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La Prensa y El Gran Pueblo Mexicano: A Study of Spanish-language Newspapers in South Texas, 1850-1930

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LA PRENSA Y EL GRAN PUEBLO MEXICANO: A STUDY OF SPANISH-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS IN SOUTH TEXAS, 1850-1930

by

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ABSTRACT

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This study focuses on Spanish-language newspapers published by Mexicans in South Texas from 1850 to 1930. These newspapers played a vital role in mobilizing Mexican communities for collective action against anti-Mexican violence, racism, and the segregation of their children in schools. This study also examines the influence of these newspapers on the formation of identity. These newspapers connected large groups of people through cultural narratives and contributed to defining concepts like "patria" and "raza", exhibiting many of the qualities Benedict Anderson attributed to print capitalism's role in the process of convincing individuals to imagine themselves as part of a community. The research presented here specifically focuses on South Texas due to its significance in the Mexican experience within the United States. Cities like San Antonio and Laredo were hubs of social and political activity in which large Mexican populations participated, especially during the years of the Mexican Revolution. Influential Spanish-language newspapers, such as *La Crónica* and *La Prensa*, emerged from this region. These newspapers were widely popular and played a crucial role in mobilizing Mexican communities through their content, strongly influencing group identity and politics among Mexicans in the United States.

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DEDICATION

I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Anh Pham, who has tirelessly supported and pushed me to continue charging forward these past five years. Without her love and support, the completion of this project would have been several times more difficult. I doubt that I will ever be able to repay her for all of her years of kindness and affection, but I will certainly spend my life trying.

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INTRODUCTION

UN RETRATO

"Quien se meté a periodista
¡Dios le valga! ¡Dios le asista!
El ha de ser director.
Redactor y Corrector,
Regente, editor, cajista,
Censor, Colaborador,
Corresponsal, maquinista,
Y a veces . . . . hasta el lector."

Evolucion, May 6, 1917.

(For those who become journalists, God help them! God bless them! They must take on the role of director, redactor, proofreader, accountant, collaborator, printer, censor, machinist, and sometimes… even its reader)

Published on the pages of *Evolucion*, a Laredo newspaper edited and managed by siblings Jovita and Eduardo Idar, "*Un Retrato*" (A Portrait) blends humor and satire in its representation of the struggles faced by the siblings as they managed their first newspaper following the death of their father in 1914 and the shuttering of the famous *La Crónica*. The piece sheds light on what it took to run what was essentially a small family business during a time in which the Spanish-language newspaper industry saw dramatic growth and expansion, as well as high competition. Only a generation earlier, Spanish-language newspapers published by people of Mexican descent in the United States had struggled to reach the financial stability necessary to last for any significant amount of time. This changed starting in 1888 with the success of Pablo Cruz's *El Regidor*, which became the first Spanish-language newspaper in South Texas with a print run of more than three years (lasting a total of twenty-six years), a feat not seen before. By 1910, dozens of new Spanish-language publications produced by people of Mexican heritage had emerged in

the United States. These early twentieth-century newspapers were diverse in purpose and opinion, matched only by the diversity of their publishers, which included Mexicans born in the United States as well as recent immigrants and exiles from Mexico. They recorded and responded to the experiences of the largest cohort of Mexican migrants, refugees, and exiles the United States had seen up to that point. These experiences included the collapse of Mexico's three-decade-old Porfiriato, the decade of bloody conflict that followed, and the ending of the Mexican Revolution's period of armed conflict. The increased Mexican presence in the US-Mexico borderlands helped increase in population size existing and recently established Mexican communities in the United States and fueled an expansive growth in the Spanish-language service and entertainment industry. These new customers with access to disposable income (no matter how little) helped to fund things like Mexican artists, businesses, and Spanish-language newspapers. Helped by mailing subsidies, relatively flexible publishing laws, and the advanced communications infrastructure of the United States, the increase in potential customers made publishing a Spanish-language newspaper a profitable business venture during the twentieth century.

While it is important to remember that these newspapers were first and foremost businesses on which families relied on for income, Mexican newspaper publishers like the Idars were also activists who aimed to use their newspapers to provide knowledge and bring social improvement to their communities. This study traces multiple themes, including the way that selected editor-publishers in South Texas used their newspapers to address the needs of their communities. These publisher-editors printed their newspapers in Spanish because their publications were aimed specifically at a Spanish-speaking audience. The choice of printing in Spanish reflects the importance of the language in their constructions of Mexican identity. In fact, one important commonality among most of the newspapers examined in this study is the importance their editor-

publishers placed on the use of the "*idoma de Cervantes*" (language of Cervantes) as one of the traits that unified their imagined communities.[1] The editor publishers of *El Regidor*, *La Crónica*, and *La Prensa* all encouraged their readers to learn the English language, but all three were adamant about the importance of having their children also maintain mastery of Spanish. Alongside promoting cultural cohesion, newspapers were an indispensable tool that helped Mexicans in South Texas mobilize their communities for collective action. The ability of the medium to help circulate ideas and information to wide audiences often placed these editor-publishers at the center of organized responses to the problems faced by Mexicans in South Texas, including responses to anti-Mexican violence and racial discrimination. At the same time, this dissertation also offers an analysis of the impact that Spanish-language newspapers in South Texas had on the process of Mexican American identity formation. In addition to Spanish-language literature, newspapers helped to play a key role in how Mexicans in South Texas related to Mexico. These newspapers helped to define *patria* and *raza*, connecting these terms not just to the history that Mexicans in Texas shared with each other, but with transnational cultural narratives like those of *Mexico de Afuera* and Greater Mexico. The newspapers discussed in this study were widely consumed as products, and their contents, alongside the activism of their editor-publishers, had a direct impact on people's lives. Editor-publishers like the Idars engaged in the political mobilization of Mexicans in Texas and worked to make Spanish-language education publicly available for Mexican children regardless of citizenship status. In the early 1900s, Pablo Cruz used his newspaper, *El Regidor*, to rally San Antonio's Mexican community against racist violence and to raise funds to help Mexicans facing trial with their legal defense. Among the many things Ignacio Lozano did for his community as editor-publisher of *La Prensa*, was the funding of a

[1] Raúl Coronado, *A World Not to Come: A History of Latino Writing and Print Culture* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2013), 374.

Spanish-language information center in San Antonio that helped Mexicans become acquainted with the services available to them in the city and helped them find jobs.

Even though the increase in Spanish-language publications during this period was a national phenomenon, this dissertation is focused on South Texas because of the region's important role as one of the geographical cores of the Mexican experience in the United States. The region is home to Laredo and San Antonio, the latter of which was revered at the time as the cultural capital of Mexicans in the US-Mexico borderlands.[2] San Antonio was the largest city in Texas until the 1930s and home to the largest population of people with Mexican heritage until around the 1920s, when it was surpassed by that of Los Angeles.[3] Laredo became one of the most popular gateways into the United States with the arrival of the railroad in the late 1880s because all passengers headed to San Antonio had to pass through the city and while it was surpassed in importance by El Paso as a result of the Mexican Revolution, it has remained one of the most frequented gateways for overland trade between Mexico and the United States since then. It is also the region in Texas where people of Mexican heritage have held a majority population and remained active participants in local government after 1848.[4] At the turn of the century and the during the first half of the 1900s, the Mexican communities of both San Antonio and Laredo became hotspots of social and political activity.[5] Key figures in the Mexican Revolution, like

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[2] Colin MacLachlan and William H. Beezley, *El Gran Pueblo: A History of Greater Mexico* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994), 36–37; Timothy M. Matovina, *Guadalupe and Her Faithful: Latino Catholics in San Antonio, from Colonial Origins to the Present* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005), 14–15; Gabriela González, *Redeeming La Raza: Transborder Modernity, Race, Respectability, and Rights* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 121.

[3] *U.S. Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Vol. 2, General Report Statistics by Subjects* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1931), 69-72.

[4] Elaine A. Peña, *Viva George!: Celebrating Washington's Birthday at the US-Mexico Border* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020), 30; Gilberto Miguel Hinojosa, *A Borderlands Town in Transition: Laredo, 1755-1870* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1983), 78–80; Daniel D. Arreola, *Tejano South Texas: A Mexican American Cultural Province*, Jack and Doris Smothers Series in Texas History, Life, and Culture (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 156.

[5] El Paso is another inland port of note but was left out of this dissertation due to my analysis focusing on South Texas.

Ricardo Flores Magón and Francisco I. Madero, frequented the region in search of soldiers, arms, and financial backing. South Texas was also where some of the most influential Spanish-language newspapers in the United States emerged. From Laredo, came *La Crónica de Laredo*, which played a key role in organizing labor and civil rights activism among Mexicans in the state of Texas. Owned by the Idars of Laredo, the family's political activism was central to the formation of The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) in 1929. Likewise, San Antonio served as the birthplace of *La Prensa de San Antonio* in 1913. Established by Mexican exile Ignacio Eugenio Lozano, the newspaper grew rapidly in circulation and popularity, becoming the most successful and influential Spanish-language newspaper in the United States by the 1920s.[6] Because they were the first to find financial success and to extend beyond state boundaries, newspapers from South Texas exerted a powerful influence on the Mexican communities of the United States and in the formation and imaginings of different Mexican identities.

As a study analyzing the newspapers of early twentieth-century Mexican publishers in South Texas, this dissertation touches on the regional identity and class politics of a privileged group of individuals who had the time and finances to write and publish from a desk, when so many in their community spent their lives toiling in fields, mines, and warehouses.[7] This dissertation then, contributes to the ongoing scholarly discourse on identity and transformation that emerged during the 1980s, specifically looking at identity through the perspectives of middle-class professionals. These are regional works that disrupt the perpetuated interpretation of

[6] Nicolás Kanellos, "Recovering and Re-Constructing Early Twentieth-Century Hispanic Immigrant Print Culture in the US," *American Literary History* 19, no. 2 (2007): 442; Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, "Ignacio E. Lozano: The Mexican Exile Publisher Who Conquered San Antonio and Los Angeles," *American Journalism* 21, no. 1 (2004): 76.

[7] Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1993), 24–25. The editor-publishers in this study belonged to what Emilio Zamora refers to as the professional group of the Mexican community. Of the total population, they were the highest in average earnings, but also the smallest in number.

Mexicans in the United States as a monolithic population, a tradition to which Arnoldo de Léon's *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt: A History of Mexican Americans in Houston* (1989) and David Montejano's *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (1987) served as forerunners. These works disputed the dominance of the "oppression narratives" popular a decade earlier by introducing economic stratification as an important characteristic to study.[8] This type of history often identifies financially well-off or middle-class Mexicans who served as middlemen and cultural brokers between their communities and the encroaching culture, politics, and economy of the United States. This scholarship emphasizes the idea of cooperation between Anglos and Mexicans and amplifies the importance of internal class divisions that challenge the once dominant idea that people of Mexican ancestry were all working-class people. Montejano and De Léon's work was further built upon by Emilio Zamora and his *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (1993), which explores the role of Mexican middle-class activists in the organizing of Mexican labor in South Texas during the early 1900s. Gabriela González's *Redeeming La Raza: Transborder Modernity, Race, Respectability, and Rights* (2018), is a more recent work that continues their legacy, exploring the contributions of middle-class activists to the construction of the Mexican American political platform. González's book deconstructs middle-class activism through a gendered lens, highlighting the many ways in which Mexican women exerted agency and influence by using gendered politics as a tool of empowerment.

When it comes to identity and ideology, debate among scholars typically centers on when precisely a Mexican American consciousness emerged among Mexicans in the United States.

[8] John R Chávez, "Aliens in Their Native Lands: The Persistence of Internal Colonial Theory," *The Journal of World History* 22, no. 4 (2011): 786. In trying to explain the development of ethnic and racial inequality, scholars of the 1960s popularized an "us-vs-them" narrative supported by theories of "internal colonialism" that explained inequality as a result of the total oppression of Mexican people in the United States by Anglo-Americans. It was a viewpoint heavily influenced by the context and politics of the Vietnam War.

In 1993, George J. Sánchez's *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* reinforced the notion that the gradual transition to a Mexican American identity began in the 1930s, emerging from a collective set of lived experiences, but especially from the trauma of the forced repatriations that took place in the United States during that decade.[9] While Sánchez's book focused exclusively on the Mexican experience in Los Angeles, California, it helped to cement the 1930s as a pivotal moment in the emergence of a recognizable Mexican American identity, bolstering the arguments of earlier works, like Richard A. Garcia's *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1949* (1991) and Mario T. García's *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, & Identity, 1930-1960* (1989). Focusing exclusively on San Antonio, Richard A. Garcia's book identified Mexican Americanism through the new discourse that emerged in that city in the 1930s among middle-class Mexicans involved in LULAC.[10] While these works established a strong argument for understanding the emergence of a Mexican American consciousness as starting in the 1930s, they have not gone unchallenged. More recent works like Laura E. Gómez's *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (2018) and Benjamin Heber Johnson's *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans Into Americans* (2003), point to earlier dates for this transition, at least at the regional level. Gómez contends that Nuevomexicanos began to develop a distinct Mexican American identity in New Mexico as early as 1848 as part of their response to the traumatic experiences they faced during encounters with Anglos and US institutions.[11] Johnson complicates matters for South Texas, arguing that Mexicans in the region

[9] George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 9–11.

[10] Richard A. Garcia, *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1941* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991), 4–5.

[11] Laura E. Gómez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race*, Second Edition (2018) (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 2–4.

began their transformation into Mexican Americans as a result of Mexico's failure to protect them during the brutal years that followed 1915 and the Plan de San Diego.[12] This more recent scholarship presents Mexican American identity as emerging in response to experiences of shared trauma, while the works discussed earlier place greater importance on participation in life in the United States as consumers and workers.

The Tejanos of South Texas emerged as an important community in the scholarship during the 1980s. Works by scholars like Arnoldo de Léon and others established Tejano history as a subcategory of the larger Mexican experience in the United States, a division that acknowledged the regional and historical differences between the Tejano community and those of Mexicans in California, Arizona, and New Mexico, the three of which became a part of the United States after 1848. Andrés Tijerina's *Tejano Empire: Life on the South Texas Ranchos* (1998) and Richard de Léon's *The Tejano Community, 1836-1900* (1997), are two works that built on scholarship from the 1980s, firmly establishing Tejanos as a community of ranchers and landowners who began to lose their socio-political power in South Texas after 1836 because of laws, violence, and unequal protections that eroded their ownership of the land.[13] Works like Richard A. Buitron's *The Quest for Tejano Identity in San Antonio, Texas, 1913-2000* (2004), have brought further attention to San Antonio as the urban cultural capital of the Tejano community. Raúl A. Ramos's *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861* (2008), emphasizes San Antonio's geography as part of the reason that Tejanos were able to play the role of cultural brokers for relations between the various groups that have coexisted in the

[12] Benjamin H. Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans Into Americans* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 209.

[13] Andrés. Tijerina, *Tejano Empire: Life on the South Texas Ranchos*, Clayton Wheat Williams Texas Life Series (College Station, Tex.: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 124–25. A combination of violence, debt, new Anglo-American laws, and the Tejano tradition of separating land among their children, led to the gradual erosion of this community's access to land as a source of wealth and security.

region.[14] Vicki L. Ruiz's work on Mexican American women, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (1998), uses San Antonio as an important hub for Mexican civil rights activists, like Emma Tenayuca, and as one of the major settings of their political emergence in the 1930s. These and other works have helped to cement San Antonio's importance in discussions on Mexican people in South Texas and earned it and Tejanos a place in any work discussing the Texas-Mexico borderlands.

Recent works on Tejanos have doubled down on aspects of the "peace structure" that Montejano explored in 1987, making cooperation and adaptation into a core aspect of the Tejano identity that emerged during the nineteenth century. Ramos's *Beyond the Alamo* portrays Tejanos as cooperating with Anglo-American society, participating in and adapting to the new political systems that emerged in Texas in the 1820s, the 1830s, and again in the late 1840s, by repeatedly defining a space for themselves as negotiators and cultural brokers.[15] The scholarship has come to define Tejanos as existing in the space between two nations, a quality that works looking more broadly at the region have gone and applied to Mexican communities in the rest of South Texas and beyond. Miguel Ángel González-Quiroga's *War and Peace on the Rio Grande Frontier, 1830-1880* (2020) and *River of Hope: Forging Identity and Nation in the Rio Grande Borderlands* (2013) by Omar S. Valerio-Jiménez, both make cooperation and adaptation qualities that emerged as necessary for surviving in the US-Mexico borderlands. Like Ramos, Valerio-Jiménez demonstrates that a local "counter-identity" developed among Mexicans in South Texas as early as the latter half of the nineteenth century, largely in response to the way that the new

[14] Raúl A. Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 8.

[15] Ramos, 201. Their role as negotiators between what was Mexican and American became much less tenable after 1848, as Tejanos had come to be defined as a suspect class by Anglo-Americans during the war with Mexico.

border and legal regimes transformed Mexican-heritage residents of the borderlands into outsiders in both the United States and Mexico after 1848.[16] And yet, the scholarship also demonstrates that even after 1848, Mexicans in South Texas continued to participate politically and economically in the region, both in Mexico and the United States. They established fraternal societies, political clubs, and newspapers. *Mutualistas*, or mutualist societies, were first formed in Texas in the 1870s for the purpose of protection and mutual benefit for Mexicans involved.[17] Writing on this topic in 1995, David G. Gutiérrez argued that mutualista societies were yet another attempt by Mexicans to carve out a space for themselves in American society. More importantly, they served as a meeting ground between Mexicans of all classes and citizenship status, a place where barriers were broken down between different groups in the community.[18] Mutualistas have become widely accepted as the precursors to labor and political organization and are featured in works by Emilio Zamora and other labor historians focused on the Mexican experience in the United States.

Since David Gutiérrez wrote *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* in 1995, the study of mutualista organizations has become and important window into the lives of the Mexican professional class that existed before the 1930s and dominated local community politics. The existence of a Gilded Age and early twentieth-century Mexican professional class in the United States was first explored by historians like Arnoldo de Léon and those writing at the time that *They Called Them Greasers* (1983) released.[19]

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[16] Omar S. Valerio-Jiménez, *River of Hope: Forging Identity and Nation in the Rio Grande Borderlands* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), 246. Valerio-Jiménez and others also establish that adaptation did not always mean assimilation into Mexico or the US mainstream.

[17] Armando Navarro, *Mexicano Political Experience in Occupied Aztlan: Struggles and Change* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2005), 147.

[18] Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 87; David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 95.

[19] Ana Luisa Martinez-Catsam, "The Voice of the People: Pablo Cruz, El Regidor, and Mexican American Identity in San Antonio, Texas, 1888-1910" (PhD dissertation, Lubbock, Texas Tech University, 2003), 8.

The topic has been touched upon by historians like George J. Sánchez and Richard Garcia during the following decade, with Garcia's *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class* exploring the conflict that arose between Mexican American professionals and their counterparts in the Mexican exile community of San Antonio during the 1930s. More recent works have provided closer examinations of these middle -class professionals and their organizations, such as their fraternal orders and especially, *El Primer Congreso Mexicanista* of 1911. Works like *Redeeming La Raza: Transborder Modernity, Race, Respectability, and Rights* (2018) and *Homeland: Ethnic Mexican Belonging Since 1900* (2021) by Aaron E. Sánchez, have shed light into the activism of these middle-class professionals and the tensions that arose between Mexican nationals and US-born Mexicans as they debated the future of their communities during the early twentieth century.

In South Texas, middle-class professionals took on a larger leading role within the Mexican community during the Gilded Age, as the region transitioned from an economy based on ranching, to one dominated by agriculture and wage labor.[20] After the 1870s, these professionals helped organize fraternal societies, political clubs, mutualistas, and social events in their communities. Through these organizations, they promoted cultural retention with events celebrating Mexico and their community's Mexican heritage, displays widely accepted as proof of a bicultural mentality existing among Mexicans in South Texas long before the twentieth century.[21] While the history of this professional class was first explored as early as the 1980s, when they were mentioned in Montejano's *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas*, very few works continued to focus on their activism until Emilio Zamora's *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*. Zamora's work offered an in-depth exploration of the involvement of the Idar family of

[20] David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 90; Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*, 10 and 22.

[21] MacLachlan and Beezley, *El Gran Pueblo: A History of Greater Mexico*, 36; Martinez-Catsam, "The Voice of the People," 6–8; González, *Redeeming La Raza*, 49.

Laredo in the labor activism of South Texas from 1900 to the 1920s. The Idars were a clan of US-born Mexican middle-class professionals who operated several newspapers out of Laredo before becoming involved in politically organizing Mexicans in the region. In 1911, they were the main organizers behind the *Primer Congreso Mexicanista* (First Congress), which was an attempt to unify mutualistas in Texas in order to organize a push for Mexican civil rights and access to education.[22] While Zamora focuses predominantly on their activism in the labor sector, more recent scholarship has looked at the actions of the Idars and other middle-class professionals in the urban centers and politics of Texas. Benjamin Johnson delves into the activism of the Idars and their efforts to organize other Progressive Era Mexicans in South Texas against the violent actions of the Texas Rangers and vigilante mobs that terrorized Mexican communities between 1910 and 1918.[23] He also delves into the actions of Congressman José Tomás Canales and his political fight to end state sanctioned racial violence in 1919.[24] In *Redeeming la Raza*, Gabriela González explores the activism of the US-born Idars and also the social redemption politics of Mexican nationals in San Antonio. Lastly, there have also been efforts to explore older figures, such as in Elliot Young's *Catarino Garza's Revolution on the Texas-Mexico Border* (2004), in which he writes about the life of Gilded Age editor-publisher Catarino Garza, who in the 1890s led an armed uprising against the Mexican government and the Texas Rangers in the South Texas borderlands.

Although current research has begun to shed light into the lives and activities of Gilded Age and Progressive Era Mexican activists, there are still areas left for exploration. The profession of choice for many of the ethnic professionals involved in activism during the twentieth century was that of editor-publishers of their own newspapers. These publications are frequently

[22] Navarro, *Mexicano Political Experience in Occupied Aztlan*, 147.
[23] Johnson, *Revolution in Texas*, 43–45.
[24] Johnson, 174.

cited in biographies and scholarly works, as they offer invaluable accounts of government policies, cultural norms, prevalent opinions, and societal trends during a given period. This is because these newspapers went beyond merely communicating news in Spanish, they were also committed to defending their communities, promoting solidarity, promoting their cultural identity in the United States, and providing a source of leadership.[25] Despite this, few scholars have made attempts to make these newspapers and their printed text the primary subject of their investigations. Although the unavailability of complete publication runs of these newspapers is a contributing factor, a significant number of scholars have instead focused their energies on writing biographies on the families and individuals responsible for publishing these newspapers. What scholarship exists analyzing the newspapers of South Texas is limited mostly to journal articles, edited volumes, and the work of Nicolás Kanellos, who has written extensively on Spanish-language newspapers and literature in general.[26] His massive collaboration with Helvetia Martell, *Hispanic Periodicals in the United States, Origins to 1960: A Brief History and Comprehensive Bibliography* (2000), remains one of the most important reference works for those studying Spanish-language newspapers of the United States.

Among those who have written about Spanish-language newspapers as subject matter, there is Richard Griswold de Castillo, who in 1977 provided a six-page analysis of *La Crónica*, *La Prensa*, and Ricardo Flores Magón's *Regeneración*, examining their publications

[25] Nicolás Kanellos and Helvetia Martell, *Hispanic Periodicals in the United States, Origins to 1960: A Brief History and Comprehensive Bibliography* (Arte Público Press, 2000), 6–7; Julián Efrén Camacho Martínez, "Palabras Del Otro Lado: Las Fronteras Sociales De La Gente Decente de Laredo, Texas. El Caso de Justo Cárdenas Y Su Semanario El Demócrata Fronterizo, 1905-1913" (Master's Thesis, Mexico City, Centro De Investigación Y Docencia Económicas, A.C., 2018).

[26] Nicolás. Kanellos, *Herencia: The Anthology of Hispanic Literature of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Kanellos and Martell, *Recovering the U.S Hispanic Literary Heritage*; Kanellos, "Recovering and Re-Constructing Early Twentieth-Century Hispanic Immigrant Print Culture in the US"; Nicolás. Kanellos, *Hispanic Literature of the United States: A Comprehensive Reference* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2003).

during the Mexican Revolution.[27] Ramón D. Chacón was another scholar who produced analytical work on Mexican newspapers, also publishing an article in 1977 but on *El Heraldo de México*, a newspaper published out of Los Angeles from 1916 to 1920. Chacón's analysis was among the first to portray the Mexican newspaper as a mediator and facilitator between its audience and Anglo-American society, an active agent in educating its readers about the norms of their new home and connecting them to valuable services, while also defending them and promoting the retention of traditional values.[28] There is also Onofre Di Stefano, who produced the first in-depth analysis of *La Prensa* in 1985 for *Aztlan*, a journal for Chicano studies. Stefano was a pioneer in exploring the reasons behind the longevity and success of Ignacio Lozano's newspaper, which outlasted all other Mexican newspapers producing during the 1910s. His research sheds light on how technology and changing demographics helped *La Prensa* emerged as the most successful Spanish-language newspaper in the United States by the 1920s.[29] In the 1990s, Robert R. Treviño published "Prensa y Patria: The Spanish-Language Press and the Biculturation of the Tejano Middle Class, 1920-1940", which examined the role of newspapers in aiding San Antonio's Tejanos embrace American identities while preserving their Mexican heritage through a process he describes as "a bifurcated."[30] More recent scholarship continues to focus on individual newspapers in South Texas. Elliot Young's research on *La Crónica* Ana Luisa Martinez-Catsam's work on *El Regidor* and *El Imparcial de Texas*, and Daniel Morales's analysis of *La Prensa* during

[27] Richard Griswold del Castillo, "The Mexican Revolution and the Spanish-Language Press in the Borderlands," *Journalism History* 4, no. 2 (1977): 42–47.

[28] Ramón D Chacón, "The Chicano Immigrant Press in Los Angeles: The Case of 'El Heraldo de Mexico,' 1916–1920," *Journalism History* 4, no. 2 (1977): 62.

[29] Onofre Di Stefano, "'Venimos a Luchar': A Brief History of La Prensa's Founding," *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 16, no. 1 (1985): 110.

[30] Roberto R. Treviño, "Prensa y Patria: The Spanish-Language Press and the Biculturation of the Tejano Middle Class, 1920-1940," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (1991): 453–56.

the 1920s, have significantly contributed to the burgeoning scholarship on these newspapers.[31] Young and Martinez-Catsam have primarily directed their research towards the newspapers of Gilded Age Mexican professionals, while Morales has provided valuable insight into the shift in tone of *La Prensa* between 1920 and 1940.

Despite the sustained interest in Mexican newspapers in South Texas, comparative analysis of themes, ideologies, or how these newspapers and their journalism fit into the larger narratives has not often been attempted for the region's newspapers. While numerous Mexican newspapers emerged and operated between 1890 and 1930, most scholars have tended to study these publications individually. As a result, much of the existing scholarship tends to focus on a single newspaper at a time. The exception to this are works meant to be used for reference, like that of Kanellos and more recently, Juan González and Joseph Torres's *News for All The People: The Epic Story of Race and the American Media* (2011), in which González and Torres devote a large portion of their book to non-English newspapers in the United States and to the publications and journalism of people of color. Their contribution to the scholarship on Mexican newspapers in South Texas is in contextualizing these publications within the broader history of Spanish-language newspapers in the United States, linking *El Regidor, La Crónica*, *La Prensa*, and others, to a cultural legacy that began with the first Hispanic-owned newspaper in New Orleans in 1809.[32] Yet, despite all of its value, these books serve largely as references on the history of American media

[31] Ana Luisa Martinez-Catsam, "Frontier of Dissent: El Regidor, the Regime of Porfirio Díaz, and the Transborder Community," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 112, no. 4 (2009): 388–408; Ana Luisa Martinez-Catsam, "The Role of Francisco A. Chapa and El Imparcial de Texas in Supporting the American War Effort, 1917-1918," *The Journal of Life and Culture in San Antonio*, 2013, https://www.uiw.edu/sanantonio/FranciscoChapa_001.html; Elliott Young, "Deconstructing 'La Raza': Identifying the 'Gente Decente' of Laredo, 1904-1911," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 98, no. 2 (1994): 227–59; Daniel Morales, "'Tejas, Afuera de México': Newspapers, the Mexican Government, Mutualistas, and Migrants in San Antonio 1910–1940," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 40, no. 2 (2021): 52–91.

[32] Juan González and Joseph Torres, *News for All the People: The Epic Story of Race and the American Media* (London and New York: Verso, 2011), 70–71.

as a whole. Thus, there remains a void to be filled in the scholarship when it comes to works analyzing multiple Mexican newspapers that do more than offer short summaries of their history.

Aiming to contribute to the scholarship, this dissertation traces the history of the newspaper as a cultural production used to communicate and document information for a community of readers, beginning with the origins of the medium in Mexico City during the colonial era and ending with the Mexican newspapers that emerged in South Texas during the early twentieth century. I examine such a wide span of time in order to trace the cultural developments and technological advances that helped bring the medium to South Texas. As established by Benedict Anderson, Creole newspapers in the Americas helped standardize language and cultural identity and established new public discourses that centered on the concerns of their readers.[33] In South Texas, especially after English-language newspapers took over the region in 1848, Spanish-language newspapers presented their readers with an alternative news source written in a language they understood and concerned with the things that affected them in particular. I end by focusing on the content of Mexican newspapers printed in Texas during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, examining what Anthony Gabriel Meléndez referred to as "the larger discourse that supplies them with their ultimate meaning."[34] These include San Antonio's *El Bejareño*, Justo Cardenas's *El Democrata Fronterizo*, Pablo Cruz's *El Regidor*, Nicassio Idar's *La Crónica*, Ignacio Lozano's *La Prensa*, and Ricardo Flores Magón's *Regeneración*, among others. My interest in these newspapers stems from their use as discursive spaces used by middle-class professionals for the public dissemination of ideas that influenced the direction in which communities of Mexican heritage developed in the United States. These publications promoted certain cultural values and

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[33] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition (2016) (Verso, 1983), 61–66.

[34] Anthony Gabriel Meléndez, *Spanish-Language Newspapers in New Mexico, 1834-1958* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005), 3–4.

perspectives, such as the importance of preserving the Spanish language, that eventually formed part of a widely embraced Mexican identity. If like nationalism, ethnic identity is a fluid cultural construction which shifts over time in response to political, economic, and social circumstances, then examining the discourse of these newspapers will reveal an evolution of thought and social dynamics.[35] The reliance of scholars on these publications as sources has shown that some of the strongest evidence of the bond between Mexican communities and Mexico can be found within the pages of their newspapers. For example, even when they held US citizenship, editor-publishers supported and organized celebrations for Mexican holidays, as well as displayed concern for the political and economic welfare of Mexico.[36] Among Mexicans living in the United States, reading, or familiarizing themselves with the content of these newspapers was one of the ways in which they collectively participated in the public sphere of their communities.

Por otro lado, this work also serves as a contribution to the history of Mexican journalism in South Texas. These regional newspapers represent a continuation of the heritage of Spanish-language journalism that originated in Mexico during the eighteenth century, when *El Despertador Américano* became the first newspaper printed for a general audience. Produced by Mexico's independence fighters during their struggle for independence from Spain, it was also the first Mexican newspaper to feature an alternative view to the mainstream.[37] *El Despertador Américano* officially inaugurated the tradition of the opposition/alternative press in Mexico, which at the time included Texas. When *El Bejareño* began printing out of San Antonio in the 1850s, it continued this legacy, serving as a newspaper aimed at organizing Tejano opposition to forces that

[35] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 17.

[36] Martinez-Catsam, "The Voice of the People," 12.

[37] Sandra Pérez Stocco, "La Influencia de la Prensa en el Proceso de Independencia de México," *Revista de Historia Americana y Argentina* 50, no. 1 (2015): 183–84.

sought to erase their community from the public sphere of San Antonio.[38] Founded by Anglo political organizers, the newspaper began as an attempt by the Democratic Party to cement its ties with the city's Tejano population, but grew to become the leading Tejano publication in 1850s South Texas after Angel Navarro took over as editor-publisher. While *El Bejareño* never advocated open rebellion, it opposed the erasure of Tejano's from the region's political structure and brought attention to the racially motivated attacks against Mexicans in South Texas during the wave of violence of 1857. *El Bejareño* took on the role of an oppositional voice against the political, social, and cultural hegemony of Anglo-Americans in Texas after 1848. As a niche publication catering to an embattled ethnic minority, it set a precedent for the role that many future Mexican newspapers in the region would follow.

The history of Mexican journalism in South Texas also includes the many immigrant and exile newspapers established by Mexican nationals who crossed north of the Rio Grande. While *El Bejareño* was not the last newspaper to represent the native Mexican element, native newspapers would become outnumbered by these immigrant-owned newspapers after the US Civil War. The earliest of these newspapers were politically motivated and their ephemeral existence was often connected to events in Mexico. It was not until the 1880s that the first notable immigrant-owned newspapers began to emerge. These include important Gilded Age newspapers like Catarino Garza's *El Libre Pensador*, Justo Cárdenas's *El Correo de Laredo*, and Pablo Cruz's *El Regidor*, which became the first Mexican newspaper to achieve any sort of permanency in the region. While their presence in South Texas slowly increased over time, it was not until the twentieth century that Mexican nationals established themselves as a dominant force in the

[38] Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861,* 210. The newspaper begin printing in response of city ordinances that did away with the need for city government to print Spanish-language translations of new laws and documents during a time of increased anti-Mexican fervor.

Spanish-language newspaper industry of South Texas. A dramatic increase in migration from Mexico during the early 1900s and the growth of a small Mexican professional class, led to an increase in the amount of native and immigrant newspapers in the United States. Many migrant newspapers, like *Regeneración*, were part of larger political projects connected to the Mexican Revolution, while others sought to politically organize other Mexican nationals in the United States. Both migrant and native newspapers became reflections of the Mexican experience in the United States, their pages filled with poems, essays, letters, and other forms of cultural expression challenging the ethnocentrism of cultural perspectives dominant in the English-language press at the time. More than just tools for communication, these newspapers also served valuable roles as preservers and transmitters of Mexican history and culture, maintainers and reinforces of language, and as sources of community leadership and pride.[39] As Meléndez wrote in, *So All Is Not Lost: The Poetics of Print in Nuevomexicano Communities, 1834-1958* (1997) when discussing Mexican newspapers produced in the US Southwest:

"The multiple functions of Mexicano newspaper presses resulted in the production of "culture bearing" documentation wherein is found cultural projections of every kind in prose, poetry, and the editorial essay."[40]

Chapter 1 of this dissertation examines the early history of newspaper publishing in Mexico, with a focus on the evolution of printed mediums that eventually gave way to the first true newspapers.[41] It begins with the arrival of the first printing press in 1539 and its use as an administrative tool of the church and state. The narrative follows the emergence of what Corinna

[39] Carlos E. Cortés, "The Mexican-American Press," in *The Ethnic Press in the United States: A Historical Analysis and Handbook* (Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1987), 254.

[40] Anthony Gabriel Meléndez, *So All Is Not Lost: The Poetics of Print in Nuevomexicano Communities, 1834-1958* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 7.

[41] I focus on print mediums created with the intention of communicating information to a mass audience.

Zeltsman has coined as the "political economy of printing" in her book, *Ink Under the Fingernails: Printing Politics in Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (2021), which saw the transformation of newspapers into political tools in an environment where political patronage was the only means for a newspaper to secure its survival.[42] This was because a combination of the stunted spread of literacy in Mexico and the lack of investments in communications infrastructure, deprived printers of the audiences and systems needed to support private enterprise, putting the entire burden of operational cost on their print shops. During the colonial era, printers were dependent on the patronage of Spain's colonial administration and the Catholic Church in order to survive. After independence, they became dependent on the patronage of men with political aspirations. This dependency bottlenecked the growth of the printing industry in Mexico to a few printers whose success depended on printing monopolies granted to them by their patrons. The spread of printing in Mexico was left in the hands of local politicians willing to pay from their personal coffers to obtain printing equipment or sponsor printers who worked for them. This chapter ends in the 1820s, shifting the focus from national patterns to how these trends affected the local, particularly in South Texas.

Chapter 2 focuses on Texas during the nineteenth century when the printing press made its way to San Antonio, where it served Joaquín de Arredondo in his duties as the Spanish commandant general of the Eastern Interior Provinces. Under Arredondo, a newspaper was published as the official medium for government communications. A little less than two years after Mexican independence, the newly appointed governor of Texas, José Félix Trespalacios, had another printing press installed in San Antonio. Continuing Arredondo's tradition, this press was

[42] Corinna Zeltsman, *Ink Under the Fingernails: Printing Politics in Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2021), 11–17.

used by Trespalacios to print the *Correo de Texas*, a government broadside that helped to disseminate information. However, Trespalacios also used the *Correo de Texas* as a discursive space, hoping that the newspaper would help him to transform the inhabitants of Texas into proper Mexican citizens.[43] Trespalacios's use of the printing press in shaping identity and creating meaning helped to attune Spanish speakers in Texas to the use of the printed word to define community and culture. It was after 1848 that the first Spanish-language newspapers began to emerge in South Texas in response to the fact that people with Mexican heritage no longer controlled the destiny of the territory. Newspapers like *El Bejareño* became tools for producing and shaping a politically active community in a world dominated by Anglo-Americans and their institutions.

Chapter 3 concerns itself with the tale of the first two Mexican newspapers in South Texas to achieve lasting success. The chapter is devoted to telling the stories of *El Democrata Fronterizo* and *El Regidor*. Their editor-publishers, Justo Cárdenas, and Pablo Cruz became leading figures in the South Texas newspaper scene. The chapter discusses the factors which made the success of these newspapers possible. It also addresses the ways in which these newspapers differed from *El Bejareño*. One of the qualities that made them unique, was that their editor-publishers were immigrants from Mexico who established themselves in as leading figures in South Texas. Pablo Cruz used *El Regidor* to criticize racism in the United States, in particular the lynching of Mexicans and Black people. In the early 1900s, his newspaper helped to mobilize support for Gregorio Cortéz, who was a Mexican facing trial for having shot and killed an American sheriff near Austin, Texas. Cortéz led Texas state authorities on a nine day manhunt and faced the very threat of being lynched by a mob upon his capture. Cruz used *El Regidor* to help keep public eyes on Cortéz while

[43] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 292.

he was in captivity, placing pressure on Texas authorities to guarantee his safety. Using his newspaper, Cruz then published Gregorio Cortéz's account of events, which established that he had acted in self-defense. Cruz then helped mobilize Mexicans in South Texas to assist Cortéz in whatever way they could, helping to raise funds to provide support for his family and legal defense. The positive response that *El Regidor* received in its efforts to support Cortez suggests a community of active readers and other participants who recognized Cortéz as a victim. *El Regidor*'s coverage of the Cortéz trial helped lead to the creation of the Gregorio Cortéz Defense Network, a local organization of volunteers that after helping Cortéz gain his freedom, turned to helping educate tenant farmers in San Antonio about their rights.

Chapter 4 discusses *La Crónica* de Laredo. This was a newspaper published by Nicasio Idar and his children, Jovita, Clemente, and Eduardo Idar. Having been born in the United States, they were Mexican Americans who perceived of themselves as México-Texanos, an identity that placed importance on their cultural connections to Mexico. In 1910, their newspaper played a key role in helping to organize Laredo's centennial celebration commemorating Mexican Independence, an event that coincided with national celebrations taking place in Mexico. The success of this transnational celebration in Laredo's was only possible because of the organizing efforts of *La Crónica* and other Spanish-language newspapers in South Texas who served as a communications network between communities and helped rally and coordinate statewide support from as many Mexican communities in Texas as possible. Only a year later, the Idars would once again use this same statewide network of collaboration to mobilize Mexican communities in Texas in defense against anti-Mexican violence and their children's right to access public education. Their efforts helped make possible the *Primer Congreso Mexicanista* (First Mexicanist Congress), the

first statewide gathering of Mexicans in Texas for the purpose of discussing the challenges facing their communities.

Chapter 5 ends with Ignacio Lozano's *La Prensa*, covering the years 1913 to 1922. This chapter discusses the newspaper's rise to popularity, drawing upon some of the papers and artifacts donated by the Lozano family to the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, and the many digitized issues of *La Prensa* available to researchers. During the first half of the twentieth century, *La Prensa* played a pivotal role in creating the first Spanish-language media landscape in the United States by being the first of these newspapers to reach national circulation. Despite the exclusive nature of the Mexicanist identity it promoted, one based on the conservative ideology of México de Afuera, its soaring popularity served as a unifying force that effectively connected and engaged a community of readers across the United States.

In regard to terminology, this dissertation adopts the terms most commonly used in these newspapers both to define their publishers as well as their readers. As such, the term Mexican is not often used to denote citizenship status or national identity, but cultural orientation. At times, the term native publication will be used to differentiate Spanish-language newspapers established by US-born editor-publishers. The individuals behind these newspapers identified as Mexicans, they spoke and wrote in Spanish, they celebrated the figures and holidays that marked Mexican nationalism, and they saw themselves as culturally oriented towards Mexico even while living beyond its legal borders. The terms Anglo, American, and Anglo-American are used in this dissertation in the same manner that they were used by the newspapers discussed, to describe people of European descent who identified as Americans and described themselves as members of the white race. These terms became popular in Spanish-language newspapers as a way to discuss

the foreigners in religion, language, and customs which conquest and migration had made neighbors. Lastly, I describe the men and women behind the Spanish-language newspapers I discuss as "editor-publishers," a term I think adequately covers the fact that they often fulfilled the role of owners, editors, and publishers of their newspapers. I think this term serves as a reminder that despite their success and influence, these newspapers were family-owned businesses established to help families make ends meet.

In bringing together this collection of Spanish-language newspapers from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this study sets out to offer a limited genealogy of the Spanish-language newspaper and its introduction and evolution in South Texas. In this region, which did not come under the complete control of the United States until after 1848, Spanish-language newspapers evolved to become the keepers of an alternative public sphere that catered to the unique needs of Mexican people in the region. The presence of these newspapers suggests the existence of a literate Spanish-speaking audience as far back as the 1850s. While Mexican people in South Texas lacked access to Jürgen Habermas's coffeehouse societies, they nevertheless had their own centers of discursive and intellectual exchange.[44] Mexicans were members of *mutualista* organizations, churches, civic and social societies, and other social groupings whose gatherings provided spaces where information could be debated and exchanged. Though newspapers often privilege the discourse of those who have the advantage of literacy and the resources to operate their own newspapers, it is also true that the nature of the medium as a commodity ensures that they also reflect the concerns of a wider public.

[44] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, 2015 Reprint (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 1989), 33–36.

Through collaboration networks with other Spanish-language newspapers, the publications discussed in this study helped to widen their readers' understanding of community to include individuals who lived beyond their horizon's edge. They helped to popularize definitions of *patria* and *raza* based on shared cultural connections to Mexico and the mutual struggle against racism in the United States, transforming the meaning of these words into pseudonyms for "homeland" and "our people". While these were old words of the Spanish-language lexicon, they acquired new meanings as a result of the collision of cultures that occurred in South Texas and newspapers played an important role in helping to promote and codify these new definitions. Similar appropriations of these words occurred across the US Southwest, as Mexican communities in the region came into contact with often hostile American newcomers. In New Mexico, Mexican editor-publishers used their newspapers to defend their communities against racial violence and to contest efforts to diminish their role in the history of the territory. This was an effort being undertaken by local American politicians trying to downplay New Mexico's "foreign" element as the territory attempted to attain statehood in the early 1900s.[45] In South Texas, Spanish-language newspapers first emerged in response to political threats against the Mexican communities of San Antonio. In the 1850s, Know-Nothing candidates running for office in the city tapped into xenophobia and anti-Catholic sentiments to directly attack Mexican culture and religion.[46] In response, Newspapers like *El Bejareño* and *El Ranchero* emerged with the goal of trying and organize Mexicans in the region for participation in American politics. Their limited scope and focus on San Antonio meant that the unity they promoted was limited to that city, but their efforts established a pattern for Spanish-language publications: rather than just existing to communicate information, these

[45] Doris Meyer, *Speaking for Themselves: Neomexicano Cultural Identity and the Spanish Language Press, 1880-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 109.
[46] Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861*, 209.

newspapers were specifically founded to organize and defend their communities in response to American racism.

Chapter 1: The Emergence of Newspapers in Mexico

In 1813, Spanish revolutionary Álvarez de Toledo ended his journey across Texas from Natchitoches, Louisiana by taking control of San Antonio with the support of the town's most prominent families. Álvarez's arrival had been expected for days, as he had spent the preceding months announcing his intentions to seize San Antonio via the two newspapers he printed in Louisiana and had distributed in Texas, the *Gaceta de Tejas* and *El Mejicano*. In San Antonio de Béxar, his publications had managed to convince the prominent Arocha, Travieso, Neramendi, and Séguin families to side with his cause and depose their local Spanish officials in preparation for Álvarez's arrival.[47] The takeover of San Antonio was connected to other uprisings across Mexico inspired by Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla's 1810 revolt against the Spanish colonial administration.[48] During his short rule over San Antonio, Álvarez installed a printing press in the town from which he began printing *Gaceta de Tejas* and *El Mejicano*, making the publications the first newspapers to be printed in South Texas. The two newspapers brought to Texas that which had become an established trend in the rest of the Spanish Empire by 1813: opposition newspapers, the first of which had emerged as a part of the Hidalgo Revolt in 1810. These opposition newspapers represented a relatively new print medium in the Iberian world, the first to be independent of the Catholic Church and Spanish state since the introduction of the printing press in 1534.

The history of newspapers in South Texas represents an offshoot of the larger history of journalism in Mexico, where a printing industry developed following the introduction of the first printing press. Delivered to Mexico City by the printing firm Cromberger of Seville, Mexico's first printing press was intended to serve the administrative needs of Mexico City, as well as to provide

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[47] Raúl Coronado, *A World Not to Come: A History of Latino Writing and Print Culture* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2013), 264.

[48] Coronado, 256–59. The uprising was quickly and violently put down only a few months later by the Spanish Royal Officer Joaquín de Arredondo.

printing services to the religious orders active in Mexico. Over time, access to printing would expand beyond the single printing press and develop into an industry that became an important part of public life. However, unlike in British North America, the sheer geographical size of Mexico and the deliberately limited investments made in roads and other communications infrastructure by Spain restricted the development of Mexico's printing industry to its administrative center. While early publications provided information on events from throughout the Spanish Empire, the bulk of their more relevant information was focused on local commercial happenings, political changes, and social events. This focus on local events prompted readers to begin imagining themselves as part of a local community separate from Spain and unique in its own ways.[49] Even as this cultural change took place, the lack of proper infrastructure forced printers in Mexico to rely on the patronage of the state and church in order to survive as an industry. It was because of this dependency that most well-established printers in colonial Mexico tended to reinforce local hierarchies, rather than as voices of innovation and change. The deliberate choices made by Spain to focus its resources on developing Mexico for the benefit of the empire's extractive economy limited the development of a newspaper industry to mostly Mexico City during the colonial era. This had dire consequences for regions far away from the administrative center, like California, Texas, and New Mexico, where a local newspaper scene did not develop until after independence, and ownership of a newspaper became a private endeavor whose success or failure depended solely on the fortunes of individuals.

By 1534, the increasing amount of paperwork needed to manage Spain’s expanding American empire and ensure the spread of the Catholic faith to new lands, convinced the Crown to authorize the shipment of a printing press to Mexico City. At the time, Mexico City served as

[49] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition (2016) (Verso, 1983), 62–63.

the colonial administrative center for New Spain, an expansive colony that stretched from Spanish Louisiana and California, all the way to the southern tip of the Kingdom of Guatemala (what would eventually emerge as Costa Rica) and included the Philippines. Since the arrival of the Spanish to the Americas, print materials and paper used by colonial administrators in the colony were imported from France and Spain. This was because paper and printing operations were yet to be set up in the Americas and because the Spanish Crown held an interest in maintaining its absolute monopoly on the production and importation of paper in the Iberian world.[50] As a result of the Crown's monopoly, Spanish officials in the Americas had to often wait for shipments from Iberia before they would have the materials needed to effectively communicate government policies to Spain's American subjects in print. This bottleneck of printing supplies and published materials led religious officials operating in the Americas to often complain about the scarcity of religious texts in the colonies and the difficulty of relying on imports for texts vital to their duties.[51] Likely driven by these frustrations to their missionary work, it was the Spanish clergy who became the most adamant in advocating for the establishment of printing presses in Mexico. For decades, Catholic officials in the Americas petitioned the Spanish Crown for the importation of printing presses and the construction of local paper mills, arguing that such investments would serve as a boon to their efforts in spreading the faith in the new territories.[52] With the help of the Bishop of

[50] Archivo General de la Nación, "La frágil industria del papel a inicios del México independiente," gob.mx, n.d., http://www.gob.mx/agn/es/articulos/la-fragil-industria-del-papel-a-inicios-del-mexico-independiente?idiom=es; Carlos E Castañeda, "The Beginning of Printing in America," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 20, no. 4 (1940): 672–74. The making of paper and paper itself, were two of the taxed items and services from which the Spanish Crown generated its income, a policy which continued until the time of Charles III.

[51] Castañeda, "The Beginning of Printing in America," 673.

[52] Castañeda, 673; Demetrio S. García, *La Imprenta en América* (México: Asociación de Libreros de México, 1939), 65; Alexander B. Carver, "Esteban Martín, the First Printer in the Western Hemisphere: An Examination of Documents and Opinion," *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 39, no. 4 (October 1969): 346.

Mexico, their desires were finally placated in 1534, when the first Gutenberg Press arrived in Mexico City alongside its first operator, the Spanish printer Esteban Martín.

The first Bishop of Mexico, Juan de Zumárraga, had been among those in the Church hoping to get a printing press authorized for use in Mexico City. Zumárraga was a member of the Franciscan order, a Basque, and among other things, a bibliophile who over his extensive career in Mexico City built up a book collection that ultimately served as the foundation for city's first library. Sometime in 1533, Bishop Zumárraga addressed several letters to the King of Spain that are credited with finally convincing the monarch to approve for the operation of a printing press in Mexico City.[53] Zumárraga also became the man responsible for convincing European publishers that expanding their industries into Mexico would be a worthwhile effort. It was the bishop that enlisted Esteban Martín to spearhead the first efforts in establishing a printing press in Mexico. By all accounts, Martín's printing operation was a small and humble one, focused on the production of Catholic catechisms and doctrinal books.[54] Martín held the position of Mexico's sole printer through 1838, though his operation turned out to be merely a proof of concept used by Zumárraga to demonstrate the viability of printing in Mexico in the hope of convincing larger publishers to jump on the project. In fact, Zumárraga had being in talks with Seville's famous House of Cromberger as early as 1527 regarding the project of establishing a print shop in Mexico City.[55] The Crombergers of Seville were a family of German merchants and printers based out of

[53] Castañeda, "The Beginning of Printing in America," 672–74; Alexander B. Carver, "Esteban Martín, the First Printer in the Western Hemisphere," 345. Zumárraga's letters emphasize the backlog of projects on the King's American colonies by Dominican, Augustinian, and Franciscan clergy that were ready to print but lacked access to a printer.

[54] Alexander B. Carver, "Esteban Martín, the First Printer in the Western Hemisphere," 346; Castañeda, "The Beginning of Printing in America," 674; Clive Griffin, *The Crombergers of Seville: The History of a Merchant and Printing Dynasty* (Clarendon Press, 1988), 90–91.

[55] Griffin, *The Crombergers of Seville: The History of a Merchant and Printing Dynasty*, 91; Alexander B. Carver, "Esteban Martín, the First Printer in the Western Hemisphere," 346.

the port city of Seville that had built their fortune in printing translations of religious works and by becoming involved in the city's trade with the Americas. Their wealth and status, as well as their professional relationships with religious officials, had brought them into contact with Zumárraga.[56] In 1539, with the backing of the Spanish Crown and Martín's relative success as an example, the bishop convinced the head of the Cromberger family to invest in the venture. This deal granted the firm the exclusive right to print and distribute books throughout Spain's colonies in the Americas in exchange for investing the resources necessary to establish permanent printing operations in Mexico City.

The year 1541 marked the beginning of the Cromberger monopoly over the production and distribution of print in Spain's American colonies. The firm's owner and Master Printer, Juan Cromberger, dispatched Giovanni Paoli to Mexico City in order to oversee their printing venture in Mexico. The Italian, who had adopted the Spanish name Juan Pablos and brought his wife with him, was charged with recruiting workers for the Mexico City branch and ensuring that the print shop met its production quotas and complied with all the regulations that had been imposed upon their trade by a wary colonial administration.[57] This included ensuring every book was licensed by the Bishop of Mexico before it was sold on the market and strict orders that all worn out machinery and materials be destroyed, lest they end up in the hands of those who could put them to ill use.[58] In order to run the Cromberger print shop in Mexico City, Juan Pablos relied heavily on transatlantic shipments from the home office in Seville to supply him with a steady flow of ink, paper, and replacement parts for worn out type and other components.[59] The

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[56] Griffin, *The Crombergers of Seville: The History of a Merchant and Printing Dynasty*, 65.

[57] Griffin, 84; Nicolás Kanellos and Helvetia Martell, *Hispanic Periodicals in the United States, Origins to 1960: A Brief History and Comprehensive Bibliography* (Arte Público Press, 2000), 121.

[58] Castañeda, "The Beginning of Printing in America," 675; Griffin, *The Crombergers of Seville: The History of a Merchant and Printing Dynasty*, 87.

[59] Griffin, *The Crombergers of Seville: The History of a Merchant and Printing Dynasty*, 86.

printing press brought to Mexico City was a wooden machine that implemented Gutenberg's innovation of reusable metal typefaces that could be arranged and re-arranged in order to efficiently mark the surface of paper with words and sentences. Printers like Juan Pablos and his print shop staff would attach these metal typefaces in sequence to a rectangular frame that held them in place as they were inked, after which a single page of clean paper was set over the frame. They then used the lever to "press" the paper against the inked type in order to imprint a single marked surface on the paper, a process that was physically demanding and required the presence of at least two printing press operators to ensure smooth and efficient work. Besides himself, Juan Pablos counted on the aid of a Black slave sent to him by the Crombergers and a hired hand who worked as a puller, the role in charge of pulling inked paper off the type after it had been pressed and readying the next sheet for impression.[60] Between working the press, preparing the ink, assembling the type, and maintaining the equipment in working order, operating a printing press in the 1500s was a time consuming endeavor that required a combination of skilled and hard manual labor.

In addition to a mandate to publish religious and administrative materials at no cost to the Catholic church and Spanish state, Cromberger of Seville also engaged in the printing of literature for personal consumption. The firm catered to the burgeoning demand for reading material in Mexico City, the administrative heart and one of the most populated cities in Spain's North American territories. Cromberger of Seville opened its Mexican branch during an era of rapid bureaucratic expansion in the Americas as Spain consolidated its control of the continent with the establishment of the Viceroyalty of New Spain (1535) and the Viceroyalty of Peru (1542). During this time, Mexico City and Lima in Peru, emerged as thriving urban centers that were very

[60] Griffin, 88.

attractive destinations for affluent merchants, skilled workers, and educated functionaries ready to build or expand their wealth in the Spanish colonies. It was the city's educated functionaries, the erudite advisors, bureaucrats, and intermediaries of Peninsular origin that Ángel Rama identifies as *letrados* in his book, *The Lettered City*.[61] These urbanites demonstrated an insatiable appetite for literature and the exchange of knowledge that was fueled by their desire to replicate in the Americas the cosmopolitan worlds they had left behind in Spain.[62] Seeking to take advantage of this demand, Cromberger of Seville turned the attention of their more impressive printing presses in Seville to the production of books and manuscripts for export to the Americas. In Mexico City, Juan Pablos and his staff were kept busy printing local translations of important biographies, philosophical texts, history books, travel literature, romance sagas, and other literature, in addition to the religious and instructional texts they were under contract to print.[63] Since the Cromberger contract stipulated that the Mexico City branch could not charge for services rendered to the church and state, Juan Pablos relied on sales to individuals in order to generate profit. This was a challenge in a city that according to Clive Griffin, offered little in the form of patronage from individuals and absolutely nothing from its nonexistent academic institutions.[64] Despite this, Juan Pablos managed to maintain the print shop's doors open and even expanded its workforce in 1550, a sign of both growing demand and perhaps even growing profits.

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[61] Ángel Rama, *The Lettered City*, trans. John Charles Chasteen (Duke University Press, 1996), 18.

[62] Stuart M McManus, "The Art of Being a Colonial Letrado: Late Humanism, Learned Sociability and Urban Life in Eighteenth-Century Mexico City," *Estudios de Historia Novohispana* 56 (2017): 44.

[63] Griffin, *The Crombergers of Seville: The History of a Merchant and Printing Dynasty*, 145–46. A little over 557 different editions are known to have been produced by the Mexico City branch of Cromberger of Seville between 1535 and 1559.

[64] Griffin, 145.

In its nearly two decades long monopoly, Cromberger of Seville helped to firmly establish a culture of print in the Americas through the importation of literature and the production of domestically printed works. In Mexico, Juan Pablos and the firm's imports created the foundations for a self-reproducing intellectual culture, though one dominated by Iberian perspectives and European frames of reference. The firm's partnership with Bishop Juan de Zumárraga greased the oversight process and established the Catholic Church as the primary client and patron of printing in Mexico. This partnership yielded various achievements, such as the founding of the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico in 1551, which was the first major academic institution in the Americas. Not only did Cromberger of Seville supply the university with its textbooks, but Juan Pablos's print shop also became the institution's publisher.[65] From the university's scholars came a series of firsts. With the help of Juan Pablos, the students and scholars published books on scientific analysis, literary essays, philosophy textbooks, and religious treatises that were conceptualized, written, and printed in the Americas. By the time its monopoly came to an end, Cromberger of Seville's investment of a single printing press sent to Mexico City in 1539 had helped to establish Mexico City as North America's printing capital, the first place on the continent where printed works were both consumed and produced.

The tight control over information that defined the Spanish Empire's colonial presence in the Americas extended to printed works and printing technology, which was heavily regulated. In the 1500s, the Protestant Reformation's connections and use of printing technology to spread its message across Europe elicited a reactionary response from Spanish state and church officials, who recognized the printed word as a possible force of corruption if wielded by the wrong hands.[66]

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[65] Castañeda, "The Beginning of Printing in America," 681.

[66] Martin Austin Nesvig, "'Heretical Plagues' and Censorship Cordons: Colonial Mexico and the Transatlantic Book Trade," *Church History* 75, no. 1 (2006): 3.

In Mexico, printing restrictions were brought about by laws that regulated printing licenses and through strict controls on the importation of printing presses and the supplies needed to print. This embargo made paper and ink highly difficult to procure in the Americas. The royal monopoly on paper production and importation meant that not even high-ranking Spanish administrators could invest in establishing local paper mills, thus forcing the profession to continue to rely on imports for this essential resource.[67] The licensing system tightly regulating who could print created a situation where acquiring permission to print was highly dependent on whether or not a printer could acquire a contract from the colonial administration. This licensing system made state contracts even more highly sought after than they already were, and they quickly became the primary source of income for printers.[68] A contract from the church or state guaranteed a license to print and often meant the potential for substantial revenue as administrative and ecclesiastical services often ordered multiple copies of text to be printed.

Another institution that wielded power over the printing industry in the Iberian world was the Spanish Catholic Church. The enthusiasm for commercial printing on display by some officials was matched only by the deep mistrust the institution held for the profession that had wrested the privilege to print from the hands of their scribes. The Protestant Reformation had done much to further deepen this mistrust and encourage officials to take a more active role in monitoring what was been printed within the Spanish Empire. Concerns over the printing and circulation of heretical texts had encouraged the stipulation in the Cromberger contract that placed the Bishop of Mexico in a position of direct oversight over the printer. In 1569, the Catholic Church established the Mexican Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Mexico City. Among its

[67] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 324; Corinna Zeltsman, *Ink Under the Fingernails: Printing Politics in Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2021), 23–24.
[68] Zeltsman, *Ink Under the Fingernails*, 25.

many duties, this local branch of the Spanish Inquisition was deeply involved in the censorship of printed material, judging intellectual contagion from heretical texts to be the most imminent threat to its flock in the Americas.[69] During its first years, the Inquisition's priorities included attempting to reign in the illegal book trade by prioritizing the persecution of book smugglers. At the same time, the need for the printing of bibles, catechisms, and instructional materials, made church officials among the greatest patrons of printing in the Americas. The Jesuits, and later the Franciscan orders, established schools and universities in the Americas, frequenting print shops to commission the printing of their writings and academic works.[70] For much of the colonial period, these print jobs helped keep print shops open by providing them with another source of steady income.

The regulations placed on the printing industry in the Americas made it wholly dependent on the patronage of the Catholic Church and the Spanish state for its survival. While Cromberger of Seville had been courted by Zumárraga to establish operations in Mexico, future printers would have to court officials of the church and state to secure access to printing privileges. Since low literacy rates among colonists prevented printers from supporting themselves off sales alone, the industry would be dominated by those who could secure this precious patronage. This gave rise to what Corinna Zeltsman refers to as the political economy of printing, which linked printers' fortunes to how well they could court the patronage of royal officials and religious leaders.[71] The need for paying contracts and political connections to achieve financial success, meant that the printing industry was heavily incentivized to serve the institutions of the Spanish Empire. Their

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[69] Nesvig, "Heretical Plagues and Censorship Cordons," 3. Some of the Mexican Inquisition's first activities were to attempt to reign in the illegal book trade by prioritizing the prosecution of book smugglers.

[70] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 44–45; José Quiñones Melgoza, "The Latin Classics at the Beginnings of Printing Press in Mexico (1577-1605)," *Nova Tellus* 38, no. 1 (2020): 682.

[71] Zeltsman, *Ink Under the Fingernails*, 23.

dependence on patronage and access to privileges became a way to keep printers under the control of the church and state by curbing any inclination printers might have to publish materials that could upset the men of power on whom they depended on for survival.

The end of the Cromberger monopoly in 1559 opened the way for the spread of printing in colonial Mexico. Former Cromberger employees who had been shipped from the Iberian Peninsula by the home office sought to capitalize on their valuable skills by establishing their own print shops or going to work in the print shops of Cromberger's competitors, who had already acquired printing licenses. Their diffusion across the colony helped to establish new print shops in Mexico City, Puebla, Oaxaca, and other urban centers.[72] A merchant by the name of Pedro Ocharte was among those who used the end of the Cromberger monopoly as an opportunity to open his own print shop. Born in France as Damián de Jardín, Ocharte adopted a Spanish name in Seville before making the journey to Mexico in 1549 and establishing himself as a merchant there. His business dealings in Mexico City brought him into contact with Juan Pablos and the two must have hit it off because Ocharte eventually married his daughter.[73] Inheriting the printing press and business connections of his father-in-law, Ocharte began publishing for the Catholic Church in 1563. He became responsible for the printing of various prayer books and sermons, but also found success in securing contracts from the colonial administration for the printing of legal codes and other important print projects.[74] Though suspicions that he might be a secret Lutheran brought him trouble from the Mexican Inquisition in the 1570s, Ocharte continued running a successful printing

[72] Castañeda, "The Beginning of Printing in America," 678.

[73] Mónica Solórzano Zavala Zavala, "Recorrido Cronológico Incunable de España y México a Través de La Vida y Obra de Los Comberger, Juan Palbos y Pedro Ocharte 1453-1600," *TEMPUS* September-October, no. 8 (2018): 20–21.

[74] Lawrence S. Thompson, *Printing in Colonial Spanish America* (London: Arcon Books, 1962), 29–32; Zavala, "Recorrido Cronológico Incunable de España y México a Través de La Vida y Obra de Los Comberger, Juan Palbos y Pedro Ocharte 1453-1600," 20–21.

business until his death and managed to pass it down to his sons in the 1580s. His son, Melchor Ocharte, inherited his father's printing press in the 1590s and continued to find work with the colony's religious orders well into the 1600s.

The generation of printers that Pedro Ocharte belonged to faced numerous obstacles in their efforts to establish their trade as a viable profession. Among the biggest challenges was the cost and difficulty of simply entering the printing business. Acquiring a printing press was costly even for those with the financial means and connections to have one sent across the Atlantic. Then there was the need to hire the necessary labor to operate the print shop. In the case of Ocharte, marriage into the family of Juan Pablos turned out to be strategic in helping him minimize the cost of entry into the industry. Not only did he inherit a working printing press, but he also appears to have had the patronage and privileges of his predecessor passed down to him. Ocharte was among the few printers of his generation that managed to secure contracts and establish their family name as a permanent force within the industry. As Ocharte's story demonstrates, the monopolies and patronage accumulated by printers could become hereditary. While this helped printers who acquired a reliable source of income, they could depend on to pass it on to their children and build printing empires, it also stifled the industry by generating a hyper-competitive environment where it was almost impossible for less fortunate printers to compete.

Among the greatest of the obstacles faced by printers was the widespread illiteracy in Mexico at the time, which limited the potential audience for all works and made it difficult to achieve financial returns on their publications.[75] In rural Mexico, printing was a completely unviable venture for most of the colonial period, further hampering the growth of the industry. Lack of sizeable reading public made the industry even more dependent on the large contracts that

[75] Victor M. Uribe-Uran, "The Birth of a Public Sphere in Latin American during the Age of Revolution," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, no. 2 (April 2000): 445.

could be acquired from the desks of the religious orders and colonial administrators.[76] In Mexico, the concentration of the largest literate public in Mexico City and the city's role as the center of the colonial administration and religious orders, encouraged the colony's printing entrepreneurs to establish the majority of their operations there. The spatial concentration of Mexico's printers in the colony's administrative capital and their dependence on government contracts for survival further cemented the close relationship between the profession and the men who controlled the coffers of the church and state. This relationship ensured that for more than a century after 1559, the majority of the publications produced by Mexico's printers were overwhelmingly focused on the needs of the colony's religious and administrative orders.

While the majority of printed material catered to the demands of administrators and church officials, there was still existed room for the requests of private individuals and the personal experiments of printers themselves. Personalized religious material, notes, and private contracts were among the variety of items published by Mexico's printers during the colonial era, but the most popular material printed for personal consumption were small individual leaflets known as *hojas volantes*. These were items similar to broadsheets that could be quickly printed in bulk and were used to communicate news, stories, jokes, and other forms of entertainment. Hojas volantes had been a popular print medium in Spain long before making their way to the Americans in 1541, where the first of these in the Americas were printed by the Cromberger printing press in Mexico City.[77] In the years following the end of the Cromberger monopoly, the cost of printing and the difficulty in competing against the established printing monopolies forced many new printers to turn to simple projects like these in order to survive. Hojas volantes became popular because unlike

[76] José Quiñones Melgoza, "The Latin Classics at the Beginnings of Printing Press in Mexico (1577-1605)," 194–96.

[77] Kanellos and Martell, *Recovering the U.S Hispanic Literary Heritage*, 121. Also referred to as "hojas sueltas de carácter informativo" in Spain, where the tradition had emerged as a popular medium.

books and other larger projects, they could be quickly and cheaply produced.[78] These leaflets also held the advantage that they could be produced in bulk and distributed anonymously, with little evidence available to help authorities discover from which press they had originated in the event that one was found offensive by Spanish inquisitors or state censors. This made them ideal for the spread of rumors and popular gossip, as well as jokes and ridicule made at the expense of bureaucrats, church officials, and other notable individuals.[79]

Most hojas volantes consisted of a single page displaying either large visuals printed in bold black ink against empty backgrounds or accompanied by lines of text. The majority were sensationalist or satirical in nature, using attention-grabbing words and images. A large portion of hojas volantes were devoted to religious material, often featuring printed *novenas*, prayers, sermons, short bible stories, images, etc. The over 500 different samples of colonial-era print artifacts in the care of Mexico's Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) serve as proof that beyond just sensationalist news and religious material, this medium covered a wide variety of popular topics ranging from indigenous medicinal practices to fables and stories that must have been popular in Spanish Mexico. The large number of surviving samples hints at the wide popularity of this medium, whose use of images makes it likely that they were enjoyed by even those who could not read or write. The popularity of these leaflets has been credited with the emergence of small clandestine communities of fans of the medium in urban spaces like Mexico City as early as the sixteenth century, ultimately bringing together people to discuss content and

[78] Iñigo Fernández Fernández, "Un Recorrido por la Historia de la Prensa en México: De sus orígenes al año 1857.," *Documentacion de las Ciencias de la Informacion (España)* 33 (2010): 70–71.

[79] This genre of print often featured *pasquínes,* which were satirical commentary on politics and popular figures.

ideas.[80] The Spanish tradition of the *tertulia*, private home gatherings where close individuals came together to discuss topics on art, music, and material they had read, provided a traditional space where hojas volantes and other printed material could be discussed.[81] The mass reading of copies of printed material that all covered the same topics and discussed the same things, even if these were small audiences, encouraged people to form connections with one another over the exchange of information related to what they were consuming. It was printed products like these, whose distribution was limited by geography, that promoted the feelings of temporal simultaneity that helped inspire readers to begin to view themselves as being a part of a larger imagined community.[82]

A century after the end of the Cromberger monopoly over print, the economic realities of operating a printing venture in colonial Mexico had cemented a relationship of dependency on funding from the church and state. The publication of simple works like hojas volantes helped printers in Mexico pioneer avenues for profit outside of this, and yet, the high costs of their trade meant that these simple works could never amount to a viable long-term alternative for those seeking to make a living as printers. A matter not helped by the fact that despite their popularity among the population, those who actually paid for hojas volantes made up a very small number of those who enjoyed their content.[83] Access to patronage and privilege continued to be the main source of financial stability for printers in Mexico. Printers like Pedro Ocharte, who secured patronage and privileges, entrenched themselves within the profession and became its most

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[80] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 140; John Lynch, *Bourbon Spain, 1700-1808* (Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1989), 116–23; Jaime E. Rodríguez O., *The Independence of Spanish America* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 40.

[81] Rodríguez O., *The Independence of Spanish America*, 39–40.

[82] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 63.

[83] Fernández Fernández, "Un Recorrido por la Historia de la Prensa en México," 70–71. The nature of this type of printed works meant profits from them were only marginal. Once purchased, these materials could be shared indefinitely between people, cutting into the need to buy more copies.

prominent names. While the diversity on display on hojas volantes proves there was interest in more than just approved religious material in sixteenth and seventeenth century colonial Mexico, the economic reality of printing meant there was little room for printers to pursue in detail projects not financed by the colonial establishment.

The close financial relationship between the church and Mexico's printing presses allowed a generation of Mexican creoles to establish themselves as notable writers, intellectuals, and popular figures within colonial society. Between 1688 and 1780, writers and thinkers studying under or belonging to the Jesuit and Franciscan orders gained unprecedented access to the printers serving these orders. They used this opportunity to publish locally authored writings on philosophy, poetry, history, and science. It is no coincidence that this window of time represents the era during which Sor Juana Inéz de la Cruz and other local creole writers rose to fame in Spanish Mexico.[84] Though much of their work was dressed in the language of religion and loyalty, creole writers like Sor Juana pushed the boundaries of what could be printed in the colony through their explorations of non-religious themes and ideas. Sor Juana herself published various works between 1689 and 1692 in which she made observations and criticisms on the topics of love, women's education, and bodily autonomy.[85] Her contemporary, the creole Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, gained fame for publishing histories of Mexico and texts on the applications of scientific knowledge, as well as becoming famous for his poetry and philosophical writings.[86] Carlos de Sigüenza was a polymath fond of the literary arts. As the creole son of a very well-connected

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[84] George Antony Thomas, *The Politics and Poetics of Sor Juana Inés de La Cruz* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2012), 67–68.

[85] Thomas, 89; Stephanie Kirk, *Sor Juana Inéz de La Cruz and the Gender Politics of Knowledge in Colonial Mexico* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 121; Guillermo Schmidhuber de la Mora, *Sor Juana: Teatro y Teología* (Mexico City: Bonilla Artigas Editores, 2015), 104.

[86] Kirk, *Sor Juana Inéz de La Cruz and the Gender Politics of Knowledge in Colonial Mexico*, 136; Anna More, *Baroque Sovereignty: Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora and the Creole Archive of Colonial Mexico* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 16.

family, he attended college at one of the Jesuit universities in Mexico City and became a frequent patron of the printing press for the rest of his life. In 1693, De Sigüenza launched his most ambitious project when he arranged the publication of the *Mercurio Volante*, a series of publications aimed at presenting information on a wide variety of contemporary topics in history and science. While the name *Mercurio Volante* would become a popular name used by future publications specializing in math, science, and medical information, especially in the late 1700s, the only surviving volume of De Sigüenza's publication still in existence dates back to 1693. This *Mercurio Volante* is most famously known for offering a history of Spain's 1692 reconquest of New Mexico in 1692 written by De Sigüenza himself and based on the letters, reports, and diaries of those involved in the campaign.[87]

The printed works of Sor Juana and De Sigüenza were part of a growing scene of local cultural production that followed in the century after the end of the Cromberger monopoly. The establishment of a university in Mexico City gave rise to locally educated elite, who not only consumed printed works but desired to participate in the act of cultural production.[88] The works of these Spanish creoles paved the way for new forms of sociability focused on the consumption of content that was not only locally printed but also locally authored. The private discussions and public gatherings that works like Sor Juana's *Inundación Castalida* (1689) must have inspired, represent the inception of a local creole public sphere that was beginning to come into being in colonial Mexico and was nurtured in part by printed works that helped to connect individual readers of these writers and thinkers to each other during the late 1600s. Censorship and other forms of social control hampered the emergence of the widespread public participation Jürgen

[87] Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, *The Mercurio Volante or Flying Mercury*, Translated volume of original 1692 work. (Los Angeles: Quivira Society, 1932).

[88] More, *Baroque Sovereignty: Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora and the Creole Archive of Colonial Mexico*, 17.

Habermas associates with the emergence of a bourgeois public sphere in eighteenth century Europe.[89] However, the rise to local popularity of creole authors like Sor Juana and Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora during this century suggests that some form of a public scene did begin to take shape at least among Mexico City's literate urbanites. The rise in local printers following the end of the Cromberger monopoly helped increase the presence of printed materials in Spanish America, which served to enhance traditional forms of sociability, such as public gatherings in marketplaces, churches, city councils, and academic institutions, especially as printed materials became more widely available in administrative centers like Mexico City during this century.

Seventeen-century Mexico City was the administrative and economic heart of Spain's operations in North America and one of the most important imperial hubs in the colonial network linking together the Spanish Empire, which at the time extended from the Iberian Peninsula to the islands of the Philippines. The city was home to a range of administrative and commercial operations responsible for running the colony and its economy, which was focused on the extraction of resources like silver from northern Mexico.[90] The colonial capital was home to an administrative society, whose higher echelons were composed of European immigrants, religious officials, merchants, and administrators who made up the higher social rungs of city life and a growing number of indigenous migrants coming to the city from the countryside in search of work. Between 1570 and 1646, Mexico City's white population rapidly increased (18,000-48,000) and the number of European immigrants in Spanish Mexico nearly doubled.[91] Though the economic elite among this growing population were fewer in number and less wealthy than their counterparts

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[89] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, 2015 Reprint (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 1989); Uribe-Uran, "The Birth of a Public Sphere in Latin American during the Age of Revolution," 432.

[90] Richard Boyer, "Mexico in the Seventeenth Century: Transition of a Colonial Society," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 57, no. 3 (August 1977): 455–56.

[91] Boyer, 469.

in Seville and Madrid, they represented a powerful presence in the colony whose wealth stimulated the circulation of commodities and information. Their growing presence, the existence of an established printing industry, and the social reforms of the 1700s laid the foundation for the creation of an open conceptual space where private citizens could come together to discuss matters of common interest, a space referred to by Habermas as the public sphere.[92] Most scholars of colonial Mexico typically agree that this public sphere first began to emerge in Mexico City as early as the 1750s, in the wake of the Bourbon Reforms, a revision of earlier scholarship that placed that process as occurring in the 1810s.[93] The Bourbon Reforms enacted by Spain in the 1700s, which introduced a series of political and administrative changes, are often seen as responsible for starting the separation of the private and public spheres that opened the door to new forms of sociability in the Spanish Empire.[94] The Bourbon Reforms, aimed at revitalizing the Spanish economy were implemented in New Spain during the latter half of the 1700s and helped roll back the powers of the Mexican Inquisition, creating the legal framework for new avenues of participation in civil society. Among the most important changes introduced to Spanish law by the Bourbon Reforms were changes that allowed for the public formation of social clubs not directly connected to the church or state, groups that were free to meet in public and recruit members without drawing the scrutiny of Spanish officials.[95]

The Bourbon Reforms aimed to strengthen the power of the Spanish Crown and revitalize the Spanish economy by inspiring scientific and economic activity among the Crown's subjects.

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[92] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society*.

[93] Pablo Piccato, "Public Sphere in Latin America: A Map of the Historiography," *Social History* 35, no. 2 (May 2010): 168; Uribe-Uran, "The Birth of a Public Sphere in Latin American during the Age of Revolution," 437.

[94] Piccato, "Public Sphere in Latin America: A Map of the Historiography," 167–68.

[95] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 140–41.

This empowerment of the Crown was executed at the expense of the Catholic Church, which saw a dramatic curtailing of its powers. The reforms weakened and limited the jurisdiction of the Office of the Inquisition on both sides of the Atlantic and removed church officials from positions of power within the empire's education system.[96] These policies encouraged the emergence of a public and popular interest in secular literary and scientific exchange. In Mexico City, social interactions that had once being confined to private settings became public in taverns, parks, and other public social spaces.[97] The implementation of the reforms saw the emergence of literary and scientific societies in Mexico City. These social clubs turned to print as a way to more easily record and exchange ideas, creating a new market for Mexico's printers to pursue.

While the church and state continued to be the primary financial backers of printing endeavors, the latter half of the eighteenth century saw some diversification in the types of work printers were engaging in. For the most part, the first major non-religious publications printed in the wake of the Bourbon Reforms had been the pet projects of creole priests. However, the eighteenth-century reforms inspired an excitement for the exchange of new knowledge among Mexico City's urban elite that encouraged private individuals to follow in the footsteps of Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora and pursue the creation of printed material. These first-time printers and authors experimented with building permanent audiences through the production of the first serialized publications in Mexico. Among them were the many local scientific and philosophical journals that appeared in Mexico City during the late 1700s, including a new *Mercurio Volante* written and produced by José Ignacio Bartolache y Díaz de Posadas, a creole letrado who pioneered

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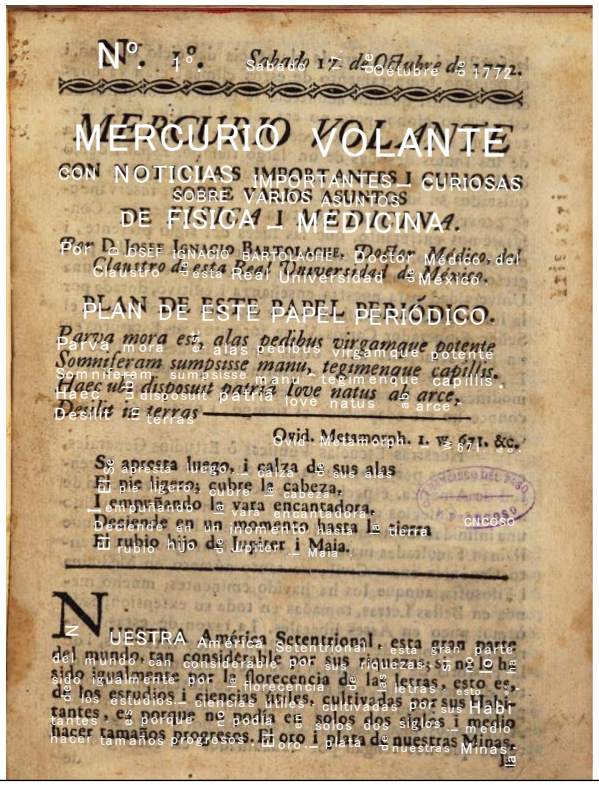
[96] Amado Manuel Cortés, *Del Manuscrito a La Imprenta, El Nacimiento de La Librería Moderna En La Nueva España: La Biblioteca Palafoxiana* (Mexico City: Ediciones y Gráficos Eón, 2012), 176; Lynch, *Bourbon Spain, 1700-1808*, 116–23; Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 220–21.

[97] McManus, "The Art of Being a Colonial Letrado," 41; Rodríguez O., *The Independence of Spanish America*, 43.

the medium of the weekly publication. Taking note of the popular interest in the topics of medicine and the sciences, Díaz began writing and publishing *Mercurio Volante* in 1772 with the hope that its success would help him pay off some of his debts.[98] The journal was among the first publications to attempt to maintain a weekly print run, which lasted until 1773 and resulted in at least sixteen issues.



N°. 1°. Sabado 17. de Octubre de 1772.

MERCURIO VOLANTE

CON NOTICIAS IMPORTANTES I CURIOSAS SOBRE VARIOS ASUNTOS DE FISICA I MEDICINA.

Por D. JOSEF IGNACIO BARTOLACHE, Doctor Médico, del Claustro de esta Real Universidad de México.

PLAN DE ESTE PAPEL PERIÓDICO.

Parva mora est, alas pedibus virgamque potenti
Somniferam sumpsisse manu, tegimenque capillis.
Haec ubi disposuit patria Jove natus ab arce,
Desilit in terras ———

Ovid. Metamorph. I. v. 671. &c.

Se apresta luego, i calza de sus alas
El pie ligero, cubre la cabeza,
I empuñando la vara encantadora,
Desciende en un momento hasta la tierra
El rubio hijo de Jupiter i Maia.

NUESTRA América Setentrional, esta gran parte del mundo, tan considerable por sus riquezas, se ha sido igualmente por la florecencia de las letras, esto es, de los estudios i ciencias útiles, cultivadas por sus Habitantes, ca porque no podia en solos dos siglos i medio hacer tamaños progresos. El oro i plata de nuestras Minas,

Mercurio Volante, October 17, 1772, pg. 6. Image from the collection held at Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

José Ignacio Bartolache's *Mercurio Volante* is a perfect example of how the Spanish reforms opened printing to private individuals unaffiliated with the church or state. Bartolache was among Mexico City's many enthusiasts of ideas and discoveries that pioneered new print culture

[98] Raquel Ofelia Barceló Quintal, "José Ignacio Bartolache y Díaz de Posadas | Real Academia de La Historia," accessed August 25, 2023, https://dbe.rah.es/biografias/17860/jose-ignacio-bartolache-y-diaz-de-posadas.

mediums like the pamphlet and the weekly publication in order to facilitate the circulation of information following the Spanish government's social reforms. While newspapers had started to become more common and frequent by the mid-1700s, the weekly and the pamphlet emerged as new print mediums in the 1770s, becoming just as commonplace as the newspaper in the urban spaces of Mexico City after 1790.[99] In 1772, Bartolache took his writings to the printshop of Felipe de Zúñiga y Ontiveros, a local printer, cartographer, and science enthusiast, whom he paid to publish copies of *Mercurio Volante* each week for at least a year. In its first issue, the publication promoted itself as a serious medical journal that endeavored to bring to Mexico the latest in scientific discoveries and medicine, as well as contemporary topics that may be of interest to the general public.[100] In what can be interpreted as a safeguard against anyone's suspicions of Bartolache's intentions during a period in which censors were still cracking down on the book trade, the publication's prospectus spends an entire page to make it clear that it has no intentions of engaging in political discourse or discussing political ideas.[101] The author instead focuses on the fact that while the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico has produced many good theologians, lawyers, and masters of the law, the academy has graduated few men sufficiently knowledgeable in the "*Bellas Letras*" (men educated in philosophy and the liberal arts in general) or the history of the sciences and its revolutions.[102] As laid out in its first issue, *Mercurio Volante* would largely feature content related to describing the use and value of various scientific equipment, such as thermometers and barometers, the promotion of the liberal arts, especially philosophy, and topics on geography.

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[99] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 140.
[100] *Mercurio Volante*, October 17, 1772, pg. 6.
[101] *Mercurio Volante*, October 17, 1772, pg. 7.
[102] *Mercurio Volante*, October 17, 1772, pg. 4.

Likely born in 1742, José Ignacio Bartolache was a well-connected second-generation creole son of a well-off family from Guanajuato who benefitted from his connections to other creoles in Mexico City. Under the tutelage of Joaquín Velásquez de Léon, himself a university professor, Bartolache studied medicine at the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico and then obtained a position there as a lecturer of medicine following his graduation in 1772. He began printing *Mercurio Volante* shortly after his graduation as a way to supplement his university income and help pay off the debts he had accumulated while in school.[103] Like other criollo publications of the era, *Mercurio Volante* features glimpses into the social imaginings of its author, which would have naturally influenced similar thought processes in its readers. Opening his first issue with "*Nuestra América Setentrional*" (Our North America), not only reveals Bartolache's imaginings of community but also establishes the connections of this community to North America, as opposed to anywhere else.[104] Printed in Mexico City with the hope that it would be consumed by an audience that resided in that urban space, the publication serves as an example of how in Spanish America, financial and geographical limitations on the individual author and printer restricted the experience of the imagined community based on the geographical reach of the author and printer.[105] While the social reforms introduced by the Spanish government in the 1700s had done much to encourage individual participation in the printing industry, the lack of government assistance in the form of subsidies or any other kind of financial assistance for those who were not a part of the printing monopolies, placed the burden of financing on the individual. For men like Batolache whose financial assets were limited, this meant accruing initial debts in

[103] Quintal, "José Ignacio Bartolache y Díaz de Posadas | Real Academia de La Historia."
[104] *Mercurio Volante,* October 17, 1772, pg. 1.
[105] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 62.

the hope of at least breaking even through the sale of publications, a system that often resulted in more failures than successes.

The possibility for permanent audiences and the general excitement among the public for the discussion of ideas during the eighteenth century saw the introduction of new types of printed mediums. Social clubs and private individuals all engaged in the hiring of printers for the production of specialized publications, like journals, aimed at fostering the growth of communities of learning and the spread of general knowledge. This century also saw the appearance of the first Iberian *gacetas*, what some scholars consider the first Hispanic newspapers.[106] Back in Spain, Spanish administrators had worked for two generations to convince the Kings of Spain on the benefits of having the Crown publish a formal publication focused on providing news on the affairs of the state to its loyal subjects.[107] In 1661, their efforts yielded the *Gaceta de Madrid*, the first official publication of the Spanish State. The short news pamphlet was printed in Madrid and delivered tailored information on the health and activities of the royal family, information on new laws, as well as news of events from across the Spanish Empire. Due to its possession of information of interest to merchants, landed elites, and members of the royal court, the *Gaceta de Madrid* was wildly successful and quickly grew to become a staple of Spanish letrado life, becoming the earliest and most widely consumed Spanish news source of its kind.[108] Its success inspired imitation, with many *ayuntamientos* (local governments) on both sides of the Atlantic seeking to replicate the publication, but with a more local focus.

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[106] Uribe-Uran, "The Birth of a Public Sphere in Latin American during the Age of Revolution," 440.

[107] María Victoria Fernández Mera, "El Recorrido Histórico de la Gaceta de Madrid," *Documenta & Instrumenta - Documenta et Instrumenta* 18 (2020): 107.

[108] Fernández Mera, 123–24. Paper shortages continued to plague printers in Spanish America until the first paper mill was built in Veracruz, Mexico in 1775. Hence why some label these as the first newspapers.

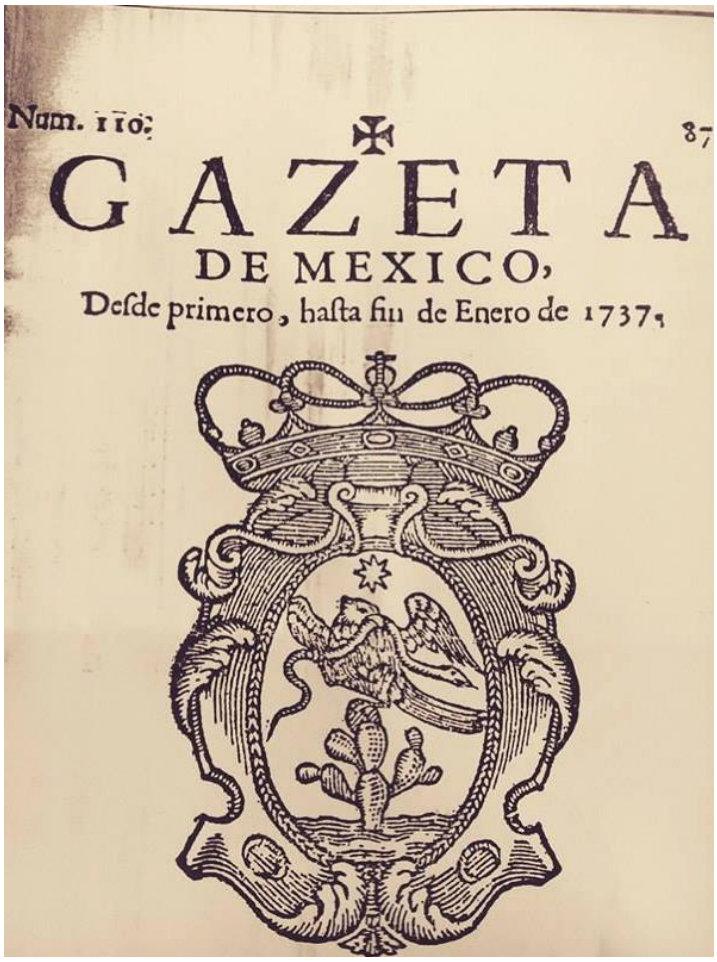
The concept of the gaceta or newspaper was quickly brought across the Atlantic to Mexico, where attempts at emulating the *Gaceta de Madrid* came together in fits and starts, with most imitations failing to survive past their first year due to the financial and material constraints that hampered efforts to publish serialized works.[109] It would not be until 1722, through the efforts of Father Juan Ignacio María de Castorena Ursúa y Goyeneche, that a publication of some permanence would emerge in Mexico. Father Castorena introduced Mexico City to the *Gazeta de México*. This was a multi-page publication that served a similar role as the *Gaceta de Madrid*, albeit with the addition of information pertinent to local readers who lived in Mexico City. Castorena's publication became the first publication for mass consumption to feature exclusive insider information collected by the creole priest through interviews with the colonial administration's civil officials and others whom his political connections gave him access to.[110] In 1729, Castorena was appointed Bishop of Yucatán and left his newspaper in the hands of another priest, Father Juan Francisco Sahagún de Arévalo. Launching a new iteration of the *Gazeta de México* in 1728, Sahagún was in charge of organizing the publication until 1742. Under him, the *Gazeta de México* expanded the amount of content it offered to almost twelve pages and was redesigned to increase its local appeal by focusing even more heavily on local news and sporting imagery meant to pay homage to Mexico and the colonial administration of New Spain.[111] The adoption of imagery associated with the ancient Nahua culture indigenous to Mexico communicates a sense of local pride, and though the image featured in *Gazeta de México* was likely placed there to help personalize the newspaper and ultimately sell more copies, it hints at a

[109] The *Gazeta General* published in 1666 represents the first attempt at establishing a journal of this kind in Mexico, but the publication ultimately failed to make it to a second year of print.

[110] Fernández Fernández, "Un Recorrido por la Historia de la Prensa en México," 39; David F Marley, ed., *Gazeta de México, (Enero a Agosto de 1784)* (Mexico City: Rolston-Bain, 1983).

[111] Part of this redesign included the inclusion of Mexico City's coat of arms, imagery connected to Mexico's indigenous past, and other visual mediums that tied the publication to colonial Mexico.

larger cultural sense of *becoming* that prioritized the local over the mainstream.[112] For this reason and the fact that the publication was a medium for the communication of news, many point to the *Gaceta de México* as being Mexico's first recognizable newspaper.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GAZETA

DE MEXICO,

Desde primero, hasta fin de Enero de 1737.

Gazeta de México, August 1, 1737, front page. Image taken from Hemeroteca Nacional Digital de México. https://hndm.iib.unam.mx/consulta/publicacion/visualizar/558a340c7d1ed64f169fdaa4?anio=1737&mes=08&dia=01&tipo=pagina&palabras=gaceta-de-méxico

As the eighteenth century came to an end, three major events in the Atlantic world brought dramatic change to the lives of Spanish citizens on both sides of the Atlantic. The first of these was

[112] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 61–63. This transition to a focus on the local helped to isolate audiences in Spain from those in Mexico, giving birth to the distinct creole public spheres Anderson discusses in his work.

the independence of the United States of America in 1783 and the ratification of its current constitution in 1788. The Spanish world had been involved in the US struggle for independence since 1777 as part of an attempt by the Spanish Crown to try and sabotage the success of the British Empire.[113] As Spanish interactions with North Americans increased, they resulted in a deluge of ideas and Protestant traditions that entered the Spanish mainstream through the expansion of the book trade. Across the Spanish Empire, translations of English and French literature that had previously been extremely hard to come by became more readily available through legal and extralegal ways.[114] Interest in these works became a self-intensifying spiral of demand and consumption, especially when Spaniards in the US realized that the US Constitution's freedom of speech guarantee extended to them as well. Spanish visitors living in the US as part of diplomatic, exile, and immigrant enclaves began publishing not only translations of Protestant works, but also original material.[115] It is from these communities that the first wave of books critical of the Spanish Crown and their management of the Spanish Empire emerged. Two of the most famous of these, *El Desengaño del Hombre* (1794) and *Reflexiones Sobre el Comercio de España con sus Colonias en America* (1799), were critiques of Spanish mercantilist policies, the Bourbon Reforms, and the Spanish Crown. These critiques were inspired by a transatlantic exchange of ideas that brought to the Iberian world the spirit of the economic revolution happening in the US following independence and the ideas that led to the French Revolution in 1789.

The second event and the one that directly affected printers in Mexico, was France's Jacobin revolution and specially the beheading of France's King Louis XIV. These events

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[113] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 117–22.

[114] Coronado, 120–25.

[115] Philadelphia, Pennsylvania became the publishing capital of the Americans following US Independence. It also served as the first Spanish publishing center outside of the Spanish Empire until New Orleans was acquired by the US in 1803.

unleashed a bureaucratic panic across the Spanish Empire (the French King was related by blood to the Spain's Bourbon monarchs). Imperial bureaucrats quickly rolled back civil liberties and reinstated inquisitorial censorship laws not heavily enforced since before the Bourbon Reforms. A failed Jacobin-inspired plot in 1796 to overthrow the Spanish Crown in Madrid helped to further justify regulation of the book trade and the stifling of the printed word. It was during this tumultuous time that the *Gazeta de México* relaunched under new ownership. The paper had shut down under De Arévalo due to a paper shortage crisis that plagued its publication starting in 1739.[116] In 1783, the publication was once again relaunched, this time under the ownership of printer Manuel Antonio Valdés Murguía y Saldaña. Rebranding it as the *Gazeta de México*, Antonio Valdés started printing the newspaper as a quarterly publication whose popularity turned it into a monthly publication starting in 1792, and then a weekly one by 1793. Part of the reason for the publication's success during a time of increased scrutiny and censorship likely came from the working relationships Antonio Valdés built with Spanish officials across Mexico, as well as a public interest in the dramatic changes happening across the Spanish Empire at the time. Following in the footsteps of De Arévalo, Valdés generated content for his newspaper through correspondence with a literate public that included business owners, town leaders, and public officials.[117] This helped Valdés not only cultivate and cultivate a growing audience for his newspaper, but also likely played a role in helping him to avoid trouble with the authorities.

Unfortunately for Valdés, the reach and popularity of the *Gazeta de México* did not lift the project out of the shadows of financial insecurity. Widespread illiteracy continued to plague

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[116] Virginia Guedea, *Las Gacetas de México y La Medicina* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico, 1991).

[117] Valdés encouraged readers to send in any stories they had on current events and strange happenings. Using these letter writers as correspondents for the news stories he published in his publication.

Mexico throughout its colonial era and beyond, limiting the audience available for even the most popular publications. To make matters worse, the livelihood of printers in the Spanish colonies was further complicated by the economic fallout brought about by Spain's disastrous wars in Europe. Bad peace treaties in 1795 and 1796 pulled the empire even deeper into military conflicts between the French Republic and Britain, further damaging the already brittle Spanish economy.[118] Financial hardship seems to have been the culprit behind the *Gazeta de México* returning to its monthly format in 1797. Unlike the *Gazeta de México*'s previous owners, Valdés was a private citizen who lacked access to the financial support available to members of the religious orders. As a plantation owner and private entrepreneur who had been in the printing business for over twenty years, Valdés knew only a printing contract would be able to provide him with the economic resources necessary to continue running his publication.[119] In 1803, he made a public appeal to the Viceroyalty of New Spain for funding. This appeal included a complete redesign of the *Gazeta de México*, one that saw the replacement of indigenous imagery with the viceregal seal and other emblems connecting the publication to the Spanish Empire. Valdés succeeded in receiving the official patronage of the Viceroy of New Spain, granting him funding, exclusive printing privileges, and the honor of becoming the semi-official publication of the state. This patronage awarded Valdés with the financial security necessary to transform his publication into the first printed bi-weekly in Mexico and the colony's first official newspaper.[120] The printer's close partnership with Spanish authorities gave Valdés access to shipping records, bureaucratic job postings, direct news from Spain and other information that helped make the *Gazeta de México* one of the most widely read publications in Spanish Mexico.

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[118] Rodríguez O., *The Independence of Spanish America*, 50–51.

[119] Not that Valdés was suffering financially, since the man was also a large plantation owner. It appears however, that he was determined to make the publication self-sufficient.

[120] Guedea, *Las Gacetas de México y La Medicina*.

The early-nineteenth century relationship between the *Gazeta de México* and Spanish officials is emblematic of the state of printing in Mexico during the colonial era. Running a printing business in Mexico depended on maintaining good relations with the religious and state officials who had oversight over the profession. Printers relied on state permissions not only to open their businesses and print material, but to import printing presses, paper, ink, and other vital supplies from Europe.[121] Even when the level of control was slightly loosened under the Bourbon Reforms, the price to operate continued to make printers in Mexico dependent on patronage and close relationships with those in power. When it came to the printing of serialized publications like newspapers and journals, the small number of people who could read, let alone afford subscriptions to these publications, served as the Achilles' heel to generating audiences large enough to properly finance these costly projects. This made Mexico's urban centers, where the majority of the literate public lived, highly competitive environments for printers who competed against one another for the loyalty of a limited audience and contracts from the church and state. Access to state and religious patronage offered clear advantages over the competition because of the privileges such relationships could dispense on printers. This political economy of printing included prioritizing ink and paper shipments, expediting the approval of material ready for print, and even subsidizing printing operations by granting access to monopolies on information and distribution zones.[122] This resulted in an industry with few success stories that were mostly centered in Mexico City and almost totally subservient to the colonial administration.

The final major event to directly impact printing in Mexico came in 1808, when French troops under the command of Napoléon Bonaparte and his brother deposed the Spanish Bourbons and claimed control of Spain. Spanish elites from across the empire responded to the crisis by

[121] Zeltsman, *Ink Under the Fingernails*, 32.
[122] Zeltsman, 23.

convening a council in Cádiz, one of the few cities in Spain not engaged in battle with the French occupation. In New Spain, the conflict with the French drew military attention away and created opportunity for long-existing tensions between Mexican-born creoles and Peninsula-born Spaniards to explode into armed conflict.[123] As peninsular and creole delegates met in Cádiz to reform the Spanish government in the absence of their king, the Spanish Empire found itself besieged on all fronts. In the Iberian Peninsula, French troops marched on the last of the Spanish military forces and closed in on Cádiz. Across the Atlantic, the military conflict in Spain and disruptions in administrative communications led to the isolation of Spanish officials in the Americas and dashed their hopes of receiving military aid from the homeland in the event of uprisings. In Mexico, these events created the opportunity for a small popular revolt that began in 1810 to grow into a widespread insurrection against the Spanish colonial government.

In September of 1810, Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla delivered his now famous *Grito* and he and his growing group of armed rebels began an armed march from the city of Guanajuato to Mexico City. Father Hidalgo's Revolt was highly popular, finding supporters throughout Mexico who not only joined him in his uprising but would continue the fight in the years after the priest's capture and execution. Facing the first major armed uprising in Mexico against colonial administrators, Spanish Viceroy Francisco Javier Venegas de Saavedra y Ramínez de Arenzana turned to print in order to calm nerves and denounce the priest's uprising. Within days of the uprising, Venegas began using the *Gaceta del Gobierno de México* to publish anti-insurrectionist material. This publication emerged in 1809 as the official publication of the Spanish colonial administration following the shuttering of Valdés's *Gazeta de México*.[124] Even as royalist forces

[123] Rodríguez O., *The Independence of Spanish America*, 159–61; Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 14.

[124] *Gazeta del Gobierno de México* stands out as the first gaceta to serve as the official publication of the state. It was aimed at influencing the direction of public opinion in Mexico City.

lost ground to Hidalgo's revolt, editorials in the newspaper assured the loyal inhabitants of Mexico City that the uprising would soon be put down and regularly reminded its readers that the leaders of the insurrection would receive "*la muerte que tan justamente merecen*."[125] This ominous messaging served as a reminder of the ultimate price of rebellion, with Venegas likely hoping this would be enough to discourage disloyalty following a string of royalist defeats which put Hidalgo's forces within hours of Mexico City.

As Hidalgo's forces advanced upon the capital, the rest of Mexico City's major newspapers followed the lead of the *Gaceta del Gobierno de México* and took to speaking ill of the uprising. For example, the popular *Diario de Mexico* referred to Father Hidalgo and his co-conspirators as scoundrels, looters, and murderers of good people.[126] While some of the antagonism towards the uprising displayed by Mexico's major publications can be attributed to editors conforming to the demands of the colonial administration, a lot of it was likely a genuine reaction to the threat that the revolt posed to the established colonial order these publications subsisted from.[127] Long-established traditions of loyalty and adherence to the political economy of patronage made it difficult for prominent printers in Mexico City to side with a movement that could potentially threaten the institutions that financed their industry. The printers behind dominant Mexican publications had all reached financial success off the back of monopolies and favors granted to them through political patronage. Their reliance on the Spanish government for financial success

[125] *Gazeta del Gobierno de México*, September 28, 1910, pg. 2.

[126] Esther Martínez Luna, *A, B, C Diario de México, 1805-1812: un acercamiento* (México: UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas, Centro de Estudios Literarios, 2009); Sandra Pérez Stocco, "La Influencia de la Prensa en el Proceso de Independencia de México," *Revista de Historia Americana y Argentina* 50, no. 1 (2015): 182–84.

[127] Not to mention that most of the editors and owners of these publications were well established creole elites with property and lands they wanted to protect.

rather than paying subscribers made it difficult for them to be critical of the state, let alone act in opposition to it.

While Hidalgo's Revolt received no support in Mexico's official publications, the popular nature of the revolt energized the printing of hojas volantes and small pamphlets in its favor. Then, during the winter of 1810, Hidalgo's allies began printing the first of many serialized rebel publications in Spanish Mexico, *El Despertador Americano*. While in print for less than a month, the publication was a multi-page document that the rebels managed to produce seven issues of and distribute close to 2,000 copies of each issue.[128] Inspired by Enlightenment thought and Spanish scholastic tradition, the publication's content aimed to radicalize readers against the Spanish government by raising awareness to its abuses and highlighting the insurrection's successes on the field of battle.[129] *El Despertador Americano* is often referred to as one of Mexico's first opposition newspapers because of the nature of its content, which on top of presenting justifications for the rebellion, also delivered news of battles, victories, and troop deployments.[130] This newspaper was the first serialized publication in Mexico to print outside the control of the church and state, challenging the long-established traditions of securing patronage and privileges in order to participate in the industry.

One the many challenges faced by Hidalgo's insurrectionist printers was maintaining access to the tools they needed to practice their craft. Without the traditional patronage and privileges that gave those licensed by the state access to ink, paper, and a printing press, Hidalgo's

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[128] Stocco, "La Influencia de la Prensa en el Proceso de Independencia de México," 171.

[129] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 8–10. Scholasticism was still a popular Spanish philosophical form of critical thought, even as Enlightenment ideas began to influence Spanish thinkers.

[130] The paper serves as a foil to the first of Mexico's publications to be recognized as a newspaper, the *Diario de México*. Founded in 1805, this newspaper was the first successful serialized publication to communicate news to readers in Mexico City and was totally antagonistic to Hidalgo's Revolt.

supporters were forced to find alternative methods of acquiring these essential materials. Even though Mexico's major sanctioned printers were clustered in Mexico City, there were a few large printers authorized to operate in Guadalajara, Oaxaca, Puebla, and Veracruz.[131] It was in Guadalajara where Hidalgo's Revolt first found success and it was also there that his allies began the practice of using the print shops of captured cities to publish in favor of the revolt. For paper and ink, rebel printers turned to scavenging battlefields and town halls, as well as ransacking colonial administration buildings. Whenever they lost access to a professional printing press, insurgents turned to wooden portable printing presses referred to as *imprentillas*. These were usually smaller, handmade replicas of the Gutenberg Press that could be assembled and disassembled as needed.[132] The technology had been developed sometime around 1808 as a way for small independent printers to publish simple works like hojas volantes, broadsides, and pamphlets. The practicality of having access to a portable press helped insurgency printers to continue their work even as royalist forces drove them out of urban centers in 1811 and forced them to hide in the countryside.

The first two years of the insurrection inspired by Hidalgo's Revolt consisted of armed conflict, but also a war of words between insurgent publications and those licensed by the state. While Viceroy Venegas certainly pressured the press to help him stamp out the remnants of the insurgency, those who were active participants in the colony's political economy of printing needed little prodding to denounce those they already saw as threats to their craft.[133] The existence of an

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[131] Peter Standish and Steven M. Bell, *Culture and Customs of Mexico*, Culture and Customs of Latin America and the Caribbean (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 2004), 80; Stocco, "La Influencia de la Prensa en el Proceso de Independencia de México," 170.

[132] Zeltsman, *Ink Under the Fingernails*, 55; Guzmán Pérez Moisés, "Hacedores de Opinión: Impresores y Editores de La Independencia de México, 1808-1821," *Anuario de Historia Regional y de Las Fronteras* 12, no. 1 (2007): 52. The term *imprentilla,* can also refer to small print shops capable of printing only simple works.

[133] "Soneto," *Diario de México*, February 14, 1811.

insurgent press operating outside the bounds of the established order that dominated the industry threatened the privileges secured by those who had played by the rules. As such, the conflict on the battlefield was mirrored by another taking place on the printed page between the Master Printers of Mexico City and the independent printers of the insurgent press. Among the points of conflict was the right to freedom of the press, one of the social reforms championed by Hidalgo's Revolt. However, the "freedom of the press" on display by the insurgents jarred against the established culture of loyalty that permeated Mexico's late colonial-era printing industry. As put by Corinna Zeltsman in *Ink Under the Fingernails*, the Master Printers of Mexico City saw themselves as active agents of the court-sponsored Spanish Enlightenment, industrious intellectuals who devoted their endeavors to royal service and the improvement of knowledge within the empire.[134] They viewed an armed uprising against the colonial administration as anathema to the identity they were trying to carve out for their profession within the empire. This became especially true as the insurgency that emerged from Hidalgo's Revolt discarded all pretense of being a reform movement and officially became a war for independence, further widening the ideological gap between the Master Printers and those of the insurgency.

While Viceroy Venegas dealt with the ongoing insurgency that continued to endure in the Mexican countryside even after Father Hidalgo's capture and execution in 1811, the Spanish delegates meeting in Cádiz were busy crafting a liberal response to Spain's crisis. As Raúl Coronado writes in *A World Not to Come*, the French invasion of Spain had "brought about the forced collapse of the Hispanic world," forcing the Spanish monarch's subjects to find new sources of transcendental authority that could continue to bind their empire together.[135] In 1812, the Constitution of Cádiz became the foundational document for a new Spanish government, one

[134] Zeltsman, *Ink Under the Fingernails*, 47–49.
[135] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 26.

based on a constitutional monarchy, formally establishing in the Iberian world the concept of representative government. Among the document's far-reaching consequences was its adoption of the right to freedom of the press, which was immediately unleashed across the Spanish Empire as the law of the land. While Viceroy Venegas had been able to dismiss an earlier 1810 attempt to grant freedom of the press to printers in the Americas, it was impossible for him to completely block the freedoms granted by the Constitution of Cádiz now that a new Spanish government had been established. The arrival of this radical liberal reform in Mexico blew the lid open on the Master Printer's long guarded printing privileges. Ironically, rather than being obtained by the grassroots efforts of the insurgency, this victory came through a mandate imposed from the very heart of the Spanish Empire.[136]

The arrival of freedom of the press in Mexico saw an explosion in the use of imprentillas and the publication of hojas volantes, independent works, and the establishment of new newspapers and journals. Many new publisher-editors quickly tested the waters of free speech, engaging in thoughtful criticism of Spanish rule in Mexico and referencing Enlightenment thinkers whose works had been previously prohibited by the State and Church. Among those who rose to fame during this time, there was José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, a creole elite who turned to print as a profession after having been dismissed from his post in local government following his surrender to insurgents during their siege of Taxco in 1810. Lizardi became the editor-publisher of the pro-reform newspaper *El Pensador Mexicano*, as well as the more radical *El Juguete Rabioso*, becoming famous after 1812 for penning popular literature that often ended up on hojas volantes. Despite the surge of new publications, few attempts at serialized works lasted longer than a few

[136] Coronado, 175; Zeltsman, *Ink Under the Fingernails*, 46. Rather than being brought into modernity through revolution against the *ancien régime,* liberal modernity in the Spanish world was imposed from above.

issues. As before, the greatest barrier to enjoying the newfound freedom of the press proved to be the exorbitant costs associated with publishing. The need to acquire paper, ink, and access to a printing press, meant that those seeking to publish were forced to secure funding if they wanted to enjoy access to their new rights for the long-term. It also meant that those with ideas but without access to a printing press, were forced to seek the services of Mexico's Master Printers in order to see their writings published.

Despite initial fears of how freedom of the press might chip away at their privileges, Mexico's Master Printers found the new liberal law enhanced their power over the profession. Their established access to the tools of their trade and connections with the colonial administration essentially bolstered their role as gatekeepers of the profession. From 1812 until after Mexico's independence, established Master Printers essentially regulated who could enjoy the right to freedom of the press. While men of means and connections like Lizardi eventually got their writings published, men of lesser means were totally dependent on the whims of a Master Printer to publish their works.[137] Corinna Zeltsman also discusses this in her book, where she brings attention to an episode in 1820 involving a dispute between two writers and the son of Antonio Valdés, who inherited and operated the print shop in which his father once published *Gazeta de México*. The very public dispute saw the writers claim that Mexico City's prominent printers were the greates threat to writers' new freedoms.[138] The dispute came as a result of Valdés raising his printing fees to levels that made it impossible for the writers to afford his services. This, as it turns out, was a popular strategy used by printers to essentially deny writers their right to freedom of

[137] Moisés, "Hacedores de Opinión: Impresores y Editores de La Independencia de México, 1808-1821," 23–24. The alternative was to contact an insurgent printer, but this would be to print outside of the system and invoke censorship and mark oneself before the law, since insurgent publications were not protected under the liberal law. After 1814, it would have also been rather difficult to locate an insurgent printer.

[138] Zeltsman, *Ink Under the Fingernails*, 64.

speech by limiting their access to a printing press. As Zeltsman argues, the public discourse over the event revealed the limits of published speech in the colonial public sphere.[139] Publicized events like these helped further the antagonism between writers seeking to exercise their new rights and the Master Printers. It also drew increasing attention to the ineptitudes of the colonial administration, whose *junta de censura* struggled to properly define the line between permissible and punishable works, resulting in an atmosphere of paranoia and uncertainty for all printers in which the will of the Master Printers dominated.[140]

On the eve of Mexican independence, low literacy levels continued to make it impractical for printers to finance their profession through subscriptions and sales alone. The profession's Master Printers also presented a significant hurdle to overcome for those seeking to enter the profession without the necessary connections. An attempt in 1820 by Lizardi highlights the way that lack of support and perhaps even outright hostility from the city's Master Printers could spell doom for new printing endeavors. Seeking for a way to push the industry to become self-sustaining, Lizardi experimented in Mexico City with a subscription-based model that aimed to make printed works available to wider audiences. Lizardi's Public Reading Society project sought to pool together the resources of printers in the city to provide a space where readers could be exposed to a wide variety of works for a fee based on their usage of the space. According to Lizardi, the project ultimately failed due to low subscription numbers and the lack of participation from Mexico City's Master Printers, who resisted it every step of the way.[141] As the colonial

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[139] Zeltsman, 77.

[140] Zeltsman, 77–78; Stocco, "La Influencia de la Prensa en el Proceso de Independencia de México," 9–10; Moisés, "Hacedores de Opinión: Impresores y Editores de La Independencia de México, 1808-1821," 32. The junta de censura was an administrative body of the colonial administration in charge of persecuting treasonous material, as well as enforcing perjury and libel laws. After 1816, it undermined its credibility in the eyes of independent printers by going too far and in the eyes of Master Printers by not going far enough to stamp out what they viewed as sensationalist works.

[141] Zeltsman, *Ink Under the Fingernails*, 66–67.

administration's authority was undermined by an ongoing insurrection and its inability to define the limits of freedom of the press to everyone's satisfaction, the privileges held by Mexico City's Master Printers elevated them within the profession to become one of its most powerful gatekeepers. Their access to well-supplied printshops in the midst of an industry experiencing supply shortages and the steady stream of funding available to them in the form of colonial contracts, essentially gave the Master Printers of Mexico City the power to deny the right to publish to those with whom they politically disagreed.

Following the first decade of the nineteenth century, the footprint of the printing industry could be found all across the territory that would become Mexico a decade later. The Bourbon Reforms and raw human enthusiasm for the consumption and creation of printed media helped print become a widespread medium for the exchange of ideas. By 1815, printing presses could be found in most of the colony's urban centers and in the hands of private individuals. Yet despite its widespread adoption, the printing industry was still plagued during the eve of Mexican independence by the same problems that had stifled its growth since its introduction during the sixteenth century. High levels of illiteracy and the economic constraints placed on Mexico because of its status as a colonial possession of Spain helped maintain entry costs into the printing profession steep and operation costs high. This bottlenecked the industry and made it dependent on a political economy based on competition for the patronage and privileges offered by New Spain's colonial administration and the Catholic Church. This made it almost impossible for the industry to grow via small independent printers and thus, resulted in the monopolization of the profession in the hands of a few privileged individuals who were royal servants of the state and religious orders.

These Master Printers who dominated the industry mostly operated out of Mexico City, where they benefitted from the patronage of the church and state. This relationship of dependence became so entrenched in the printing industry that even the introduction of freedom of the press in 1812 via orders from the Iberian Peninsula did little to bring about change. In fact, increased competition as new printers emerged only served to reinforce the relationship between the industry and the church and state.[142] While the introduction of new technology during a prolonged period of insurrection helped to create new voices within the industry in the form of the insurrectionist printers, the illegal nature of their enterprise and the high financial and material costs of running a printer consigned these projects to ephemeral appearances. Identifying the insurrectionist printers as a threat to the political system from which they benefitted, Mexico City's Master Printers further entrenched themselves within the colonial administration by taking on the role of the colonial administration's propagandists and regulating who had the right to use their services. Yet, the appearance of new independent players in the industry brought about by the implementation of freedom of the press helped to decentralize printing by diversifying the colony's overall media landscape.

On September 27, 1821, Mexico officially began its transition from colonial possession to new nation. The rupture with Spain ended the monopoly of the Master Printers by cutting off their access to contracts and patronage from the colonial administration. The Mexican Constitution of 1824 founded the nation's first republic and enshrined freedom of the press, a clear sign that the newly reborn Mexico not only embraced print as a medium but had become a culture of print. Among the new government's pro-print initiatives was the legalization of trade with North America. This helped promote the growth of the printing industry by helping to reduce some of

[142] Zeltsman, 63–65.

the costs of entry. Access to North American markets allowed printers to access the United States as a new and cheaper source for essential resources like ink and paper.[143] Still, the centuries old problems of high operating costs and low literacy levels in Mexico persisted and continued to limit the potential growth of the industry.

While increased competition and the obliteration of royal patronage certainly undermined the power of the Master Printers, the political economy of printing that had made them relevant did not completely disappear after independence. Printers soon found new sources of patronage in the form of the Mexican government and the various printing contracts it issued in order to create the materials needed for statecraft.[144] While this newfound relationship was reminiscent of the industry's previous one, Mexico's growing debt crisis and political turmoil undercut the ability of the Mexican government to serve as a reliable patron. The Mexican government's coffers were also nowhere near as deep as their previous partner's and so government contracts were fewer in number and even more difficult to secure.

Between 1821 and 1822, Mexico experimented with being a constitutional monarchy. The nation's first emperor, Emperor Agustín Cosme Damián de Iturbide y Arámburu recognized the importance of public opinion in his new nation and the role that the printing industry might play in ensuring the continuation of his rule. While this opinion did not last long, Emperor Iturbide promoted and defended freedom of the press for a few years under his rule. He himself helped found the publication *La Gaceta Imperial de México* with the purpose of fostering loyalty and keeping his subjects informed on events within the Empire and abroad. When Iturbide was removed from power by armed uprising in 1824, Guadalupe Victoria became the first president of

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[143] Zeltsman, 85.

[144] Laura Suárez de la Torre, "Editores Para El Cambio: Expresión de Una Nueva Cultura Política, 1808-1855," in *Transición y Cultura Politica: De La Colonia al México Independiente* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2004), 52; Zeltsman, *Ink Under the Fingernails*, 86.

the Republic of Mexico. Like Iturbide, President Victoria also promoted freedom of speech during his five years in power. This trend among Mexico's first governments and the freshness of the new nation, helped to foster a climate in which public political debate was encouraged.[145] It was open debate and the formation of Mexico's first political parties that helped make the newspaper into a staple of Mexican political life. Printers found the medium was easy to print in large quantities and cheaper to produce than books, whether they owned an imprentilla or a large printing press and politicians found that newspapers could help to sway public opinion.

Publications with titles like *La Gaceta*, *La Prensa*, *El Cometa*, emerged in cities far removed from the Mexican capital, focusing on local issues, and fostering ties with local politicians aspiring for positions of power in the newly independent nation. Newspapers in Mexico focused on local audiences, while placing in context the national issues that affected these communities. Mexican politicians recognized the power of the press to shape the new nation's politics. Both President Victoria and Emperor Iturbide, who had started out as defenders of freedom of the press, quickly turned to suppression when political adversaries hired printers to publish political attacks on their administrations. Regional elites with aspirations for national politics, *caudillos* in every sense of the word, utilized the press to raise their local profiles to national levels. It became almost customary for those hoping to contest the primacy of whatever government ruled from Mexico City to legitimize their calls for rebellion by funding a newspaper to publish on their behalf.[146] After 1824, the newspaper quickly emerged as a tool of bipartisan politics whose dependence on the financial generosity of the politicians it supported came to

[145] Fernández Fernández, "Un Recorrido por la Historia de la Prensa en México," 80; de la Torre, "Editores Para El Cambio: Expresión de Una Nueva Cultura Política, 1808-1855," 54.

[146] Will Fowler, *Independent Mexico: The Pronunciamiento in the Age of Santa Anna, 1821–1858* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 61–62; Fernández Fernández, "Un Recorrido por la Historia de la Prensa en México," 81. To be precise, this was a tradition that started while Mexico was still a part of Spain but one that became even more important after independence.

redefine the politics of printing that had previously dominated the industry. Mexican printers found that despite the scarcity of potential audiences outside of Mexico City, success could be found there by aligning their printshops with politically ascendant individuals.

The enshrining of freedom of the press in the Constitution of 1824 and the end of the colonial administration helped to loosen state control over the printing industry after independence. However, just how free the industry should be continued to be a hotly debated question in Mexican politics throughout the nineteenth century, as discussed in the work of scholars like Corinna Zeltsman and Pablo Piccato.[147] In addition, the initial issues that had limited the growth of the industry during the Spanish period, those of widespread illiteracy, limited communications infrastructure, and high operation costs, continued to plague Mexican editor-publishers well into the twentieth-century. In Northern Mexico, regional authorities received little to no aid from the central government in setting up their own communications infrastructure, forcing them to rely on their own financial resources.[148] This significantly hampered progress throughout the region, especially in South Texas, where local access to a printing press did not materialize until after 1836. As shall be discussed in the next chapter, the inability of the Mexican government to invest in the region had long-term consequences in how Mexicans living there imagined themselves in relation to the Mexican nation.

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[147] Zeltsman, *Ink Under the Fingernails*, 90–91 and 117; Pablo Piccato, *The Tyranny of Opinion: Honor in the Construction of the Mexican Public Sphere* (Duke University Press, 2010), 157–58. From the post-independence period to the Porfiriato, the Mexican government constantly engaged in debates on how much freedom the press should have, how accountability should work, and what its role in shaping the public sphere should be.

[148] Lota M. Spell, *Pioneer Printer: Samuel Bangs in Mexico and Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963), 67–68.

Chapter 2: Spanish-Language Newspapers Emerge in South Texas

On August 25, 1822, José Félix Trespalacios arrived in San Antonio de Béxar to serve as the first post-independence Mexican governor of Texas. A former military officer in Spain's

colonial regime who had become an insurgent leader during Mexico's struggle for independence, Trespalacios was charged by Emperor Iturbide of the Mexican Empire to guide the inhabitants of Texas as they became Mexican citizens. His arrival followed the removal of Spanish military commandant José Joaquín de Arredondo, who had terrorized San Antonio with brutal repression for almost a decade following an insurgent uprising aiming to liberate Texas from Spanish control that lasted from 1812 to 1813. Eight months after his arrival, Governor Trespalacios installed the first printing press in San Antonio, a device imported from the United States for the publication of official announcements, laws, and administrative paperwork. Among the first things the governor printed using this press was a broadside introducing *El Correo de Texas*, a newspaper that Trespalacios envisioned as the first official newspaper of the Mexican government in Texas. The bilingual prospectus promised *El Correo de Texas* would be a weekly publication that would "*instruct the public in every thing that may have a connection with its prosperity*", helping to liberate Texas from the shadow of ignorance Spain had kept it in for so long.[149] The document reveals that the governor planned to use his newspaper to help Texans understand their new civil liberties and civic duties. It emphasized the fact that rather than continue being passive subjects as the Spanish had demanded, Governor Trespalacios expected the people of San Antonio to be active participants in efforts to improve Texas.[150] The newspaper would serve as a tool that would show them how to play a more active role in their local government.

The governor's broadside was not the first or the last attempt at encouraging the Hispanic inhabitants of San Antonio to engage as active participants in the government of a new nation. In 1813, the insurgent leaders José Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara and Antonio Álvarez de Toledo used

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[149] *Prospecto*, April 9, 1823, San Antonio.

[150] Raúl Coronado, *A World Not to Come: A History of Latino Writing and Print Culture* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2013), 277–78.

widely circulated broadsides and newspapers to convince San Antonio's residents to declare independence from Spain as *Mexicanos*, an identity justifying their declaration of sovereignty by establishing them as a people native to America, not Spain.[151] San Antonio's revolution was short-lived, lasting from April to August of 1813, being brutally put down by the Spanish regional commander, General Joaquín de Arredondo. The general brought ruin down upon San Antonio and the rest of the insurgents in Texas, executing a total of 327 people in two weeks, running down fleeing insurgents all the way to Nacogdoches, and imprisoning dozens of others.[152] The counterinsurgency led by Arredondo lasted until he was deposed by Mexican Independence in 1821, but the event left its mark on San Antonio's Hispanic inhabitants. Recovering and properly burying the remains of those who participated in the Battle of Medina in 1813, San Antonio's first and only battle against Arredondo, was among the first things Trespalacios did upon arriving in town.[153] The governor's publications and proposed newspaper were an effort to heal the trauma of the event that in his eyes, marked the transformation of San Antonio's population into Mexican citizens. Though *El Correo de Texas* never materialized because Trespalacios was reassigned after the fall of the First Mexican Empire in 1824, the premise that newspapers could be used as tools to help overcome trauma would be revisited by San Antonio's Hispanic inhabitants. So too would the use of newspapers as tools that promoted participation in politics. Beginning in 1855, the Hispanic community of San Antonio responded to the trauma of annexation into the United States by producing their first Spanish-language newspaper, *El Bejareño*. With it, they promoted unity under a *Tejano* identity that encouraged their community's active participation in American

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[151] Coronado, 221.

[152] Raúl A. Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 41.

[153] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 263–64. After the battle, Arredondo barred the families of San Antonio from retrieving their dead after the battle and left the victims' bodies strewn on the fields outside the settlement.

politics. Using *El Bejareño*, they established an imagined community that encompassed Hispanic people across vast geographic distances and were connected to each other through their ties to Mexico, the shared trauma of annexation, and the region's Spanish past, helping to forge a post-1848 Mexican-Tejano identity in South Texas.

Among the themes explored in this chapter is the establishment of a Spanish-language culture of print in South Texas, one that began as an extension of Spanish colonization in the early eighteenth century, became a part of Mexican national culture in the 1820s, and developed into its own regional tradition after 1848. According to Anthony Gabriel Meléndez in *So All Is Not Lost*, print culture is best understood as "a complex system of communications based on the production and distribution of multiple copies of written material".[154] To be considered as having a print culture, there needs to be individuals besides the author involved in the production of printed material. The path to achieving a culture of print typically begins with the introduction of print, followed by the transformation of print into the primary means of communication and information exchange between people.[155] Print culture as it emerges in the Spanish-language newspapers of South Texas is framed by its intellectual and cultural purpose. The communications circuit composed of the publisher-editors of these newspapers and their readers was animated by discourse concerned with defining the contours of community and its place in a post-1848 world. Like the Spanish-language newspapers produced in New Mexico starting in the 1880s that are the subject of studies by Meléndez and Doris Meyer, the Spanish-language newspapers of South Texas represent culture-bearing documentation carrying cultural projections in the form of poetry, news, and editorial essays. In their attempt to define community and that community's role in the world,

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[154] Anthony Gabriel Meléndez, *So All Is Not Lost: The Poetics of Print in Nuevomexicano Communities, 1834-1958* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 5.

[155] Frances Robertson, *Print Culture: From Steam Press to Ebook*, Directions in Cultural History (London, England) (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 6–13.

Hispanic editors in South Texas engaged in what Meléndez refers to as "*periodismo cultural*", a form of journalism that stimulates public debate and gives voice to the overriding concerns of the period.[156] San Antonio's three Spanish-language newspapers in the 1850s, *El Bejareño*, *El Correo*, and *El Ranchero*, emerged out of concern for the city's Mexican heritage population. They became a way to voice the reality of their community's experience in Texas within the framework of the U.S. body politic and established a tradition future Spanish-language newspapers in South Texas would follow.

The lateness that marks the appearance of newspapers like *El Bejareño*, *El Ranchero*, and *El Correo* in the region is directly linked to the absence of any kind of serious economic development in South Texas before 1848. As a territory located in the far north of Mexico, the land that would become Texas was largely ignored by Spain and Mexico, who were more concerned with events happening in the interior. For much of the Spanish and Mexican periods, the territory lacked access to a printing press and locals relied heavily on oral tradition and the written word for communication.[157] Inadequate support from Spanish officials, coupled with a lack of vital trade infrastructure such as roads and ports that marked Spain's heavy-handed control of trade, deprived the region of the necessary factors needed to populate Texas and denied it the infrastructure needed to economically develop it.[158] The largest settlement in terms of both people and geographical space was that of San Antonio de Béxar, named the province's capital in 1773. By the 1800s, there were about 7,000 people living in Texas, of which about 2500 lived in San Antonio. This was only five hundred more than appear on the records dating from 1777.[159] The city served primarily as a

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[156] Meléndez, *So All Is Not Lost*, 7.

[157] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 318.

[158] Andrew J. Torget, *Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800-1850* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 24.

[159] Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861*, 18; Torget, *Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800-1850*, 24.

military outpost for Spain in South Texas, a buffer zone meant to protect the Mexican interior and help maintain the empire's claim on the province.

The majority of those living in San Antonio de Béxar during the colonial era comprised primarily of soldiers, farmers, and cattle ranchers focused on surviving the dangers of the frontier between Spain and the outside world. As such, they had little time to produce newspapers or print publications of their own, especially since they lacked access to a printing press before 1813. San Antonio's first experience with a printing press came when the insurgent Álvarez de Toledo brought the device with him to aid in his uprising against Spain. This attempt at tearing Texas away from Spain would be brutally put down by José Joaquín de Arredondo, Spain's appointed Commandant General of the Eastern Interior Provinces, who would also seize the insurgent's printing press. In 1817, Arredondo captured a second printing press in Galveston when he apprehended yet another group of filibusters and insurgents that had landed there after departing from New Orleans. Among those captured was an Anglo-American man who went by Samuel Bangs. Trained as a printer by allies of Arredondo, Bangs was given the choice by Arredondo to operate his growing collection of printing presses or face time in a Mexican prison.[160] By then, both devices had been relocated to Monterrey, Nuevo Léon where they were put to use by Arredondo. From there, it was not until the post-independence arrival of Trespalacios in 1823 that another printing press found its way to San Antonio and once again, and its presence there was short-lived.

For Mexican printers, the 1820s were a time of fluid and constant change as the industry struggled to define itself in a nation rocked by unending political struggles between Mexican liberals and conservatives. In the wake of independence, new and established printers

[160] Coronado, *A World Not to Come,* 267–68.

experimented with press freedom and took advantage of scaled-back trade regulations that gave them access to cheaper technology and supplies from US markets. Mexican independence had brought an end to the political and economic conditions upon which the Master Printers of Mexico City relied during the colonial era. In its place, both new and established printers entered a new print ecosystem based on market competition for church business, state contracts, commercial commissions, and political patronage.[161] The Mexican Constitution of 1824 enshrined freedom of the press, encouraging Mexican printers to use their newspapers as a platform for the discussion of national politics, ushering in the maturation of Mexico's public sphere, a process that had begun during the late 18th century with the publications of that era. Aware of the influence that newspapers had on public opinion, the Mexican state made periodical attempts to regulate the press, but the frequency at which political change swept Mexico through military conflict during the nation's first fifty years of existence made it difficult to properly execute reform or repression. Often, persecuted printers only needed the patience to wait until the next administration change to find themselves free to publish once again.[162]

The opening up of official trade relations between Mexico and the United States flooded Mexico and granted printers cheaper access to new and established printing technologies developed in Europe and the United States, then a pioneer in printing technology. Mexican printers purchased ink, paper, and printing presses in international markets to bring back to Mexico. Paper remained an expensive commodity for all New World printers for much of the nineteenth century, but new access to printing presses and type helped to fuel an expansion of the printing industry in

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[161] Corinna Zeltsman, *Ink Under the Fingernails: Printing Politics in Nineteenth-Century Mexico* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2021), 85.

[162] Zeltsman, 110; Iñigo Fernández Fernández, "Un Recorrido por la Historia de la Prensa en México: De sus orígenes al año 1857.," *Documentacion de las Ciencias de la Informacion (España)* 33 (2010): 79–81.

post-colonial Mexico.[163] The 1820s saw the introduction of the first metal presses to Mexico, including such developments as the Stanhope Press, the Columbian Press, and the popular Washington hand-press, the latter two being the first printing press designs patented and manufactured in the United States. Following independence, Mexican government officials at both the national and local levels became interested in establishing official government newspapers. This concern for state control over printing came from the government's desire to represent itself as supreme and establish greater direct control over the direction that the new nation's public sphere would take.[164] Like Trespalacios in San Antonio, many state governors turned to North American markets to acquire the supplies and devices needed to establish newspapers for their state governments, as such devices were difficult to come by in Mexico while it was still recovering from its war for independence.[165] Mexican officials dispatched agents to US port cities like New Orleans and New York in search of American printers that could be contracted to begin printing operations in their states and train a new generation of Mexican printers through apprenticeships.[166] These types of operations only became more prevalent after 1824, when the new constitution encouraged state governments to establish their own state newspapers. It was this kind of arrangement that brought Samuel Bangs back to Mexico in 1827 to work as the official printer for the state government of Tamaulipas, which operated in Ciudad Victoria.

Upon his return home from Mexico in 1823, Samuel Bangs had moved to New York and established his own publishing house with a local partner. Despite his years of captivity as

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[163] George H. Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper* (Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1999), 12–13. Papermaking was a slow and laborious process as most printing paper before the 1830s was made by hand.

[164] Zeltsman, *Ink Under the Fingernails*, 148.

[165] Colin MacLachlan and William H. Beezley, *El Gran Pueblo: A History of Greater Mexico* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994), 8–11. The ten-year conflict that tore Mexico from the Spanish Empire decimated what little internal infrastructure Mexico possessed and left the economy in shambles.

[166] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 281–83.

Arredondo's prisoner while in Mexico, Bangs quickly learned to operate the latest printing devices, transitioning from working on a vintage wooden press to the latest iteration of the Washington hand-press. Correspondence referenced by Lota M. Spell reveals that despite having been a prisoner of Joaquín de Arredondo in Monterrey for over eight years, Bangs had personally grown fond of Mexico and yearned to return there.[167] The American printer continued to seek work in Mexico throughout the 1820s, petitioning the governments of Nuevo Léon and Coahuila y Texas. Finally, in 1827, Bangs returned to Mexico after striking a contract with the government in Ciudad Victoria. Mexican officials there hired Bangs to serve as the official printer of the city's government and provided the American with a home and a workshop in which he could operate the two Washington hand-presses he promised to bring with him.[168] Bangs prospered in Ciudad Victoria and his work drew commendations that landed him a better-paying position working for the government of Coahuila in Saltillo only a year later. In 1830, he and his family became Mexican citizens just as Bangs established a business dedicated to the importation of printing presses and ink from New York to Mexico.[169] Bangs and other American printers operating in Mexico during this era became part of a widespread network of information and material exchange that helped to expand and modernize Mexico's printing industry during the post-independence decade. Change came to Mexico through the combined efforts of private printers who participated in the exchange, and Mexican state officials furnished with the funds needed to back printing enterprises. It was a combination of private enterprise and state patronage helping to fund the

[167] Lota M. Spell, *Pioneer Printer: Samuel Bangs in Mexico and Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963), 63–64.

[168] Spell, 67–68.

[169] Spell, 85. Bangs would eventually end up moving to Texas, lured by the promise of cheap land and seeking to establish a local publishing house in Galveston after nearly a decade of working government contracts. His plans would be derailed in 1835 with the beginning of the Texas insurrection.

introduction of new technologies that helped printing expand beyond Mexico City during the post-colonial years.

Like in most of Mexico, printing did not permanently expand into South Texas until after independence. A lack of local printers meant that settlements like San Antonio tended to prioritize oral and written communication for the transfer of information. The settlement's inhabitants also stayed informed about developments in the interior through travel, word of mouth, and the infrequent circulation of texts. Their town's role as the last major settlement between Mexico and the shared frontier with the United States made their city a major stopping point for merchants, smugglers, and diplomats traveling between both countries, making the settlement a good place for information exchange.[170] State patronage of print arrived in 1823 with Trespalacios, whose presence played a pivotal role in influencing San Antonio's inhabitants to adopt the use of print as a form of communication. Among other things, Trespalacios helped to organize the Governing Junta of Texas, a body of government made up of members from San Antonio's *ayuntamiento*. Established in the 1730s, the ayuntamiento was a local council that served to govern the settlement and San Antonio's was the oldest in the province of Texas. It represented the public arena where the settlement's most prominent families exercised political power.[171] In 1823, the Provisional Governing Junta of Texas used the printing press introduced by Trespalacios to produce broadsides and other materials aimed at familiarizing the town's inhabitants with Mexican rule.[172] These

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[170] Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861,* 35; Paul Barba, *Country of the Cursed and the Driven: Slavery and the Texas Borderlands* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021), 183. This was especially true after 1814, since Nacogdoches had been reduced to a ghost town as a result of raids by Native Americans and violent purges by the Spanish military during Mexico's struggle for independence.

[171] Jesús F. De La Teja and John Wheat, "Bexar: Profile of a Tejano Community, 1820-1832," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 89 (July 1985): 13.

[172] Coronado, *A World Not to Come,* 322.

products included the broadside by Trespalacios discussing *El Correo de Texas*, but also public imprints of the Junta's decrees, decisions, and communications with the national government.

The use of printed communications was meant to make the people of San Antonio active participants in the new Mexican nation and engender a nationalist devotion among them to the new country. Upon coming into power in the early 1820s, Emperor Iturbide's government had institutionalized the use of publications in the promotion of nationalist devotion with the publishing of *La Gaceta Imperial de México* and the *Noticioso General*. Both were newspapers intended to foster civic engagement and promote a brand of Mexican nationalism that aligned with Iturbide's empire. Iturbide's government also promoted freedom of speech, which helped promote the expansion of Mexico's printing industry in the 1820s and resulted in the proliferation of newspapers, journals, gazettes, and broadsides across Mexico. In addition to serving as platforms of political discussion and print communication, these publications took on what Benedict Anderson has described as the "decisive historic role" of *imagining* the nation.[173] In San Antonio, the activities of the Provisional Governing Junta of Texas and Governor Trespalacios can be interpreted to have had similar aims. The broadsides and publications produced by the junta and the governor aimed to turn the inhabitants of San Antonio into loyal Mexican subjects by allowing them to participate as spectators in their government's efforts to better living conditions in Texas.

Alongside these publications promoting the new Mexican government, the participation of San Antonio's prominent families in the Governing Junta also helped to encourage the establishment of ritualized celebrations, like those commemorating Mexican Independence Day and other events that reinforced San Antonio's transition into a Mexican town. The presence of the new government in everyday ceremonies and religious life further promoted the active

[173] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition (2016) (Verso, 1983), 64–65.

participation of San Antonio's inhabitants in the transition.[174] Through public interaction and civic engagement, San Antonio's inhabitants familiarized themselves with what it meant to be Mexican citizens. Among the elites of the settlement, the privilege of status and economic connections had long afforded them access to books and newspapers from across the Spanish Empire and beyond, but the lack of a local printing press had largely confined their ability for self-expression to written and oral communications.[175] Exposure to the process of printing and use of the governor's printing press helped a generation of them to become acquainted with the operation of the printing press. When Iturbide's government collapsed in 1823, the Provisional Governing Junta of Texas voted to keep Trespalacios in power, despite orders from the interior to have him removed from office. In response to criticism over this decision, the Junta published a broadside titled *Noticias del Gobierno de Texas* on June 11, 1823, with an explanation for their actions. Printed on the broadside was the Junta's declaration of their commitment to the Mexico's liberal federal system, claiming responsibility for their actions and defending them by going over the former governor's body of service to San Antonio. According to Raúl Coronado, the nature of this imprint as a response focused on explaining the rights of the Junta as a sovereign political body and the nature of its response as a form of "news" that was to be dispersed and shared with more than just Mexican officials, demonstrates the early ways in which Tejanos had begun to understand themselves as part of a sovereign social body.[176]

In 1824, Trespalacios departed San Antonio for Monterrey and took his printing press with him. The departure of the settlement's only printing press was but the first in a series of setbacks experienced by the people of San Antonio de Béxar after the collapse of the First Mexican Empire.

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[174] Andrés Reséndez, "National Identity on a Shifting Border: Texas and New Mexico in the Age of Transition, 1821-1848," *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 2 (September 1999): 676–78.

[175] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 318–20.

[176] Coronado, 322.

Not long after their June 11 response, the Mexican Constitution of 1824 was adopted. This new constitution was used by Mexico's liberals to politically restructure the nation into a federal republic. The new government saw Texas as too sparsely populated to remain autonomous and decided to merge it with the state of Coahuila into a single political entity under the jurisdiction of a state government seated in Saltillo, Coahuila.[177] This decision robbed San Antonio of its status as the provincial capital of Texas and gave it to a town some 350 miles south of Texas. The departure of the printing press from San Antonio also forced the settlement's ayuntamiento to return to the use of handwritten manuscripts, something that would have been seen as a step backwards. With no access to a local printing press, San Antonio and the rest of South Texas was left without a means with which to produce print without having to rely on contacts in Saltillo or the Anglo-American colonies in east Texas.

While San Antonio's importance was greatly diminished by the political restructuring of the province, the settlement remained relevant after 1824 because of its connections to Stephen F. Austin's growing colony on the Brazos River. This colony, which had begun as an Anglo-American community of three-hundred families, experienced exponential growth as cheap land and Austin's promotion of the territory drew more and more American Southerners to the region. Population estimates for San Felipe de Austin place the Anglo-American population at about 1350 in 1826 and somewhere around 1800 by 1828.[178] Anglo-Americans soon established themselves as the leading growing demographic of east Texas, where they took over Nacogdoches, the center of commerce between Texas and the United States and founded new towns, like Brazoria in 1828 and

[177] Torget, *Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800-1850*, 80.

[178] Barba, *Country of the Cursed and the Driven: Slavery and the Texas Borderlands*, 190.

Liberty in 1831.[179] From the very beginning, the activities of Anglo-Americans in east Texas were encouraged and aided by notable members of San Antonio's Tejano community, like the Seguíns. These relationships were based on a shared interest in the economic development of Texas and reinforced by their mutual participation in trade networks and shared antagonism towards the region's Native Americans.[180] Mexicans in Texas provided Anglo-Americans with cultural and linguistic assistance, acting as cultural brokers between them and the Mexican government. In exchange, Anglo-Americans served as a market for their services and steadfast allies in their struggles against Native Americans, providing them with hope for the economic development of the province.

Credit for the introduction of the first permanent printing presses in Texas does not belong to Spain or Mexico, but to the Anglo settlers who arrived in the territory to settle the Austin land grant in the 1820s. Not long after Mexican Independence, Texas became the first Mexican territory to receive a large influx of migrants from the United States with the intent to settle and develop Mexican land. While colonization projects involving Anglo-Americans had existed in Texas as early as the 1790s, it was not until the 1820s that Mexican officials legalized their presence in Texas by establishing an official land grant process for these settlers. Mexican officials hoped this colonization program would expedite the development of the region and strengthen the province as a buffer zone against the looming threat of both Native American Comanchería and the

[179] Torget, *Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800-1850*, 37; Barba, *Country of the Cursed and the Driven: Slavery and the Texas Borderlands*, 158. Mexicans were pushed out of east Texas by a combination of Spanish anti-insurgent purges during the war for independence and a wave of recent Comanche raids that had encouraged those remaining to abandon the region.

[180] Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861*, 83; Barba, *Country of the Cursed and the Driven: Slavery and the Texas Borderlands*, 215–16.

territorial expansion of the United States.[181] With the establishment of Stephen F. Austin's colony along the Brazos River in 1823 the province became a place where established Tejano traditions met against the growing presence of Southern US culture. When it comes to the history of newspapers in South Texas, the permanent settlement of Anglo-Americans in Texas forever changed the trajectory of Spanish-language publications produced there. The introduction and eventual dominance of the region by Anglo-Americans flooded the region with their printing technology and a culture of print built on the Protestant European worldview of the United States.[182] While Tejanos and other people of Mexican decent living in Texas benefitted from the greater access to printing technology and infrastructure that came with the territory's economic development in the hands of the United States, the conquest of the region by Anglo-Americans also resulted in trauma for their communities. Their experiences in Texas inspired a political response that included the creation of newspapers that promoted and celebrated their Mexican past while encouraging them to look forward to a future as members of the United States.

The Anglo colonies in Texas attracted a wide variety of settlers from the United States, but Stephen F. Austin's focus on the quality of Mexican land in his promotion of the territory ensured the vast majority of them would be men interested in farming or plantation agriculture. It was the latter that came to represent the majority of the Anglo settlers arriving in Texas, men enticed by Austin's promises of fertile soil perfect for the cultivation of cotton. According to Andrew J. Torget, Austin's offer of fifty extra acres for every slave that settlers brought with them to the

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[181] William S. Kiser, *Illusions of Empire: The Civil War and Reconstruction in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), 17; Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 18; MacLachlan and Beezley, *El Gran Pueblo: A History of Greater Mexico*, 56.

[182] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 8. This is basically the argument of this book, that Spanish-language print culture in Texas reflects the trauma of being ripped away from the Hispanic world and subjugated by Protestant culture.

colony not only suggests that the empresario's vision for the future of Texas was one in which it served as a bastion for slavery but explains why east Texas became overwhelmingly populated by slaveholders.[183] Alternatively, Austin may have prioritized slaveholders from the American South because he and his Mexican allies believed these men would want to see a quick return on their investments and therefore develop the land and local economy expeditiously. Slaveholders brought with them slaves, cash, and other commodities that could be used to pay for goods they needed, and as Austin's colonies grew, a frontier service economy developed in order to cater to their needs. In 1829, Godwin Brown Cotten became one of the many men drawn to Texas by the promise of cheap land and the opportunity to capitalize on the growing needs of its colonists.

Godwin B. Cotten got his first taste of Texas in 1813 when he infiltrated the territory alongside José Alvarez de Toledo as an apprentice for the printing press that would eventually end up in the hands of Arredondo. Cotten seems to have been among those lucky few who managed to follow Toledo to freedom during the insurgent's escape from San Antonio, as he is credited for publishing the *Louisiana Gazette* until 1816, right before moving to Mobile, Alabama, and starting the *Mobile Gazette* that same year.[184] In 1819, Cotten packed up his printing press and returned to Texas with the intention of becoming a landowner, selling his stake in the *Mobile Gazette* and heading to San Felipe de Austin where an agent had purchased some land for him. Cotten soon found out his agent had pocketed some of his money and that he still owed money for the purchase of his land. Having arrived to Texas with nothing but his clothes and printing equipment, he offered

[183] Torget, *Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800-1850,* 62–66. Alternatively, Austin may have prioritized slave holders from the American South because he and his Mexican allies wished to see the territory colonized and developed as quickly as possible. Slave owners often had access to the financial resources and labor required to develop vast spaces of land post haste.

[184] Charles A. Bacarisse, "'The Texas Gazette,' 1829-1831" 56, no. 2 (1952): 239–40.

the town's ayuntamiento his services as a printer in exchange for his debts being cleared.[185] As the only man in the territory in possession of a printing press, the local government accepted the deal. They placed Cotten in charge of publishing the ayuntamiento's paperwork and public communications, as well as its ordinances and public announcements. Since he would be publishing all of their materials at no cost to them, Cotten was also given permission to draw a living from printing the town's first semi-official newspaper, the *Texas Gazette.*

The *Texas Gazette* began printing on September 25, 1829. The newspaper belonged to Cotten, but its success was driven by the partnership between Cotten and San Felipe de Austin's ayuntamiento. In fact, it was the colony's local body of government that allowed Cotten to use the name he attached to his publication, which had been the title of a newspaper prospectus printed in 1827 that failed to materialize into a serious publication.[186] The *Texas Gazette* quickly became one of the most important publications in the Anglo colonies as it was the only print platform that featured English translations of laws and communications from the Mexican Government. The newspaper also printed English translations of correspondence between Stephen F. Austin and the Mexican government, with the famous empresario frequently contributing editorials to the paper.[187] While the *Texas Gazette* is sometimes listed as a bilingual newspaper, the reality is that the only sections of the newspaper that were presented in Spanish were paid advertisements, and these consisted mostly of slave owners seeking to recapture fugitive slaves. The newspaper ran until 1831, when after a brief change of ownership and his relocation to Brazoria, Cotten rebranded the newspaper and became independent from the ayuntamiento of San Felipe de Austin.

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[185] Bacarisse, 240.

[186] John Melton Wallace, *Gaceta to Gazette* (Austin: The University of Texas Austin, 1966), 44–45.

[187] Bacarisse, "'The Texas Gazette,' 1829-1831," 244.

The removal in 1824 of the printing press in San Antonio cut the settlement from access to a printing press until after 1836. Across Mexico during the 1820s, the financial burdens involved in operating a printing press limited the endeavor to the local governments of each state capital, the well-established printing houses of Mexico City, or financially well-off regional elites.[188] In Texas, the Austin colony's first newspaper emerged only as the result of Godwin B. Cotten owing a substantial debt to the local government. Other English-language newspapers established as independent ventures in the 1830s did not fare as well and none lasted longer than three years. In South Texas, the political merger with Coahuila and the relocation of the capital from San Antonio to Saltillo robbed Mexicans in the region of any hope of obtaining a new printing press. Beginning in the 1830s, the Mexican inhabitants of San Antonio experienced increasingly difficult circumstances as their province's political and economic importance declined. Between 1833 and 1834, San Antonio endured a cholera outbreak, receiving no assistance from the state government in Saltillo or the national government in Mexico City. As they had done before during times of crisis, the town's inhabitants organized a communal response to the outbreak. At the same time, the people of San Antonio had to contend with the growing tensions between their Anglo neighbors and the Mexican government. These tensions made it increasingly harder for San Antonio's leadership to thread the middle-ground they had always sought in their role as the cultural brokers between both sides. Then in 1835, war came to San Antonio de Béxar when it became the site of the first major military campaign of the Texas Revolution. Between October and early December of that year, an army of Texan volunteers laid siege to Mexican forces stationed in San Antonio until the Mexican military was forced to retreat to Mexico. The following year, the Mexican army marched back into San Antonio and laid siege to the Alamo Mission, where Texan forces holed up

[188] Zeltsman, *Ink Under the Fingernails*, 25.

until they were all killed. On April 21 of 1836, the Texan rebels would emerge victorious in their conflict with Mexico and create the Republic of Texas. However, this victory effectively turned San Antonio and the rest of South Texas into the primary active warzone in an ongoing conflict that dragged out for almost two decades. In the midst of these decades of violence, San Antonio was occupied twice by the Mexican military during the 1840s. It was not until Mexican officials gave up on reclaiming Texas following their nation's disastrous defeat at the end of the Mexican War in 1848 that South Texas had a chance to truly recover from the hostilities.

During the Texas Revolution, Mexican people living in the territory had been forced to pick a side in the conflict. With some very notable exceptions, most decided to remain neutral as the Mexican military and Texan volunteer force fought for control of the province. When the violence of the conflict reached their communities, many Mexican families in South Texas packed up their belongings and fled to safety across the Río Grande or scattered into the surrounding countryside.[189] This was a pattern that would repeat itself during the conflict between Mexico and the United States in the 1840s. Yet, there were still plenty of Mexicans who chose to fight to free Texas from Mexico. These included Mexican federalists who took up arms in revolt against the dictatorship of Antonio López de Santa Anna and San Antonio locals like Juan N. Seguín and José Antonio Navarro, who sought to secure a place for their communities in the world that might emerge from a Texan victory. Due to the racial factor that existed within the conflict, it became paramount that people of Mexican heritage fighting alongside Anglo-Americans to differentiate themselves from the Mexicans they were fighting against. According to Raúl Coronado and others, the nearly three decades of trials and tribulations that began in the 1830s saw a rise in the usage of

[189] Timothy M. Matovina, *Tejano Religion and Ethnicity: San Antonio, 1821-1860* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 25.

terms like "*Mexico-Tejano*" and "*Tejano*" among the Mexican inhabitants of Texas.[190] Differences in culture and a shared history of solidarity born out of their frontier past had always helped Mexicans in South Texas to differentiate themselves from the rest of Mexico.[191] In San Antonio, the label "*Mexico-Tejano"* (Tejano) became the dominant way used to describe Mexican individuals who belonged to the families who long ago settled the region and who later made the choice to remain in Texas when it went rogue in 1836.

The racial tendencies of US culture, the ongoing conflict with Mexico, and the competition for local resources fueled rising animosity between Mexicans and Anglos in Texas during the post-independence years. The potential of being met with violence influenced Mexicans like the Seguíns and Navarros to distance themselves from Mexico by emphasizing their Tejano identity. Especially since many Anglos had come to interpret the war for Texas independence and the continuing struggle against Mexico as a racial conflict.[192] Raúl A. Ramos and other historians have written about how between 1836 and 1845, racially incensed Anglo-Americans turned Mexicans in Texas into a suspect class through policy and public discourse. Ramos goes so far as to tie the creation of law enforcement organizations like the Texas Rangers to growing calls for the policing of Mexican communities.[193] Racist attitudes were reinforced by the English-language newspapers that came to dominate Texas during what is referred to as the Republic Era. Prominent newspapers like the Houston-based *Telegraph and Texas Register* promulgated a racialized view of people of Mexican heritage through ill descriptions of them, a trend that intensified in bravado as Mexico's conflict with the Republic of Texas evolved into a war with the United States in the 1840s. As early

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[190] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 293; Matovina, *Tejano Religion and Ethnicity: San Antonio, 1821-1860*, 35–37.

[191] Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861*, 94; Matovina, *Tejano Religion and Ethnicity: San Antonio, 1821-1860*, 23.

[192] Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861*, 155–56.

[193] Ramos, 184.

as 1838, the newspaper got in the habit of featuring stories and editorials that described Mexicans as a "*mongrel population*".[194] Racist content in newspapers like the *Telegraph and Texas Register* criticized Mexicans for electing tyrants and despots as their national leaders but they also homed in on their mixed racial background, something which was inescapable, as proof of Mexican inferiority. The emphasis placed on the racial origins of Mexico's people by the phrase "mongrel race" reflects the influence of the scientific racism popular in the United States and Europe during the nineteenth century. As an editorial in the same newspaper illustrates, this system of racial categorization based on the economic success of European nations like the United States, on the "*intelligence, the energy, and valor of Europeans or men of European descent*" and simplified the problems of nations like Mexico by blaming them on the natural inferiority of a people "*without energy, or courage*".[195] While this vitriol was directed specifically at Mexicans residing in Mexico, these publications popularized racialized views that also impacted the way people viewed Mexicans living in the United States.[196]

The racialization of Mexican people as "other" bled over and affected all Mexicans in the Republic of Texas, even those who had fought for the new nation's independence. The language employed by both Anglo newspapers and politicians to describe Mexicans helped to strengthen a disturbing racial rhetoric that cast all people of Mexican heritage as part of a suspect race, a widespread suspicion that San Antonio's Tejanos were not immune from. Both Ramos and

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[194] "Speech of Col. White," *Telegraph and Texas Register*, July 21, 1838, pg. 4.

[195] *Telegraph and Texas Register*, March 23, 1842, pg. 2. Editorial by Francis Moore, Jr. containing observations on Mexico made in response to renewed threats of aggression by the government of that nation.

[196] Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1993), 10–30, 211. One example of the use of this language to describe Mexican people can be found in the fourth page of a July 21, 1838 issue of *Telegraph and Texas Register*. Another example can be found in *The Northern Standard* out of Clarksville, Texas, which on May 20, 1846, described US military activities in Mexico as "how white men trample underfoot, the mongrel race who pollute the fairest land on earth."

historian Paul Lack have discussed how Anglo-Americans during the Republic Era used the low Tejano participation during the war for independence to justify their suspicions of Tejano loyalties.[197] Judgments like these were passed with little regard to the complexities that Mexicans in Texas faced during the conflict, or the sacrifices made by those Tejanos that actively participated in battle. These suspicions fueled harassment that had the potential to lead to violence, as José Antonio Navarro and his family learned when the youngest of the Navarro brothers was killed in 1838. The murder transpired when an Anglo-American man in San Antonio cast doubt over the Navarro family's allegiance to the Republic of Texas while visiting the family's dry goods store, which triggered José Eugenio Navarro. The youngest of the Navarro clan then engaged the man in an argument that escalated into an armed fight during which both were killed.

When it comes to newspapers, it is clear that the unstable political order of South Texas hindered the development of a local economy that could support a printing press. Gangs of marauders in the South Texas countryside and frequent violence in the region's urban centers discouraged investment in the region. San Antonio itself was invaded twice in 1842 by Mexican armies and became a constant battleground in 1846 when US and Mexican forces fought for control of the Río Grande during the US-Mexican War. The lack of a printing press since 1824 meant that the majority of Tejanos and Mexicans living in the region had little experience interacting with print in their everyday lives. In South Texas, official communications remained transmitted through written manuscripts intended for specific individuals, just as they had since the Spanish colonial era. Violence, political turmoil, and a lack of access to a printing press kept Tejanos and other Mexicans in South Texas from printing their own newspapers until 1855. For

[197] Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861,* 149; Paul D. Lack, *The Texas Revolutionary Experience: A Political and Social History, 1835-1836* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1992), 115.

almost thirty years, their communities lacked a print outlet through which their social body could express its desires and concerns as they experienced diminishing control over the political destiny of their homeland.

At the same time, Anglo-Americans in Texas were experiencing a surge in the number of newspapers available to them as English-language newspapers became a dominant force in the new republic. Between 1829 and 1836, about eight English-language newspapers had been established in Texas, but none were able to duplicate the success of the state-backed *Texas Gazette*. This all changed in 1836, starting with the aforementioned *Telegraph and Texas Register*, which was established in San Felipe de Austin through a partnership between Gail Borden Jr., his brother Thomas H. Borden, and a Joseph Baker. The *Telegraph and Texas Register* became the first newspaper published in the Republic of Texas to see long running success, becoming the first to exist for more than two years, and staying in business until the end of Reconstruction (1877). The years between 1838 and 1840 saw the establishment of at least twelve English-language newspapers in Texas. This trend was largely supported by the growing population of transplants from the American South who were drawn to Texas after its independence.[198] This boom moved in a southward direction, especially during the 1840s, when Anglo-American newspapermen accompanied the US military in its advance south of the Texas hill country as the nation moved ever closer to war with Mexico. In South Texas, these men encountered urban centers where people of Mexican heritage made up a majority of the population and Spanish was still the *lingua franca* among the local elite, offering new markets for those who had the know-how to launch bilingual publications.

[198] Torget, *Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800-1850,* 182.

In the 1840s, Samuel Bangs was among those entrepreneurs who established newspaper ventures south of the Nueces River. The chain of events that led Bangs to Corpus Christi, began with his return to Texas sometime in 1838, when he purchased lands near the town of Bastrop and near Corpus Christi.[199] Two years later, Bangs became involved in the publishing of the Houston *Musquito* from 1840 to 1841, before he relocated his printing press to Galveston and rebranded the newspaper as the *Galvestonian*.[200] On the eve of Texas annexation in 1845, Bangs published one last newspaper out of Galveston, but this was a short-lived venture. Only a few months later, Bangs was on his way to Corpus Christi. The newspaperman was attracted to the harbor city as it, along with other urban centers in South Texas, was quickly becoming a bustling hub of activity as US military operations transformed the region into a launching point for their invasion of Mexico. Following the annexation of Texas, US troops funneled into Corpus Christi on steamboats and overland routes. On the heels of this military presence came merchants and migrants from the American interior who felt the region had become secure enough to pursue financial opportunities in the growing military camps. A letter from Corpus Christi appearing on the *Telegraph and Texas Register* the same year that Samuel Bangs arrived in the city reveals with optimism and excitement how the security brought by the military presence helped transform the city into a thriving commercial hub:

> "the prosperity of this place is without a parallel. Some of the late cities of the Union are small compared with it…In July last, there were only two Bar rooms in this town, now they exceed two hundred!"

[199] Spell, *Pioneer Printer: Samuel Bangs in Mexico and Texas*, 93–95.
[200] Wallace, *Gaceta to Gazette*, 24.

"From four to six vessels arrive daily at Corpus Christi and their cargoes meet with a ready sale."[201]

On January 1, 1846, Bangs established Corpus Christi's *Gazette* in collaboration with George W. Fletcher, a local physician. Seeing financial opportunity in catering to the city's well-established Mexican community, Bangs and Fletcher sought out José de Alba, a prominent member of that community, and convinced him to agree to join as editor. While Bang's venture only ran for about three months, it is often cited as the first "war newspaper" of the US-Mexico conflict because of its early coverage of US military operations during the eve and start of the conflict.[202] Like other Anglo newspapers started in South Texas during this decade, the *Gazette* presented an Anglo perspective that despite containing a section printed in Spanish, paid nothing but lip service to the concerns of the Tejano and Mexican communities in the region. Bangs himself was an ardent proponent of the coming US war with Mexico, having been convinced during his time in Texas of the need for reprisal against Mexico for its many military incursions into the republic and the Mexican government's treatment of its American prisoners.[203] Like Bangs, most of the Anglo newspapermen who arrived in South Texas did so on the trail of the US military occupation of the region. When the military conflict finally began in 1846, these newspapermen followed the army's push into Mexico all the way past the Río Grande, documenting wartime events and seeking to build audiences among the war camp communities that sprouted on the road to Mexico City.

The printing of Anglo newspapers in South Texas represents one of the tendrils of US expansion that made its way into Mexican territory. In 1846, US military activity helped push the

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[201] *Telegraph and Texas Register*, December 24, 1845, Pg. 3.

[202] Robert W. Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 19; Nathaniel Lande, *Dispatches from the Front: A History of the American War Correspondent* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1998), 407; Spell, *Pioneer Printer: Samuel Bangs in Mexico and Texas*, 126.

[203] Spell, *Pioneer Printer: Samuel Bangs in Mexico and Texas*, 112–16.

Texas frontier all the way to the banks of the Río Grande, bringing several Mexican cities into the United States when the land grab was formalized by the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. In the meantime, the act severing all territory north of the Río Grande from Mexico included the temporary military occupation of key border cities like Matamoros from 1846 to 1848. While Matamoros and other cities were eventually released back to Mexico at the end of the conflict's negotiations, the events that unfolded during the US military occupation of the city are indicative of the patterns that accompanied the physical spread of the United States into South Texas. Of importance to this story, is that for the majority of the 1830s, Matamoros was home to the largest concentration of Mexican newspapers in the shared borderlands between Mexico and Texas. The city gained renown after 1825 when US merchants discovered the local port to be an ideal entry point into Mexican markets. Already by 1832, the town boasted a significant number of North American entrepreneurs, newspapermen among them.[204] Matamoros became a commercial crossroads, growing quite rapidly in the 1830s, putting its development ahead of other border towns in South Texas. The concentration of people and wealth invited the presence of multiple printing presses during that decade. Juan González and Joseph Torres have claimed that over twenty different Spanish-language newspapers were launched in Matamoros by both born and naturalized Mexican citizens.[205] After 1836, turmoil in Mexico and the conflict with the Republic of Texas and the United States drove much of the city's publishers out of business, but even in 1846, there were still at least six or five newspapers in operation. These last few newspapers helped document the arrival of US troops in the city but were soon ordered to cease publication by the

[204] Juan González and Joseph Torres, *News for All the People: The Epic Story of Race and the American Media* (London and New York: Verso, 2011), 82.

[205] González and Torres, 82–83.

occupying force thanks in part to their negative outlook and criticism of US actions during the war.[206]

Like the rest of South Texas, the conflict between the US and Mexico left Matamoros a shell of its former self. Depopulation and disruptions caused by the war and the treaty that followed diminished the importance of the city. After the war, many of its inhabitants relocated to the newly established harbor town of Brownsville. Finally, in 1848, the US treaty with Mexico officially removed Matamoros from South Texas and made Brownsville the new gateway to Mexico. As the city grew to become the new commercial hub of South Texas, newspapermen from across the United States flocked to the city, eager to establish audiences for their newspapers among the growing population. In South Texas, these men found that the relatively new English-speaking communities were vastly outnumbered by large and established communities of Spanish-speaking Tejanos, former Mexican citizens, and other people whose primary language was Spanish.[207] Seeking to capitalize on local circumstances, the newspapermen of Brownsville launched some of the first bilingual newspapers of the post-war era. These began in 1849 with the *Centinela del Río Grande*, which was published by Edwin B. Scarborough and J.R. Palmer. The four-page publication started in Spanish before transforming into the English-language *The Rio Grande Sentinel* about halfway through. The *Bandera Americana*, which was also published in Brownsville, followed a similar pattern of devoting half of its pages to each language. As early as 1848, Corpus Christi was home to the *Corpus Christi Star*, a four-page newspaper that began in English and ended its last two pages as the Spanish-language *La Estrella de Corpus Christi*.

[206] González and Torres, 83.

[207] Bruce Baum and Duchess Harris, *Racially Writing the Republic: Racists, Race Rebels, and Transformations of American Identity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009), 84.

The Anglo-American-owned bilingual newspapers that emerged in South Texas during and after the US conflict with Mexico helped the region and its inhabitants of Mexican heritage transition from Mexican to US rule. For their part, Anglo-American newspapermen saw an opportunity in the natural need that the new citizens acquired by the treaty of 1848 would have for translations and explanations of the once foreign legal system that now ruled over their lives.[208] Their newspapers became platforms for the printing of content that helped integrate the region into America's Anglo-dominated society. Spanish translations of American laws dominate the pages of these newspapers, as do large quantities of advertisements for American products and Anglo-owned businesses. During the war, bilingual newspapers followed the progress of the American Brigade through Mexico, becoming a form of pro-US propaganda focused on emphasizing the security brought to the Mexican interior by the US military presence and its policies of zero tolerance towards those cast as Indians and bandits.[209] After the war, Spanish translations of stories taken from other American newspapers and local news came to dominate the spaces in between *avisos*, *anuncios*, and translations of American laws. Through their promotion of local business and normalization of the US presence in South Texas, these newspapers promoted a return to everyday life amidst the ruins left behind by the first major conflict to take place on North American soil.[210]

By 1849, Anglo American-owned bilingual newspapers had largely replaced Spanish-language publications in the settlements of South Texas where Mexican newspapers had once dominated. There and in the many spaces where there had been no newspapers prior to the arrival

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[208] "El Centinela," *El Centinela*, August 25, 1849, pg. 1.

[209] *Corpus Christi Star*, September 19, 1848.

[210] Kirsten Silva Gruesz, *Ambassadors of Culture: The Transamerican Origins of Latino Writing* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 87. The US-Mexican War inaugurated the US as an imperial power, becoming the first nation in the hemisphere to dismember a sister nation and appropriate its territory as its own.

of the American Army, a new wave of bilingual newspapers offered communities of Mexican heritage a way to interface with the new order of things. Bilingual newspapers granted Mexican heritage communities in South Texas a measure of continuity by allowing the Spanish-language to continue to play a dominant role in their personal lives despite the erosion of its importance in the larger society. Carlos G. Vélez-Ibañez has noted that in their own way, these publications also helped to preserve the Spanish-language by giving the Mexican children who grew up in the region a way to make Spanish their own through reading and observation of what their own parents were reading and discussing.[211] It is also important to note that Spanish-language ads and advertisements in these newspapers played a role in helping transform Spanish-speakers in the region into consumers of American goods and products. These newspapers offered translations of the new land laws in Texas they were now subject to, Spanish-language advertisements for lawyers and products that promised to better their everyday lives. By presenting these instances of acculturation in a language familiar to them, bilingual newspapers helped Tejanos and people of Mexican heritage navigate the changing world around them.

At the same time, bilingual newspapers served the end of cementing US control over the region. The printing, translation, and dissemination of US laws by these Anglo-owned publications, while in many ways helpful to people of Mexican heritage, also served to reinforce a sense of US control and authority over their homelands.[212] As Anglo-owned newspapers came to dominate the newspaper industry of South Texas, they helped transform Spanish-language

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[211] Carlos G. Vélez-Ibáñez, *Hegemonies of Language and Their Discontents: The Southwest North American Region Since 1540* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2017), 163, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/j.ctt1ws7wh3. Those who were unable to read, still took part in oral exchanges and other forms of communication that spread this content.

[212] Manuel J. Gutiérrez, "Linguistic Encounters in Texas," in *Biculturalism and Spanish in Contact: Sociolinguistic Case Studies* (New York and London: Routledge, 2019), 37–38. The translation of laws served the role of teaching colonial subjects how to behave under the new order.

communities into captive markets for American goods and established the reach of American laws over these communities. As the editor-publishers of these publications, Anglo Americans were transformed into the new cultural brokers of the region. Bilingual newspapers made Anglo editor-publishers the mediators of everyday interactions between the Anglo and Mexican worlds their audiences navigated. Through product and service placements, and decisions on what information would be made readily accessible to Spanish-speakers, Anglo editor-publishers played a role in the colonizing process by helping to shape the boundaries of acceptability through content that established the limits of how people of Mexican heritage could participate in Anglo society.

In South Texas, the concentration of printing in the hands of Anglo editor-publishers during the post-war years effectively silenced communities of Mexican heritage. While bilingual newspapers often hired Spanish-speakers to influential roles, like that of translators or even editors, the goals and direction of these publications remained firmly in the control of their Anglo owners. No newspapers from a Hispanic or Mexican point of view or worried about the concerns of these communities would surface in the region until well into the 1850s. As the only game in town, Anglo American editor-publishers integrated themselves and their publications into the social fabric of local Spanish-speaking communities, with many even adopting Hispanicized names.[213] In the years following the US-Mexico conflict, these newspapers became one of the few media outlets left still bearing the language of Spanish-speaking communities. As the sole public platform catering to these communities, the owners of these publications assumed influential roles that extended beyond mere media ownership. These editor-publishers helped to establish and maintain the foundations of the social structures that promoted stability under US control of the region.

[213] *Corpus Christi Star,* September 26, 1848. For example, editor-publisher of the newspaper, John H. Peoples, would don the name "Juan" H. Peoples in the title page for *La Estrella*.

They became one of the ways in which political parties in South Texas reached out to communities of Mexican heritage and influenced their choices at the ballot box.[214]

The bilingual newspapers of the post-war years also played a role in the cultural transfer of the traditions and business culture of the US newspaper industry to South Texas. As the products of men who had honed their craft in the US interior before moving to Texas, bilingual newspapers like the *Corpus Christi Star*, the *Centinela del Río Grande*, and other Anglo American-owned publications normalized the widespread use of advertisements to finance newspapers, the use of mailing subsidies, and introduced to the region the role of the industry in US politics. These men took advantage of the economic development of the region during the post-war years which helped create profitable opportunities in advertising. The sale of advertising space quickly became one way to supplement subscriptions and single-paper sales. Mexican-owned publications along the border, while having engaged in some similar practices, never came close to the scale of advertising space sold and purchased in the pages of these post-war publications. Even Mexican newspapers from the interior tended to keep the content featured in their "*Avisos*" sections to about ten or eleven advertisements.[215] American newspapers, on the other hand, not only featured advertising on their English-language pages but also populated their Spanish-language sections with advertisements. One issue of Brownsville's *The American Flag* printed in 1852 features a total of about twenty advertisements when accounting for all the ads present throughout the paper.[216] The newspaper advertising market also served as yet another lever of Anglo control over these newspapers. Publications that were largely financed by Anglo-owned businesses were less likely to deviate from established narratives or offer up controversial opinions.

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[214] "Candidatos," *Centinela del Río Grande*, March 13, 1850, pg. 2
[215] *EL Siglo Diez y Nueve*, March 31, 1852, pg. 4.
[216] *The American Flag,* May 15, 1852.

Government funded mail service in the United States was officially established in 1792 when President George Washington signed the US Postal Service Act and formally established an institution that had somewhat existed since the days of the Second Continental Congress.[217] In Texas, the United States Post Office Department officially began operations in 1836, but it was not until 1846 that these operations became widespread. Anglo-American newspapers established in South Texas were among the first private enterprises to utilize the US postal services and other government-funded services for their advantage. The integration of Texas into the US postal network after annexation gave editor-publishers in the state access to the mailing discount rates and other benefits granted to newspapers by the Post Office Act of 1792. The same law that established the postal service gave newspaper publishers in the US substantial savings when using the US Postal Service to distribute their publications, which ultimately eliminated their need for private carriers and significantly slashed the costs of operating in a region whose infrastructure was in development.[218] US postal subsidies also helped editor-publishers in Texas gain access to the circulation of state-wide newspapers as well as a selection of out of state publications. This facilitated exchange of information was made even easier by the lax copyright laws in place during that century. According to Paul Starr, the Copyright Act of 1790 was seldom utilized by the US courts to protect news reports, which meant that there was little pushback in the re-publishing of news stories found in other newspapers.[219] The free range on the reprinting of stories helped post-war newspapers in South Texas to play a role in helping integrate the region into the larger nation

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[217] On July, 1775, Benjamin Franklin was appointed as the first Postmaster General by the Second Continental Congress.

[218] Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 37–38.

[219] Paul Starr, *The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communications* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 120–21. Ethically-conscious editor-publishers often credited the newspaper a story was taken from, while others simply provided the name of the far-away location where the event took place.

by presenting news stories taken from newspapers from elsewhere in the United States. This information exchange between newspapers allowed people in Texas to participate as spectators of events happening across the nation, helping to integrate them into the national culture.

In the aftermath of the war with Mexico, bilingual newspapers helped to familiarize Spanish-speaking audiences with the politics of the nation that had engulfed them. The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo expanded the definition of US citizenship to include Mexican nationals residing in the territories acquired by the United States during the war. This landmark treaty bestowed collective citizenship upon individuals of Mexican heritage who swore an oath of allegiance to the United States, providing the first challenge to the notion of whiteness as a prerequisite for US citizenship that was prevalent during this time period.[220] On paper, the acquisition of treaty citizenship granted voting rights to people of Mexican heritage, a policy that specifically affected those living in the border communities of South Texas that had been incorporated into the US by the conflict. However, the reality is that in Texas, the right to vote was limited to communities fortunate enough to reside in regions where Mexican elites had successfully negotiated agreements with Anglo-American power brokers.[221] The end of the conflict with Mexico was almost immediately followed by the creation of political machines in South Texas. This was largely done through the insertion of Anglo-American politicians into the region's established tradition of Mexican *patron* politics.[222] While they offered a valuable service to their Spanish readership, bilingual newspapers provided an invaluable service to the construction of the region's political machines. In their role as cultural brokers, the editor-

[220] Rosina Lozano, *An American Language: The History of Spanish in the United States* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018), 24–25.

[221] Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*, 38–41.

[222] Kenneth L. Stewart and Arnoldo De León, *Not Room Enough: Mexicans, Anglos, and Socio-Economic Change in Texas, 1850-1900* (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico, 1993), 40–41.

publishers of these publications helped to connect political bosses to a base of Mexican voters by delivering campaign news and communicating political agendas in Spanish.[223] Bilingual newspapers served as tools of political mobilization and voter education, helping Anglo and Mexican political bosses amplify their reach and influence throughout the region.

The bilingual newspapers of South Texas helped Anglo-American merchants, ranchers, and politicians install themselves at the top of the region's social hierarchy in the aftermath of the conflict with Mexico. Yet, their impact went well beyond the role they played in the transfer and establishment of Anglo-American culture and society as the dominant order in the region. At their very core, these newspapers sought to help the region transition from wartime to peacetime. The various Spanish-language prospectus of these publications tended to state that their aims in providing content in Spanish were to educate, inform, and establish peaceful relations between Mexicans and US citizens.[224] In other words, these publications helped communities of Mexican heritage in South Texas to transition into US society by offering them a path to incorporation into the peace structure established by the Anglo and Mexican elites. Though it demanded their subjugation, the boss rule of machine politics offered people of Mexican heritage one of the few pathways to addressing their concerns and providing for their communities. As Kenneth L. Stewart, Arnoldo De Léon, and Montejano have pointed out, these political arrangements sometimes even offered the opportunity for these communities to elect people who looked like

[223] *Corpus Christi Star*, August 4, 1849, pg. 4. Even as the newspaper transitioned into an all-English publication at the end of the 1840s, it still presented information on political candidates in Spanish.

[224] *Centinela del Río Grande*, March 13, 1850, pg. 1; *Corpus Christi Star*, September 19, 1848; *American Flag*, May 15, 1852, pg. 4.

them, spoke their language and shared their heritage to political positions at the local and city level.[225]

The spread of bilingual publications across South Texas also helped to introduce and familiarize communities of Mexican heritage with the political possibilities of print media. The bilingual newspaper boom of the immediate post-war years significantly expanded access to print and the presence of print technology in the region and it did so the two most common languages in that geography. As the only Spanish-language publications available in some of these communities, bilingual newspapers naturally fostered a sizeable following among the type of people that Benedict Anderson refers to as the "reading classes."[226] Bilingual newspapers perpetuated the division between English and Spanish-speaking society by using phrases and terms that reinforced a view that their Spanish-speaking readership was distinct from their Anglo American one. Phrases like "*A los Mexicanos*," "*La parte Mejicana del pueblo*," helped to differentiate on print the subjugated from the victors. Afterall, these newspapers aimed to educate the Mexican masses on how to live and participate in American society, not the other way around. Unintentionally, these newspapers also provided communities of Mexican heritage with a way to conceptualize their individual experiences as part of a shared "Mexican" struggle set against the backdrop of a new world dominated by Anglo rule.

Bilingual newspapers also helped to preserve and ensure the continuation of the Spanish language as a dominant form of communication in communities of Mexican heritage. Despite the brutality of the US-Mexican War, the end of the conflict did not result in the total annihilation of

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[225] Stewart and De León, *Not Room Enough*, 41–43; Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*, 34.

[226] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 75–77. These are the primary consumers of print, a group made up of people of "some power," a description which includes merchants, professionals, functionaries, and men of the market and their families, including servants.

the defeated.[227] Instead, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo made it so that former Mexican citizens would be brought into the fold of the United States as citizens. This acquisition of treaty citizenship did not guarantee a peaceful transition, however. Newspaper stories, oral histories, and first-hand accounts, all point to the fact that mob violence targeting people of Mexican heritage was not an unusual occurrence on the US side of the Río Grande borderlands, especially after 1848.[228] In 2013's *Forgotten Dead*, William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb track instances of violence against Mexican people in the US between 1848 and 1920, documenting at least 547 incidents of mob violence across the US Southwest for a variety of alleged crimes ranging from murder to people killed for shouting "¡Viva Díaz!".[229] Yet, even this violence did not aim to totally eradicate an entire population.[230] Bilingual newspapers played a role in the endurance of these communities by helping the language of the vanquished to live on. The mass production of Spanish on the pages of bilingual newspapers, a simple act born out of the object's nature as a commodity to be purchased, help to immortalize Spanish by imbuing it with the fixity granted by the mere act of imprinting it in a widely consumed imprint. Bilingual newspapers helped ensure that in South Texas, Spanish maintained its status as the *lingua franca* of the community, a language that was written, read, and most importantly, passed down to the next generation.

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[227] *Telegraph and Texas Register*, March 23, 1842, pg. 2. It should not be forgotten that the conflict with Mexico was a racially charged conflict long before troops hit the ground: "the destinies of this wretched nation (referring to Mexico) are now in the hands of a miserable mongrel race, inferior even to negroes."

[228] William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928*, paperback, 2017 (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 49–50; Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861*, 204. Ramos discusses how increased Anglo violence against their community convinced many Tejanos to abandon their lands in San Antonio and its surrounding areas for the safety of Mexico.

[229] Carrigan and Webb, *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928*, 19.

[230] As opposed to the Native American peoples whom the United States encountered and launched campaigns of systematic annihilation against.

One final note on bilingual newspapers is the role they played in the spread of printing technology from the US interior to South Texas. As previously stated, the printing press made its debut in the region in 1823, but then quickly vanished as a result of Mexican politics. In the meantime, Tejanos in San Antonio were forced to return to producing hand-written manuscripts as a form of communication and legal documentation. When in need of printed material, Tejanos had relied on their connections in San Felipe de Austin in order to gain access to the same printing press responsible for the printing of the *Texas Gazette*.[231] Following the independence of Texas in 1836, the Lone Star Republic saw a sudden increase in the number of printers operating in the territory. Very few, if any, of these editor-publishers printed newspapers in Spanish and most restricted their operations to East Texas. It was not until the conflict with Mexico in 1846 that editor-publishers following the march of the American Brigade began to saturate the region south of the Nueces River with newspapers.[232] These men brought with them printing technology that was sold, exchanged, and sometimes left behind when they moved on or by accident.[233] This introduction of printing technology to the region opened up new opportunities for Spanish-speakers to interact with the technology and even print their own words. With the spread of printing technology in South Texas, the opportunity to access paid printing services became a much more likely possibility for Tejanos and people of Mexican heritage. The printing of San Antonio's first post-war Spanish-language publication in 1855 serves as an example of the possibilities made available by the proliferation of print technology in the region. That year, the print shop of German editor-publisher Carl Daniel Adolph Douai was contracted to help launch the now famous *El*

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[231] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 311.

[232] Louise C. Allen, Ernest A. Sharpe, and John R. Whitaker, "Newspapers," Texas State Historical Association Handbook of Texas, updated 2022 1976, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/newspapers.

[233] T. Herbert Etzler, "German-American Newspapers in Texas with Special Reference to the Texas Volksblatt, 1877-1879," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (April 1954): 431.

Bejareño.[234] Douai, an abolitionist colluding with Frederick Olmstead to establish a pro-abolition political party in Texas, was facing financial troubles in 1855. He had previously been the editor and publisher of the German-language newspaper *San Antonio Zeitung* since 1852, but when his financial backers pulled out after discovering his abolitionist views, he was forced to purchase the publication outright or see it fold.[235] Desperate for cash, he accepted a contract from Xavier Blanchard Debray and Alfredo A. Lewis for the publication of San Antonio's first newspaper printed entirely in Spanish.

The publication of *El Bejareño* in 1855 represents a monumental shift in the history of South Texas as its publication marks the beginning of a new effort in which people of Mexican heritage pushed to become producers of their own newspapers. For San Antonio's Mexican heritage community, *El Bejareño* was the first publication since 1813 to directly address them and their needs. Beginning its circulation on February 7, 1855, the newspaper was brought about by the joint effort of a coalition of prominent Tejanos and their allies. Debray was a French immigrant with commercial ties to the Tejano community and Lewis was an Anglo ally who later married into a Tejano family.[236] The two served as the newspaper's editors during its first year of publication, lending *El Bejareño* a veneer of legitimacy in Anglo society equal to that of the bilingual newspapers that had come before, a decision that echoes the compromises necessary to maintain the region's structure of peace. Contributors to the newspaper during its first year included Narciso

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[234] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 324; Marilyn McAdams Sibley, *Lone Stars and State Gazettes: Texas Newspapers Before the Civil War* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A & M University Press, 1983), 234–35.

[235] Sibley, *Lone Stars and State Gazettes*, 233–34. In San Antonio, Douai faced mob violence for his anti-slavery stance. He also faced anger from his fellow Germans, who blamed him for causing trouble for their community. Ultimately, he left the state sometime in 1856.

[236] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 325. Debray would go on to serve as a Confederate officer during the Civil War. Lewis used a Hispanicized version of his name and wound up marrying one of Juan N. Seguín's daughters in 1856.

Leal and Julius Berends in San Antonio, with additional material submitted by Agustin Soto from Laredo.[237] This roster would expand over time to include several more Tejano and Anglo contributors from all over South Texas and even El Paso, with all of them helping to expand the reach of the publication by doubling as distributors.

El Bejareño stands as a modern publication by the standards of 1855, similar in format and design to popular Anglo publications of the era. It typically used the four-page format commonly found in all the major Texas publications at the time, limiting its content to four columns per page as was the standard among smaller newspapers of that era. At launch, the newspaper published twice a month before becoming a weekly by December of 1855 (a sure sign of its almost immediate success). Like all modern newspapers, *El Bejareño* financed its operation through sales of newspaper copies and advertising space. While the paper's political leanings may have secured some funding for it from the Democratic Party, the high density of advertisements featured in each issue suggest that the bulk of its revenue came from selling advertising space on its pages. This is reinforced by the newspaper's use of illustrations, a sparingly employed resource, whose heavy use in advertisements suggests that this was where the money was made. Having adopted the ways of Anglo newspapers, this funding scheme helped *El Bejareño* become first Spanish-language newspaper in post-war South Texas to find financial success and print for an extended period of time without interruption. The newspaper's formatting, funding strategy, and status as an independent publication, represents the embrace by Tejanos of aspects of US print culture introduced to the region after 1840.

From its very first issue, *El Bejareño* distinguished itself from other publications by declaring itself the friend and protector of the Tejano community. The prospectus featured on the

[237] *EL Bejareño*, March 3, 1855, pg. 1. Later issues also show that the newspaper gained agents in Eagle Pass and Refugio, Mexico.

front page of this first issue described its intended audience as "*la población Mejico-Tejana*," defining the community as those people of Mexican heritage who saw the Río Grande as a body of water that separated not just Mexico from the US, but "*el futuro, de el pasado*."[238] As the first post-war Spanish-language publication in South Texas produced by members and allies of the community, *El Bejareño* sought to carve out a space for itself as a publication of significant influence in the Tejano community. *El Bejareño*'s non-ad-oriented content consisted of foreign and domestic news, marriage announcements, political coverage, local news, editorials, poetry, transcripts of correspondence, translations of laws and ordinances, and historical material. According to Coronado, the newspaper team behind *El Bejareño* aimed to use the publication to produce a new social imaginary that would help to reconfigure the Tejano community and make it ready for incorporation into the dominant public sphere.[239] The prospectus laid out in *El Bejareño*'s first issue was not just a description of the community it sought to serve, but marching orders signaling to its readers that *el futuro* for their people lay in embracing the United States and leaving Mexico *en el pasado*.

El Bejareño's push for them to wholeheartedly embrace the United States came during a time when the Tejano community faced an uncertain future following almost two decades of social and political decline. The annexation of Texas and the conflict with Mexico had only served to accelerate the general erosion of Tejano land ownership that began after 1836. Though the state-wide decline in Mexican land ownership progressed unevenly across the state, Armando C. Alonzo lists San Antonio as one of the three cities of Texas where it happened the fastest.[240] Raúl A. Ramos

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[238] "Editorial," *El Bejareño*, February 7, 1855, pg. 1.

[239] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 348–51.

[240] Armando C. Alonzo, *Tejano Legacy: Rancheros and Settlers in South Texas, 1734-1900*, 1st ed (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 181. The other two cities were Nacogdoches and Goliad.

points to 1852 through 1853 as years of significant decline as a result of loss of land and serious population decline among San Antonio's Tejanos.[241] The dragged out conflict with Mexico that had played out in South Texas for over a decade had taken a toll on San Antonio's Tejano population. Many Tejanos had fled from the violence in South Texas and of those that returned after 1848, plenty had come home to find their properties razed or appropriated by a combination of squatters, opportunists, or military officers. The challenges faced by Tejanos in the 1850s were compounded by a wave of increased xenophobia that swept across the United States and accompanied the ascension of the Know-Nothing Party to political prominence. In San Antonio, the Know-Nothing Party targeted the city's Tejano community through city ordinances that directly affected popular public-space pastimes enjoyed by them, such as fandangos, gambling, and cockfighting. Ramos notes that *El Bejareño* emerged in response not only in response these ordinances, but an additional ordinance eliminating the need for the city to produce Spanish translations of its publications.[242]

In the face of potential socio-political annihilation at the hands of the Know-Nothings, *El Bejareño* emerged donning the persona of an ally and protector of the Tejano community. Its first issue established part of the publication's role as aiming to fill the need for a newspaper that defended Mejico-Tejanos and looked out for the political, economic, and social well-being of the *pueblo* (community).[243] With this goal in mind, every issue of *El Bejareño* included Spanish-language translations of laws and ordinances, as well as the activities of the Texas State Legislature. The newspaper also brought attention to the plight of Mexicans across the state, with its agents supplying it with accounts of violence and injustice against Mexicans happening all over

[241] Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861,* 207–10.
[242] Ramos, 209.
[243] "Editorial," *El Bejareño*, February 7, 1855, pg. 1.

Texas. Less than a month in publication, *El Bejareño* even featured a public plea for a Bexar County judge to reconsider their decision in the case of a Mexican man the newspaper considered as wrongfully accused.[244] The publication was also an ardent critic of the authorities and circumstances in the US that enabled mob violence and allowed its perpetrators to go unpunished, especially in cases where the victims of "*La Ley Lynch*" were Mexicans.[245] Clearly *El Bejareño* did not shy away from actively participating in current events and the newspaper is perhaps best known for its very public role in actively opposing the San Antonio branch of the Know-Nothing Party.

The Know-Nothing Party, or "*el Partido Americano*" as *El Bejareño* translated the party's slogan, posed a significant challenge against San Antonio's political establishment during the election cycles of 1854 through 1856. As Ramos describes it, the Know-Nothings secured a year of political power in San Antonio during the summer elections of 1855 by defeating Democratic Party candidates through a campaign that combined elements of xenophobic and anti-Catholic rhetoric that fostered discontent against the city's entrenched political establishment.[246] In San Antonio, Tejanos seemed appeared to be in the crosshairs of the Know-Nothing's nativist policies. During this time, *El Bejareño* served as the political organ of the Tejano Democrats, who sought for the first time to politically organize their community on a wide scale in order to return control of the city to the Democratic Party. The newspaper became the first long-running Spanish-language newspaper in San Antonio to carry political commentary aimed at the Tejano community, listing city and state candidates, as well as providing political editorials and promoting political

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[244] "Al Publico," *El Bejareño*, March 3, 1855, pg. 3.

[245] "La Ley Lynch," *El Bejareño*, June 7, 1856, pg. 2.

[246] Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861*, 208–9. The election of Know-Nothing mayor James R. Sweet and several other members of his party to positions on the city council ended the political stranglehold the Democratic Party had maintained on the city since at least annexation.

gatherings in favor of the Democratic Party hosted by some of the city's most revered Tejano elite.[247] The combined efforts of the Democratic Party and *El Bejareño* proved to be so much of a success that the Know-Nothings faced a landslide defeat in the elections of 1856 thanks in part to the Tejano vote.

The involvement of *El Bejareño* in organizing for the Democratic Party and its efforts to rally the Tejano vote in the party's favor has cast some doubt on the newspaper's authenticity as a Tejano publication. Ramos hesitates to recognize the newspaper as such, believing it is more akin to a political rag sponsored by the Democratic Party. He points to the two non-Tejanos at its helm and its heavy reliance on advertisements mostly featuring Anglo-owned businesses as proof that while *El Bejareño* advocated positions of benefit to Tejanos, it was not a Tejano publication.[248] This interpretation sees the publication as more akin to the bilingual newspapers discussed earlier, Anglo-owned and seeking some benefit in catering to Spanish-speakers, than to the celebrated newspaper of the Tejano community that scholars like Raúl Coronado and Nicolás Kanellos have described it as. While *El Bejareño* did unflinchingly serve the Democratic Party throughout its existence and was most certainly a partisan rag, its content engaged and shaped communities of Mexican heritage across South Texas in ways that were more than just limited to political identity.[249]

Alongside what has been mentioned above, the content of *El Bejareño* really set it apart from what had come before. For Tejanos, *El Bejareño* was the only publication that encouraged its

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[247] "Junta Democrata," *El* B*ejareño*, December 15, 1855, pg. 1. Referred to as "*Junta Democrata*," these gatherings often featured speeches by old Tejano elite who had led the community since before the Texas Revolution. Men like José Antonio Navarro, who in their old age urged their community to side with the Democratic Party and embrace American identities.

[248] Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861,* 210–11.

[249] Thanks to its agents in Laredo, Eagle Pass, Corpus Christi, Piedras Negras and other parts of the region, *El Bejareño* had a reach that encompassed all of South Texas.

readership to submit their own personal experiences of injustice to the paper, publishing these accounts in a fashion similar to letters to the editor. It was also unique in its production of Spanish-language content that could be considered as part of its entertainment sections, segments consisting of history, poetry, and proverbs. Many of the poems featured were submissions by members of the Tejano community. The newspaper also featured news about local community gatherings, such as for Texas Independence Day celebrations and weddings, with *El Bejareño* often publishing wedding announcements for members of the community marrying not just in San Antonio, but also Laredo, Eagle Pass, and even in Mexico. In this way, *El Bejareño* built a rapport within the Tejano community, becoming a sort of community forum connecting people of Mexican heritage across vast geographical distances. Even if it was a puppet of the Democratic Party, *El Bejarenno* played an active role in helping forge a post-1848 Tejano identity in South Texas. Its content represents a good example of what Benedict Anderson has described as the process by which the printed word helps individuals to imagine themselves as part of a larger community that transcends their immediate locality.[250] Through its content, especially its historical inserts, it defined who and what the Tejano community was not just in San Antonio, but across South Texas thanks to its reach.

Similar to when war engulfed the region in the 1840s, the violence brought about by the Civil War in the 1860s brought an end to a small but growing community of Spanish-language publications in South Texas. *El Bejareño* and the Spanish-language newspapers that followed it at the end of the 1850s all but vanished by the 1860s. Coronado lays part of the blame on the prohibitive costs carried by printing supplies, such as paper, which became even more exorbitant as the secession crisis and subsequent civil war engulfed the region.[251] Other aspects that certainly

[250] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 188.

[251] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 324. Though cheaper paper had begun to be pioneered, a paper mill would not be built in Texas until after the US Civil War.

played a role was the entrenchment of xenophobic sentiments towards people of Mexican heritage and the declining quality of educational and financial opportunities accessible to Tejanos and other Mexican communities in Texas.[252] The disappearance of Spanish-language newspapers by these communities at the end of the 1850s represents the final disruption in the history of newspapers produced by people of Mexican heritage in South Texas. Starting in the 1880s, new publications in the hands of publishers of Mexican heritage would emerge with some frequency. South Texas, serving as both a refuge for political exiles from Mexico and a second cultural Mexican homeland, would emerge as the cradle of Mexican printing in Texas during the Gilded Age. These newspapers, under the direct control of Mexican and Tejano printers, would engage in their own reconfigurations of *el pueblo*.

Chapter 3: The Newspapers of the 1890s

Published in 1997, *So All Is Not Lost* is a book by Anthony Gabriel Meléndez describing the history of the Spanish-language press in New Mexico from its beginnings in 1834 to its decline following statehood for New Mexico in the twentieth-century. At the heart of Meléndez's historical

[252] Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*, 72–75. A combination of population decline and land loss helped to diminish the political and financial importance of Mexicans in South Texas.

narrative lies the story of a cohort of Spanish-language journalists (often editor-publishers) who beginning in the 1880s, established Spanish-language newspapers to combat the social decline experienced by their communities after 1848.[253] These publications not only fostered the birth of a regional Spanish-language print culture but also played a pivotal role in uniting New Mexico's communities of Mexican heritage through cultural solidarity under a collective *Mexicano* identity.[254] Through their newspapers, Mexicano editor-publishers helped to create a historical consciousness among their communities from which they could challenge cultural devaluation and collectively imagine a better future that no longer included Mexico.[255] Meléndez's work demonstrates how Mexicanos in New Mexico used the printed word as a tool for cultural redemption. Newspapers, as a massively produced and widely consumed commodity, played a vital role in the codification and dissemination of the shared narratives that upheld and grew the imagined community.[256] By providing a platform for their voices and stories to be told, the Spanish-language newspapers of New Mexico not only served as a means of communication but also as a catalyst for social and political change. In South Texas, a similar collective response to life in the United States would materialize among editor-publishers of Mexican heritage at the turn of the twentieth-century. Yet theirs would face South, fostering links with Mexico based on a shared cultural heritage.

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[253] Anthony Gabriel Meléndez, *So All Is Not Lost: The Poetics of Print in Nuevomexicano Communities, 1834-1958* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 26–27.

[254] Meléndez, 60. The term *Mexicano* was used by people of Mexican heritage in New Mexico to describe their shared cultural ancestry. Because of its use in an inclusive manner, it helped to flatten differences of race/class/national origin among members of the community.

[255] Meléndez, 136.

[256] Meléndez, 135; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition (2016) (Verso, 1983), 188. Mexicano publishers in New Mexico used their newspapers to create what Meléndez refers to as *"una literature nacional*" (a national literature).

As discussed in the previous chapter, newspaper activity among communities of Mexican heritage in South Texas peaked for the first time following the war between the United States and Mexico. Of the publications that emerged during this era, San Antonio's *El Bejareño* was one of the few that can genuinely be considered to represent the community that consumed it.[257] However, the newspaper did not last beyond the 1850s. The widespread social and economic instability experienced in Texas during the US Civil War likely contributed to the inability to get a Spanish-language press started following the demise of *El Bejareño*.[258] The Reconstruction Era that followed saw a re-emergence of Spanish-language newspapers in South Texas of both the monolingual, bilingual, and even trilingual variety.[259] Starting in the 1870s, political exiles from Mexico who were critical of Mexican President Porfirio Díaz began to arrive in South Texas. Wherever they settled, these political exiles established newspapers intended to be consumed by Mexican nationals as a way to continue to their political activism against the regime of the Mexican dictator.[260] These newspapers rarely lasted longer than two years before disappearing in the face of financial hardship or the return to Mexico of their editor-publishers. It was not until the late 1880s, with the launch of Pablo Cruz's *El Regidor* (1888-1914) in San Antonio, that South Texas once again had a lasting Spanish-language publication that catered to the needs of the region's Mexican heritage communities.

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[257] Raúl Coronado, *A World Not to Come: A History of Latino Writing and Print Culture* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2013), 353. I failed to mention it, but San Antonio's *El Ranchero* (1856-1858) was another publication that represented the Tejano community. I excluded it from my analysis because its editor-publisher was a Cuban exile.

[258] Coronado, 379.

[259] Conchita Hassell Winn, "Spanish-Language Newspapers," Texas State Historical Association Website, January 1, 1996, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/spanish-language-newspapers. TSHA website mentions Brownsville's *El Correo del Río Grande* (1860-1867), which was published in English, Spanish, and French.

[260] Laura Gutiérrez-Witt, "Cultural Continuity in the Face of Change: Hispanic Printers in Texas," in *Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage, Vol. II* (Houston, Texas: Arte Público Press, 1996), 263.

This chapter examines Pablo Cruz's *El Regidor* and Justo Cárdenas's *El Democrata Fronterizo* (1896-1920), both pivotal Spanish-language publications that emerged in South Texas during the latter half of the nineteenth-century. These newspapers hold the distinction of being the first independent Spanish-language newspapers in Texas to achieve long-lasting circulation in the region. Produced by editor-publishers born on Mexican soil, these newspapers served as ethnic and migrant publications, reflecting the perspectives of newly arrived individuals in the United States as well as the enduring elements of the native Mexican community of the region. By providing news from Mexico and the United States in Spanish, these newspapers fulfilled a vital role in informing and influencing the Spanish-language communities of South Texas. Their lasting presence in the region amplified their impact, making them influential agents of culture that shaped the public spheres of these communities.

El Regidor and *El Democrata Fronterizo* launched amidst a wave of change in the communications infrastructure of South Texas that followed Reconstruction and impacted all newspapers printed in the region. Notably, it was the introduction of the wired telegraph service and the expansion of the railroad into the region that played the most significant roles in reshaping the newspaper industry in South Texas. The telegraph was first introduced to Texas in 1854, when lines that helped connect East Texas to Louisiana were set up by the state chartered Texas and Red River Telegraph Company.[261] That same year, the service was extended to Houston and then to Galveston, but the poorly managed telegraph company soon saw its operations fall apart and by 1855, telegraph service in Texas had come to a full stop.[262] In the years immediately after, private

[261] Curtis Bishop and L.R. Wilcox, "Telegraph Service," Texas State Historical Association, 1976, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/telegraph-service.

[262] Charles H. Dillon, "The Arrival of the Telegraph in Texas," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (1960): 205. Service had always been patchy and frequently interrupted, but in 1855, the company's workers revolted in demand of owed backpay. Not long after, the Texas and Red River Telegraph Company found itself financially insoluble and collapsed.

investors took it upon themselves to ensured that their neck of the woods became connected.[263] This activity excluded South Texas and so it was not until after the Civil War that the telegraph arrived in the region alongside the expansion of the railroad. In the meantime, the Federal Government connected San Antonio to the national mail service in 1857. This increased the delivery of mail from a bimonthly endeavor to an event that occurred twice a week and while it was disrupted during the war, the service only improved with the extension of the railroad mail service into South Texas after the 1860s.[264] Returning to the issue of the telegraph, an article by Charles H. Dillon claims that by 1877, the United States Federal Government had ensured that the region finally received a more permanent and stable telegraph service.[265] The arrival of these technologies to South Texas initiated a new era of reliable and efficient communication that facilitated the exchange of information and revolutionized the media landscape of the region.

The arrival of the railroad and telegraph to South Texas gave newspapers in the region the ability to quickly access the latest national and international news and to reach wider audiences through delivery networks that were safer and faster than anything that had come before. However, in connecting the region to the wider national ecosystem of print media, it also imposed upon publishers in the region the practices and business culture of the nation's more established newspapers. The expansion of the railroads was accompanied by an expansion of national and international newspapers into South Texas. Local publications now had to compete with the larger and more experienced newspapers from around the country in a process that paved the way towards

[263] Dillon, 205–6.

[264] Torsten Kathke, *Wires That Bind: Nation, Region, and Technology in the Southwestern United States, 1854-1920*, ebook (Verlag, Bielefeld: Transcript, 2017), 88.

[265] Dillon, "The Arrival of the Telegraph in Texas," 208–9.

a more centralized public sphere.[266] In order to survive, smaller newspapers began to emulate the big city publications, reforming their journalistic practices, the physical layout of their publications, and purchasing syndicated news content. This was the era in which Western Union's monopoly of the telegraph helped the New York Associated Press dominate the distribution of national news and other materials.[267]

The arrival of the railroad produced a moment of cultural encounter between the dominant Anglo American culture of the United States and the communities of Mexican heritage in South Texas. Railroad transportation helped bring Mexican communities in the United States and Mexico closer together but the commercial opportunities that opened up also helped to attract more Anglo Americans from the national interior to the region.[268] A national interest in the South Texas borderlands after the 1880s also brought reporters curious about life in the borderlands to the region. Especially after Catarino Garza's uprising in the 1890s, their attention was captured by the local Mexican residents who in the eyes of one reporter writing for *Harper's Weekly*, "hold life very cheap, and do not count it a grievous crime to murder either in private quarrel or public brawl."[269] According to Juan González and Joseph Torres, racist commentary like this became all too common with the wiring of the news media. They write that because of Western Union charged per word sent and sensationalism sold papers, reporters tended to leave context out of their descriptions of events, especially when it came to representing people of color.[270] This type of

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[266] Juan González and Joseph Torres, *News for All the People: The Epic Story of Race and the American Media* (London and New York: Verso, 2011), 137; George H. Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper* (Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1999), 66–68.

[267] Paul Starr, *The Creation of the Media: Political Origins of Modern Communications* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 252.

[268] David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 96; González and Torres, *News for All the People*, 147.

[269] "The Hunt for Garza," *Harper's Weekly*, January 30, 1892.

[270] González and Torres, *News for All the People*, 142–43.

journalism, especially when syndicated, helped to popularize racist stereotypes among audiences across the United States.[271]

The editor-publishers of Spanish-language publications benefitted from the improved communications infrastructure in the region in similar ways as their local English-language counterparts. The railroad helped to connect their businesses with the big urban centers of the East Coast and American Midwest, places where industrial innovation and competition in the newspaper industry had led to falling prices in paper production and the introduction of more powerful printing presses.[272] Telegram communications made it easier for editor-publishers to sell advertising space to more businesses and connect with far-away brand advertisers seeking to expand into new markets.[273] This was the type of advertising first introduced in New York City in 1841, involving large companies and department store brands that operated at the national level and strategically deployed ads as they expanded into new markets.[274] While advertising had always been a source of revenue for newspapers, George H. Douglas argued in *The Golden Age of the Newspaper* that the rapid increase in the volume of this type of advertising after the 1870s helped to boost the newspaper industry into the larger sphere of big business.[275]

These technologies also introduced some benefits that were unique to the editor-publishers of Spanish-language publications. Most importantly, was the whole new level of connectivity between Mexico and the United States introduced by the arrival of the railroads and the telegram. Beginning in the late 1880s, these technologies helped link Northern Mexico and the United States through the flow of goods, patterns of circular migration, and as Emilio Zamora points out, an

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[271] González and Torres, 141. According to the authors, almost eighty percent of all news that appeared in small-town newspapers originated from AP dispatches by the 1880s.

[272] Starr, *The Creation of the Media*, 252.

[273] Starr, 262–63.

[274] Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper*, 82–86.

[275] Douglas, 82.

international workforce that used the railroads and their feet to travel between the two countries.[276] The potential audiences for the Spanish-language newspapers grew as people of Mexican heritage were drawn to South Texas by the opportunities made available through the economic development of the region. The new technologies also dramatically increased access to news from Mexico, allowing editor-publishers to more readily consult newspapers produced in Mexico City and other major urban centers from across the border. This increased connectivity between Mexico and United States was also reflected in the content of the Spanish-language newspapers produced in the region during the latter half of the nineteenth-century. Browsing newspapers produced in South Texas during this era reveals no shortage of content sourced from newspapers from Mexico, a departure from the content that graced the pages *El Bejareño*. Spanish-language newspapers of this era also displayed a very high interest in the politics of Mexico. Both Pablo Cruz and Justo Cárdenas frequently used their newspapers as platforms to comment on the actions of Porfirio Díaz and his administration. The combination of increased connectivity and expanded readership engendered by the new technologies and their willingness to use them to their advantage, allowed editor-publishers like Cruz and Cárdenas to establish influential and long-lasting publications in South Texas.

It was during the latter half of the nineteenth century that Abraham Cruz Valdez and his family crossed north of the Rio Grande and established themselves in Texas as a prosperous family of Mexican entrepreneurs. The Cruz family started out their business ventures in Texas with a shoe shop and dry goods store in Marion County in the 1860s, amassing enough wealth over time to buy land and real estate in nearby Floresville by 1881 and finally, relocating to San Antonio as an

[276] Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1993), 15–18.

established middle-class merchant family in 1883.[277] In the economic capital of South Texas, Cruz and his two eldest sons, Pablo and Victor, established a successful print shop before launching the Spanish-language newspaper *El Heraldo* in 1887. Since the end of the 1850s, Spanish-language newspapers serving San Antonio's Mexican population had suffered from the financial instability of not having access to economic resources or the subscription base necessary to sustain independent publications. *El Heraldo* burst onto the scene on the heels of the disappearance of the only two Spanish-language newspapers serving San Antonio's West Side at the time, *El Centinela* and *El Hogar*.[278] The newspaper's success would bring Cruz Valdez recognition and win him an induction into the Texas Press Association in the 1890s. It would also inspire his two eldest sons to launch their own publications, with Victor establishing *El Correo Mexicano* and Pablo Cruz launching the famous *El Regidor* in 1888.

Pablo Cruz was one of the older Cruz children. He was born in the Mexican state of Coahuila to his father's first wife and had come north with his siblings to join his father in Lido, Texas in 1877 at eleven years of age. His father remarried and the family soon relocated to Floresville, where historian Ana Luisa Martinez-Catsam speculates that Cruz and his siblings began attending school. Though there were no free public schools to attend in the newly established Floresville, Martinez-Catsam states in her 2003 dissertation that as "a merchant whose personal property, in Lodi and Floresville, was valued at over one thousand dollars in 1881, Cruz Valdez possessed the financial means to send his children to school".[279] As one of two older male children in the family, Pablo was educated in preparation to join his father in managing the family's business

[277] Ana Luisa Martinez-Catsam, "The Voice of the People: Pablo Cruz, El Regidor, and Mexican American Identity in San Antonio, Texas, 1888-1910" (PhD dissertation, Lubbock, Texas Tech University, 2003), 26–29.

[278] Martinez-Catsam, 51.

[279] Martinez-Catsam, 29.

affairs. The education of the Cruz children in the 1880s is emblematic of the inclination towards education among wealthier Mexican immigrants of the period, a trend noticed by scholars like Richard Griswold del Castillo. In his 1980 study on literacy rates among Mexicans living in San Antonio during the latter half of the nineteenth century, Griswold noticed that while literacy rates stagnated among Tejanos after the 1850s, there was a steady increase in the 1860s and 1870s that correlated with increased immigration from Mexico.[280] Griswold speculated that Mexican immigrants with a mastery over English and Spanish might be responsible for the spike. Griswold's findings and the Cruz family's story certainly points to the fact that the economic opportunities present in South Texas at the end of the nineteenth century compelled a more educated class of Mexicans to cross north into the United States.

The Cruz family appears to have been part of a significant wave of well to do Mexicans who fled to South Texas during the years of the French occupation of Mexico, perhaps seeking to distance themselves from the conflict with France and take advantage of the economic boom that followed the end of the Civil War in the United States. It was near the end of the Reconstruction Era that the railroad arrived in South Texas and spurred the economic transformation of the region. Immigrant entrepreneurs like Cruz Valdez were poised to benefit from the transportation improvements that helped create a railroad corridor connecting Texas to Mexico, a network that brought Mexican laborers to South Texas and sent Anglo businessmen to Mexico.[281] Census records show that in 1860, the population of Mexican people who had recently arrived in the

[280] Richard Griswold del Castillo, "Literacy in San Antonio, Texas, 1850-1860," *Latin American Research Review* 15, no. 3 (1980): 182–83.

[281] David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 90; George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 39–41; Colin MacLachlan and William H. Beezley, *El Gran Pueblo: A History of Greater Mexico* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994), 181.

United States was at 42,435. By 1870, that number had reached around 68,000 and by 1890, it reached 77,853. Ten years before the Mexican Revolution, the number of new arrivals had gone up by more than 30,000 and the total population of Mexican nationals in the United States hit 103,393.[282] These economic and demographic changes experienced throughout the region gave Mexican families like that of the Cruz clan the opportunity to profit from doing business in the growing number of Mexican enclaves in Texas.[283] These families established pharmacies, grocery stores, and other businesses in Mexican neighborhoods that provided needed services in these communities. The profits from these ventures helped these families establish themselves as part of a limited Mexican middle-class during the Gilded Age.

By 1890, Pablo Cruz had been publishing *El Regidor* on a mostly weekly basis for at least two years. The paper continued to cost five cents and advertisements still dominated the four-page publication as advertising fees continued to be a major source of funding for the newspaper. Another way that Cruz kept the paper afloat was by offering printing services out of the same print shop from which *El Regidor* was published. Every issue of the newspaper contained an advertisement for the "Imprenta de El Regidor", which was the official storefront from which Cruz sold books and offered an assortment of printing services to the public and businesses alike.[284] The newspaper also proved to be an excellent platform for promoting Cruz's other side venture as a small bookstore owner. *El Regidor* not only gave Cruz a place to list the books he currently had on sale for a relatively large audience to see, but also served as the perfect space in which to provide these potential buyers with sample sized excerpts of the books. Spanish translations of works like the French origin *La Hija del Amante*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and other classics were printed

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[282] United States Bureau of the Census, *12th. Census of the United States 1900*, vol. 1, Washington, 1901, part 1.

[283] Martinez-Catsam, "The Voice of the People," 29.

[284] *El Regidor*, April 26, 1890, Pg. 3.

on the pages of *El Regidor*'s "Variedades" section. The genius of Cruz's marketing strategy lay in splitting up these works by chapters that were then delivered on a weekly basis within the pages of that week's *El Regidor*. Cruz, transformed these classic texts into serialized productions that readers could follow each week only in his newspaper.

Like *El Bejareño* before it, Cruz's newspaper drew its funding from both Mexican and Anglo-American sources. The pages of *El Regidor* were filled with advertisements paid for by Anglo-owned enterprises, with many of these translated to Spanish. Advertisements promoting services and establishments in Mexico could also be found alongside these. In her dissertation, Martinez-Catsam describes Cruz not just as a bridge that brought both the Anglo and Mexican portions of San Antonio together on the pages of *El Regidor*, but also as a bridge that helped to connect its readers of Mexican heritage with Mexico.[285] By working as the middleman between Anglo and Mexican entrepreneurs and their prospective Spanish-speaking clientele in city's West Side, Cruz adopted the mantle of cultural broker, a role that had once belonged exclusively to the old Tejano elite of San Antonio. In the history of the region, elite Tejanos had traditionally served as cultural guides and assistants to Anglo-Americans attempting to navigate Mexican culture and society in South Texas. Coined by Raúl A. Ramos to describe the role of Tejanos from San Antonio in the history of Texas, the term describes the way that this group functioned as intermediary or go-betweens for Anglo-Americans in the 1820s, helping to pave the way for a culture of cooperation rooted in wide-scale commercial and social interactions between both groups.[286] As a cultural broker, Pablo Cruz served to connect Anglo enterprises with potential Mexican clientele. During a decade in which violence against Mexicans was at an all-time high, an ad for an Anglo

[285] Martinez-Catsam, "The Voice of the People," 63–66.

[286] Raúl A. Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 84–83.

business on the pages of *El Regidor* was an endorsement and a reassurance that the proprietor was safe for Mexican customers to do business with.[287]

Around the time that Cruz launched *El* Regidor, some 150 miles south of San Antonio, the construction of a railroad extension connecting the city of Laredo with Mexico in 1881 spurred the transformation of that city. Like San Antonio, Laredo had begun as a Spanish settlement. Established in 1755 as the Villa de San Agustín de Laredo, it represented the northernmost of the Villas del Norte, a chain of settlements established by the Spanish government in the northernmost portion of Nuevo Santander. The Spanish government hoped that the presence of colonists in the area would help to redirect Native American raids away from the interior, as well as help Spain get one step closer to firmly establishing a hold on its northeast territories.[288] Isolation from the political affairs of Mexico City and neglect under the Spanish and Mexican governments forced Laredo to rely on its own soldier-settlers for defense from the dangers of the region, helping to forge a unique borderlands culture of cooperation between individuals, hyper-individuality as a community and dissent from centralized power among the people of Laredo.[289] In the 1840s, the city came under control of the United States during its military conquest of northern Mexico. By 1846, it had been placed under the protection of former President of the Texas Republic Mirabeau B. Lamar and his army. Lamar and his forces were stationed in Laredo during the war with Mexico

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[287] Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861*; Omar S. Valerio-Jiménez, *River of Hope: Forging Identity and Nation in the Rio Grande Borderlands* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), 137; Sam W. Haynes, *Unsettled Land: From Revolution to Republic, the Struggle for Texas* (New York: Basic Books, 2022), 310–11. These authors show that the conflicts of 1836 and 1848 unleashed a wave of widespread violence against people of Mexican heritage that intensified again during the uprisings of Juan Cortina and Catarino Garza that took place during the latter half of the nineteenth-century.

[288] Robert D. Wood, *Life in Laredo: A Documentary History from the Laredo Archives* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2004), 14–16.

[289] George T. Díaz, *Border Contraband: A History of Smuggling Across the Rio Grande* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 16–17; Beatriz Eugenia De la Garza, *From the Republic of the Rio Grande: A Personal History of the Place and the People* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), 2–4.

and tasked with keeping the peace, and after 1848, helping to ensure that the locals understood that their town had become a part of the United States.[290]

The 1848 treaty between Mexico and the U.S. split Laredo in half, physically dividing in half a community that had recently voiced its desire to be given back to Mexico in a referendum vote just the year before.[291] Mexicans in Laredo were also forced to adjust to a new power structure in which Anglo-Americans dominated state and national politics, with the new order enforced in Laredo by the presence of U.S. troops permanently stationed at the newly built Fort McIntosh. Despite the rough start, Laredo seems to have settled into a relative climate of cooperation by the 1860s. Scholars typically agree that Laredo, before the arrival of the railroad, serves as a perfect example of David Montejano's peace structure. Rather than be immediately confrontational, the new Anglo arrivals chose to integrate into old Laredo's Mexican elite, who were allowed to stay in charge of local affairs and given the opportunity to preserve the city's Mexican character.[292] Gilberto Miguel Hinojosa believes that conflict was evaded because Laredo had become sparsely populated as a result of the war and the 1848 division of the town, meaning plenty of land was available, but also because Anglo-Americans were numerically outnumbered by people of Mexican descent and in need of help from the old elite to lead the town's economy.[293]

The first cracks in Laredo's peace structure appeared in the 1880s, when the railroads arrived. Just like they had done in San Antonio, the railroads helped integrate Laredo into the

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[290] Díaz, *Border Contraband: A History of Smuggling Across the Rio Grande*, 15.

[291] De la Garza, *From the Republic of the Rio Grande: A Personal History of the Place and the People*, 3–5; Díaz, *Border Contraband: A History of Smuggling Across the Rio Grande*, 15; Gilberto Miguel Hinojosa, *A Borderlands Town in Transition: Laredo, 1755-1870* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1983), 58.

[292] Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*, 8, 310–11; Elliott Young, "Deconstructing 'La Raza': Identifying the 'Gente Decente' of Laredo, 1904-1911," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 98, no. 2 (1994): 229.

[293] Hinojosa, *A Borderlands Town in Transition: Laredo, 1755-1870*, 70.

national economy, which resulted in increased migration from the interior of the United States to the city. In just one decade, Laredo's population jumped from 3,521 people in 1880, to 11,319 by 1890.[294] By 1882, modern brick buildings had begun to replace the stone and adobe buildings that had dotted the town for decades and its market plazas began transforming into large business sectors as storefronts began to go up.[295] An increased European immigrant and Anglo-American presence in the city put an end to the conditions that had held up the peace structure. In 1886, the Anglo dominated Citizens Party emerged as a powerful force in Laredo. Their victory at the polls that same year resulted in the defeat of Laredo's old Mexican elite and a riot that left more than two dozen dead and at least 40 people wounded before U.S. forces from Fort McIntosh put an end to the violence.[296] The *Austin Daily Statesman* reported the next day that the riot had been "…like a small battle. Bullets whistled from all directions…".[297] However, it appears that in the aftermath of the violence, Anglo and Mexican elites rekindled alliances. During the 1887 elections the following year, the *Laredo Times* ran an article which indicates that the two political groups had formed an alliance, with representatives of the groups quoted as saying, "We are a band of Brothers".[298] While altered slightly to accommodate the new arrivals, Laredo's peace structure was mostly preserved for the time being.

It was during these times of rapid change that Justo Cárdenas arrived in Laredo from Mexico, perhaps fleeing for his life. In 1885, the Díaz regime dismantled Nuevo León's elected government and installed Bernardo Reyes as interim governor of the state, unleashing a wave of

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[294] Hinojosa, 119.

[295] Seb. S. Wilcox, "The Laredo City Election and Riot of April, 1886," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (1941): 4.

[296] Young, "Deconstructing 'La Raza,'" 230.

[297] "Laredo – The Latest Last Night From the Scene of the Late Riot," *The Austin Daily Statesman,* April 9, 1886, pg. 1.

[298] Wilcox, "The Laredo City Election and Riot of April, 1886," 23.

violence and repression aimed at those opposing the change.[299] As a lawyer and publisher in the city of Monterrey, Cárdenas's move north of the Rio Grande that same year may have been prompted by the regime change and the danger it might have represented for someone who was very vocal about politics. Immediately after arriving in Laredo, Cárdenas began publishing a newspaper and is credited as the creator of Laredo's *La Colonia Mexicana*, which began publishing in 1885. In 1888 he firmly established himself as one of the city's printers and publishers when he opened the Casa Editorial de Justo Cárdenas. While it is not clear what happened to his first newspaper, it was from this new print shop that he began publishing *El Correo de Laredo* in 1891. The new publication benefitted greatly from the economic development that Laredo was undergoing during that era. The railroads converging on Laredo gave Cárdenas access to the well-established paper and ink supply markets in the United States. Cárdenas also benefitted from the expansion of postal services, when Laredo's Post Office increased the number of deliveries and pick-ups, going from providing a weekly service to a daily one, allowing Cárdenas to ship his newspaper more frequently across the border and to other cities in Texas.[300]

Justo Cárdenas's *El Correo de Laredo* presented itself as a four-page publication that relied on telegraph wires, local businesses, other newspapers, and the ingenuity of its editor-publisher to generate content with which to fill its pages. News of events in Texas were taken from translations of English-language newspapers delivered to the city via train and international news coverage was made possible by transcripts drawn from the wired telegraph.[301] Its coverage of events in

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[299] J. Gabriel Martínez-Serna, "State-Construction and Industrial Development in the Transformation of State Violence in the Texas-Mexico Borderlands during the Early Porfiriato," in *These Ragged Edges: Histories of Violence along the U.S.-Mexico Border* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022), 179–80; Elliott Young, *Catarino Garza's Revolution on the Texas-Mexico Border* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 202.

[300] Jerry Thompson, *Tejano Tiger: José de Los Santos Benavides and the Texas-Mexico Borderlands, 1823-1891* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 2017), 234.

[301] *El Correo de Laredo,* July 16, 1891, pg. 1.

Mexico tended to come from wired material and copied articles from Mexican newspapers like *El Mundo* and *El Universal*.[302] *El Correo de Laredo* stands out from other publications for the various editorials consisting of travel accounts drawn from Cárdenas's use of the railway to visit Corpus Christi. The travel accounts describe the modern marvel of the passenger train and detail the people and places that Cárdenas encountered while visiting Corpus Christi. These accounts included the names of the men who the editor-publisher surrounded himself with while in the city, as well as a tour of the city's commercial center and its many Mexican-owned establishments.[303] These travel accounts acquainted his readers with the Mexican community of Corpus Christi and familiarized them with modern transportation like the passenger train and streetcar, making them aware of what to expect in traveling to and from the two cities. The publication's connections to Corpus Christi were further strengthened through the presence of permanent correspondents. Letters containing news from Corpus Christi were printed in *El Correo de Laredo*, allowing readers to learn about and follow the latest on the various trials and tribulations that unfolded in the city during the newspaper's print run.[304] These stories show how Mexican communities in South Texas interacted with the new communications technologies introduced in the latter half of the nineteenth-century and used them to become familiar with one another. *El Correo de Laredo* represents the role played by newspapers as platforms that united large swaths of readers across large distances, encouraging relations and exchanges between the different Mexican heritage populations which made up their community of readers.

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[302] *El Correo de Laredo,* November 28, 1891.

[303] *El Correo de Laredo,* July 30, 1891, pg. 1-2.

[304] "Correspondencia," *El Correo de Laredo*, July 30, 1891, pg. 2. A letter sent to Cárdenas by a correspondent in Corpus Christi with information on events in the city and meant to be published in the newspaper.

Like *El Regidor*, *El Correo de Laredo* also benefitted from the increase in commercial activity that came to define a modernizing South Texas at the end of the nineteenth century. Advertisements were one of the sources of income that propped up Cárdenas's newspaper and just like *El Regidor*, there were plenty of ads promoting Anglo-American businesses.[305] Beyond being one of the spaces through which Spanish-language newspapers performed their role as cultural brokers, the mutually beneficial relationship with Anglo business owners also reflected the binational nature of these publications. *El Correo de Laredo* was filled with ads for Mexican and Anglo businesses from both sides of the border, with its fourth and final page often consisting of nothing but ad space. Unlike San Antonio, where the Cruz family newspapers had dominated with very little in the way of competition, the rapid economic development of Laredo and its geographic location across from Nuevo Laredo, made the city's newspaper market a highly competitive one. Not only was Cárdenas's *El Correo de Laredo* competing against other local Spanish-language newspapers like *El Figaro* (1890), *El Mutualista* (1886), and *El Horizonte* (1879), but it was also competing against bilingual newspapers like *Two Laredos* (1879), while also facing off against the Mexican newspapers published in Nuevo Laredo.[306] In additon, the transportation revolution increased the number of other Spanish-language publications found in the city. Catarino Garza's *El Comercio de Mexico* and *El Libre Pensador* were but two of at least thirteen different Spanish-language publications that utilized the rail-powered postal service to make their way to the urban centers of South Texas in the 1880s.[307] This hyper-competitive newspaper ecosystem made it

[305] *El Correo de Laredo*, July 16, 1891.

[306] Nicolás Kanellos and Helvetia Martell, *Hispanic Periodicals in the United States, Origins to 1960: A Brief History and Comprehensive Bibliography* (Arte Público Press, 2000), 301–5; Julián Efrén Camacho Martínez, "Palabras Del Otro Lado: Las Fronteras Sociales De La Gente Decente de Laredo, Texas. El Caso de Justo Cárdenas Y Su Semanario El Demócrata Fronterizo, 1905-1913" (Master's Thesis, Mexico City, Centro De Investigación Y Docencia Económicas, A.C., 2018), 41.

[307] Young, *Catarino Garza's Revolution on the Texas-Mexico Border*, 204–5.

difficult for a score of the region's Spanish-language publications to attain financial stability, with many failing to remain in business for more than a few years.

While *El Correo de Laredo* failed to survive beyond 1897, it was not the last newspaper that Cárdenas published. In 1890, the editor-publisher launched the famous *El Democrata Fronterizo* from his print shop in Laredo. Like his previous newspaper, *El Democrata Fronterizo* was a four-page Spanish-language publication, differing from the previous in its column size, adoption of widespread illustrations and use of a variety of font styles. The content of the new newspaper had also changed from that of its predecessor, with *El Democrata Fronterizo* containing a much greater focus on material aimed at educating its readers. The newspaper often ran articles that criticized popular habits or promoted particular values and lifestyles as remedies to the malaise of modernity. Articles with titles like "*Mas Trabajo, Menos Fiestas*" or "*Obligaciones Sociales*", sought to influence the daily habits of readers, promoting lifestyle changes by claiming that adopting these habits would not only benefit their lives, but uplift the entire Mexican community of Laredo.[308] This type of content also reflects the social norms and moral aspirations of a group of people that Elliot Young has referred to as the *gente decente* of Laredo, a group of local elites to which Justo Cárdenas definitely belonged.[309] Young popularized the term to describe the Mexican elite of Laredo and their Anglo-American allies, but mostly the first group, which strived to set themselves apart from other people of Mexican descent through the embrace of a value system that prioritized respectability, education, and honor.[310] The term places an emphasis on this group's embrace of these values and their fascination with progress and modernity. As people of means in their community, they sought to share and promote this value system to the rest of the

[308] "Obligaciones Sociales," *El Democrata Fronterizo*, September 9, 1905, Pg. 1; "Mas Trabajo, Menos Fiestas," *El Democrata Fronterizo,* September 16, 1905, pg. 1.
[309] Camacho Martínez, "Palabras Del Otro Lado," 1–2.
[310] Young, "Deconstructing 'La Raza,'" 228–29.

Mexicans in Laredo using their positions of leadership in social clubs and political organizations, and in the case of Justo Cárdenas, their role as editor-publishers of popular newspapers.

In the same year that Cárdenas launched his new newspaper in Laredo, Pablo Cruz's *El Regidor* was enjoying its tenth year of publication in San Antonio. The newspaper had changed much in appearance since 1890, making huge improvements in quality and content size. At launch, *El Regidor*'s first page had consisted of content divided into three columns, with a fourth column reserved for advertisements.[311] The masthead or nameplate, the area where the name of the newspaper is displayed on the first page, bore the words "EL REGIDOR" boldly displayed against blank space. To its right, smaller text displayed the newspaper's price, circulation schedule, and to its left stood English words proclaiming *El Regidor* as, "the best Spanish advertising medium published in this City." This latter part was not aimed at his regular audience but at the national brands that might have an interest in advertising to the niche audience his newspaper served. For men like Pablo Cruz, a newspaper was not just a business venture, but a family's livelihood. The emphasis on using them to generate advertisement revenue and promote newspaper adjacent endeavors, such as his print shop and bookstore, was a strategy for economic survival that was not uncommon among many editor-publishers at the turn of the century.[312] Unlike their counterparts in the big east coast cities of New York and Philadelphia, where newspapers were becoming big business, newspapermen living in cities with much smaller populations were often forced to diversify their interests by involving themselves in multiple business endeavors that their newspapers were then used to promote.[313]

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[311] *El Regidor*, January 18, 1890, pg. 1.

[312] Other Spanish-language editor-publishers also tended to sell printing services on the side to make ends meet.

[313] Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper*, 81–83; Martinez-Catsam, "The Voice of the People," 54; Starr, *The Creation of the Media*, 257.

A year after its launch, Pablo Cruz began to implement subtle changes in the appearance and content of *El Regidor* that pushed it closer towards the professional standards established by big city Gilded Age newspapers like the *New York World*. During the Antebellum Era, falling costs encouraged many to enter the newspaper business, leading to a crowded and highly competitive market by the end of the century. This in turn, spurred constant and rapid innovation as English-language newspapers competed with one another, especially along the nation's east coast. High competition led to the modernization of the newspaper industry. Following the Civil War, high-speed steam-powered rotary presses replaced the Colombian printing press and its steam-powered upgrade, the following decade gave way to the introduction of the linotype machine, and within a few years, the monotype was introduced.[314] Industrialization helped newspapers publish on a much greater scale during the Gilded Age, which coupled with the transportation revolution, resulted in improved transportation networks in the United States, decreasing costs for editor-publishers, and a wider circulation for their newspapers.[315] The changes that *El Regidor* underwent in appearance and content suggests that Cruz incorporated some of these technological advancements into his own publishing operation. Between 1891 and 1900, *El Regidor* saw a dramatic expansion in its column quantity and an increase in its non-advertisement content. Financial success seems to have allowed the publication to trim back on the number of ads featured on its first page, making way for more news, and more headlines.[316] By 1900, the number of columns present in *El Regidor* had expanded to seven and ads were almost totally gone from the first page. The adoption of an illustrated nameplate for the newspaper's front page suggests that Cruz adopted the use of new printing technologies in order to produce it and the various highly sophisticated illustrations that

[314] Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper*, 84.
[315] Starr, *The Creation of the Media*, 254.
[316] *El Regidor*, January 10, 1891, pg. 1; *El Regidor*, August 3, 1899, pg. 1.

began to show up with frequency on the first page of his newspaper.[317] *El Regidor*'s steady move towards professionalization went in tandem with its growing success. By 1905, the newspaper had achieved that which most independent Spanish-language publications in South Texas aimed to attain, but which had proved far too difficult for most: sustainability and profit.

The adoption of widely held professional standards among newspapers in the United States began in earnest in the 1860s, when famous big city newspapers like Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* (1860-1931) and William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal* (1895-1966) became the first national publications. Aspiring to reach similar success, even regional behemoths like *The Chicago Tribune* (1847-present) and the *San Francisco Examiner* (1863-present) began to emulate the format and content of these big city publications.[318] In San Antonio, the dominant English-language newspapers included the *San Antonio Light* (1881-1993) and the *San Antonio Express* (1865-present), and in Laredo, the *Laredo Daily Times* (1888-1921) set the standard for professionalization. In addition to printing transcripts of national and international news delivered via telegraph, English-language newspapers began to engage in what Paul Starr refers to as "new journalism". This trend was marked by a move towards appealing to bigger and wider audiences through the addition of more and more original and sensational content produced by larger newspaper staffs made possible by the explosion in advertising that occurred after the Civil War.[319] Editor-publishers also took advantage of the rapid developments in printing technology by increasing their use of illustrations and stylized font, transforming the newspaper's first page into the "front-page news".[320] By the 1880s, some publications had begun to engage in what become

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[317] *El Regidor*, January 8, 1903, pg. 1; *El Regidor*, May 25, 1905, pg. 1.

[318] Juan González and Joseph Torres, *News for All the People: The Epic Story of Race and the American Media* (London and New York: Verso, 2011), 51–52; Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper*, 56–57.

[319] Starr, *The Creation of the Media*, 254.

[320] Starr, 254.

known as investigative journalism through their focus on muckraking. Pulitzer's *New York World* was among the first newspapers to adopt a strategy that heavily centered on attracting readership through the spectacle of muckraking and sensationalism.[321] This activist journalism shifted the role of the newspaper from a form of communication focused on reporting news, to one that created news by wielding its power to influence large audiences. The massive success of the *New York World* and other publications who adopted Pulitzer's editorial style helped to mainstream acceptance for this "new journalism" among publications in the United States.

While Spanish-language newspapers certainly tried at different times to emulate the physical appearance and gravitas of mainstream publications, the trend of "new journalism" did not trickle down to these newspapers as much as it reinforced trends that were already present. Activist journalism had made up the majority of what Spanish-language newspapers had been publishing since the 1850s. Tejano newspapers like *El Bejareño* and *El Ranchero* strived to present themselves as active participants in the Mexican-origin community and their content reflected this. *El Bejareño*'s content cheered on the Tejano community in its endeavors and antagonized those it perceived as enemies to the community.[322] Among its most hated enemies were members of the Know-Nothing Party, the anti-immigrant political group that rose to political prominence in San Antonio during the 1850s. In an article from 1855, *El Bejareño* goes so far as to compare the Know-Nothing Party members to snakes, deriding them for their behavior before and after losing an election, criticizing their attempt to monopolize so called "*Americanismo puro*" among themselves.[323] In a time when the problems and needs of people of Mexican heritage were being ignored by mainstream newspapers, *El Bejareño* offered a space where their concerns could be

[321] Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper*, 191.
[322] *El Bejareño*, May 12, 1855, pg. 3.
[323] "Elecciones," *El Bejareño*, August 18, 1855, pg. 3.

validated. Throughout 1855, the newspaper often published correspondence from its readers discussing a variety of problems that ranged from correcting local misconceptions, such as explanations regarding the changing land laws of the state, to informing the community about recent lynchings and other forms of violence against Mexicans.[324] Similar to other communities of color existing in the United States at the time, exclusion from the public sphere created by mainstream newspapers led to the creation of minority run publications and these were almost always activist in nature because they took it upon themselves to defend and politically organize their communities.[325]

Spanish-language newspapers of the Gilded Age like *El Regidor* and *El Correo de Laredo* inherited and carried on the activist legacies of the Tejano newspapers of the 1850s. The travel accounts Justo Cárdenas published in *El Correo de Laredo* relayed personal experiences that familiarized the newspaper's audience not just with the city of Corpus Christi, but with the life of the newspaper's editor-publisher as well. Cárdenas's re-emergence at the start of the twentieth century with the launch of *El Democrata Fronterizo* shied away from the extremely personal material of his previous publication but continued the trend of using emotionally charged reporting that had been present to some extent in *El Correo de Laredo*. The unabashed personalism and insertion of opinion in these newspapers surfaced during a time when European newspapers and mainstream publications in the United States looked down on editor-publishers who did not adhere to the impersonal standard that appealed to the educated elites of both countries.[326] Yet these newspapers found success because even as they strived for professionalism, they appealed to the needs and interests of a community that had no alternatives to turn to. Where English-language

[324] *El Bejareño,* July 7, 1855, pg. 3; *El Bejareño,* August 18, 1855.

[325] Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 353–54; González and Torres, *News for All the People*, 161–63.

[326] Starr, *The Creation of the Media,* 255.

publications often wrote about people of Mexican heritage in disparaging, if not outright racist terms, Spanish-language publications exalted their audience's Mexican heritage and offered a sense of belonging and vindication.[327]

While the sensationalism that took over the mainstream press during the close of the nineteenth century would come to tarnish itself during the U.S. conflict with Spain and receive the moniker "yellow journalism", the continuing popularity of activist journalism ensured its endurance as it contributed and was at the same time influenced, by the coming of the Progressive Era (roughly 1890-1920).[328] Pablo Cruz's *El Regidor* began the new century with a new eye-catching appearance, but it also took on an even bolder approach to its content. While Cruz had always been a vocal reformist when it came to education, sanitation, and racial prejudice, his newspaper saw an even greater focus on these concerns during the early 1900s.[329] *El Regidor* continued to operate as a daily publication, but it now came with more than twice as many columns as it had carried when it launched. A typical twentieth century issue of *El Regidor* featured several front-page stories, with large bold headlines distinguishing the more important material from the poems, short stories, and less important foreign and local news that could also be found on the newspaper's first page. *El Regidor* continued to run as a four-page publication in the early 1900s, with the occasional eight-page issue for special occasions. The inside of the newspaper followed a similar layout to the front page in that important news and editorials were presented in large bold

[327] For examples of casual and explicit racism in English-language newspapers: "Mariposa," *Evening Tribute* (Galveston, TX), July 19, 1892, pg. 3; multiple uses of the term greaser to describe Mexican characters in a fictional story; "Latest Telegraph News," *San Antonio Daily Light*, August 13, 1886; story refers to Mexico as the "greaser republic"; *San Antonio Daily Light*, August 19, 1886, pg. 2; short news article states of Mexican people that "the greaser is a slippery fellow". These are but a small sample of what was been printed at the time just in Texas.

[328] Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper*, 191; González and Torres, *News for All the People*, 162; Starr, *The Creation of the Media*, 262–63.

[329] Martinez-Catsam, "The Voice of the People," 70.

headlines and everything else was minimized as if to fit as much of it as possible on the page. Aside from content that specifically homed in on important issues, the rest of the paper reflected its editor-publisher's progressive interests. Stories emphasizing the importance of education were supplemented by advertisements of schools and institutes promising to help readers master the English language or to educate their children.[330] The newspaper often devoted large portions of its towards presenting literature, with chapters from recognized classics, but also included were several ads promoting self-help books and other educational tools. Small inserts tucked away between ads and literature carried information promoting sanitation and financial literacy, such as short contributions credited to local Mexican businessmen, who used their space to dispense financial advice and preach what it took to be a savvy business owner.[331]

As one of the city's longest running newspapers, *El Regidor* and its editor-publisher had become deeply embedded in the politics and culture of the Mexican community of San Antonio by the 1900s.[332] Like most newspapers, *El Regidor*'s audience extended beyond those with the literacy level needed to directly engage with its content. By their very nature as a print commodity, newspapers involve various people in their production and distribution, promoting the creation of networks of information exchange that involve everyone from the editor-publisher to those learning about the newspaper's content through oral exchanges.[333] While *El Regidor* did not have a public section in which readers could directly interact with one another in the form of correspondence or submissions, the newspaper still served as a platform through which people

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[330] "Nuevo plantel de educación," *El Regidor,* January 29, 1903, pg. 3.

[331] "La Piedra Fundamental Del Exito," *El Regidor,* October 28, 1909, pg. 4.

[332] Martinez-Catsam, "The Voice of the People," 70–74. In the early 1900s, Cruz became directly involved in local politics when he ran and got himself elected to the San Antonio Independent School Board.

[333] Nicolás Kanellos, "Recovering and Re-Constructing Early Twentieth-Century Hispanic Immigrant Print Culture in the US," *American Literary History* 19, no. 2 (2007): 441–42; Meléndez, *So All Is Not Lost,* 5, 35–41.

could communicate with one another. Social and political organizations, like the city's many *mutualista* organizations, did this by using the newspaper to post their announcements for gatherings, events, and new developments. This type of platforming was extended by *El Regidor* to Mexican communities beyond the boundaries of San Antonio. Besides news, *El Regidor* used ads and inserts to bring attention to events and mutualista societies in other parts of the state, encouraging its readers to expand their networks beyond the city limits.[334] The newspaper fostered a shared sense of community through its editorials on local subjects and the publishing of local news, but also through the frequent wedding announcements, obituaries and the occasional announcement noting arrivals and departures by members of the community who embarked on travel to and from Mexico.[335]

In Laredo, Justo Cárdenas's *El Democrata Fronterizo* assisted a similar construction of community among Mexicans in that city. There, however, geographical, and historical circumstances had a direct impact on this process. By the early 1900s, Laredo and Nuevo Laredo had been transformed from small border towns devastated by war and the imposition of a national border between them in 1848, into the main points of exchange between Mexico and the United States.[336] The two cities belong to a collection of bordering cities that exist along the Rio Grande Valley as a result of the Treaty of 1848 carving up Mexican communities, with others examples including El Paso, Texas and Mexico's Juárez.[337] In the case of Laredo and Nuevo Laredo, the two cities remained intimately linked post-1848 by continued interaction and a borderlands economy that included both legal trade and the smuggling of contraband, along with other illegal activities.

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[334] "Sociedad Heramnos y Amigos del Trabajo," *El Regidor*, January 29, 1903, pg. 3.

[335] "De Regreso," *El Regidor*, June 11, 1903, pg. 1. The role was also performed by newspapers in New Mexico and Arizona, which marked the departures and arrivals of people from Mexico.

[336] Díaz, *Border Contraband: A History of Smuggling Across the Rio Grande*, 42.

[337] Other examples of this in Texas include McAllen and Reynosa, Brownsville and Matamoros, and other smaller and now long forgotten towns.

When examined as a metatext, *El Democrata Fronterizo* serves as a window into local constructions of community.[338] The content of Cárdenas's new newspaper reflected the binational existence which defined the lives of most Laredoans. The paper was dominated by articles on Mexican politicians and events in Mexico, discussing local events with as much fervor as it discussed events in Mexico. News from Nuevo Laredo often made it to the front page of *El Democrata Fronterizo* and most notably, news of smaller importance from Nuevo Laredo could often be found in the same pages and sections devoted to news from Texas.[339] The casual way in which the publication tended to present news from Nuevo Laredo alongside news from Texas, almost as if they were happening in the same country, was something that set *El Democrata Fronterizo* apart. Other newspapers often presented news in a way that clearly defined foreign and domestic news, with news from Mexico that did not merit a headline often appearing grouped in the first section. In *El Regidor*, news from Mexico could be found in a section marked with the phrase "*Noticias de México*," clearly separate from news pertaining to the United States. News articles on Nuevo Laredo's politics were also quite common in the publication, with some political leaders even getting front-page space devoted to them and their activities.[340] Perhaps distinctions were unnecessary for Laredoans, to whom news from northern Mexico, especially from *el otro lado*, have historically qualified as important news.[341]

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[338] Doris Meyer, *Speaking for Themselves: Neomexicano Cultural Identity and the Spanish Language Press, 1880-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 13–15; Meléndez, *So All Is Not Lost,* 7. Meyer in particular, suggests an approach that examines newspapers as archeological sites, communicative sites where we look for clues to the ongoing narrative of identity.

[339] *El Democrata Fronterizo,* September 11, 1909, pg. 2.

[340] "Juan F. de la Garza," *El Democrata Fronterizo*, January 14, 1904, pg. 1.

[341] Elaine A. Peña, *Viva George!: Celebrating Washington's Birthday at the US-Mexico Border* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020), 22. States that Laredo's entire reason for existing had been to serve as a midway station for trade between San Antonio and Monterrey.

Justo Cárdenas and Pablo Cruz may have lived in different cities and belonged to different social circles, and although they could often have contradictory ideas, they both became heavily invested in promoting what Gabriela González refers to as "the politics of respectability".[342] In *Redeeming la Raza: Transborder Modernity, Race, Respectability, and Rights*, González writes about how at the turn of the century, notable members of the Mexican community sought to secure a respectable place for themselves and their communities in Anglo-American society. Made up of mostly social elites who looked forward to the benefits that economic development of South Texas might bring, these men and women embraced the values of modern capitalist society. Their mutually shared fascination with progress and respectability proved useful in helping bridge the differences in ancestry and origin among the Mexican elite of South Texas.[343] Popular praise of Porfirio Díaz and his rule of Mexico in U.S. newspapers might have also made them aware of how Mexico's projection of respectability and its embrace of modernity changed North American perceptions of that country during the dictator's rule.[344] Influenced by Mexican liberalism and North American progressive ideology, this alliance of social elites sought to muster the powers of cultural redemption to secure for themselves and their communities a place of respectability within the United States.

Justo Cárdenas and Pablo Cruz used their positions as editor-publishers to promote the politics of respectability in their communities. They pushed for the embrace of modern habits and technology through their ads and editorials, but also advocated for the preservation of cultural

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[342] Gabriela González, *Redeeming La Raza: Transborder Modernity, Race, Respectability, and Rights* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 5–8.

[343] Young, "Deconstructing 'La Raza,'" 230; González, *Redeeming La Raza*, 17–18; Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 104.

[344] Michael Matthews, *The Civilizing Machine: A Cultural History of Mexican Railroads, 1876-1910* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 43; James Creelman, "President Díaz: Hero of the Americas," *Pearson's Magazine*, 1908.

heritage, glorifying Mexican culture and the nation's historical achievements through their content. Their newspapers enabled the wide distribution of their ideas and made them some of the most prominent men in their communities, basically transforming them into arbiters of culture. Kirsten Silva Gruesz uses this term in *Ambassadors of Culture: The Transamerican Origins of Latino Writing* to describe the editor-publishers of *El Bejareño* and their use of this newspaper as a tool for promoting cultural continuation while also serving as cultural brokers between their community and the ascendant Anglo-American socio-political order.[345] In a similar way, *El Regidor* and *El Democrata Fronterizo* helped guide their communities through their encounters with the modern world, helping to translate experiences and give temporal meaning to the events unfolding in their daily lives. For example, the large presence of health information and extensive ads for medicine on the pages of *El Democrata Fronterizo* between 1904 and 1905, are likely related to the fact that early twentieth-century Laredo served as the site of the first federally coordinated mass public health effort in the United States when it suffered a recurring series of yellow fever epidemics and smallpox outbreaks beginning in 1882, a history that John Mckiernan-González discusses in detail in *Fevered Measures: Public Health and Race at the Texas-Mexico Border, 1848-1942*.[346] Justo Cárdenas himself became directly involved in the push for compulsory vaccinations, with his efforts carrying over to the smallpox epidemic during the 1890s. The content of *El Democrata Fronterizo* normalized the use of and adherence to modern medicine by exposing its readers to the rhetoric of medical science, educating them on navigating its complexities

[345] Kirsten Silva Gruesz, *Ambassadors of Culture: The Transamerican Origins of Latino Writing* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 100.

[346] John McKiernan-González, *Fevered Measures: Public Health and Race at the Texas-Mexico Border, 1848-1942* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), 157.

through things like ads that described symptoms and offered options for treatment, as well as running content that fused modern medicine with ideas about progress and modernity.[347]

Another realm where Spanish-language newspapers wielded a vast influence and flexed their powers as arbiters of culture was in the curation of Mexican cultural identity. Editor-publishers like Cárdenas and Cruz were among those who played a major role in shaping common understandings of a shared cultural past for Mexican people in South Texas. Already a part of the Spanish-language lexicon, terms like *la raza* and *patria* needed to be defined to better fit the aspirations of middle-class social reformers. Newspapers were one of the platforms through which understandings of these words could be shaped to better reflect the reformers' prerogatives of order and progress. Alongside mutualistas, social clubs, church and fraternal organizations, newspapers exerted a social influence through their content that shaped the community's understanding of these terms.[348] Both *El Regidor* and *El Democrata Fronterizo* often featured content mythologizing Mexico's past, articles like "Los Antiguos Mexicanos", "Carta de Juarez a Maximiliano", and others that served to paint a moral map connecting Mexico's past to the present.[349] This glorified past was also a useful tool to covertly counter Anglo-American claims of Mexican inferiority. Like Nuevomexicano newspapers in New Mexico post-1848, the historiographical content of *El Regidor* and *El Democrata Fronterizo* was aimed at fostering a historical consciousness that could bring together the various social classes of the community.[350] For every Washington, a Juárez, and for every 1776, an 1810.

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[347] "Sobre La Viruela," *El Democrata Fronterizo*, May 8, 1909; "Juan F. de la Garza," *El Democrata Fronterizo,* January 14, 1904.

[348] Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas,* 152–61; González, *Redeeming La Raza,* 20–21; Young, "Deconstructing 'La Raza,'" 230.

[349] "Los Antiguos Mexicanos," *El Regidor*, August 10, 1905, pg. 6; "Carta de Juarez a Maximiliano," *El Regidor,* August 3, 1899, pg. 2.

[350] Meléndez, *So All Is Not Lost,* 107.

Like the Tejano newspapers that had preceded them, *El Regidor* and *El Democrata Fronterizo* took on the mantle of *defensores del pueblo*, vowing to serve the needs and interests of their communities. While their push against cultural and historical devaluation consisted of content that quietly challenged Anglo-American norms, both publications were very often moved to words when it came to acts of racism and violence perpetrated against Mexicans living in the United States. Both Cárdenas and Cruz began their newspaper careers just as the U.S. Southwest was experiencing a wave of anti-Mexican violence that started in the 1870s. According to William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, anti-Mexican violence (hangings, burnings, and shootings), peaked at three points in U.S. history between 1850 and 1920: In the 1850s, in the 1870s, and again in the 1910s.[351] While Laredo and San Antonio remained relatively insulated from mob violence and vigilante justice, even these bastions of peace structure politics experienced a few instances of hangings between 1850 and 1926.[352] Even so, it is clear that this type of violence was a concern to both Cruz and Cárdenas. Both men included reports of extra-judicial violence in the content of their newspapers whenever it occurred, regardless of the race of the victim.[353] They both viewed this violence as antithetical to the ideals espoused by the United States and its claims of cultural supremacy. For example, a 1906 piece in *El Democrata Fronterizo* took aim at the epidemic of racism and anti-immigrant sentiments in the United States, using the experiences of an Anglo-American in Buenos Aires to criticize racism in the United States and concluding the article with

[351] William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928*, paperback, 2017 (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 20–21.

[352] Carrigan and Webb, 179–239. The charts on confirmed and unconfirmed killings put together by the authors shows that between Laredo and San Antonio, there were a total of about 2 lynchings between 1850 and 1926 combined for cities. One of the more striking comparisons is to Brownsville, which shows up a combined nine times in the same charts.

[353] *El Democrata Fronterizo*, August 19, 1904, pg. 4. Cárdenas criticizes the U.S. and Anglo-Americans over the lynching of Tom Williams, who was burned at the stake without a trial.

a jab: "*las comparaciones, que las hagan los lectores; y verán si el sol de la libertad, de la justicia y la fraternidad, brilla más en Washington que en Buenos Ayres.*" (Let the comparison be made by my readers; based on the facts, does the sun of liberty shine brightest in Washington DC or in Buenos Aires?)[354]

Of the two publications, Pablo Cruz's *El Regidor* was the most vocal when it came to denouncing the extra-legal violence carried out by Anglo-Americans. Cruz used his newspaper to report on anti-Mexican violence taking place not just in Texas, but even as far away as New York.[355] Cruz also covered the lynching of Black people in the United States with a passion that surpassed that of Cárdenas, frequently ending his coverage of the atrocities by demanding that the law take action on the perpetrators.[356] An analysis of a piece Cruz published in *El Regidor* in 1905 reveals that part of his furor against lynching came in part because he believed that lynching was incompatible with modernity and had no place in a modern nation.[357] He was particularly concerned with the fact that lynch mobs tended to target Black and Mexican people, robbing them of the justice promised to them by the Constitution of the United States. Cruz's acknowledgement of the suffering of Black people is a rare act of inclusivity, but foreshadows their inclusion in future counter hegemonic projects, such as the Plan de San Diego in 1915. *El Regidor*'s constant inclusion of mob violence against people of African descent in the United States in a newspaper published for a Mexican audience certainly increased awareness that racially charged violence was a problem faced by both peoples, making members of the Mexican community aware that, as Cruz wrote:

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[354] "Confrontaciones," *El Democrata Fronterizo,* September 15, 1906, pg. 1. Compared experience of Anglo-American in Buenos Aires to the treatment of both European and Mexican immigrants at the sanitation stations of the U.S. ports of entry.

[355] "Locos Peligrosos," *El Regidor,* November 4, 1893, pg. 2.

[356] "Linchamiento," *El Regidor*, November 25, 1895, pg. 4; "Diez Linchamientos en Texas en 1905," *El Regidor,* January 4, 1906, pg. 2.

[357] "La Ley Lynch," *El Regidor*, February 23, 1905, pg. 2.

"*para los negros y los mexicanos se reservan todas las durezas y todas las torturas*" (For Blacks and Mexicans they reserve all the hardships and torture).[358]

Cruz's progressive drive and brand of activist journalism were put on full display after 1901, the year that Cruz involved *El Regidor* in the defense of Gregorio Cortez. Cruz threw the full weight of his newspaper behind Cortez and wagered its reputation to help mount a public defense of the man. The newspaper closely followed Cortez's trial and fundraised to help pay his legal costs.[359] The attention brought to the case likely helped to pressure Texas authorities into ensuring that Cortez was kept safe from becoming a victim of angry lynch mobs. The man in question, Gregorio Cortez Lira, was the son of Mexican migrant workers from Tamaulipas who came to Texas to work in the farmlands around Austin in the late 1800s.[360] He had recently become a tenant farmer in the area when he was confronted by law enforcement officers on suspicion of horse theft sometime in June 1901. The confrontation escalated and Cortez is said to have killed an Anglo officer in self-defense, trying to escape to Mexico in the aftermath, likely out of fear of what might happen to him before he even faced trial. He was eventually captured by the Texas Rangers, jailed, and his trial was scheduled for a month after.[361] Pablo Cruz was among those in San Antonio's Mexican community who came to Cortez's defense, publishing his story in *El Regidor* and using the newspaper to fundraise for Cortez's legal defense. Years later, Cruz would publish Cortez's story as a serialized segment in *El Regidor*, focusing on his eventual release and

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[358] "La Ley Lynch," *El Regidor*, February 23, 1905, pg. 2.

[359] "Historia Interesante," *El Regidor*, November 18, 1909, pg. 1. Article recounts the efforts of Cruz and El Regidor in helping Gregorio Cortez overcome the injustices he faced in 1901.

[360] Cynthia E. Orozco, "TSHA | Cortez Lira, Gregorio," Texas State Historical Association Website, accessed June 21, 2022, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/cortez-lira-gregorio.

[361] Orozco.

the role that unity and solidarity among Mexicans in the United States played in helping him get through the ordeal.[362]

El Regidor and *El Democrata Fronterizo* are important to the history of newspapers in South Texas because they represent several firsts. They were the first Spanish-language newspapers in Texas to establish themselves in their respective communities and publish uninterrupted for a significant amount of time, running from 1890-1913 for *El Regidor* and 1900-1917 for *El Democrata Fronterizo*. Only in New Mexico did Mexican communities achieve similar feats with their newspapers at the turn of the century.[363] As such, *El Regidor* and *El Democrata Fronterizo* represent the closest thing to an intellectual inheritor of the legacies of Tejano newspapers like *El Bejareño*. They were also decisively different from these earlier publications. While Spanish-language audiences had seen their publications get involved in local politics before, *El Regidor* and *El Democrata Fronterizo* surprised by not becoming mouthpieces for any one party as the old Tejano newspapers had.[364] This freedom from the shackles of party politics allowed Cruz and Cárdenas to market their newspapers as "*independiente*", giving these publications a sense of credibility helping to set a professional standard.

While *El Regidor* and *El Democrata Fronterizo* distanced themselves from U.S. politics, they were certainly a lot more involved in Mexican politics than the old Tejano publications had ever been. Of the two, it was Cárdenas's newspaper that most frequently covered politics in Mexico and even endorsed Mexican politicians, especially those active in Nuevo Laredo. Their most dramatic transformation occurred in the early 1900s, when both publications transitioned into

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[362] "Historia del Proceso de Gregorio Cortez," *El Regidor*, December 23, 1909.

[363] Meléndez, *So All Is Not Lost,* 63–69; Meyer, *Speaking for Themselves: Neomexicano Cultural Identity and the Spanish Language Press, 1880-1920,* 14–15.

[364] Coronado, *A World Not to Come,* 363. *El Bejareño* became so entangled with the Democratic Party that a schism within the party in 1856 pulled it into political drama.

oppositional newspapers totally opposed to the Mexican government of Porfirio Díaz. Likely tied to the increasingly repressive nature of the Díaz regime, especially its abhorrent treatment of journalists and newspaper editor-publishers who fell out of its good graces, both newspapers became exponentially critical of Díaz between 1900 and 1910. *El Regidor* went so far as to publish articles denouncing Mexico's dictator as a fake liberal and providing anti-Díaz insurgents with positive coverage that defended their actions and criticized their arrests by U.S. officials.[365] Cárdenas's newspaper also flung criticism at the dictator, running stories that emphasized the corruption of public officials at the local level and at one point, even protesting a Laredoan attempt to honor Díaz with a statue.[366] This level of involvement in Mexican politics post-1848 was unprecedented among newspapers that were not the mouthpieces of Mexican politicians in exile in the United States. It proved to be a prelude of things to come as migration from Mexico began to rapidly increase during the early 1900s and new Spanish-language publications emerged in South Texas.

Amidst a time of profound transformation in south Texas, where English-language newspapers had largely moved away from catering to Spanish-speaking audiences, newspapers like those of Cárdenas and Cruz emerged as beacons of an alternative public sphere that sought to meet the needs of the region's communities of Mexican heritage. In a manner reminiscent of *El Bejareño* in the 1850s, these newspapers provided a vital space where Spanish-speakers found validation, respect, and a platform to express their perspectives and reflect on their shared experiences. By harnessing and adapting to new technologies, *El Regidor* and *El Democrata Fronterizo* emerged at the turn of the twentieth-century as the leading Spanish-language

[365] "Proceso de los Presuntos Revolucionarios," *El Regidor*, January 3, 1907; "Benito Juárez y Porfirio Díaz," *El Regidor*, April 27, 1905.

[366] "La Catástrofe de Monterrey," *El Democrata Fronterizo*, September 11, 1909, pb. 1; *El Democrata Fronterizo*, February 11, 1905, pg. 4.

publications in South Texas. Their influence in the region contributed to the reinforcement of the transnational links between the region's communities of Mexican heritage and Mexico, preparing the ground for their active participation in events of the Mexican Revolution.

Chapter 4: *La Crónica* and the Idars

In 1910, Nicasio Idar and his three eldest children, Jovita, Eduardo, and Clemente, began their second year as editors and publishers of Laredo's *La Crónica*. An examination of the content of this newspaper from 1910 to 1912 reveals that while the Idars saw the United States as their home, they were culturally oriented towards Mexico, holding a reverence for the Spanish language, observing Mexican holidays, and referring to themselves as México-Texanos. While most scholars are familiar with the Idars' use of *La Crónica* to organize *El Primer Congreso Mexicanista* (First Mexicanist Congress) in 1911, few are aware that this strategy was derived from their use of the newspaper to organize state-wide support for the centennial celebration of Mexico's Independence hosted in Laredo only a year earlier. The success of this event encouraged the Idars to see themselves and other Mexicans in Texas as active participants in the destinies of both Mexico and the United States, a sentiment reflected in their coverage of Mexican politics and events in their newspaper over the next two years. Following its role in organizing Laredo's centennial celebration, *La Crónica* became an indispensable tool that allowed the Idar family to take to the pages and use their transborder understandings of identity to contest racial violence and discrimination, educational disparities, stereotypes, and negative portrayals of Mexicans by using their newspaper's influence to hold accountable the governments of Mexico and the United States. Their newspaper became the most powerful tool they had in their efforts to organize Mexicans in Texas and push for the pursuit of their middle-class goals for cultural redemption.

Nicasio Idar was born in Point Isabel, near Brownsville, Texas in 1855. He grew up in Corpus Christi where he attended school, but despite this, is often described as a self-educated

man.[367] He moved to Laredo in the 1880s, where he married Jovita Vivero from San Luis Potosí and found employment with the Mexican National Railroad as a messenger and yardmaster, spending at least the next decade in the Mexican states of Nuevo Leon and San Luis Potosí.[368] While working in Mexico, Nicasio was involved in the first wave of labor organizing that occurred among Mexican railroad workers from 1880-1890, participating in the establishment of the first national union for Mexican railroad workers in Mexico, *La Orden Suprema de Empleados Ferrocarrileros Mexicanos* (La Orden Suprema). Within the discourse of development that enraptured Mexico during the latter half of the nineteenth century, railroads, and locomotive travel came to embody Porfirio Díaz's brand of economic modernization, one focused on export markets and foreign investment.[369] In the 1880s, railroad workers organized in order to address the dangers of working on the railroad and wage discrimination at the hands of the foreign companies that controlled the majority of Mexico's railroads. They formed several local unions that eventually came together to create La Orden Suprema. However, pressure from the Porfirian government and the railroad companies' strategy of meeting the demands of some workers but not others, led to internal divisions and the eventual demise of La Orden Suprema in the 1890s.[370] Not long after, Nicasio Idar left Mexico and returned to Laredo, having accumulated enough wealth to establish himself as a business owner and provide for his wife, Jovita, and their eight children.

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[367] Teresa Palomo Acosta, "Idar, Nicasio," Texas State Historical Association, March 1, 1995, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/idar-nicasio; Gabriela González, *Redeeming La Raza: Transborder Modernity, Race, Respectability, and Rights* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 19.

[368] Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1993), 61.

[369] Michael Matthews, *The Civilizing Machine: A Cultural History of Mexican Railroads, 1876-1910* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 48.

[370] Juan Felipe Leal, *Del Mutualismo al Sindicalismo en México: 1843-1911* (Mexico City: Juan Pablos Editor, 2012), 70.

The Laredo that Nicasio Idar returned to in the 1890s was a city in the midst of a dramatic transformation from a small border town into a booming commercial center. That decade, the effects of Laredo's full integration into the transnational network of railroads connecting the United States to Mexico led to economic development that had a visible impact on the everyday lives of its inhabitants. Economic development spurred population growth during this decade and dramatic physical change in Laredo's skyline and surroundings. New housing structures spread across the city as Laredo transitioned from a town of about 3,811 people in 1880 to 13,429 by 1900.[371] Following the interracial riot that had marked the aftermath of the election of 1886, the two feuding factions that had killed each other for control of city politics merged into the Independent Party, sometimes referred to as the Old Party (Partido Viejo).[372] This faction fused the goals of the new commercial elite with those of the older ranching and farming elite, their new alliance grounded on their mutual interest in the politics of capitalism and progress. By 1889, Laredo boasted an electric street railway, which was inaugurated on the same day the city opened its International Bridge, the first steel-forged bridge connecting it to Nuevo Laredo. Under the rule of the Old Party, brick buildings went up, roads were paved, and commercial agriculture and ranching boomed as the railroads connected Laredo to both labor and markets.

After returning to Laredo from his time working in Mexico's railroads, Nicasio Idar opened up a cigar factory in the city and became involved in the publication of the local newspaper, *La Crónica*. Idar began as an outsider in Laredo but grew to become an influential figure within local politics within a few years after his return from Mexico. He accomplished this by becoming involved and taking leading roles in the city's many organizations for self-support, protection, and

[371] González, *Redeeming La Raza*, 19.
[372] Jerry D. Thompson, *Warm Weather & Bad Whiskey: The 1886 Laredo Riot* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1991), 147.

social/cultural purposes operated by Mexican people. These were civic organizations, *mutualista* groups, and other community-oriented organizations that Mexicans in Laredo had organized in response to their social and political experiences in the United States and Mexico. The mutualistas in particular were mutual aid societies that had evolved from the old traditions dervied from the lay brotherhoods that were imported to the Americas during Spanish colonization, developing within communities of Mexican heritage in the United States out of the need for mutual assistance and support.[373] These types of organizations became a way for Mexican communities to confront the fact that governments could not always be counted on to confront the social and economic repercussions directly caused by the manner in which Anglo-American society treated Mexicans. Though Emilio Zamora and other historians believed that the cultural frame of reference for these organizations was predominantly Mexican and working-class, Gabriela González has shown that these organizations were a space where class, and sometimes gender distinctions, came second to the importance of Mexican solidarity.[374] The participation of Nicasio Idar in organizations that catered to the working class, like *La Orden de Caballeros de Honor y Talleres* (Order of the Knights of Honor) and the *Sociedad Mutualista Benito Juárez*, as well as his continued association with Mexican railroad workers' associations, reinforces González's point that these organizations were a space where working class and middle-class Mexicanos rubbed shoulders and engaged in discourse with one another.

Although it is difficult from the lack of a paper trail to ascertain for certain what Nicasio Idar's income might have been, it is clear from his standing in the community at the time of his death that he had at least attained a middle-class status. His ownership of a cigar factory, and a

[373] Armando Navarro, *Mexicano Political Experience in Occupied Aztlan: Struggles and Change* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2005), 146.

[374] González, *Redeeming La Raza*, 21.

newspaper, and his involvement in real estate during the 1900s, certainly qualified him and his family as members of Laredo's *gente decente*. This Spanish phrase literally meaning "decent people" was a classification adopted in Laredo to downplay the racial differences between Anglo-Americans, Europeans, and people of Mexican descent, especially of those with political power, by focusing instead on their shared class status. In Laredo, the growth of the Anglo, and European communities was offset by continued immigration from Mexico, and so their population never numerically overwhelmed that of local Mexicans like it did in other parts of Texas.[375] The city remained a predominantly Mexican town even after the arrival of the railroads. For the span of Nicasio Idar's life, Mexicans continued to be politically involved and represented in Laredo, with many holding public offices as high as that of Mayor of the city. Elliott Young has argued that the adoption of the term gente decente was a reaction to these economic and demographic realities, which compelled Anglo and European arrivals to include Mexicans in the city's social and political life.[376] While phenotypical factors, such as "fair skin" still played a role in social distinctions, the distinctions most drawn upon to determine membership among the gente decente in Laredo were type of work, dress, leisure activities, and style of speech.[377] For their part, the Mexican elite of Laredo sought to distinguish themselves from other Mexicans by focusing on their education and respectability, which they demonstrated through their refined understandings of culture, their involvement in local business, and their participation in the American political system. Besides owning multiple businesses and being involved in the leadership of several local organizations,

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[375] George T. Díaz, *Border Contraband: A History of Smuggling Across the Rio Grande* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015), 42.

[376] Elliott Young, "Red Men, Princess Pocahontas, and George Washington: Harmonizing Race Relations in Laredo at the Turn of the Century," *Western Historical Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (1998): 55.

[377] Elliott Young, "Deconstructing 'La Raza': Identifying the 'Gente Decente' of Laredo, 1904-1911," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 98, no. 2 (1994): 228; Young, "Red Men, Princess Pocahontas, and George Washington: Harmonizing Race Relations in Laredo at the Turn of the Century," 84.

Idar's time as Justice of the Peace in Laredo and his close relationship with Judge John F. Mullaly of the 49th District Court distinguished him as a member of Laredo's gente decente.[378]

A year or two after 1907, Nicasio Idar became the owner and editor-publisher of *La Crónica*. He transformed the weekly into a family operation by bringing on board his three eldest children: Jovita, twenty-five, Eduardo, twenty-three, and Nicasio, seventeen. The three Idar children were put to work by their father as writers, reporters, and printers of the newspaper. Alongside the children, Nicasio Idar also counted on several collaborators to help in the production of content for the newspaper. According to an article published by *La Crónica* in 1910, contributors to the newspaper during its first year under the Idars included former editor Pedro N. González, Ignacio A. De La Peña, Ventura Euresti, J. J. Mercado, Felipe Martínez, and a few others credited with providing support to the publication and penning the various anti-clerical articles the newspaper became known for.[379] Nicasio Idar also established a printing business at the same 1205 Lincoln Street location that served as the office for his newspaper. About a nine-minute walk from Laredo City Hall, *Talleres Tipograficos de N. Idar é Hijos* offered imprints, reproductions, and translations that were printed using the same equipment that published *La Crónica*. The same printing press was also used by Nicasio Idar to produce *La Revista Masonica*, which served as the newsletter for Laredo's community of Mexican Freemasons. The Masonic tradition had arrived in Laredo in the 1880s and by the 1900s, the city boasted several lodges and organizations catering to the Mexican community, such as the Grand Mexican Masonic Lodge of Texas, No. 14 Masonic Lodge, and the Order of the Knights of Honor.[380] Nicasio Idar's production of *La Revista Masonica*

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[378] Jerry Poyo, Tom Shelton, and Jerry Poyo, Interview with Aquilino Idar and Guadalupe Idar, recording, October 26, 1984, Institute of Texan Cultures Oral History Collection, University of Texas at San Antonio, https://digital.utsa.edu/digital/collection/p15125coll4/id/1304/.

[379] *La Crónica*, February 19, 1910, pg. 2.

[380] Juan González and Joseph Torres, *News for All the People: The Epic Story of Race and the American Media* (London and New York: Verso, 2011), 221; González, *Redeeming La Raza*, 54–55.

and photos featuring him wearing the Masonic regalia suggest that not only was he involved in these organizations, he likely held leadership roles within them.

As was typical for newspapers produced in the twentieth century, *La Crónica* presented itself as an independent journal. Like Pablo Cruz's *El Regidor*, this claim did not mean that the newspaper did not have a bias in its reporting but more as a way to inform its readers that the newspaper was not owned by anyone directly connected to the government. Like most publications after the 1880s, the Idars' newspaper relied on the finances of its owner and whatever profit was made from selling advertising space or generated from the sale of subscriptions and individual issues.[381] This meant that the success or failure of the newspaper was largely tied to its ability to connect with, speak on behalf of, and reflect the interests of its readers. As Doris Meyer argued in *Speaking for Themselves*, newspapers can often serve as metatexts of their community because capitalist forces push these commodities to incorporate directly or indirectly the voices of the common people as well as those of the educated elite involved in the power structures of community politics, business, and society.[382] These forces manifested themselves in articles that reflected the needs and desires of the community, such as self-improvement articles, entertainment pieces, and stories that kept readers informed about everyday life in the community. In *La Crónica*, the "*Informacion Local*" (Local Infromation) section served people's need to keep up with developments in their community by covering weddings, deaths, and births, and delivering information on local politics and developments. The newspaper also served as a space for local organizations to advertise events, promote public gatherings, and inform members of upcoming meetings. The comings and goings of various individuals headed in and out of Laredo were also

[381] George H. Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper* (Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1999), 82.

[382] Doris Meyer, *Speaking for Themselves: Neomexicano Cultural Identity and the Spanish Language Press, 1880-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 13.

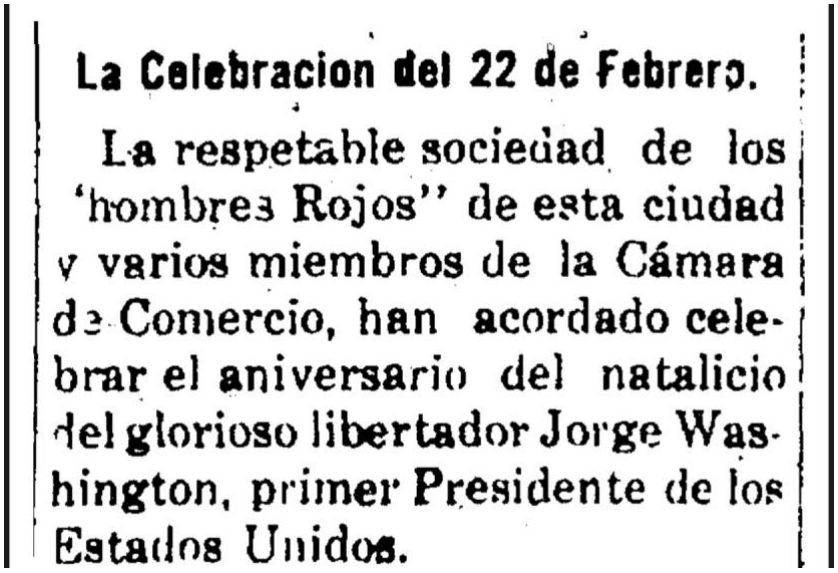
noted, with an emphasis on their destinations. News from other cities in Texas was also provided, taken from other newspapers, compiled from letters written to the editors, or from information collected by local correspondents. This tactic allowed readers to become aware of events happening in cities like Karnes, La Feria, Río Grande City, Brownsville, Luling, Pearsall, San Marcos, Seguín, San Antonio, Valentine, Alice, and other cities in Texas. The information presented would have been useful for readers traveling across Texas in search of business and job opportunities by preparing them for conditions they might encounter across the state or simply to give them something to stir up local conversations with.

La Crónica also reflected Laredo's unique relationship with its sister city of Nuevo Laredo. The newspaper often devoted large segments to the coverage of news from Nuevo Laredo, encompassed in a section aptly titled "*Notas de Nuevo Laredo*" (Notes from Nuevo Laredo). The space featured information regarding events, meetings of organizations whose activities sometimes extended to both Laredos, sports news, and personal ads. As the Idars' coverage of events in Nuevo Laredo shows, the construction of the new International Bridge connecting the two cities in the late 1880s encouraged a level of interconnectedness between the two cities. This was bolstered by the fact that Mexicans on both sides of the border had long shared a common observation of Mexican national celebrations like Cinco de Mayo and Mexican Independence Day, ensuring that these celebrations often occurred simultaneously on both sides of the international divide. This blurring of national boundaries was a source of concern for some in Laredo. According to Elaine A. Peña, in the 1890s, the over-representation of Mexican celebrations in the city unsettled some of the more US-oriented members of the city's gente decente.[383] In response to these feelings, members of the Yaqui tribe No. 59 of the national fraternity Improved Order of Red Men (Order

[383] Elaine A. Peña, *Viva George!: Celebrating Washington's Birthday at the US-Mexico Border* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020), 30.

of Red Men) established the first George Washington's Birthday Celebration in Laredo in 1898. While a celebration commemorating George Washington's birthday had been hosted in Laredo before in the 1870s, it had only been a one-time event. By contrast, the celebration introduced by the Order of Red Men that February became a yearly tradition that continues to this day. The inaugural 1898 event brought the American mythos to the borderlands with an opening act featuring Order of Red Men members dressed as Indians who raided a makeshift "boat" in front of Laredo's Town Hall in a reenactment of the Boston Tea Party. The rest of the night included a private ritual induction ceremony into the Order of Red Men, and a public pyrotechnic display in honor of George Washington's birthday. The 1898 event served as a way of cementing US dominion over the region by permanently branding a piece of the US mythos in Laredo's collective memory.[384] Over time, George Washington's Birthday Celebration found itself becoming a major tourist attraction, drawing visitors from both Mexico and the rest of the United States to Laredo for the celebration. By 1905 at the latest, the celebration had become a binational one with festivities that took place in both Laredo and Nuevo Laredo, and even involved cooperation between Laredo's local government and Mexican government officials, who participated in ceremonies and even added performances by Mexican military bands to the event.[385] The popularity of the celebration among Mexicans in both Laredos is reflected in the adoption of "Jorge Washington" as a widely used translation of the first president's name among local Spanish speakers and their publications in the region.

[384] Peña, 32–33.
[385] Peña, 38.



La Celebracion del 22 de Febrero.

La respetable sociedad de los 'hombres Rojos'' de esta ciudad y varios miembros de la Cámara de Comercio, han acordado celebrar el aniversario del natalicio del glorioso libertador Jorge Washington, primer Presidente de los Estados Unidos.

"La Celebracion del 22 de Febrero," *La Crónica*, January 8, 1910, pg. 6.

While George Washington's birthday falls on February 22, by 1910 the celebration had evolved into a four-day festival running from February 20th to the 23rd. *La Crónica* was among the Spanish-language newspapers that year that covered the celebration. The newspaper chronicled on its pages the results of events, discussed performances and parades, and provided a list of visitors to Laredo who had come by the newspaper's office during the celebrations in a segment titled "*Respetables Visitantes*" (Respectful Visitors). An article featured in the newspaper on February 19 of 1910 sheds some light on why a Spanish-language newspaper owned by a Mexican family in Laredo would be interested in actively participating in the celebration of a President of the United States. It begins by presenting a short summary of the life of George Washington, beginning with his birthday in 1732 and then immediately fast-forwarding to his involvement in the American Revolution in the 1770s, a quick summary of his time as president, and ultimately his death in 1799. Throughout, Washington is painted as a fiercely brave individual who preferred peace to war and had reached such a state of enlightenment when he died, that death had to wait

until he was finished giving his secretary orders regarding how his funeral would be carried out. It is at the end of the article, after the author establishes Washington as someone worthy of being celebrated that some further explanation is given:

"*Por un deber de patriotismo los unos, y una obligación de hospitalidad los otros, todos unidos, como un solo hombre*"[386]

(For some it is out of a patriotic duty, for others it is out of an expected sense of hospitality. We are all united by a single man)

These words demonstrate that the celebration held different meanings for different segments of Laredo's community but that the overall goal of the celebration in 1910 was to promote the unity of the city's inhabitants. Some of the words used by the unnamed author also carry implications regarding the interpretations of reality held by Mexicans like the Idars. The writer emphasizes the duty of Mexicans in Laredo to play the role of hosts to the US residents of the city, paying service to the idea that Laredo continued to be a Mexican town. Read with this in mind, this article paints participation in George Washington's Birthday Celebration as one of the ways in which the societal bonds between Anglos, Europeans, and Mexicans in Laredo were renewed and its unique social order was preserved. In her history of the celebration, Peña also points out how the profits and positive national attention that the event generates have historically served to reinforce the bonds of cooperation between the three groups in control of Laredo.[387] However, as Elliott Young argues, in bolstering Laredo's myth of racial harmony, the celebration did so at the expense of Native Americans and Black people who were excluded or turned into caricatures by it.[388] There is no mention of these communities in *La Crónica*'s coverage of George Washington's

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[386] "Jorge Washington," *La Crónica,* February 19, 1910, pg. 2.

[387] Peña, *Viva George!: Celebrating Washington's Birthday at the US-Mexico Border,* 43.

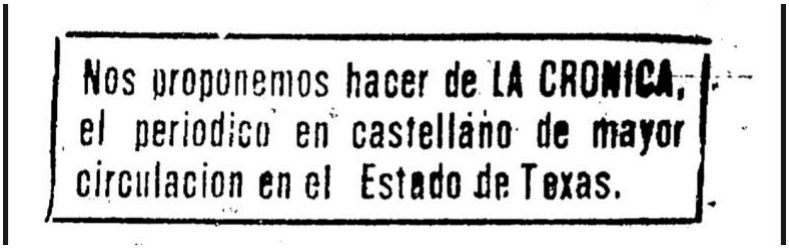
[388] Young, "Red Men, Princess Pocahontas, and George Washington: Harmonizing Race Relations in Laredo at the Turn of the Century," 48–50.

Birthday Celebration for either 1910 or 1911. The Idars' coverage of the celebration represents just another way in which the newspaper reflected the attitudes of its readers, and also establishes the publication as oriented towards the values and interests of Laredo's gente decente.

A year after its acquisition by Nicasio Idar, *La Crónica* appears to have experienced tremendous growth. During its first year under the Idars, it became well known in Laredo for its involvement and reporting on a series of initiatives that included the construction of a kindergarten, participation in a water dam initiative, and the establishment and promotion of several new civic clubs, including one for businessmen.[389] Transcripts from other newspapers presented in *La Crónica* by the Idars as proof of support for their attacks against *La Revista Católica* of New Mexico, suggest that the drama between the two newspapers that began in 1909 also helped in bringing attention to their work in Laredo. Though no records of its subscription numbers exist, a reading of the advertisements and letterheads featured in the newspaper from 1910 to 1911 reveals an increase in the number of people involved in its sale and production, which points to an aggressive push by the Idars to expand the newspaper's distribution network beyond Laredo. In May of 1910, the newspaper publicly announced its intention to become the most widely read Spanish-language newspaper in Texas at the top of its front page.[390] As the year went on, the newspaper began to expand its staffing roster to include "*agentes foraneos*" (the word means foreign agents but the position these individuals held is better understood in this context as subscription agents and correspondents). These were people hired by Nicasio Idar to set up distribution and subscription offices in cities throughout Texas and Nuevo Laredo. These agents were vital to the Idars' plan to increase the reach of their newspaper by targeting small towns as far West as Marathon and as close by as San Benito near Brownsville, Beeville near Corpus Christi,

[389] "Nuestro Primer Año de Vida," *La Crónica*, January 8, 1910, pg. 2.
[390] *La Crónica*, May 14, 1910, pg. 1.

Seguín near San Antonio, and San Marcos.[391] An advertisement for the newspaper also outlines another method used by the family to distribute their newspaper which involved taking advantage of Laredo's proximity to major rail lines by hiring railroad workers to sell the publication at each stop.[392] This strategy granted *La Crónica* access to markets in major cities like San Antonio, Houston, and El Paso. The expansion gave readers of the newspaper access to information from the rest of Texas, promoting a level of integration with communities beyond Laredo's physical horizon that complimented the ongoing process of national integration that had begun with the arrival of the railroads in the 1880s. If they could not be active participants in events beyond Laredo's horizon, newspapers like *La Crónica* at least allowed them to be spectators of events.



La Crónica, May 14, 1910, pg. 1.

At the start of 1910, *La Crónica*'s Laredo staff no longer included Pedro N. González or Ventura Euresti. Idar retained the services of J.J. Mercado, Ignacio A. De La Peña and added the names of Dr. C. Danes Cassabouch, and Dr. Rafael L. Molina to the staff roster. The name of famous local poet Sara Estela Ramírez also shows up, as well as that of his daughter, who used the pseudonym, Astrea.[393] His two sons, Clemente and Eduardo also continued to be credited as

[391] *La Crónica*, May 28, 1910, pg. 2.
[392] "Notas Generales," *La Crónica*, March 12, 1910, pg. 3.
[393] Jessica Enoch and Cristina Devereaux Ramírez, eds., *Mestiza Rhetorics: An Anthology of Mexicana Activism in the Spanish-Language Press, 1887-1922* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2019), 229. Astrea and A.V. Negra were two of the pseudonyms used by Jovita Idar.

members of the newspaper's staff, though Eduardo would leave by the Fall to serve the newspaper as a reporter and agent in Brownsville. The shift in staff and focus on hiring subscription agents was part of the newspaper's endeavor to meet its ambitious goals for expansion as well as in preparation for extensive coverage of the *Centenario de la Independencia de México* (El Centenario). This was a celebration commemorating Mexico's first one hundred years as a nation that the Porfirian government sought to utilize to promote Mexico as a stable and prosperous modern nation. El Centenario celebrations were meticulously planned and involved a series of events that were scheduled to culminate in a grand celebration in Mexico City on September 16, 1910. In Mexico, the Porfirian government heavily involved itself in curating the celebrations and everything connected to them in order to ensure the event would unfold along acceptable modes of nationalism, hoping to nip in the bud anything that might embarrass it in front of the international audience it planned to invite.[394] In the US-Mexico borderlands, local plans for El Centenario were in the hands of the many *juntas patrióticas* organized across the US Southwest, especially in cities with high Mexican populations like San Antonio and Los Angeles. The Mexican government retained a hand in the planning of events through the involvement of Mexican Consuls in the organizing of these events. The involvement of Mexican Consuls in these events not only lent legitimacy to the celebrations but granted the juntas patrióticas access to state resources, such as Mexican military bands and the cooperation of Nuevo Laredo's Mexican officials in the case of Laredo. The push to organize a Centenario celebration in Laredo was an endeavor that began on the pages of *La Crónica* and other Spanish-language publications like the Spanish-language daily,

[394] William H. Beezley, *Mexican National Identity: Memory, Innuendo, and Popular Culture* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2008), 95–96.

Pro-Patria.[395] Together, these newspapers helped cultivate local support for hosting a Centenario celebration in Laredo and even got Mexican Consul Antonio León Grajeda involved.

On March 17th of 1910, Consul Grajeda lent his support to the creation of the *Club Internacional* (International Club), a local Mexican organization with the intended purpose to serve as a junta patriótica in charge of organizing Laredo's Centenario celebration.[396] Coverage of the club's activities in *La Crónica* shows that while the organization's main focus was organizing the festivities of 1910, it also aimed to become a permanent umbrella organization for all other social and civic clubs involved in organizing the city's yearly Mexican patriotic celebrations going forward.[397] The International Club's membership consisted of Mexican business owners from Laredo and surrounding towns on the US side of the border. Some of the more recognizable names included both Nicasio Idar and his son, Clemente Nicasio Idar. Its treasurer, who was the president of the local First State Bank and Trust Company, Ignacio Benavides. Furniture store owner, H. F. Valdez, who served as one of its vice presidents, and José María García, a grocery store owner from Torrecillas (Oilton, Texas), who served as president of the organization. The absence of Anglo and European names in its membership reflects the International Club's heavy reliance on nationalist rhetoric in its organizing activities. The event itself was promoted by the International Club on the pages of *La Crónica* as "*una fiesta **de y para los mexicanos** todos de Texas y México*" (a celebration by and for all the Mexicans in Texas and Mexico).[398] Fundraisers and volunteer recruitment campaigns were addressed "*A LOS MEXICANOS DE TEXAS*" (to the Mexicans of Texas).[399] In a city famous for its yearly celebration reinforcing US dominion over the region, it

[395] "¡Gracias, Colegas!," *La Crónica*, May 28, 1910, pg. 3.
[396] "Club Internacional," *La Crónica*, April 2, 1910, pg. 1.
[397] "Celebracion del Centenario en Laredo, Texas," *La Crónica*, May 7, 1910, pg. 5.
[398] ibid.
[399] "El Club Internacional de Laredo," *La Crónica*, May 28, 1910, pg. 1.

makes sense that there would be some hesitancy among non-Mexicans in joining an organization with such a heavy emphasis on Mexican patriotism. Yet, coverage of the International Club's activities and reports on public sentiment towards the celebration shows that the organization and its goals enjoyed ample support from Laredo's European and Anglo-American citizens. A Mr. Wilson of the Laredo Commissioner's Court interviewed by *La Crónica* replied when questioned on the issue of the Centenario celebration: "*Estoy con ustedes*" (I am with you).[400] George Page, owner of 4,000 acres of farmland on the Río Grande and co-owner of a brick manufacturing company in Laredo, also made his support of the event clear.[401] In all of their responses, the underlying reason for their support seemed to be the idea that the event would bring *"visitantes y dinero á Laredo*" (visitors and money to Laredo).[402] International Club members were well aware that the promise of money to be made would win them support from across the racial divide, helping to mute any objections to Laredo's hosting of a Mexican national celebration on US soil. In fact, *Pro-Patria* and *La Crónica* promoted the event by linking the Centenario to the international expositions, parades, and other cultural celebrations that helped San Antonio, then the largest city in Texas, become a thriving city.[403]

The Centenario episode offers a window into the inner workings of the politics that upheld Laredo's distinctive political landscape. In particular, it sheds light on how the prospect of profit and economic development could be used to grease the wheels of cooperation between the Mexican and non-Mexican members of the city's gente decente. In order to sell non-Mexicans on the idea of hosting the Centenario in Laredo, members of the International Club engaged in the

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[400] "Celebremos el Centenario De La Proclamacion De La Independencia Mexicana," *La Crónica,* March 5, 1910, pg. 1.

[401] ibid.

[402] ibid.

[403] ibid.

language of American boosterism. Most boosterism in Texas after the 1900s focused on promoting immigration from the rest of the United States to the region with the aim of fueling economic development.[404] The end goal of boosterism, according to Timothy Paul Bowman, was to generate wealth for local landowners and businessmen with the means to take advantage of rising property values and increased economic activity.[405] Approval for the Centenario was conferred in May of 1910 and excitement for the celebration abounded among everyone involved, including Laredo's European and Anglo members of the gente decente. A story in *La Crónica* discussing the excitement surrounding preparations for the Centenario notes the participation of a significant number of mixed commissions participating in ensuring planning for the celebration was a success. These mixed commissions, made up of Mexicans and "*caballeros americanos*" (American gentlemen) who volunteered to help out the International Club, were praised by *La Crónica* as proof of the "*vecinidad y perfecta armonía*" (neighborly disposition and perfect harmony) that existed between the two races in Laredo.[406] Pitching the Centenario as an event that would bring national attention to Laredo and involving the city's business community in its planning, tied the event to the themes of modernity and development that were a part of the discourse of boosterism. In negotiating an understanding of the Centenario as an event in line with other local acts of boosterism, members of the International Club ensured that a celebration gushing with Mexican nationalism was not interpreted as a threat by the European and Anglo members of Laredo's leadership.

For the Idars and other Mexicans in Laredo involved in its organizing, the motivations for hosting the Centenario certainly included the economic opportunities such an event would offer,

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[404] Timothy Paul Bowman, *Blood Oranges: Colonialism and Agriculture in the South Texas Borderlands* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2016), 55.

[405] Bowman, 55.

[406] "Celebracion Del Centenario en Laredo, Texas," *La Crónica*, May 7, 1910, pg. 5.

but there was also a unique cultural element at play. *La Crónica*, which credited itself with planting the seeds that led to the creation of the International Club in late March, indicated that at the core of its enthusiasm for promoting the celebration was the hope that it would promote "*el amor á la raza de Cuauhtémoc y de Juárez*" (love for the Mexican race).[407] The newspaper's interviews with Mexican business owners in Laredo taken from before the project was approved show that among Mexican members of the gente decente an emphasis was placed on participation itself, rather than the economic benefit the event might bring.[408] A lot of them committed themselves to contributing to the parade by donating money and building their own *carro alegórico*, a type of parade float decorated and designed to convey stories and emotions. Once the event was approved, the Independent Club extended an invitation to participate to all Mexicans in Texas. The event was promoted using nationalist language that emphasized the duty owed to a homeland that was not the United States.[409] Among the most direct items of propaganda produced to promote participation, was a manifesto produced by the International Club that addressed all Mexicans in Texas and called upon them to contribute to making the celebration an event worthy of Mexico's national heroes, *their* national heroes.[410] The use of this rhetoric suggests that a driving motivation for participation among Mexicans in Texas was the opportunity to celebrate their cultural heritage on a scale equal to if not greater than that of the George Washington Birthday Celebration.

Another consistent theme in *La Crónica*'s coverage of the Centenario is a push by its organizers to encourage all Mexicans residing in Texas to participate. Members of the International Club realized early on that the organizing and planning of the celebration was an opportunity for

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[407] "Club Internacional," *La Crónica*, April 2, 1910, pg. 1. The description heavily emphasized the connections between Mexicans and the heroes of Mexico's national past.

[408] "Celebremos El Centenario de la Proclamacion de la Independencia Mexicana," *La Crónica*, March 5, 1910, pg. 1.

[409] "El Club Internacional de Laredo," *La Crónica*, May 28, 1910, pg. 1.

[410] ibid.

Laredo to claim a central role in uniting the "*Pueblo Mexicano de Texas*" (Mexican people of Texas).[411] Using *La Crónica*, *Pro-Patria*, and other local Spanish-language newspapers as their platform, the International Club began a considerable grassroots effort to organize Mexican communities across the state for participation in the celebration. Part of the earlier mentioned manifesto produced by the International Club included a request that each community send delegates to Laredo to help in coordinating Centenario celebrations across the state.[412] Based on what information can be gathered from the content available in *La Crónica*, it appears that members of the International Club aspired to make the celebration a spectacle that would put on display the culture and progress that Mexicans in Texas had achieved. It is important to mention that Mexicans in Texas did not constitute a monolithic identity. Rather, they were shaped by key differences in identity formation, such as class, race, and regional background, and comprised a spectrum of roles, such as migrants, immigrants, exiles, and deeply rooted residents who traced their family lines back to before 1848. In promoting their ambitious goal, The International Club's call to action emphasized a pre-1848 cultural heritage they believed was shared by all Mexicans in Texas, one centered on their mixed heritage status as the children of the land of Cuauhtémoc and their connections to the liberal legacy begun by Miguel Hidalgo.[413] In invoking the idea that all Mexicans in Texas were united by this shared cultural heritage, the promotion aimed to motivate Mexican communities to collaborate together for the benefit of Laredo's Centenario celebration. At the same time, such references also helped blur the legal distinctions between citizen and

[411] "Celebracion Del Centenario en Laredo, Texas," *La Crónica*, May 7, 1910, pg. 5. The term is better understood as "uniting the Mexican diaspora in Texas" as this would better encapsulate the use of the term "pueblo".

[412] "Celebracion Del Centenario en Laredo, Texas," *La Crónica*, May 7, 1910, pg. 5.

[413] "El Club Internacional de Laredo," *La Crónica*, May 28, 1910, pg. 1.

immigrant, promoting an inclusive vision of Mexican participation in the event that did not mention or reference class, gender, or citizenship status.

While leadership positions in the planning and organizing of the Centenario were consolidated in the hands of Laredo's gente decente, Mexican business owners like José María García and H. F. Valdez aimed to make a celebration that would draw in Mexicans from across Texas. Coverage of the International Club's labors by *La Crónica* shows that as early as May, there was an understanding among participants that the celebration was geared at helping to strengthen the bonds of "*amistad, unión y confraternidad que deben existir entre todos los mexicanos y mexico-texanos residentes en Texas*" (friendship, union, and brotherhood that must exist between all Mexicans and Mexico-Texanos living in Texas).[414] The International Club's manifesto and subsequent calls to action were reproduced in Laredo's Spanish-language newspapers, which then inspired other newspapers like *El Imparcial de Texas* in Floresville and *El Cosmopolita* in Alice to also reproduce these documents, ensuring that these documents were circulated at least as far north as San Marcos and as far south as Río Grande City. The calls to participate in the celebration appear to have been mostly well received, at least based on the responses featured on the pages of *La Crónica*. A notable exception seems to have occurred in San Marcos, where a local correspondent notes that while a junta patriótica was established in favor of collaborating in the celebration, there also emerged significant opposition to it mostly from the town's newspapers.[415] Even if participation in its organizing or the donation of money was not possible, the celebration's propagandists encouraged Mexicans in Texas to show their support by attending the event. *El Imparcial de Texas* promoted the Centenario in Laredo as a must-see for patriotic Mexicans, as

[414] "Los Trabajos del Club Internacional," *La Crónica*, May 28, 1910, pg. 6.

[415] "Notas de San Marcos, Tex.," *La Crónica*, June 4, 1910, pg. 3. According to the correspondent, the local newspapers ignored the event and refused to publish any information on it.

this would mark the first time in the history of Texas that Mexican Independence would be celebrated "*con la brillantez debida*" (with the brilliance it deserves).[416] Coverage of Centenario-related content in other newspapers available on the pages of *La Crónica* demonstrates that mobilization efforts for the event relied on a network of Spanish-language newspapers that were interconnected as competitors and collaborators but united in their desire to see the celebration succeed. For example, a short gratitude notice on the May 28th issue of *La Crónica* indicates that Clemente Nicasio Idar was actively writing material promoting the celebration in Laredo's *Pro-Patria*, which then found their way to other Spanish-language newspapers like *El Cosmopolita* of Alice and *El Imparcial de Texas* of Floresville.[417] *La Crónica*, *El Imparcial de Texas*, *Pro-Patria*, *El Cosmopolita*, and others all collaborated to promote the event among Mexicans in Texas as an important celebration of their cultural heritage, using inclusive nationalist rhetoric to motivate their participation and attendance.

As both owners of *La Crónica* and named participants in the International Club, the Idars played a pivotal role in organizing and promoting the Centenario in Laredo across the rest of Texas. They used the most powerful tool at their disposal, their newspaper, which not only featured stories documenting the efforts of the International Club, and companion pieces written in favor of the celebration but also offered the organizers a platform on which to publish directives and calls to action. Their widely circulated newspaper helped promote coordination across the state by becoming a space where communications between the different juntas patrióticas working with the International Club were made publicly available. Their newspaper also served to communicate information on fundraisers and other events benefitting the Centenario preparations. Perhaps most

[416] "El Club Internacional de Laredo, Texas, Celebrará Espléndidamente el Centenario," *La Crónica*, June 4, 1910, pg. 4.

[417] "¡Gracias, Colegas!," *La Crónica*, May 28, 1910, pg. 3.

important of all, was the way that the publication of letters to the staff, interviews, and initiatives suggested by anonymous contributors, promoted an atmosphere of inclusivity and encouraged the involvement of everyday people in the events unfolding around them. For example, a story published in *La Crónica* on the suggestion of "*Una respetabilísima Señora*" (a super respected lady) encouraged readers to show their support for the Centenario by cultivating flower gardens in their homes in preparation for September.[418] Though not implicitly stated, this idea suggested that even those unable to contribute in any other way could engage in patriotic behavior by lending their support through as simple an act as the planting of flower beds in their homes. This type of content encouraged grassroots participation in the Centenario, providing a broad range of ways for Mexicans across Texas to participate in the celebration regardless of class, legal, or social status.

In the end, the Centenario celebration in Laredo was remembered as a total success. A program for the celebration printed in *La Crónica* a month before the event indicates that the celebration was scheduled to last five days, starting on the 14th of September. The International Club and their collaborators managed to convince the military staff of Fort McIntosh to lend them their cannons to announce the start of each day with a cannon blast.[419] The first two days of the Centenario were filled with sporting events, races, fairs, and parades hosted in Laredo and Nuevo Laredo, as well as plays portraying events in Mexican history and the life of Porfirio Díaz. Friday night ended with reenactments of the famous "*Grito de la Independencia*" delivered by Miguel Hidalgo in 1810.[420] Consul Miguel E. Diébold replaced Consul Grajeda, who was transferred to Belgium in May, but Diébold appears to have been just as committed to helping out.[421] The new

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[418] "Muy Hermosa Idea," *La Crónica*, March 12, 1910, pg. 3.

[419] "Ligera Reseña de la expléndida celebración del Primer Centenario," *La Crónica*, September 24, 1910, pg. 1.

[420] "Programa," *La Crónica*, August 19, 1910, pg. 1.

[421] "Banquete Leon Grajeda-Diebold," *La Crónica*, May 7, 1910, pg. 6.

Consul's participation ensured the collaboration of Nuevo Laredo's local government and allowed the International Club to enjoy the use of Mexican military bands throughout the event and to organize a greeting ceremony between Mexican and US officials on the Saturday of Independence. This was a public event where Diébold, and the U.S. Consul in Nuevo Laredo, Alonzo B. Garrett, would meet on the International Bridge and greet each other in the presence of Mexican, American, and local officials and organizers.[422] If performed as described on the printed program, this part of the celebration would have been strikingly similar to the more current iterations of the International Bridge Ceremony which form part of present-day George Washington Birthday Celebrations in Laredo. Just as in this instance, the modern configuration of the ceremony is a public event that occurs on the bridge and tends to feature US and Mexican politicians, diplomats, and local officials, in addition to actors portraying George Washington and Miguel Hidalgo.[423] The rest of the weekend was taken up by fairs, sporting events, bull runs in both Laredo and Nuevo Laredo, as well as jaripeos, an event where Mexican cowboys rode bulls in a manner similar to the riding of unbroken bronco horses in American rodeos.

Program for the Centennial Celebration
La Crónica, August 19, 1910, pg. 1.

[422] "Programa," *La Crónica,* August 19, 1910, pg. 1.
[423] Peña, *Viva George!: Celebrating Washington's Birthday at the US-Mexico Border,* 5.

PROGRAMA

DE LA CELEBRACION DEL PRIMER CENTENARIO DEL GRITO DE INDEPENDENCIA DE MEXICO EN LAREDO, TEXAS, LOS DIAS 14-15-16-17-18 DE SEPTIEMBRE DE 1910.

Miercoles 14:

6 P. M.—Disparos de 21 cañonazos en todas las Plazas, silvatos de las locomotoras, fábricas, plantas eléctricas, taller, etc. y repiques á vuelo, anunciando la Apertura de la Celebración.

6:15 P. M.—GRAN FERIA Y EXPOSICIÓN EN LA PLAZA DEL MERCADO.

Profusa Ilumuninación de la Ciudad.

Serenatas en todas las Plazas.

Jueves 15:

6 A. M.—Disparo de 21 cañonazos en todas las Plazas.

Formación y paseo de Bandas de Música por las principales calles de la Ciudad

9 A. M.—Torneo Internacional de Jaripeo en Nuevo Laredo, México

Audiciones musicales en todas las Plazas.

10 A. M.—Juego de Pelota en el Parque de Base Ball.

4 P. M.—Gran Corrida de Toros en Nuevo Laredo, Méx.

4:30 P. M.—JUEGOS ATLÉTICOS.

Programa: Palos Ensebados, Marranos Ensebados, Carreras á pié, Carreras de 25 Burros, Carreras en Automóvil de Laredo á Las Islitas, etc.

Audiciones musicales en todas las Plazas.

8 P. M.—GRAN FERIA Y EXPOSICIÓN EN LA PLAZA DEL MERCADO.

8:30 P. M.—REPRODUCCIÓN DE LAS ESCENAS DE LA VIDA DE PORFIRIO DÍAZ en tresactos, á la orilla del Río Grande.

11:30 P. M.—GRITO DE LA INDEPENDENCIA POR HIDALGO.

INDEPENDENCIA.

6 A. M.—Salva de 21 cañonazos.

9 A. M.—REUNION DE OFICIALES. En este acto, el Cónsul Mexicano de Laredo, Texas, Don Miguel E. Diébold, acompañado de oficiales de la Federación, del Estado y del Municipio americanos, saludará al Cónsul Americano de Nuevo Laredo, Tamps., Sr. Alonzo B. Garrett, acompañado de oficiales mexicanos de la Federación, del Estado y del Municipio, cambiando frases de congratulación en nombre de los dos Gobiernos. Las felicitaciones de ambos Cónsules serán trasmitidas á los Presidentes de ambas Repúblicas.

10 A. M.—GRAN PROCESIÓN CÍVICA INTERNACIONAL ENTRE LAREDO, TEXAS Y LAREDO, MÉXICO.

2 P. M.—GRAN JARIPEO EN NUEVO LAREDO, MEX.

4 P. M.—GRAN CORRIDA DE TOROS EN NUEVO LAREDO, MEX.

4:30 P. M.—GRAN JUEGO DE BASE BALL.

8 P. M.—DISCURSOS QUE SE DIRÁN EN LA PLAZA DEL MERCADO:

1o. Sobre Hidalgo.
2do. Sobre Allende.
3ro. Sobre Morelos.
4to. Sobre Matamoros.
5to. Despedida. Cuadro plástico.

Cada uno de los discursos será seguido de un hermoso cuadro plástico, en una pequeña plataforma construida para el efecto.

Domingo 17:

10 A. M.—Audiciones musicales en todas las Plazas.

3 P. M.—GRAN FERIA Y EXPOSICIÓN EN LA PLAZA DEL MERCADO

Domingo 18:

En la mañana—
GRAN JARIPEO EN NUEVO LAREDO, MEX.

En la tarde—
GRAN CORRIDA DE TOROS
GRAN PELEA DE GALLOS.
JUEGO DE PELOTA.

En la noche—
GRAN ILUMINACIÓN ROJA DE LA CIUDAD,
GRAN FERIA Y EXPOSICIÓN EN LA PLAZA DEL MERCADO.

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La Comisión de Programa está debidamente autorizada para hacer todas las mejoras que sean posibles á este programa.

El Prof. Agustín B. Chávez-nava, está completa nente á cargo de todo el trabajo de las escenas reproductivas de la vida del Presidente Díaz, así como de la bellísima escena que dará una idea de cómo se levantó el pueblo mexicano en Dolores. Después de esta escena y en el lugar mismo donde se celebra, que será á orillas del Río Bravo, el pueblo en masa seguirá á Hidalgo en una gran procesión de antorchas, acompañada de jinetes, carruajes adornados y sociedades recorriendo las principales calles de la Ciudad de Laredo.

El Cónsul Mexicano, Sr. Miguel E. Diébold, está haciendo activas gestiones para ver si es posible obtener una banda militar mexicana y el mismo señor acompañado del Sr. Don Anacleto Vi-

La Comisión de Ornato está muy contenta de lo que ha hecho para el ornato de la ciudad.

El Mariscal Brennan y el Sr Joe T. Agan estarán á cargo de la Oficina de Información que se situará en la oficina del mismo Mariscal. Todas las personas propietarias de hoteles y de toda clase de casas de hospedaje, se servirán inscribir sus nombres en los libros de esta oficina.

La gran feria y exposición que se celebrará en la Plaza del Mercado será uno de los detalles más notables de la celebración. Las cuatro aceras del Mercado estarán profusamente iluminadas; habrá música, fuegos artificiales, cinematógrafos al aire libre, gratis, con actos extraordinarios, y una variedad inmensa de lugares donde se exhibirán los productos de esta ciudad y Condado, así como una gran variedad de puestos que anunciarán á las numerosas casas comerciales de esta población. El Prof. Agustín B Chávez nava ha solicitado un local para exhibir numerosos objetos de bellas artes que él ha hecho y así se verán, pinturas de aceite, acuarela, trabajos en yeso, taxidermia, etc.

Al programa que ahora publicamos se le irán aumentando otros números, á medida que se vayan aproximando los dias de la gran celebración. Esos números procuraremos darlos á conocer á nuestros lectores con toda oportunidad.

* * *

For five days, the Centenario event brought together people from across the Mexico-Texas borderlands for a Mexican national celebration that spanned from Laredo to Nuevo Laredo. The event represented the blurring of identities and boundaries. Though there remained plenty of reminders of the geopolitical realities, from the presence of US officials to the daily canon blasts from Fort McIntosh, at least temporarily the event transformed Laredo into an extension of Mexico. While it is impossible to retrieve accurate attendance figures for the event from the pages of *La Crónica*, articles written in the days after the event make note of the numerous crowds "*que*

invadían los paseos públicos" (invaded the public spaces).[424] Like the George Washington Birthday Celebration, the Centenario had its share of private events reserved for Laredo's gente decente and their guests, but the parades, fairs, and sporting events were all open to the public, and oftentimes even free of charge.[425] While direct participation in the planning and organizing of the Centenario was limited to the gente decente, enjoyment of the event was open to all. Laredo's gente decente retained the privilege to be the ones who controlled the boundaries of the Mexican nationalism on display, but the event also offered all Mexicans present a chance to feel involved either as passive spectators of parades, speeches, and reenactments or as active participants in sporting events, games, and public dances. This dynamic fusion of engagement allowed diverse segments of the Mexican population in attendance to connect not just with the celebration on their own terms, but to feel a part of a community larger than themselves.

For the Idars, the Centenario seems to have offered more than just an opportunity to grow their business or fulfill their patriotic duty. *La Crónica*, which had been instrumental in helping the International Club organize the event and establish communication networks with other Mexican communities across the state, was now a well-known and well-regarded publication among *la prensa mexicana del estado* (Mexican press of the state). Following the previous months of close collaboration with other Spanish-language newspapers like *El Imparcial de Texas* of Floresville, *Pro-Patria* and *Evolucion* in Laredo, and *El Cosmopolita* of Alice, the Idars were ready to begin another state-wide project only a few weeks after the Centenario. That October, *La Crónica* published a front-page editorial titled "*A la Raza Mexicana del Estado de Texas*" (To the Mexican people of Texas). The article, addressed to Mexican readers and the Mexican press of

[424] "Ligera Reseña de la expléndida celebración del Primer Centenario," *La Crónica*, September 24, 1910, pg. 1.
[425] ibid.

Texas, was a response to English-language newspapers' use of the word *tramp* to describe poor Mexicans in the state.[426] Rather than directly attacking the English-language publications responsible, the unattributed editorial delivered a rebuttal by arguing that there was no such thing as a Mexican tramp, bringing attention to the hard-working nature of all Mexicans who labored in the state. The editorial then addressed Mexicans in Texas, proclaiming that the greatest problems they faced were that they "*rarísimas veces*" (rarely) worked to make a profit for themselves, and spent their money "*á medida que lo gana*" (as they earned it).[427] The editorial then called upon the Mexican press of Texas to engage in more activist journalism, proposing that it was the responsibility of the Mexican press to investigate the social and economic conditions of Mexicans in Texas and offer solutions, projects, initiatives, and other methods to combat these problems.[428] Beyond being a defense of the community from negative commentary in the English-language press, this article served as both a call to action for Mexican readers and as an invitation to other Spanish-language publications that followed *La Crónica* to see if there was any interest in collaborating on another ambitious project.

Education was at the core of what *La Crónica* presented in its editorial as the solution to the economic problems facing Mexicans in Texas. It argued for adults to be educated through the newspaper by providing them with content that would teach them "*ideas regeneradoras, constructivas, y de unificación*" (regenerative and constructive ideas, that speak of unity).[429] The education of youth was *La Crónica*'s most important concern, calling the tendency for Mexican parents to remove their children from schools before they could even graduate from grade school

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[426] "A la Raza Mexicana del Estado de Texas," *La Crónica*, October 1, 1910, pg. 1.

[427] ibid. The editorial was criticizing the tendency of poor Mexicans to live paycheck to paycheck and to put very little money away in savings.

[428] ibid.

[429] "A la Raza Mexicana del Estado de Texas," *La Crónica*, October 1, 1910, pg. 1.

a mistake. The editorial argued that this habit left Mexican children at a disadvantage in a society where American children remained in school until they graduated from "*la Universidad de Texas ó en alguna de las más reputadas instituciones educativas del Estado*" (or in one of the other reputable institutions of the state).[430] While the editorial was left unattributed, a claim within it that the writers had been hard at work for the last fifteen years trying to promote these ideas among Mexicans in their community seems to indicate that the writers behind the text were the Idars themselves. The editorial makes it clear that Nicasio Idar and his children were ready to use their experiences as local leaders and members of social and civic groups to help mobilize a state-wide response to the needs of Mexicans in Texas.

The editorial published by the Idars was reproduced in other Spanish-language publications across the state, often alongside a response to the concerns discussed. The week following the publication of the Idars' editorial, *La Crónica* published some of the more positive responses it received. *El Imparcial de Texas* of Floresville used its last issue before it was bought out by Francisco A. Chapa of San Antonio to reproduce the editorial in hopes of increasing its circulation.[431] The publication with the most to add to the Idars' editorial was *Evolucion*, which was published in Laredo. In its response, *Evolucion* agreed that education was important, as it was necessary to develop the intellectual capacity of the Mexican community. However, *Evolucion*'s emphasis was on how increasing business ownership among Mexicans was the solution to their economic woes. It claimed that Mexicans had gotten too accustomed to let Americans own everything and had grown complacent with just being their laborers. Instead, *Evolucion* called for Mexicans to become more engaged in owning the means of production and for Mexican labor to work for Mexican owners. Like *La Crónica*, the solutions offered by the Spanish-language press

[430] "A la Raza Mexicana del Estado de Texas," *La Crónica*, October 1, 1910, pg. 1.
[431] "A la Raza Mexicana de Texas," *La Crónica*, October 8, 1910, pg. 1.

reflected middle-class concepts of progress. When *Evolucion* discussed the challenge Mexican business owners would face in competing against the American monopolies, it did not suggest for Mexicans to mobilize and break these monopolies apart through the ballot box or by seizing the means of production. Instead, it simply maintained that Mexican labor should work for Mexican business owners and in that way serve the interests of the community, just as American laborers and business owners served the interests of theirs. *Evolucion* did not want to see Mexicans in Texas trying to remake society but wanted them instead to focus on the redemptive powers of personal transformation. *La Crónica*, *Evolucion*, and the other newspapers that responded all seemed to agree that real change would come from personal decisions and actions that would lead to self-improvement and community uplift.

November of 1910 was an eventful month for *La Crónica* and other Mexican newspapers in Texas. Francisco I. Madero, who had fled to exile in Texas in October after escaping house arrest by the Mexican government, had made his way to San Antonio and by November, had declared a revolution against the government of Porfirio Díaz. Madero hailed from a wealthy family from Coahuila, Mexico with connections in San Antonio. He ran in Mexico's presidential elections of 1910 as an opposition candidate who was critical of the state of the country and the re-election schemes that had kept Díaz in power for over thirty years. On the eve of the election, Díaz had Madero put under house arrest and rigged the election so that he was re-elected to another six-year term.[432] *La Crónica*, which had reported on Madero's imprisonment and relocation to Monterrey back in June, also reported on his arrival in Nuevo Laredo and his journey into exile in the United States later in October.[433] That following November, written copies of Madero's Plan de San Luis

[432] Colin MacLachlan and William H. Beezley, *El Gran Pueblo: A History of Greater Mexico* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994), 201–3.

[433] "Don Francisco I. Madero en Territorio Americano," *La Crónica*, October 8, 1910, pg. 1.

Potosí began to circulate across South Texas and Mexico, calling for the Mexican Revolution to begin on the 20th of that month.

Throughout 1910, the Idars had been very restrained in their political opinions regarding Mexico, likely because of their close involvement with Mexican government officials like Consul Diébold and his predecessor. Their efforts to help make the Centenario celebration in Laredo a success had required close collaboration with Diébold and other Mexican officials, as well as approval from the Porfirian government. As such, the Idars restrained from being directly critical of the regime. It is clear from what they published in *La Crónica* and the many "Viva Díaz!" shouts given at the Centenario that the Idars celebrated the economic development and international attention that Porfirio Díaz had brought to Mexico. However, Nicasio Idar was also known to have been at least friendly towards the plight of the *Partido Liberal Mexicano* (Mexican Liberal Party), another Mexican political group in opposition to Díaz which had made its way into exile in Laredo in 1904.[434] Several articles published in *La Crónica* in 1910 also hinted that the Idars' had strong opinions on Mexico. In January of that year, their newspaper published an article that seemed critical of the fact that the Porfirian government was in the habit of using subsidies to buy the loyalty of newspapers in Mexico.[435] Without mentioning any names, the article argued that "*los escritores vendidos*" (writers who were sellouts) as among the worst enemies of the Mexican Republic.[436] The newspaper also had a few things to say about the Díaz regime's ever-closer relationship with the Catholic Church in Mexico. The Idars publishes several articles, that while never directly attacking the Mexican government, did emphasize the importance of separating the church from the state, keeping religion out of education, and criticizing the abusive tendencies of

[434] González, *Redeeming La Raza*, 61–62.

[435] Pablo Piccato, *The Tyranny of Opinion: Honor in the Construction of the Mexican Public Sphere* (Duke University Press, 2010), 161–62.

[436] "Lo Que Pensaba Juarez de los Escritores Publicos," *La Crónica*, January 8, 1910, pg. 5.

the Catholic clergy. One such article ended with the claim that in the United States and Mexico, anyone trying to alter the law of the land with the intention of trying to alter the separation of church and state would be marked as a traitor because "e*so seria destruir la justicia, la tranquilidad doméstica, el bien estar general*" (doing so would be to destroy justice, peace, and the well-being of the nation).[437] With the Centenario behind them, the Idars produced their first article critical of conditions in Mexico in November of 1910 in response to the events that followed the murder of Antonio Rodríguez in Rock Springs, Texas.

On November 12, *La Crónica* joined several other English and Spanish-language newspapers in reporting on the brutal killing of Antonio Rodríguez in Rock Springs, Texas by a mob of Anglo-Americans. It was a Mexico City newspaper, *El Debate*, that first brought attention to Rodríguez's murder in Texas.[438] Twenty-year-old Antonio Rodríguez had been accused of murdering a white rancher's wife, for which he was apprehended, and forced to confess to his crimes. Before Rodríguez could face trial, an angry Anglo mob broke down the jail doors, carried him out, and beat him before he was doused with oil and thrown into a pre-prepared fire.[439] Published on November 5, 1910, the article in *El Debate* triggered widespread horror and anger in Mexico, where Americans and their businesses and other property were attacked during an epidemic of widespread anti-American protests.[440] The Idars' frontpage response to these events was critical of the violence displayed in both Mexico and Rock Springs, but also showed a level of solidarity with the protesters in Mexico, especially with the medical school students who took part in the protests that transpired in Mexico City. The Idars placed blame for the events on the

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[437] "La Separacion de la Iglesia y el Estado," *La Crónica*, January 15, 1910, pg. 2.

[438] Nicholas Villanueva Jr., *The Lynching of Mexicans in the Texas Borderlands* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017), 53.

[439] Villanueva Jr., 53.

[440] Villanueva Jr., 53.

current state of Mexico, where they claimed that nepotism and monopolies left the average Mexican without work, forcing Mexicans to travel north into the United States and place themselves in harm's way.[441] Again, they did not mount a direct attack on the government as the cause, but this was one of the first times they had directly criticized the state of things in Mexico. When it came to the riots, they criticized "*la actitud agresiva y comprometedora del pueblo de la Ciudad de México*" (the violence on display in Mexico City), while also attributing it to the passion of the youth involved in a manner that seems to dismiss it as justified.[442] The Idars found themselves moved by what they interpreted as a physical expression of the continued concern Mexicans had for those who had crossed the border. The Idars also hoped that the protests would pressure the Mexican government to push authorities in Texas to commit to performing an investigation to find those involved in murdering Antonio Rodríguez. The investigation eventually did come to pass as a favor from US President William H. Taft to President Díaz, but the resulting grand jury trial of the men involved in the killing failed to produce any indictments.[443]

For the Idars, the murder of Antonio Rodríguez was linked to the social and economic problems that were holding back Mexicans in Texas. They recognized the challenge posed by the anti-Mexican sentiments held by Americans and criticized their attitudes but believed that racism could be overcome by focusing on obtaining education and building wealth. An article written by Nicasio Idar and published on November 19, described the hostility between the races in Texas as fatal and emphasized the need for "*La exaltación moral, material é intelectual*" (moral, material,

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[441] "Barbarismos," *La Crónica,* November 12, 1910, pg. 1. The article suggests that anti-Mexican attitudes among Americans are inspired by the bad journalism they consume, which has painted Mexicans as blood-thirsty savages or subservient peons.

[442] ibid.

[443] William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928*, paperback, 2017 (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 143.

and intellectual achievement) among Mexicans in Texas.[444] The Idars became even more determined to promote education as the solution, pointing to Mexico's long history of famous military commanders, legislators, poets, and other intellectual men to justify that Mexicans in Texas could achieve the same results if given the opportunity to learn.[445] That December, the Idars launched an investigation into the state of education among Mexicans in Texas. On December 17, Clemente Nicasio Idar used *La Crónica* to publish an article criticizing the state of public education in Texas and its attempts to exclude Mexican children from the same learning opportunities as American children.[446] Clemente was particularly critical of F.M. Bralley, the Superintendent of Public Education in Texas and the man who represented the public face of the attack on local control of schools and the push to segregate Mexican children in the state's public schools.[447] From 1910 to 1912, the Idars published a series of articles investigating the state of education opportunities available to Mexican children in Texas. Their journalism highlighted the disparities already present between Mexican and Anglo-American children, as well as noting the growing push to further jeopardize the opportunities of Mexican children by segregating them.

The Idars use of *La Crónica* to advocate utilized many of the same strategies the newspaper had used to promote the Centenario in 1910. In their articles on education, the Idars reached out to other Spanish-language publications like *El Cosmopolita* in Alice and *El Democrata Fronterizo* in Laredo. They republished related stories that ran in other newspapers and published appreciation articles when other newspapers ran transcripts of their articles. They also reached out to social and

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[444] "El Antagonismo de Razas es Fatal," *La Crónica,* November 19, 1910, pg. 1.

[445] ibid.

[446] "La Exclusion de los Niños Mexicanos en la Mayor Parte de las Escuelas Oficiales," *La Crónica,* December 17, 1910, pg. 1.

[447] Philis Barragan Goetz, *Reading, Writing, and Revolution: Escuelitas and the Emergence of a Mexican American Identity in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2020), 49–50.; "Extracto de un Discurso del Superintendente de Instrucción Pública de Texas," *La Crónica,* January 12, 1911, pg. 1.

civic organizations and got them involved in their endeavor. The International Club, which after the Centenario had transformed into a mutualista for teaching Mexicans practical skills, like how to farm and raise livestock, was one of the organizations that became involved.[448] In November of that same year, Mexican laborer Antonio Rodríguez was burned at the stake by a mob in Rocksprings, Texas after being accused of having murdered the wife of an Anglo rancher. The incident received widespread outrage in both Mexico and among Mexican communities in the United States. Just a few days later, *La Crónica* published a front-page story on the events in Rocksprings condemning the burning as barbaric and defending the anti-American response to the lynching that took place in Mexico City after news of the event reached the Mexican capital.[449] The aftermath of the incident was closely followed by the Idars, who continued to publish on the ongoing investigation into the murder of Antonio Rodríguez by officials connected to the Mexican consulate. Their interest in the matter soon merged with the family's concerns over segregation in Texas schools and evolved into a general push to address the overall challenges faced by people of Mexican heritage living in Texas. Towards the end of 1910, when the Mexican government became irresponsive to their pleas for assistance as a result of the Mexican Revolution, the Idars drew on their social connections to spearhead the creation of an organization that could help to politically organize Mexican people across the state to pressure both the US and Mexican governments to address their community's concerns.[450] In February of 1911, *La Crónica* became the organizational organ for *El Primer Congreso Mexicanista de Texas* (The First Mexican Congress), an event that marked the first instance of a state-wide political convention aiming to unite all Mexicans in Texas.

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[448] "El Club Internacional," *La Crónica*, November 5, 1910, pg. 6.
[449] "Barbarismos," *La Crónica*, November 12, 1910, pg. 1.
[450] Barragan Goetz, *Reading, Writing, and Revolution*, 50.

As a mouthpiece and promotional tool, *La Crónica* played a vital role in helping to make El Primer Congreso a reality. The Idar's idea drew on the concept of uniting the fraternal and mutualista organizations that Mexicans in South Texas had long utilized as social safety networks. It was no coincidence that the First Mexican Congress was scheduled to take place during the annual meeting of the Order of the Knights of Honor, an established mutualista organization that already boasted a considerable membership in South Texas and for which Nicasio Idar served as secretary in the Laredo branch.[451] The Idars used *La Crónica* to advertise The First Mexican Congress as the only sensible response to the challenges their Mexican communities faced, laying out the first meeting's concerns and inviting people and newspapers to attend the event. Among the concerns at the top of the list were access for Mexican children to quality public education, the preservation and teaching of the Spanish language, how to use the Mexican consulate system to address their needs, and the protection of Mexican lives in Texas.[452] Promotions for the convention were largely done through the fraternal orders, mutualistas, and word of mouth, though the event was probably also advertised in other local Spanish-language newspapers, like Justo Cárdenas's *El Democrata Fronterizo*.[453] However, it was *La Crónica* that helped to generate momentum for the event through a well-timed wave of editorials and investigative journalism.

A few days after announcing the First Congress, *La Crónica* published a report refuting the findings of both the Texas government and Mexican consulate investigations into Mexican children's lack of access to good public education. Addressing the concerns of Mexican families in Texas over barriers to their children's education, both the State of Texas and the Mexican

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[451] González, *Redeeming La Raza*, 27.

[452] "Una Excitativa Al El Primer Congreso Mexicanista de Texas," *La Crónica*, February 2, 1911, pg. 3.

[453] Justo Cárdenas was in fact, named an honorary member of the Primer Congreso for his support of the event.

government had launched perfunctory inquiries that had dismissed any claims of discrimination or other wrongdoing.[454] Displeased with the results, the Idars launched their own grassroots investigation into the state of education in several counties. The results were printed in a two-page report published in *La Crónica* that included local interviews and a sharp condemnation of the failure of the Mexican government in addressing this issue.[455] This piece of investigative journalism was only the first in a series of stories that were ran in *La Crónica* in anticipation of the First Congress. The Idars would go on to publish stories on the failures of the Texas penitentiary system, the inability of the Texas legal system to convict white lynch mobs, and other topics that helped to raise the need for something like the First Congress. For those left unconvinced, the events of that summer would leave little doubt for the necessity for Mexican people to politically organize.

On June 19, 1911, a mob of about 200 people lynched twelve-year old Antonio Gómez in Thorndale, Texas. Particularly egregious, was the fact that Gómez was beaten and dragged to the center of Thorndale before being hanged, an act described by scholars William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb as clearly intended to send a message.[456] Ten days later, the front-page of *La Crónica* featured a full-page recounting of the events, including a call for the Mexican consulate to become involved in delivering justice for Gómez's family. The Idars were not the only ones to cover the lynching, but they were among those connecting the murder to a rising tide of anti-Mexican violence and rhetoric. Their coverage of the Thorndale lynching tied the event to worsening conditions for Mexicans in Texas and the growing racism directed towards people who shared

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[454] Barragan Goetz, *Reading, Writing, and Revolution*, 50.

[455] "La Exclusion en las Escuelas de los Condados de Frio, Bee, Hays, Bastrop, Comal, Caldwell, Blanco, Etc. Etc.," *La Crónica,* February 9, 1911, pg. 1 and 6.

[456] Carrigan and Webb, *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928*, 82.

Mexican heritage, bringing attention to the rising number of "*Strictly for White People*" signs cropping up throughout the state.[457] Since announcing the First Congress, the Idars had spent months publishing content in *La Crónica* to draw attention to what was at stake for Mexicans in Texas and why it was important for them to organize the convention. As a publication distributed across South Texas and Nuevo Laredo by 1911, *La Crónica* had a large audience, doubly so since it also served as an important publication for those involved in fraternal organizations like The Order of the Knights of Honor. A few months later, Laredo successfully hosted the First Mexicanist Congress, a gathering that included Mexican consulate officials, local editor-publishers, and notable Mexican community members that came together to network and strategize. While there would be no follow-up event like it, the Primer Congreso jumpstarted the activist careers of Nicasio Idar's children, who took on leadership roles during the convention. They would go on to publish their own newspapers and continue the family's tradition of activism.

The content of *La Crónica* sheds light on a worldview that while acknowledging modern borders between nations, approached life in the Texas-Mexico borderlands as a transnational experience. The Idars were just as concerned for Mexicans coming from Mexico as they were for those who had been born and raised in Texas. This made the Idars active contributors in the construction of "Greater Mexico," a term coined by Américo Paredes to describe Mexicans living in the United States as part of a cultural extension of Mexico regardless of citizenship status. *La Crónica* was essential in helping to spread the family's vision among communities of Mexican heritage in Texas and some parts of Mexico. The network of collaboration they developed in favor of Laredo's Centenario celebration allowed the Idars to engage in dialogue with other Spanish-language newspapers. This dialogue between publications made it clear that feelings of indignation

[457] *La Crónica*, June 29, 1911, pg. 1.

and concern over the effects of inequality, discrimination, and anti-Mexican violence were of special concern to Mexican communities across the state. Influenced by the popular ethic of mutuality so present in the civic, social, and fraternal organizations most of these middle-class editor-publishers participated in, they assumed political responsibility for all Mexicans in Texas and placed their faith in collaborative endeavors like the First Congress.

Chapter 5: The Lozano Newspaper

NUESTRA CULTURA

"*Los refugiados, solemos,*
para azotar los oídos de la gente carranclana,
Decir de modo expresivo que la cultura de México,
que del país lo exquisito y noble y lo ilustrado,
al huír trajimos meramente cual si fuera
de cerezas un racimo
o cualquier cosa que puede
ser cargada en el bolsillo….
…Pero hablamos de cultura
y con orgullo decimos
que en nosotros está México,
dentro de nuestros bolsillos".

CHANTELER, *La Prensa*, October 9, 1916.

(We, the exiles, in order to annoy those in Mexico who follow Carranza, tend to claim that the culture of Mexico, the noble and the exquisite, we brought with us into exile. When we fled, we carried with us as a budding branch. But we are speaking of our culture and with pride, we can say that in our pockets we brought Mexico with us.)

On the evening of August 23rd, 1921, an excited crowd composed of people from across the US-Mexico borderlands gathered inside the Teatro Acuña in Piedras Negras, Coahuila. The crowd was there to attend the "*Noche de Gala*," a fundraising event organized by women from some of the most distinguished Mexican families of San Antonio, Texas. Taking center stage at the event were the famous Higares-Novelty comedy sketch duo and the child-comedian, La Muñequita. The three actors were a family comprised of a husband-and-wife duo joined by their daughter. Their comedy sketches and musical acts had garnered them quite the following in the South Texas-Mexico borderlands and made them frequent guests at theaters in Piedras Negras, Laredo, and San Antonio. Their presence that night at the event marked the beginning of their two-year tour at various other fundraising events that took place across Northern Mexico and the US

Southwest between 1921 and 1922 with the purpose of raising funds for Ignacio Lozano's *Beneficio para las Escuelas del Centenario*. This ambitious project aimed to raise funds to build two schools in the city of Dolores Hidalgo in Guanajuato, Mexico. With an unwavering commitment to meet a Fall 1922 deadline, this endeavor received extensive promotion and advocacy in Lozano's *La Prensa*. These efforts coincided with Mexico's celebration in 1921 of its one hundred years of independence, an occasion marked by national celebrations sponsored and promoted by the new Mexican President Álvaro Obregón.[458] Lozano's two-year fundraiser received widespread support from Mexican communities across the United States, where Lozano's *La Prensa* dominated the Spanish-language media landscape. The success of the fundraiser proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that Ignacio Lozano had become the most influential Spanish-language publisher in the United States.

This chapter explores the meteoric rise to fame of Ignacio Lozano's *La Prensa* and its transformation into an institution whose opinions by the 1920s had become widely understood to represent the mood and thoughts of the Mexican immigrant community in the United States.[459] While there were many Spanish-language competitors to *La Prensa* in circulation between 1915 and 1930, none were able to match the impact, reach, or financial success of San Antonio's *La Prensa*. Starting in 1914 the ideas, conservative politics, and cultural discourse printed in *La Prensa* became widely distributed in communities across the Mexican communities of the United States. In 1921, members of these communities answered the call *La Prensa*'s call for funds to

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[458] Jaime Tamayo, *El Obregonismo y Los Movimientos Sociales: La Conformación Del Estado Moderno En México (1920-1924)* (Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara, Mexico, n.d.); Linda B. Hall, *Alvaro Obregón: Power and Revolution in Mexico, 1911-1920* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1981). The *Fiestas del Centenario* were meant by the Obregón administration to mark an end to the Mexican Revolution and to perhaps help distract from the many social and financial problems facing the war torn nation.

[459] Nicolás Kanellos and Helvetia Martell, *Hispanic Periodicals in the United States, Origins to 1960: A Brief History and Comprehensive Bibliography* (Arte Público Press, 2000), 39.

build schools in Mexico and helped Lozano raise tens of thousands of dollars (largely through individual donations) for the project. This widespread support for Lozano's Escuelas del Centenario project entailed the mobilization of hundreds of people of Mexican heritage living in the United States who through their donations to *La Prensa*'s cause, proved that the *México de Afuera* mentality that Lozano had cultivated through his newspaper since 1913 had become an observable social force capable of real world impact.

Scholars writing about *La Prensa* have often categorized the publication as a foreign press in exile exclusively serving the needs of the Mexican exile community in the United States. They have described the newspaper as an elitist pro-Porfirian publication stuck on US soil.[460] Writing in 1991, Roberto R. Treviño went so far as to call *La Prensa* the public newsletter of "a shadow government (in exile) totally opposed to the ideals of the (Mexican) Revolution."[461] However, this interpretation ignores the role the newspaper played in establishing a more accessible and all-encompassing vision of Mexican identity in the United States. Newer understandings of the newspaper's impact tend to credit *La Prensa* with establishing the first Latino media landscape in the United States and through its promotion of the ideology of *México de* Afuera, popularizing a homogenized version of Mexican identity that played a role in helping unite Mexicans in the United States.[462] México de Afuera was a concept that acknowledged the longstanding history of

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[460] Melita M Garza, "Framing Mexicans in Great Depression Editorials: Alien Riff-Raff to Heroes," *American Journalism* 34, no. 1 (2017): 34; Richard A. Buitron, *The Quest for Tejano Identity in San Antonio, Texas, 1913-2000*, 1st paperback ed, Routledge (New York: Routledge, 2013), 20; Colin MacLachlan and William H. Beezley, *El Gran Pueblo: A History of Greater Mexico* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994), 243.

[461] Roberto R. Treviño, "Prensa y Patria: The Spanish-Language Press and the Biculturation of the Tejano Middle Class, 1920-1940," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (1991): 456.

[462] Vicki Mayer, "From Segmented to Fragmented: Latino Media in San Antonio, Texas.," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 78, no. 2 (2001): 293; Daniel Morales, "'Tejas, Afuera de México': Newspapers, the Mexican Government, Mutualistas, and Migrants in San Antonio 1910–1940," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 40, no. 2 (2021): 64; Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, "Ignacio E. Lozano:

migration and immigration from Mexico to the United States which by 1910 had resulted in various "Mexican colonies" across the country.[463] At first, *La Prensa* broadened the term's criteria for inclusion to encompass all people of Mexican heritage, irrespective of nationality. Anyone with "*sangre Mexicana*" who upheld the defining characteristics that identified them as one of the "*buenos Mexicanos*" could ultimately claim membership in México de Afuera.[464] As the Mexican Revolution progressed and more of Mexico's more conservative liberals found their way to the United States, México de Afuera became less inclusive over time, coming to specifically define Mexican refugees who rejected the changes to Mexico brought about by the revolution.

In starting his newspaper in San Antonio, Lozano could not have chosen a better place to open a Spanish-language newspaper. At the time, the city was the largest urban center in Texas, often considered the de facto capital of South Texas.[465] The city's historical role as a crossroads of trade between Mexico and the United States meant that San Antonio was the first city in South Texas to begin the process of modernization.[466] This process started with the arrival of the railroads during the Gilded Age, which helped to transform the city into one of the most important agricultural and manufacturing nodes along the system of railroads that connected the US Southwest to Northern Mexico. By the time of *La Prensa*'s launch in 1913, commerce, industry,

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The Mexican Exile Publisher Who Conquered San Antonio and Los Angeles," *American Journalism* 21, no. 1 (2004): 75–77.

[463] Américo Paredes, *Folklore and Culture on the Texas-Mexican Border*, ed. Richard Bauman (University of Texas at Austin: CMAS Books, 1993), 12; Julia G. Young, *Mexican Exodus: Emigrants, Exiles, and Refugees of the Cristero War* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 40.

[464] The phrase "buenos mexicanos" makes an appearance within almost every issue of *La Prensa* to describe Mexicans on both sides of the border, though a definition of what use of this term was based on is not directly given.

[465] Richard A. Garcia, *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1941* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991), 15–18.

[466] Garcia, 15; Claudia R. Guerra, ed., *300 Years of San Antonio & Bexar County*, ebook (San Antonio, Texas: Maverick Books, Trinity University Press, 2019); Lewis F Fisher, *American Venice: The Epic Story of San Antonio's River* (New York: Trinity University Press, 2015), http://www.myilibrary.com?id=768686.

and immigration had transformed San Antonio into THE metropolis of the Southwest. Immigration from both the US interior and the rest of the world made the city, which had historically served as a cultural crossroads, a home to one of the most diverse populations in the United States.[467] In addition to San Antonio's promising modern and economic landscape, it was the city's remarkable blend of Anglo modernity with Spanish/Mexican culture and heritage that drew men like Lozano to it.

As early as the 1890s, the city's Anglo leadership had started to make deliberate efforts to tone down their hostility towards Mexican culture and pivot instead to promoting San Antonio to the rest of the world as a modern Anglo city built on a celebrated past influenced by Spanish and Mexican culture. Spanish/Mexican architectural elements, such as ornate colonial facades, vibrant colors, and traditional plazas and courtyards became props promoting a "Spanish Fantasy Past" to tourists and migrants.[468] San Antonio's Anglo elite conveniently forgot their recent past of anti-Mexican rhetoric and political attacks on local Mexican customs. As problematic as this new invented past was, the preservation of San Antonio's Spanish/Mexican character and the normalization of popular Mexican celebrations helped to promote San Antonio as a place of continuity for Mexicans moving there. It also helped that the city's modernization process necessitated a tremendous amount of labor, which attracted Mexican workers with the promise of economic opportunity. Thus, even as the city's native Tejano population dwindled in the decades

[467] Garcia, *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1941*, 16–18; Laura Hernández-Ehrisman, *Inventing the Fiesta City: Heritage and Carnival in San Antonio*, ebook (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016), 12. San Antonio was home to a mix of different cultures and races, among which the most prominent were communities of Anglo, Irish, German, African American, Italian, Polish, Mexican, Cuban, Spanish, and by 1915, Chinese heritage.

[468] Hernández-Ehrisman, *Inventing the Fiesta City*, 12. This was the commercialization and fetishization of the city's Spanish/Mexican past. It was a nostalgic and romanticized take that racialized the city's Mexican population (the heirs of Spain) as remnants of a bygone era which had been replaced by an obviously superior modern Anglo present.

after 1864, a steady stream of people from Mexico continued to sustain and even grow the Mexican presence in San Antonio. The city's Westside became home to a mix of migrants, immigrants, and native-born Mexicans whose secular and religious activities helped to expand San Antonio's Mexican presence and transform the urban landscape. It was this cultural milieu so conveniently close to the US-Mexico border and the city's modern aesthetics and potential business opportunities that helped draw illustrious Mexican nationals to San Antonio. By 1900, San Antonio had come to be considered by many Mexicans as a spiritual extension of their homeland, maybe even its northernmost city.[469]

From 1880 to 1910, Mexican nationals fleeing their homeland to escape political persecution and deteriorating conditions during the rule of Porfirio Díaz chose San Antonio as their home in exile in part because of the familiar cultural atmosphere that could be found there. Many prominent Mexican politicians and intellectuals, like future Mexican presidents Francisco I. Madero and José Venustiano Carranza, had extended family with homes in the city. The growing presence of prominent individuals from Mexico served to attract others of similar class and wealth to the city, which in turn helped to promote San Antonio as an important site of Mexican political and intellectual thought. By the 1900s, the city had become a place of political intrigue and debate as anarchists, liberals, socialists, liberals, and conservatives critical of the government of Porfirio Díaz all plotted a number of different rebellions against the regime.[470] By the time the Mexican

[469] MacLachlan and Beezley, *El Gran Pueblo: A History of Greater Mexico,* 14.

[470] Ricardo Flores Magón and the PLM used San Antonio as a base of operations until 1906. In 1910, Francisco Madero would launch the start of the Mexican Revolution by delivering his challenge to Porfirio Díaz from San Antonio. General Bernardo Reyes and his supporters also spent some time in San Antonio plotting alongside Francisco A. Chapa to overthrow the Madero regime in 1911.

Revolution began in earnest in 1910, San Antonio had established itself as the most important center for Mexican intellectual discourse and political activism on the US side of the border.[471]

From the moment of his arrival in San Antonio in 1908, Ignacio Lozano had positioned himself to enter the circles of the city's Mexican social elite. For starters, the list of literature sold by Lozano suggests that his bookstore's target clientele was not necessarily the average Mexican pecan-sheller or *jacalé* dweller. The bookstore carried a sizeable amount of popular and accessible titles, but the majority of the books sold consisted of works like *Gramática Castellana*, *Nociones de Geografía Universal*, and other titles that suggest they were intended for people belonging to a higher social demographic. The location where he set up shop is also telling. The bookstore's first location was on Dolorosa Street, which allowed for convenient access to the city's downtown commercial districts and the Mexican community's public scene in San Antonio's West Side.[472] The location that placed him in San Antonio's modernizing urban center while keeping the city's Mexican Town and its social life within reach, but also distanced the shop from the Mexican neighborhood's more unsavory elements. In this way, Lozano mirrored the patterns of the wealthy Mexican political exiles he was associating with by 1910. Like him, *los ricos* (the wealthy Mexican exiles) enjoyed frequent visits to the West Side but maintained a distance from its problems by choosing to take up residence elsewhere in the city.[473]

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[471] Gabriela González, *Redeeming La Raza: Transborder Modernity, Race, Respectability, and Rights* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 121; Buitron, *The Quest for Tejano Identity in San Antonio, Texas, 1913-2000*, 59; Daniel D. Arreola, "The Mexican American Cultural Capital," *Geographical Review* 77, no. 1 (January 1987): 17–34.

[472] In 1913, Dolorosa Street began near River Park (the precursor to San Antonio's famous River Walk) and ran westbound towards the city's Mexican Quarter. This was the second iteration of Lozano's bookstore, which had been upgraded to house the printing press from which *La Prensa* was printed.

[473] Garcia, *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1941*, 95; Arreola, "The Mexican American Cultural Capital," 26.

By the 1900s, the fractures that had long divided San Antonio's Mexican community along class lines had further widened and split with new arrivals from Mexico and the occupational diversity introduced by modernization. Writing in 1991, Richard A. Garcia observed that three major class divisions split the city's Mexican community during that era. These were the ricos, the middle-class, and the laboring classes.[474] He and other scholars have since further subdivided the top of this hierarchy into the exiled ricos, and the upper and lower middle-class, affording special distinctions within these classes for Tejanos and US-born Mexicans.[475] As the owner of two businesses, Lozano has often been classified as a member of the exiled rico class. While he was certainly not part of an established Mexican political or financial dynasty, his ability to open a bookstore and financially support his mother and two sisters so immediately upon arrival to San Antonio certainly supports this conclusion. It is also likely that frequent interactions with the rico and other upper-class Mexican clientele drawn to his bookstore helped him to establish important connections with these men. By the time of *La Prensa*'s launch, his direct association with men like Adolfo Duclos Salinas and Francisco A. Chapa had certainly cemented his place in the social world of the exiled ricos.

For the exiled ricos, many of whom lived well in Mexico under the rule of Porfirio Díaz, the elitist attitudes of Mexico's liberal *científicos* and their national project left a lasting influence on their concept of Mexican identity. Like the científico advisors of the Porfiriato, the ricos emphasized Mexico's cultural connections to Europe, in particular the Spanish aspects of their national heritage.[476] This meant that for them, the Spanish language and the Catholic faith were

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[474] Garcia, *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1941*, 53.

[475] González, *Redeeming La Raza*, 7–9; Garcia, *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1941*, 87; MacLachlan and Beezley, *El Gran Pueblo: A History of Greater Mexico*, 243.

[476] William H. Beezley and Colin MacLachlan, *Mexicans in Revolution: 1910-1946* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 59.

central aspects of what defined *Mexicanidad* (being Mexican). They were Mexican elites whose cultural geography had revolved around Mexico City, what they considered as the enlightened core of Mexico's culture and politics.[477] They interpreted the Mexican Revolution as the takeover of the nation by Mexico's ignorant masses. After 1914, the exiled ricos began to see themselves as retainers and guardians of what was left of the modern and sophisticated culture that Mexico had attained under the rule of Porfirio Díaz.[478]

This advertisement from *La Prensa* emphasizes the duty of parents to teach their children Spanish.
La Prensa, December 17, 1933, pg. 15. Acquired from Newsbank.

[477] Nancy Aguirre, "Porfirista Femininity in Exile: Women's Contributions to San Antonio's La Prensa, 1913-1929," in *Women of the Right: Comparions and Interplay Across Borders* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 148; Beezley and MacLachlan, *Mexicans in Revolution: 1910-1946*, 59.

[478] Garcia, *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1941*, 222–23.

When *La Prensa* launched in 1913, the publication stood out because of its modern design and widespread distribution. From the start, Lozano aimed to make his newspaper the premier publication of exiled ricos in the United States, but also sought to increase his publication's market potential by appealing to any other person of Mexican heritage who might have an interest. To achieve this, he focused on including content that would appeal to both los ricos and Mexicans born in the United States and made sure his newspapers were distributed far and wide. It was access to San Antonio's modern communications infrastructure that made it possible for *La Prensa* to reach every corner of Lozano's imagined México de Afuera on its first issue. Lozano made use of the railroads that conveniently connected San Antonio to major exiled rico destinations across South Texas and the rest of the US Southwest.[479] He also took advantage of the postal service subsidies extended by the United States to all newspapers printed within it in order to send large stacks of his newspaper to Laredo, Uvalde, Corpus Christi, Brownsville, and El Paso at discount rates. Use of the Southern Pacific Railroad service, which had been extended into San Antonio in 1877, also granted Lozano access to parts of New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

La Prensa's first issue reflects Lozano's desire to reach as wide an audience as possible while also remaining highly tailored towards the elite upper-class readers he was used to catering to. As with the majority of modern newspapers of the era, a handful of Spanish-language advertisements for local stores line the pages of the newspaper. This was valuable content that helped to connect Mexican communities with needed services and products from businesses that might not typically reach out to a Spanish-speaking audience. A few news stories from across the nation and around the world can be found as well. These were likely reprints from English-language newspapers that were translated into Spanish. In an era during which most Mexican

[479] Rivas-Rodriguez, "Ignacio E. Lozano," 81.

communities in the United States were segregated linguistically and geographically from the English-speaking world that surrounded them, Spanish-language versions of advertisements and syndicated news stories helped to connect readers of *La Prensa* to the world beyond their local communities.[480] This content would have held appeal to a general audience, especially members of the Mexican middle-class who had access to the financial means to engage in retail.

While advertisements and translated news stories appeal to a general audience, the bulk of *La Prensa*'s first issue is lined with content catering to the exiled ricos and those of the Mexican upper-class. News from Mexico crowd the front page, delivering the latest information on the multi-day coup d'état that brought an end that week to the regime of Mexican President Francisco I. Madero. Taken from a mix of sources that likely included Mexican newspapers and correspondence from Lozano's contacts in Mexico, this was the type of content that *La Prensa* became most known for. As discussed in the previous chapter, the access to news from Mexico provided by *La Prensa* played an important role in forging and maintaining the links between the cultural homeland and el México de Afuera. This was likely also the main content that exiled ricos would have been interested in reading. Additionally, this issue's entertainment section contains works of the literature and poetry created by renowned literary artists hailing from Europe and Latin America. A parade of works by the likes of Colombian poet Isaías Gamboa, French man of letters Catulle Mèndes, and Austrian modernist Peter Altenberg line this issue's *Pagina Selecta*. Future issues would contain Cuban legends like Aurelia Castillo de González, even excerpts from Voltaire and Kant, and of course, Mexican literary luminaries like Amado Nervo and Luis G. Urbina. It is this type of content which set *La Prensa* apart as a publication meant for the exiled ricos and other elites of the Mexican colonies in the United States. Despite the goals of wider

[480] Nicolás Kanellos, "Recovering and Re-Constructing Early Twentieth-Century Hispanic Immigrant Print Culture in the US," *American Literary History* 19, no. 2 (2007): 442.

inclusion pronounced in the famous "*venimos á luchar*" prospectus featured on this issue's front page, the majority of *La Prensa*'s first issue lends itself more to the tastes and preferences of the exiled ricos and Mexican upper classes.

This first issue of *La Prensa* published on February 13, 1913, helped set the standard for the newspaper's 1913 to 1914 run. During that time, *La Prensa*'s content focused mostly on news regarding the latest developments in Mexico, where the violence of the Mexican Revolution had only intensified following the *Decena Trágica* of 1913 and the assassination of President Madero.[481] Its close coverage of the Mexican Revolution helped *La Prensa* establish itself as the premier publication for news from Mexico. Much of the information used in *La Prensa*'s coverage of events in Mexico was gathered from newspapers printed there and by correspondents in the country who supplied by Lozano with information via telegram.[482] The editorial content featured during the *La Prensa*'s first year of life also enshrined it as a conservative publication in complete opposition to the Mexican Revolution. By featuring stories that condemned the Mexican revolutionaries and waxed nostalgic over the country's era under the rule of Porfirio Díaz, the publication reaffirmed its commitment to serving the interests of the exiled ricos. As discussed in the last chapter, this group was largely made up of supporters of Porfirio Díaz who had thrived both socially and economically under his rule and had fled to cities like San Antonio to escape the growing turmoil of the Mexican Revolution.[483]

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[481] Roger A. Bruns, *Border Towns and Border Crossings: A History of the U.S.-Mexico Divide* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2019), 79; MacLachlan and Beezley, *El Gran Pueblo: A History of Greater Mexico*, 214–15.

[482] "Telegramas Tres Piedras," *La Prensa*, February 20, 1913, pg. 2. This was a practice that was used throughout the life of the publication.

[483] Young, *Mexican Exodus: Emigrants, Exiles, and Refugees of the Cristero War*, 64; Beezley and MacLachlan, *Mexicans in Revolution: 1910-1946*, 59.

In 1913, los ricos and other conservative Mexican elites in the United States threw their support behind the man who had overthrown the Madero regime, José Victoriano Huerta. Like their conservative counterparts in Mexico, los ricos who had opposed the liberal politics of Francisco Madero saw "The Usurper" as the closest thing to a return to the times of Porfirio Díaz. *La Prensa* publicly echoed these sentiments, running stories that portrayed Huerta as the only man capable of restoring order to Mexico and the ally/possible chosen heir of "don" Porfirio.[484] It was not long after endorsing Huerta as interim President of Mexico that the term "buenos mexicanos" made its first appearance on the pages of *La Prensa*. On May 22, 1913, *La Prensa* ran a front-page editorial in which it reached out to Huerta's opposition in Mexico and the United States, using the term to describe those committed to restoring peace to the homeland. The editorial was a pro-Huerta puff piece that built the general up as a man of honor and defender of the *patria* that the rebels were being misled to criticize and that "good Mexicans" should recognize as the only one capable of bringing the conflict to an end.[485] The next instance of the term shows up in June, when it is used to describe Mexicans residing in the homeland who are eager for work. Here the phrase is used to describe "buenos mexicanos" as those eager for the return to the normality on offer by the Huerta regime.[486] The term then, becomes associated with those Mexicans on both sides of the border who long for an end to the hostilities of the conflict, leaving it open ended whether this would then be followed by a return to the status quo that had existed before the Mexican Revolution or to something new.

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[484] "Vuelve un Porfirista," *La Prensa*, March 20, 1913, pg. 4; "Nada Quiere Vitoriano," *La Prensa,* March 27, 1913, pg. 3.

[485] "He ahí a vuestros amigos, señores carrancistas," *La Prensa,* May 22, 1913, pg. 1.

[486] "Dentro de un mes habrá trabajo para veinticinco mil hombres.,"*La Prensa,* June 12, 1913, pg. 2.

The term "buenos mexicanos" shows up one final time before the end of 1913 in a story ran on the nineteenth of June. The story draws on the correspondence addressed to *La Prensa* by Arnulfo G. Gómez, a rico from Nuevo Laredo who fled to Raymondville, Texas in order to escape the violence of the Mexican Revolution.[487] The story describes Gómez's travels to Kingsville and Brownsville as a representative of the Mexican Consul in Laredo who was helping to promote the Huerta regime among Mexicans in Texas. The term "buenos mexicanos" is used here to describe the Mexican immigrants Gómez met with at each of these cities. These were middle-class exiles and other ricos who had formed *sociedades patrióticas* to organize their communities and yearned for an end to the Mexican Revolution so that they might return to the homeland. Similar to the *junta patriótica* and the *mutualista* organizations, these were grass-roots activist organizations that provided immigrant and US-born Mexicans with an institution through which to participate in local social and political life. Participation for both Mexican nationals and those born on US soil served to reinforce their cultural heritage and reaffirm their ties to their shared cultural homeland, ensuring the preservation and continuation of this connection.[488] Gómez and the members of the sociedades are characterized as "buenos mexicanos" not just for their enduring love of homeland (*patria*), but for their decision to not support anti-Huerta rebels in any capacity. Here again, *La Prensa*'s conservative politics dictates the meaning of the phrase and shapes the contours that divide good Mexicans from the Villistas, Carrancistas, Magonistas, and other bad Mexicans who conservative ricos blamed for the Mexican Revolution.

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[487] "Un obrero que lucha por el buen number de su patria," *La Prensa*, June 19, 1913, pg. 1. In Mexico, he had been a railway worker affiliated with the Unión Ferrocarrilera y Gremios Confederados del Trabajo, Mexican labor union representing railroad workers.

[488] Armando Navarro, *Mexicano Political Experience in Occupied Aztlan: Struggles and Change* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2005), 146–47; Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston*, ebook (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2001), 36–38.

Gómez's efforts to promote pro-Huerta unity among Mexicans living in Texas made the front page news of the June 19th issue, in which he was praised for his efforts in assisting the Consul of Laredo in its efforts to bring peace to the homeland. His travels came at a time when some of the fiercest fighting of the Mexican Revolution was taking place along the Texas-Mexico border. During 1913 and 1914, Nuevo Laredo became the site of fierce military engagements between the forces of Huerta and Venustiano Carranza. As the fighting raged on, the two sides frequently looked across the US-Mexico border for political and financial support, appealing to Mexicans living in the United States for aid. Both Mexican nationals and US-born Mexicans answered the call, becoming involved in smuggling operations, fundraisers, sanctuary, and at times, even volunteered themselves to make more direct contributions.[489] For example, Nicasio Idar's children were among those who became directly involved in the conflict in support of Carranza's Constitutionalist Army. Between 1913 and 1914, Jovita, Elvira, and Clemente Idar served as volunteers in *La Cruz Blanca*, a Mexican infirmary and relief organization established to treat wounded soldiers. Jovita and Elvira Idar joined the organization as nurses, while Clemente Idar lent his managerial and clerical skills to the organization.[490] Their participation in the conflict was directly tied to their *fronterizo* world view, which encouraged their belief that despite living north of the Mexican border, they could still be active participants in the forging of the renewed nation that would emerge from the Mexican Revolution.[491]

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[489] Arnoldo De León et al., *War along the Border: The Mexican Revolution and Tejano Communities*, ebook edition, University of Houston Series in Mexican American Studies, Sponsored by the Center for Mexican American Studies (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2012), 34–35; David R. Maciel, *El México de Afuera: Historia del Pueblo Chicano* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2021), 102, El México de Afuera.

[490] González, *Redeeming La Raza*, 94–96.

[491] Yolanda Padilla, "Borderlands Letrados: La Crónica, the Mexican Revolution, and Transnational Critique on the US-Mexico Border," *English Language Notes* 56, no. 2 (2018): 108–14.

Transborder activities like those of the Idars were exactly what *La Prensa* hoped its stories would help to curve, especially among those who were actively aiding and supplying Huerta's enemies. Arnulfo G. Gomez's story was used by *La Prensa* to reiterate its recurring argument that "buenos mexicanos" residing in the United States should not in any capacity support the rebel factions involved in the Mexican Revolution.[492] Certainly recognizing that US-born Mexicans were among those getting involved, the story even suggests that there might be some merit in Mexican exiles working together with *méxico-texanos* (US-born Mexicans) to form mutually beneficial "pacifist" organizations. The goal of these peaceful organizations would of course be focused on pushing to bring an end to the Mexican Revolution.[493] In the eyes of the conservative exiled ricos whose viewpoints *La Prensa* reflected, the term "mexicanos buenos" became a shorthand way to describe those persons of Mexican heritage whose desire to protect and defend the patria (homeland) included a total opposition to the Mexican Revolution. In this way, Lozano used *La Prensa* during 1913 and 1914 to support Huerta's efforts in pacifying the country.

La Prensa experienced almost immediate success following its launch, quickly finding a niche for itself within the hyper-competitive Spanish-language newspaper market of the 1910s. Only a few months after its launch, Lozano saw fit to expand the publication from the average four pages per issue to a total of eight. The doubling of the newspaper's size in less than a year proves that *La Prensa*'s conservative ideology resonated with a significant portion of those living in the Mexican communities of the United States. Lozano benefitted not only from the growing numbers of people fleeing Mexico during this decade, but from the fact that a significant portion of this immigration consisted of Mexico's middle and upper classes. Writing about immigration from Mexico between 1900 and 1930, Richard A. Garcia recognized three distinct waves. He recognized

[492] *La Prensa*, June 19, 1913, pg. 8.
[493] *La Prensa*, June 19, 1913, pg. 1.

that the first two of these waves contained a significant amount of Mexico's upper classes, who had fled the country specifically because of the Mexican Revolution and the turmoil leading up to it.[494] Launching *La Prensa* in 1913, just as the second of Garcia's waves was beginning to start, Lozano benefitted from this demographic shift. As an experienced business owner, he also capitalized on what advantages he had access to. From day one, Lozano published *La Prensa* in the tens of thousands of copies, using San Antonio's communications infrastructure to make sure the newspaper found its way to all of the cities in the US Southwest were the exiled ricos were taking refuge.[495]

On July 15, 1914, facing defeat at the hands of the armed opposition, Victoriano Huerta resigned from his role as President of Mexico. Five days later, he and his family boarded a ship in Puerto México and departed for Jamaica in what marked the beginning of his exile from Mexico. Diplomacy seemed poised to carry the day in the months that followed as fighting came to a standstill between rebel leaders Carranza, Francisco "Pancho" Villa, Pascual Orozco, Emiliano Zapata, and Alvaro Obregón. The rebels and what was left of the Huerta administration began to negotiate with each other what would come next. However, differences in vision, recent insults, and unbridled ambition soon saw the conflict turn bloody again as Villa and Carranza set their armies on each other in a continuation of the Mexican Revolution. By 1915, the allied forces of Carranza and Obregón had ensured that their rivals would never emerge victorious while also being incapable of entirely defeating the Villistas and Zapatistas.[496] This conflict, which engulfed Mexico from 1915 to 1917, unleashed upon the country a wave of wanton violence that impacted every level of society. Across the nation, widely dispersed bands of revolutionaries roamed the country

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[494] Garcia, *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1941*, 221–23; MacLachlan and Beezley, *El Gran Pueblo: A History of Greater Mexico*, 243.

[495] "Un Hombre y un Periódico," *La Prensa*, February 13, 1938, pg. 46-47.

[496] Beezley and MacLachlan, *Mexicans in Revolution: 1910-1946*, 32–34.

committing all sorts of depredations on both rival factions and innocent civilians. According to William H. Beezley and Colin M. Maclachlan, the violence was so pervasive that it totally disrupted day-to-day life in Mexico during these years.[497]

The year of Huerta's resignation and subsequent exile from Mexico marked a year of transformation for *La Prensa* as events in Mexico influenced the direction in which Lozano took the newspaper. When Huerta had come into power, Lozano, and many of the exiled ricos had looked forward to the restoration of the old Porfirian order with the intention to return to Mexico once the nation was pacified. *La Prensa* encouraged the "buenos mexicanos" of México de Afuera to support Huerta's efforts to defeat men like Carranza and Villa with stories that proclaimed that the president sought to reinstate national elections and return the country to more peaceful times.[498] The fall of Huerta was not received well by the exiled ricos and their allies. The newspaper, which had already been hostile towards Carranza for some time, became his harshest and loudest opposition newspaper in the United States. Stories in the newspaper had long accused Carranza of being in league with the United States, rumors that seemed to be confirmed by President Wilson's refusal to recognize Huerta as President of Mexico. The Wilson administration did in fact support the Carrancistas, helping them throughout out the conflict, particularly by blocking foreign aid to Huerta.[499] On April 21, 1914, the invasion of the city of Veracruz by the US Navy all but confirmed President Wilson's desire to have Huerta removed from power.

La Prensa had reported on this drama since its launch, frequently running stories that criticized the Wilson administration's involvement in Mexico's domestic affairs, and warning of a

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[497] Beezley and MacLachlan, 33–34.

[498] *La Prensa*, May 7, 1914, pg. 4; *La Prensa*, March 27, 1913, pg. 4.

[499] Beezley and MacLachlan, *Mexicans in Revolution: 1910-1946*, 26–28. Huerta and Wilson engaged in a series of escalating slights after the former had refused to follow Wilson's demands that he step down and hold free elections.

possible military intervention by the United States that could result in a fate worse than that of 1848.[500] As the main benefactor of the foreign intervention, Carranza became the main target of attacks by *La Prensa*, which questioned the legitimacy of his potential future presidency. In 1914, the departure of Huerta at the hands of a coalition headlined by Carranza was portrayed as a victory for the Wilson administration.[501] *La Prensa* spent the rest of the year attacking Carranza and the Wilson administration. At the same time, the newspaper's content also displayed an utter disgust with the perpetrators of the violence that engulfed their homeland after the fall of Huerta. Between 1914 and 1915, *La Prensa* focused a large portion of its coverage on reporting on the unhinged acts and retributive violence of the armed men roaming Mexico at the time. In this way, it portrayed the Mexican Revolution as having devolved into a contest between bad men who only sought to fulfill their basest desires.[502] In 1938, longtime contributor Jose C. Valadez would channel the views of *La Prensa*'s staff during this era when he wrote that between 1914 and 1915, "*los grupos armados se destrosan entre sí; destrosan también a la nación*."[503]

In 1914, after having narrowly escaped destruction by an accidental fire at the start of the year, Lozano took advantage of the necessary repairs to expand both the physical space of his newspaper's print shop and its staff. *La Prensa*'s almost immediate success had convinced Lozano to set his mind that year on making the then Thursday weekly into a daily publication.[504] The downfall of Huerta that summer and other events in Mexico made this planned expansion into a

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[500] "Parece Que Alguien Esta Provocando la Intervencion," *La Prensa*, March 6, 1913, pg. 1; "La Doctrina Monroe," *La Prensa*, January 22, 1914, pg. 8.

[501] "El Presidente Wilson se ha salido con la suya," *La Prensa*, June 16, 1914, pg. 1.

[502] "Los Zapatistas Se Han Entregado a Satisfacer Sus Paciones en la Ciudad de México," *La Prensa*, June 24, 1915, pg. 1. While the newspaper rightfully criticized murder and destruction of property, it was also appalled by the seizure of private property and any mention of redistribution of wealth or land.

[503] "Un Hombre y un Periódico," *La Prensa*, February 13, 1938, pg. 45.

[504] "Un Hombre y un Periódico," *La Prensa*, February 13, 1938, pg. 46-47.

necessity. A shift in thinking began to take place as the renewed violence of the Mexican Revolution spurred even more upper and middle-class Mexicans to flee the homeland and join the exiled ricos in the United States. Appalled by the violence in Mexico and retaining their total opposition to the Mexican Revolution, the exiled ricos began to see themselves and other exiled Mexican nationals as a community embodying the best aspects of Mexico, the better half of *la raza* (Mexican people). Nicolás Kanellos and other scholars have described the exiled rico worldview of this era as one that saw Mexico as totally transformed by the Mexican Revolution, with the ricos believing themselves to be the last standing bastion of an uncorrupted Mexican cultural identity.[505] In agreement with their outlook and already popular among them, Lozano positioned *La Prensa* in 1914 to become the organ of this emerging version of México de Afuera.

On June 23, 1915, the newspaper featured a lengthy opinion piece written by Bartolo Guardiola Hernández. The respected orator was a renowned Mexican academic who had served the government of Porfirio Díaz as one of their chief education ministers in the state of San Luis Potosí. As an employee for *La Prensa* from 1913 to 1917, he was responsible for various opinion sections published under the heading of "*Lecturas para el pueblo*" (Lessons for the people) which he printed under the pseudo name POLIMARK. His opinion piece was a response to the despicable state of affairs that followed the exile of Huerta from Mexico, decrying the perpetrators of violence and placing the blame for it at the feet of those who deposed "The Usurper."[506] Hernández channeled the frustration of the exiled rico class, who had hoped that Huerta would bring an end to the Mexican Revolution and allow them to finally return home. By 1916, the exiled rico zeitgeist, as it appears on the pages of *La Prensa*, saw the return home of the exiled as a near

[505] Kanellos, "Recovering and Re-Constructing Early Twentieth-Century Hispanic Immigrant Print Culture in the US," 441.

[506] "Por la Patria y por la Raza: Lecturas para el pueblo," *La Prensa,* June 23, 1915, pg. 3.

impossibility as long Carranza and the rest of the revolutionaries continued to run the country. The exiled rico zeitgeist, as it appears on the pages of *La Prensa*, turned inward, to the preservation of everything that made them "buenos mexicanos" and set them apart from those across the border. A hierarchical world view, strong Catholic faith, and an unyielding dedication to Mexican nationalism and culture came to define the ideology of México de Afuera.[507] As its political organ, *La Prensa* intensified its attacks on Carranza and the rest of the Mexican revolutionaries. It also ran stories advising Mexican nationals in the United States not to return to Mexico, warning them that they would be treated as traitors by the revolutionaries and be made into victims of the mindless violence.[508]

The content featured in *La Prensa* between 1914 and 1920 hints at the changing configuration the Mexicanist ideology of México de Afuera underwent after the fall of the Huerta regime. As discussed in the previous chapter, México de Afuera had long been used as a way for Mexican nationals living in the United States to continue identifying as a part of the Mexican national body.[509] As such, the essence of México de Afuera had always been centered on the preservation of Mexican religious and cultural values in anticipation of an eventual return to Mexico.[510] However, during the 1900s the term began to be appropriated by Mexican rico and upper-class exiles to refer exclusively to themselves and other Mexican nationals who had fled to the US to escape the revolution. After Huerta's fall in 1914, the writings and literature of the exiled

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[507] Nancy Aguirre, "A Public Defense of Faith: Catholic Nationalism in Media During the Mexican Revolution," in *The Right and Radical Right in the Americas: Interwar Currents from Interwar Canada to Contemporary Chile* (Connecticut and London: Lexington Books, 2022), 31–34; Norma A. Mouton, "Rev. Gregorio M. Valenzuela and the Mexican-American Presbyterian Community of Texas," in *Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage* (Houston, Texas: Arte Público Press, 2010), 143.

[508] "Un Error de los Emigrados," *La Prensa*, November 6, 1915, pg. 3.

[509] Alberto Varon, *Before Chicano: Citizenship and the Making of Mexican American Manhood, 1848-1959*, Kindle Edition (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 25.

[510] Aaron E. Sánchez, *Homeland: Ethnic Mexican Belonging Since 1900*, Kindle Edition, New Directions in Tejano History (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2021), 12–14.

Mexican upper classes featured in *La Prensa* began to reflect the imposition of a mental separation between those who belonged to the exiled México de Afuera and those Mexicans who had remained behind in Mexico.[511] Especially among the exiled upper classes, there was a sense that they were the truest embodiment of Mexican national identity, appropriating the meaning of México de Afuera to refer exclusively to them. As Aaron E. Sánchez writes in *Homeland: Ethnic Mexican Belonging Since 1900*: "In *el destierro*, they began to articulate a notion that the nation might be lost, but the national essence could be maintained."[512]

If the upper classes who adhered to México de Afuera saw themselves as an isolated island of culture in a sea between the United States and a decrepit Mexico, then *La Prensa* took on the role of the island's community newsletter and political representative. Throughout 1916 and 1917, Lozano's newspaper served as a platform through which the upper classes of México de Afuera published scathing critiques of both the revolutionaries in Mexico and the Wilson administration in the United States. President Wilson had earned the ire of México de Afuera due to his support of Carranza and his role in ousting Huerta. But it was Wilson's use of the US Army to enter Mexico in pursuit of Pancho Villa in 1916 that further escalated these sentiments, transforming *La Prensa* into a fervent opposition newspaper in both Mexico and the United States. While *La Prensa*'s content displayed disgust with the events that triggered the military intervention of 1916 (Villa's raid of Columbus, New Mexico), the newspaper's nationalist voices where even more horrified by what they saw as the violation of Mexico's national sovereignty. *La Prensa* echoed the concerns of a large swath of the Mexican exile community, for whom the presence of the US military on Mexican soil in Veracruz in 1914 and during the pursuit of Villa during 1916 to 1917, animated fears of a repeat of the aggression of 1848 that had resulted in the territorial dismemberment of

[511] "Nuestra Cultura," *La Prensa*, October 9, 1916, pg. 3.
[512] Sánchez, *Homeland*, 14.

Mexico.[513] Content on the pages of *La Prensa* published during the yearlong occupation reveals an enduring frustration with Carranza that stemmed from his inability to deny the United States its military occupation of Mexico and later, his apparent hesitation (at least to them) to cooperate with American military officers to capture Villa and swiftly bring the invasion to an end.[514]

By 1917, the content featured in *La Prensa* shows that relations between Carranza and México de Afuera had hit a point of no return. Though he had ascended to *Jefe Supremo* in 1916 and held the title of de-facto President of Mexico, it was not until new constitution for the country was written and agreed upon in 1917 that Carranza officially assumed the role. It is following these events that *La Prensa* and the elites of México de Afuera began to truly embody the "shadow government" description ascribed to them by Robert R. Treviño in 1991.[515] Lozano and his staff denounced the Constitution of 1917 that empowered Carranza's administration, never recognizing him as president of Mexico. They constantly published stories that opposed and criticized the administration's actions and encouraged their fellow exiles to refrain from returning to Mexico, a directive issued in opposition to the Mexican government's attempts to encourage its compatriots in the United States to return home. *La Prensa* condemned the new Mexican Constitution as an illegitimate "*cachito de papel, fabricado con las patas*" (a cheap paper produced by animals) of Carranza's appointed little Caesars.[516] For Carranza, they saved their deepest ire, presenting and referring to him in *La Prensa* not as President of Mexico, or even by his name, but by the mockingly disrespectful nickname of "*Don Venus*."

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[513] *La Prensa*, March 3, 1916, pg. 1; "Notas de la Intervencion American," *Regeneración*, April 13, 1916, pg. 2. In this concern, *La Prenda* was joined by other exile newspapers, even those it tended to disagree with like Magón's *Regeneración*.

[514] "Por La Union," *La Prensa*, March 15, 1916, pg. 3.

[515] Roberto R. Treviño, "Prensa y Patria," 455–56.

[516] "Constitucion," *La Prensa*, January 13, 1917, pg. 3.

The opposition of what by 1914 was the largest Spanish-language newspaper in publication in the United States did not go unnoticed by Carranza. In 1915, Carranza authorized a propaganda campaign designed to combat opposition newspapers like *La Prensa* and secure official recognition for his administration from the United States. This was a tactic that had previously worked in Carranza's favor.[517] In Mexico, Carranza banned opposition newspapers under the charge that they represented Huertista elements trying to undermine his government. According to writers for *La Prensa*, their newspaper was prevented from circulating in Mexico during this time and their correspondents faced harassment and arrest.[518] In the United States, the president authorized his Mexican consuls to collaborate with friendly Spanish-language newspapers. According to Michael M. Smith, this went so far as to provide significant funding to these newspapers with budgets allocated for this endeavor totaling in the thousands of dollars.[519] Carranza's continued engagement with newspapers printed in the United States and consumed by readers who did not live in Mexico helped legitimize the importance of México de Afuera in Mexico's domestic politics. As the most widely distributed newspaper of México de Afuera during this era, *La Prensa* played a significant role in shaping the political discourse between Mexico and the colonias Mexicanas of the United States. Lozano's hiring of Porfirian and Huertista contributors helped to transform *La Prensa* into the premier anti-Carrancista newspaper in the United States. Its presence in San Antonio ensured that the city remained an anti-Carrancista

[517] Michael M. Smith, "Carrancista Propaganda and the Print Media in the United States: An Overview of Institutions," *The Americas* 52, no. 2 (October 1995): 160. Smith details how in 1913, Carranza used contacts cultivated during his time in Texas with Madero to swing public opinion in the United States in favor of his opposition to Huerta.

[518] "Un Hombre y un Periódico," *La Prensa,* February 13, 1938, pg. 52.

[519] Smith, "Carrancista Propaganda and the Print Media in the United States: An Overview of Institutions," 163–67.

stronghold even when Carranza enjoyed widespread support in other cities in South Texas, like Laredo and Brownsville.

La Prensa's opposition to Carranza reflected a popular sentiment shared among the exiled Mexican upper classes of México de Afuera. For many among this influential segment of colonias, their hate for Carranza stemmed from their own feelings of persecution and victimization at the hands of the regime. Many of them had lost family members during the purges of Huertista officers carried out by Carranzista and Villista soldiers. Others still, had experienced loss of property as Carranzista officers confiscated the wealth and belongings of Porfirian and Huertista officials across Mexico. Even more remained in exile out of fear of potential reprisals by Carrancista officials upon their return to Mexico for voicing criticism of the revolution. The stories featured in *La Prensa* between 1915 and 1920 validated and substantiated these fears by reporting accounts of confiscations, arrests, and murders of people whose only crime appeared to be holding anti-Carrancista opinions. For Lozano and his staff, their opposition to Carranza and the revolution was deeply personal. While the banning of *La Prensa* in Mexico served to heighten their ire, it was the deaths and arrests of people they knew that permanently stained the waters. In 1916, *La Prensa* reported the death of their former assistant editor, Victor David Delgado. The former employee had returned to Mexico with hopes that the situation there had improved and had wound up among those rounded up and shot during a confrontation between Villistas and Carrancistas in the city of Chihuahua. Lozano and his staff placed the blame squarely on the ineptitudes of Carrancista leader Jacinto B. Treviño, who controlled the region at the time.[520]

In the same year that Mexico gained its new Constitution, Mexican intellectual and frequent contributor to *La Prensa*, Nemesio García Naranjo made the claim that Lozano's

[520] Victor David Delgado fue fusilado en Chihuaha," *La Prensa*, September 27, 1916, pg. 1.

newspaper was "*el refugio de la alma nacional*."[521] This claim located *La Prensa* as a vital organ at the very core of México de Afuera, not just a newspaper but an institution. Nemesio's claim came a year after Lozano's newspaper had officially surpassed 20,000 in monthly subscribers, a landmark number for a publication that was not only presented in Spanish but largely focused coverage on news from Mexico.[522] While an impressive feat, the newspaper's influence extended well beyond these numbers. In a mere three years, *La Prensa* became a commanding voice within the niche of the industry in which Mexican-owned Spanish-language newspapers operated in the United States. Newspapers not just in South Texas, but in El Paso, Los Angeles, and even in Missouri were being influenced by the content presented in *La Prensa*. Between 1914 and the early 1920s, the presence of *La Prensa* and Lozano's hiring practices helped to maintain San Antonio's status as the cultural and literary capital of México de Afuera. Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, exiled intellectuals and men of letters from Mexico were attracted to the city by the prospect of working at *La Prensa* or to set up their own publications as part of the print ecosystem led by the Lozano's printing press.

While *La Prensa* and the majority of the publications printed by those who belonged to the intellectual classes of México de Afuera tended to create content that catered largely to the refined tastes of the exiled Mexican upper classes, the success of these many literary endeavors was far too widespread and far too large for their consumption to have been limited to the wallets of a small social class, no matter how influential it was. According to the calculations of Richard A. Garcia, los ricos of San Antonio made up only the smallest percentage of all the social classes in the Colonia Mexicana.[523] Thus, it can then be summarized that the majority of the financial burden

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[521] "Un Hombre y un Periódico," *La Prensa*, February 13, 1938, pg. 50.

[522] *La Prensa*, January 4, 1916, pg. 3.

[523] Garcia, *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1941*, 95. A fluctuating number of about sixty to seventy families by his estimates.

needed to support this print ecosystem fell on the shoulders of the second wealthiest social group in the community, the Mexican-middle classes. In fact, the appearance of *La Prensa* and the print ecosystem it headed coincided with a period of intense modernization and economic expansion in both Northern Mexico and the US Southwest. The turn of the century saw the emergence of a professional Mexican working class in both nations.[524] These are the men and women who Emilio Zamora described in 1993 as skilled workers, the teachers, typographical workers, taxi drivers, clerks, electricians, barbers, shoemakers, plumbers, tailors, painters, mechanics, cement workers, and others who represented a little over twenty-one percent of the Mexican work force between 1910 and 1920.[525] In the 1910s, a large portion of Mexico's specialized workers were among those that relocated to the United States, bolstering the size of this demographic bloc and increasing its potential to be a lucrative market for publications and other commodities.

Another demographic that played a role in the continued existence of a Spanish-language print ecosystem during this decade, albeit a smaller one than the lower-middle class, was the Mexican community's upper middle-class. This group was largely composed of the few business owners, doctors, lawyers, and other business professionals who had financially thrived by becoming the providers in the service industry focused on catering to the needs of a growing Mexican community. In this group were also the moderately successful musicians, printers, and journalists of the community. Though their potential incomes were capped by the low wages of the community they served, they were also among the highest earners in the community, with enough disposable income to allocate towards the consumption of commodities like print media.[526]

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[524] Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1993), 22; MacLachlan and Beezley, *El Gran Pueblo: A History of Greater Mexico*, 74. In regards to Mexico, I am in fact referring to urban centers like Torréon, Nuevo Laredo, etc.

[525] Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*, 25–30.

[526] Zamora, 24–26.

Together with those of the lower middle class, these exiled and US-born Mexicans represented a diverse social block drawn together by their common affinity for modern capitalist culture and a shared class identity built on privileges, occupations, and business associations. As has been pointed out by Gabriela González, the upper and lower middle classes represented the largest bloc of the Mexican community's *gente decente*, often existing in close association with the exiled ricos with whom they shared an affinity for political strategies that emphasized order and progress.[527]

Meeting the basic requirements of being text literate, either through schooling or being self-taught, and having access to some form of disposable income, the ricos and middle classes made up the bulk of *La Prensa'*s readership. While these groups may not have seen eye to eye on everything, especially politics, the middle class tended to appreciate the social and cultural capital the ricos added to their communities. González writes that for the middle class, the concept of México de Afuera carried different meanings depending on whether they were Mexican nationals or US-born. However, it was the philosophy's core redemptive vision for all Mexicans that earned it their support.[528] In San Antonio, the heart of México de Afuera, the middle classes became culturally and socially intertwined with the exiled Mexican ricos. They participated in many of the same community organizations, social events, and above all, were avid consumers of the Spanish-language literature being produced in their city. Together, these two social classes became part of what Benedict Anderson refers to as a reading public, the active consumers of print media in whom the simultaneity of the act of mass consumption becomes one factor in the development of a (mass) consciousness.[529] It was among them and the exiled ricos that reading *La Prensa* became a daily

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[527] González, *Redeeming La Raza*, 17–18.

[528] Garcia, *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1941*, 94; González, *Redeeming La Raza*, 214.

[529] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition (2016) (Verso, 1983), 37–40. I replace here Anderson's use of the world "national" with mass because it better reflects the situation I am trying to describe.

ritual, for they made up the relatively smaller classes of the Mexican community who were highly literate and could afford to find the free time to read and participate in the social world of México de Afuera.

While *La Prensa* was certainly designed to cater to the tastes of the more privileged in the community, the prospectus featured on its first issue makes it clear that Lozano was interested in promoting unity and solidarity between people of Mexican heritage. *La Prensa* was a product designed to be consumed by a wide audience. Part of the key to his publication's sudden success was Lozano's inclusion of a variety of content that would appeal to large swaths of the Colonia Mexicana. In creating *La Prensa*, Lozano not only adopted the modern look of an English-language newspaper, but it is also clear from the newspaper's content that he embraced the modern practice of new journalism popularized by American newspaper tycoons Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst. New journalism was an approach to newspaper production that redefined the medium at the end of the nineteenth-century. As owners of the most successful newspapers in the United States at the turn of the century, Pulitzer and Hearst became responsible for mainstreaming new journalism and transforming the newspaper into a highly lucrative enterprise.[530] While advertising had always existed in newspapers, new journalism popularized the use of mass commercial advertising as the newspaper's main method for generating profit. Pulitzer and Hearst's newspapers used news and entertainment to lure in readers, selling access to this growing audience to businesses and organizations in the form of costly advertising space. Thanks to the success of Pulitzer and Hearst, non-news entertainment sections became a staple of the modern newspaper. The competition for space on the page between advertisements, news, and

[530] George H. Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper* (Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1999), 132–33. Mark Twain was among those who benefitted from being featured in newspapers.

entertainment gave rise to evening and Sunday papers, which not only increased ad revenue but also featured more space for the printing of entertainment.

The presence of news and non-news content in *La Prensa*, as well as the widespread appearance of advertisements on the page, is clear evidence that Lozano embraced new journalism in his bid to launch a successful publication. *La Prensa* delivered news and politics, but it also provided its readers with product reviews, health advice, and entertainment in a variety of forms. Segments like "*Lecturas Historicas*," "*Literatura Y Variedades*," and "*Lecturas Para El Pueblo*" certainly featured content fused with ideological implications that fell in line with the worldview of México de Afuera, but these sections also served as entertainment that helped readers simply pass the time. In the Hearst and Pulitzer newspapers, the entertainment sections helped introduce a generation of humorists, poets, and writers to a nationwide audience.[531] Under the direction of Lozano, *La Prensa* served a similar role in communities of Mexican heritage in the United States. As discussed earlier, it exposed its readers to legends of the Hispanic world and beyond, like Spain's Eduardo Marquina and other famous names from Europe and Latin America.[532] At the same time, *La Prensa* also served as the launchpad for younger voices like that of Teodoro Torres, Jr., who lent his talents to the newspaper starting in 1914. Torres was a Mexican exile who had briefly worked as a journalist before escaping to the United States and joining *La Prensa* in 1913. During his years working for Lozano, he developed into a prolific poet, humorist, novelist, and leading journalist who became internationally recognized.[533] His work was heavily featured on *La Prensa*'s Sunday edition, which launched in 1915 and like the Hearst and Pulitzer newspapers,

[531] Douglas, 134–37.
[532] *La Prensa*, August 6, 1914, pg. 3.
[533] Guerra, *300 Years of San Antonio & Bexar County*.

tended to focus more on non-news entertainment with sections like "*Comentarios del Día*" and "*Platicas Populares*."

As an experienced editor-publisher, Lozano knew that larger audiences and higher sales would result in more lucrative advertising revenue. Whether it was profits that motivated him, or a desire for unity, or even a combination of both, *La Prensa* was one of the few Spanish-language publications published by a Mexican exile to market itself to US-born Mexicans. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the newspaper's prospectus acknowledged those of Mexican heritage born in US soil and invited them to participate in *La Prensa*'s community of readers.[534] Mexican politics would dominate the newspaper and its priority would always certainly be those exiled from the homeland. However, *La Prensa* also featured news from around the United States, particularly in its "*Por Los Estados*" section. While one can certainly parcel out the presentation of content as intended for separate audiences, the reality is that here was a lot of potential overlap in the material presented in *La Prensa*. While the ricos and other financially well off community members were often insulated from it, discrimination and racism still affected both the expatriates and the US-born. Both would have found interest in *La Prensa*'s reporting of instances of discrimination and violence against people of Mexican heritage. Local news, the "*Informacion General*" section, and entertainment was yet another area of content that would have drawn eyes from among both groups. Beginning in 1916, *La Prensa* became one of the few Spanish-language publications to offer coverage of presidential elections in the United States. *La Prensa* offered political commentary on the campaign and translated transcripts of the three debates between President Woodrow Wilson and his Republican challenger, Charles Evans Hughes. While the motivation to cover the campaign came from how extensively the candidates' plans for Mexico and its ongoing

[534] "A la Prensa, a nuestros amigos y al publico," *La Prensa*, February 13, 1913, pg. 1.

revolution featured in their debates, this coverage helped to make the US democratic process less opaque and more accessible to Spanish-speaking voters.[535] This sort of content positioned *La Prensa* to draw in all kinds of readers from the upper classes regardless of nationality, individuals with the financial resources to purchase individual issues and subscriptions.

When *La Prensa* launched in 1913, it had to contend with a crowded Spanish-language market in which it was pit against well-established publications like Pablo Cruz's *El Regidor*, the influential Francisco A. Chapa's *El Imparcial de Texas*, and the anarchist press of Ricardo Flores Magón's *Regeneración*. It also faced the deluge of publications funded by Carrancistas and other factions of the Mexican Revolution that flooded border cities like San Antonio. While not all of his competitors held ambitions beyond influencing the minds of the Colonia Mexicana, all of these publications competed with teach other for the limited resource that was the attention of Mexican readers. The majority of these publications were successful in finding audiences by cutting across the social, geographical, political, and citizenship divides that separated people of Mexican heritage living in the American Southwest. Hiring men of talent whose political views reflected the conservative nature of most of the exiled ricos allowed Lozano to similarly establish a strong base of readers in that particular segment of the community.[536] Yet, Lozano seems to have understood that restraining *La Prensa* to this relatively small group within the community limited his newspaper's potential. Having worked for not one, but two newspapers that had used this limited strategy, Lozano made the choice to push his newspaper to pursue wider audiences.[537] He succeeded in establishing *La Prensa* as a financially successful publication by producing a product that appealed to a wider number of the Mexican upper classes and through massification of this

[535] "Un Hombre y un Periódico," *La Prensa,* February 13, 1938, pg. 50.
[536] Mayer, "From Segmented to Fragmented," 293.
[537] Onofre Di Stefano, "'Venimos a Luchar': A Brief History of La Prensa's Founding," *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 16, no. 1 (1985): 106.

product, that is Lozano's mass printing of *La Prensa* and his use of carriage drivers, railroads, and correspondents to distribute his publication far beyond the boundaries of San Antonio.

The transformation of *La Prensa* from just another successful newspaper into a widely influential institution occurred between 1913 and 1917. In a period of about five years, *La Prensa* not only surpassed all Spanish-language newspapers that had come before it in both readership and influence but played a key role in establishing the first national Spanish-language media landscape in the United States. *La Prensa*'s path to the zenith of Spanish-language media was full of leaps and bounds but began with Lozano's decisions to make his newspaper appeal to as wide an audience as possible, to ensure from the start that it was distributed as widely as possible, and to market the publication as an independent newspaper. While the first two choices have been extensively discussed in this chapter, the latter was equally important to *La Prensa*'s success. In 1913, the partisan politics of the Mexican Revolution had spilled across the border and into the Mexican communities of the United States. This visibly manifested in a media landscape in which the majority of Spanish-language publications printed in the United States between 1913 and 1918 publicly harbored loyalty to at least one revolutionary faction.[538] For example, in Laredo there was Nicasio Idar's *La Crónica*, which was pro-Madero before becoming a pro-Carranza publication. In San Antonio, Lozano had worked for Chapa's *El Imparcial de Texas*, which had been in favor of Porfirio Díaz before switching to support Bernardo Reyes, and finally Huerta, before simply becoming anti-Carranzista for the remainder of its print run. While content analysis of *La Prensa* in 1913 and 1914 shows that the publication tended to tilt in favor of Huerta and later Felix Díaz, *La Prensa* marketed itself as independent. It also frequently claimed that it was a neutral observer, often presenting itself as an outsider from the politics and influences that dominated what it

[538] Smith, "Carrancista Propaganda and the Print Media in the United States: An Overview of Institutions," 155–57.

referred to as "*los diarios de esta ciudad*" (newspapers in this city) and "*los diarios de esta nación*" (newspapers in this nation). Lozano positioned *La Prensa* as a source of alternative news and opinions, often depicting others as misled or downright intentionally misleading for basing their own content on untrustworthy sources.[539] In the highly partisan climate of the 1910s, *La Prensa* convinced its readers that it was a publication they could trust to be the exception to all the rest.

Only a few months after its launch, *La Prensa* expanded its content from four to eight pages and later that September, premiered its first sixteen-page special to commemorate Mexican Independence. It can be inferred from its increase in pages and expansion of content that *La Prensa*'s politics, wide circulation, and marketing had already gained it a substantial number of subscribers. In fact, by early 1914, *La Prensa* would end up hitting a circulation number of 12,000, which is highly impressive when considering the fact that the norm for Spanish-language publications was far less than that during that era.[540] Early success encouraged Lozano to finance the acquisition and installation of a Goss-brand printing press in 1914 and to begin making plans to transform *La Prensa* from a weekly into a daily publication.[541] At this point in its life, the newspaper's wide distribution played a role in increasing *La Prensa*'s reach and in making it into a household name in the United States. Across the US Southwest, Spanish-language newspapers of the past and *La Prensa*'s contemporaries all aimed to organize their customers into a community of readers made up of neighbors, allies, and fellow compatriots united by their shared Mexican heritage. Due above all to cost and the relatively small size of their target audience, these newspapers never managed to substantially grow their communities beyond local or regional

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[539] "La Torre de Babel," *La Prensa,* November 16, 1914, pg. 5.

[540] Smith, "Carrancista Propaganda and the Print Media in the United States: An Overview of Institutions," 158. For example, *El Heraldo de México* in Los Angeles, California sold about 7,000 copies daily.

[541] "Un Hombre y un Periódico," *La Prensa,* February 13, 1938, pg. 46.

bounds. Between 1914 and 1916, *La Prensa* became the first Spanish-language publication in South Texas to reach a national audience and to foster a substantial and responsive national readership.

From 1914 to 1916, *La Prensa* featured correspondence written by its readers as part of a campaign to collect opinions on the publication. These published letters, obviously handpicked by Lozano and his staff, came in from all over Texas but also included letters written by readers from far-away places like Los Angeles, California and Denver, Colorado.[542] These published letters do not represent the only instance of public interaction featured in *La Prensa*. Between 1914 and 1915, *La Prensa* encouraged its readers to send in questions and comments on current affairs and then, picking those it found most relevant, would publish these letters along with a response in a section titled "*Correspondencia del público*" (Letters from our Readers). Particularly entertaining stories sent in by its readers were sometimes published as full length stories in *La Prensa*, often presented as insider confession stories. This type of content played a crucial role in fostering a strong rapport between *La Prensa* and its readers, akin to the way in which these types of interactions between readers and editor-publishers helped turn the influential immigrant newspapers of the nineteenth century into household names among their respective diasporas.[543] As discussed in the previous chapter, *La Prensa* was the first Spanish-language publication to address the entirety of the Mexican heritage diaspora and therefore, the first media entity to try and link it into a single diasporic community.

As part of his contribution to a project he was working on in the early 2010s, the late Dr. Eliud Martinez recalled his childhood in Plugerville, Texas during the 1940s. Discussing the

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[542] "Opiniones de los lectores sobre La Prensa," *La Prensa*, September 27, 1916, pg. 4.

[543] Anna Jaroszynska-Kirchmann, *The Polish Hearst: Ameryka-Echo and the Public Role of the Immigrant Press* (University of Illinois Press, 2015), 6–7.

beginnings of his journey to a life as an academic, he wrote of how his father taught him how to read and write in Spanish before he could even speak English by having him read *La Prensa*.[544] In an oral interview recorded for *Voces of Oral History Center* project by the Moody College of Communication at the University of Texas at Austin in 2004, Moses Aleman recalled his childhood as the son of immigrant field hands in Austin. He tells of how in the 1930s, his father, who was too poor to afford the newspaper, read *La Prensa* daily by borrowing it from a neighbor who had a subscription.[545] Finally, there is Richard Savala, who while being interviewed for the same project spoke of his own childhood as the son of a Mexican cement worker in Dallas. He recalled a childhood spent reading *La Prensa* to his father, who was illiterate but had an interest in the contents of the publication.[546] Among the experiences connecting the participants' accounts is the presence of *La Prensa* in their childhoods, which they deemed important enough to mention during their interviews. Though their accounts come from time periods past the 1930s, their experiences serve to shed light into one of the ways that *La Prensa* infiltrated the lives of people of Mexican heritage from distinct social classes. The experiences of Zavala and Aleman hint at the popularity of *La Prensa* among the working-class members of the Mexican diaspora in the United States. Despite its elitist tone and the conservative bent, *La Prensa* managed to cultivate a dedicated following even among individuals who lacked the ability to read its contents firsthand or bear the cost of accessing it directly through a subscription.

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[544] Eliud Martínez, "On Reading: Book in My Life," in *With a Book in Their Hands: Chicano/a Readers and Readerships*, ebook (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014), 21.

[545] Lynn Maguire-Walker, Interview with Moses Aleman for the Voces Oral History Center at The University of Texas at Austin, March 27, 2004, Voces Oral History Center, https://voces.lib.utexas.edu/collections/stories/moses-aleman.

[546] Anabelle Garay, Interview with Richard Savala for the Voces Oral History Center at The University of Texas at Austin, June 27, 2002, Voces Oral History Center, https://voces.lib.utexas.edu/collections/stories/richard-savala.

As discussed in the previous chapter, those belonging to the lower classes of the Mexican communities in the United States consisted largely of manual and industrial laborers, the urban poor, and agricultural workers. This lower class made up the biggest percentage of the Mexican communities they inhabited yet were often dismissed and disparaged by the upper classes who often referred to them as *gente corriente*. While the lower classes were often excluded from the high society of the Mexican upper classes, they were still participants in the day-to-day and social life of the Mexican communities they inhabited. In San Antonio, the social soirees of the *Casino Social* and the refined social outings of the *Club Mexicano de Bellas Artes* were the firmly established domains of the exiled ricos and middle classes, who had the time, finances, and social capital to partake in these organizations. However, it was in the dozens of events put on by juntas patrióticas*,* mutualista organizations, and the many yearly religious activities that the world of the elite intermingled with that of the lower classes.[547] Religious activities brought together all segments of the Mexican community, particularly in South Texas and even more notably in San Antonio, where the Catholic Church stood at the center of most religious activity.[548] It was in these spaces where people came together to interact and exchange ideas that the influence of *La Prensa* infiltrated the public discourse and reached even those who had never held a physical copy of the publication in their hands.

La Prensa's wide distribution and large popularity among upper class Mexicans made the newspaper a frequent sight in the Mexican communities of the United States, especially along the US Southwest. This ubiquity meant that even those without the ability to read were likely to encounter either a physical copy of *La* Prensa or run into discourse related to its contents. *La*

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[547] Navarro, *Mexicano Political Experience in Occupied Aztlan*, 147; Garcia, *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1941*, 77.

[548] Timothy M. Matovina, *Guadalupe and Her Faithful: Latino Catholics in San Antonio, from Colonial Origins to the Present* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005), 12–19.

Prensa's tendrils of influence were especially strong in the Catholic cathedrals and religious organizations of Mexican communities across the United States. This was especially true in San Antonio, where San Fernando Cathedral served as the epicenter of the exile community's religious devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe. As Timothy Matovina has shown, Mexican émigres like Lozano were at the core of a resurgence of Guadalupan devotion centered in San Antonio that began in 1914.[549] Lozano and much of his fellow exiles had come of age during a period in Mexican history when veneration of the Virgin of Guadalupe had taken on a heightened association with Mexican nationalism. This was the doing of President Porfirio Díaz, who in the 1890s strategically associated his regime with devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe, reinforcing the connections between veneration of the Lady of Guadalupe and the version of Mexican national identity espoused by his regime. This was a relationship especially internalized by Mexico's conservatives and brought with them across the border when they fled Mexico to escape the Mexican Revolution.

The Virgin of Guadalupe was a recurring character on the pages of *La Prensa*. She made her most frequent appearances in the newspaper's "*Literatura Y Variedades*" (Litetarure and Variety) section, where contributors used a variety of titles to invoke her presence in their poems and stories.[550] Through written words, the Virgin was connected to México de Afuera's nationalist project, her presence written into Mexico's past, and projected into the present and future of the nation and her chosen people. This manifested into a close association between *La Prensa* and the Catholic Church in San Antonio, where Lozano's newspaper served as an ally and defender of Catholic ideas and philosophy, as well as a platform for the promotion of church services and

[549] Matovina, 115. Guadalupan devotion centered on the veneration of the Virgin of Guadalupe, a national symbol of Mexican Catholic faith.

[550] She could be referred to as "*la Virgen Morena*," "*la Virgen India*," "*la Virgen Madre*," or "*la Virgen de América*."

events. Lozano and the members of *La Prensa*'s staff were all active participants at San Fernando Cathedral. According to Matovina, Lozano and many of the exiled upper class Mexicans played key roles in establishing and maintaining pious societies and the organizing of almost weekly communal events honoring the Virgin.[551] The constant presence of this group and their ideas at the center of the community's religious world was one of the cultural fronts that ensured that even those who did not have the skills or time to directly participate in reading *La Prensa* were touched and influenced by its ideas.

Religion was a central focus for most people of Mexican heritage belonging to the lower classes. They drew meaning, moral values, and self-definition from the rituals and spiritual guidance provided by the Catholic faith. In San Antonio, Mexican urban and agricultural workers living in the Mexican Quarter who shared the Catholic faith were part of a Spanish-language religious community that included the churches of Immaculate Heart of Mary, San Alfonso, Sacred Heart, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Immaculate Conception Parish, and San Fernando Cathedral.[552] The church served as a socialization agent, a place where they formed and strengthened bonds with each other and interacted with the middle and upper classes in a manner that reinforced the feeling of being part of a community. *La Prensa*'s influences in this intimate setting stemmed from the prominent role that exiled ricos played in the growing number of parish societies and associations dedicated to the Virgin of Guadalupe. As noted by Matovina, the strong ethnic solidarity in these organizations that served to attract the lower classes to them, did not preclude the absence of all differentiation between worshippers. The prominent roles played by upper class Mexican exiles in

[551] Matovina, *Guadalupe and Her Faithful: Latino Catholics in San Antonio, from Colonial Origins to the Present*, 120–21.

[552] Garcia, *Rise of the Mexican American Middle Class: San Antonio, 1929-1941*, 152.

many of Mexican San Antonio's Catholic community made Mexico and the views espoused by México de Afuera a major focus of the community discourse.[553]

The active influence of the Mexican upper classes in almost every aspect of life in the Mexican Colonies of the United States made *La Prensa* and its discourse almost inescapable in these communities. This was especially true in San Antonio, where exiled ricos directly involved in the production of *La Prensa* (and their families) were also directly involved in organizing the Mexican community's religious activities, often took up leadership roles in fraternal and community organizations, and played a hand in deciding what type of entertainment would be available to the community. Their grasp on the community was by no means absolute. For example, Mexicans who had become Protestants, as well as US-born Mexicans for whom México de Afuera did not appeal to, had their own social universes they could retreat to whenever they wanted.[554] When it came to *La Prensa*, even those in the community who did not see eye to eye with its takes benefitted from engaging with its content. Many found its messages of ethnic solidarity and cultural redemption highly appealing, especially since *La Prensa* often proved that its appeals to these were not empty gestures. The newspaper was often at the center of fundraisers and other activities that produced measurable positive change and lived up to the ideals it championed in print.

In June of 1920, Ignacio Lozano returned to Mexico for the first time since his departure in 1908. By then, *La Prensa* had become an institution whose influence expanded west from South Texas to California and as far north as Missouri.[555] *La Prensa* enjoyed a substantial readership in

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[553] Matovina, *Guadalupe and Her Faithful: Latino Catholics in San Antonio, from Colonial Origins to the Present,* 123.

[554] Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Mouton, "Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage," 143.

[555] "Un Hombre y un Periódico," *La Prensa,* February 13, 1938, pg. 52-60.

every Mexican community in the United States. As the owner of the most successful Spanish-language newspaper north of the Río Grande, Lozano had been invited to Mexico City by the provisional government of President Adolfo de la Huerta. In the wake of the killing of Venustiano Carranza in May of that year, Huerta had been appointed to lead the country as Mexico transitioned into the hands of a new administration. In truth, Lozano had arrived in Mexico to meet with General Álavaro Obregón Salido, who was next in line to become President of Mexico later that year. In an interview obtained by Lozano during his visit and later published in *La Prensa*, Obregón's answers hint at a desire to establish a good relationship with the newspaper that had been such a thorn in Carranza's side. Obregón was set to preside over the process of restoration of a Mexico devastated by over a decade of civil war, and he wanted reconciliation between his government and Mexico's exiles in the United States to be a part of that process.[556]

The *Beneficio para las Escuelas del Centenario* fundraiser with which this chapter opened stemmed from Lozano's meeting with Obregón. The 1921 project not only marked the new peace between the Mexican government and the exiled ricos living in the United States, but it also offered Lozano and other proponents of México de Afuera an opportunity to participate in the rebuilding of Mexico after the Mexican Revolution. Under Obregón, the Mexican government lifted all Carranza Era restrictions on the repatriation of exiles and actively welcomed people seeking to return to Mexico. The new president looked at Mexican expatriates in the United States as a resource that could be put to use in the rebuilding of the country. Beginning in 1921, his administration embarked on an aggressive campaign to convince Mexicans in the United States to return to Mexico.[557] Obregón strategically established a working relationship with Lozano, the

[556] "Cuestionario que envió al General Obregon *La Prensa*," *La Prensa*, July 1, 1920, pg. 1.

[557] George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 113. Obregón expanded

only man whose newspaper could virtually guarantee him access to the entirety of Mexico's exiles in the United States. Lozano's involvement with the Mexican government elevated him to the distinguished role of serving as both as a representative of the Mexican government and the transnational voice of México de Afuera. He established valuable relationships with the new Mexican consuls appointed under Obregón in 1921 that granted him a valuable edge over his competition by giving *La Prensa* early access to new laws, policies, and information from Mexico. The relationship between Lozano and the Mexican government propelled *La Prensa* to the height of its power and influence. When the Escuelas del Centenario were finally completed in 1922, Lozano handed the keys to the schools directly to José Vasconcelos, then Mexico's Secretary of Public Education.

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the Mexican Consulate system and established the first Department of Repatriation within Mexico's Secretariat of Foreign Relations.

CONCLUSION

On February 13, 1938, *La Prensa* celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary by printing a special commemorative edition. This limited-run publication was among the largest editions of the newspaper, totaling almost one hundred pages and divided into four sections. In addition to the day's news, this edition contained messages congratulating the newspaper and its staff on their anniversary, articles covering *La Prensa*'s history, and pages of other material ranging from illustrations to narratives of historical events. This edition celebrated *La Prensa*, its accomplishments, staff and collaborators, its subscribers, and anyone considered part of its community. Included were congratulations from subscribers across the United States, as well as businesspeople and politicians from across South Texas and Northern Mexico, making these messages a testament to the newspaper's reach and influence. The publication marked the twenty-fifth celebration of Ignacio E. Lozano's efforts to unite the colonia mexicana of the United States under a single publication. This project began with the founding of *La Prensa* in 1913 and led to the creation of the nation's first Spanish-language media empire by 1926 when Lozano founded *La Opinión* in Los Angeles. By the 1930s, *La Prensa* was the oldest Spanish-language newspaper printed in the United States and remained highly influential among Mexican communities in the United States.

The various messages from politicians, businesspeople, Mexican intellectuals, and subscribers to the newspaper that appear in its anniversary edition demonstrate that in 1938, *La Prensa* remained a cultural and political juggernaut that continued to impact the politics of the United States and Mexico. The newspaper remained firm in its role as the main political organ of the Mexican exile community, which in the 1930s was still promoting the cultural mission of

México de Afuera. Twenty-five years after its founding, questions about identity and culture remained at the core of the newspaper's editorials and other content. Yet despite their continued promotion of a Mexican identity emphasizing cultural purity, this edition of the newspaper betrays signs that cultural hybridity was underway. This and the continued influence of *La Prensa* on Mexican communities in the United States even into the late 1930s validate the hypothesis that in spite of its conservative politics and focus on Mexico, it remains an important culture-bearing document for the study of this group's history. Due to the self-reflection involved in creating cultural productions like the newspaper, *La Prensa* offers a window into a unique identity that was a part of the Mexican communities of the United States and coexisted alongside efforts by Mexican-Americans to organize and have their US citizenship recognized politically. Unlike the efforts of Mexican-American organizations like the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), which championed cultural hybridity through the embrace of American values, México de Afuera continued to champion a Mexicanist identity centered on Mexican's Spanish cultural heritage, including a strong adherence to the Catholic faith and mastery of the Spanish language, as well as a strong attachment to Mexico. As he had done since attaining financial success with *La Prensa*, Ignacio Lozano continued to promote this identity through cultural events, celebrations, social gatherings, and through the content of his extremely influential newspapers.

Even after being banned multiple times by the Mexican government since 1916, *La Prensa* continued to play an active role in Mexican politics. After President Calles banned the circulation of his newspapers in Mexico in 1927, Lozano and his staff went on the offensive, working as an opposition newspaper criticizing the lingering influence of Calles in Mexican politics after he left office in 1929. As a devout Catholic, Lozano had not forgotten the vicious anti-Christian persecutions that took place under the Calles regime during the Cristero Rebellion. During the

Mexican presidential election of 1933, Lozano reached out to Mexican politicians in opposition to Calles and gave them the use of *La Prensa* to promote their political parties and platforms.[558] When they were all defeated by Lázaro Cárdenas, the Calles pick for the presidency, Lozano himself wrote an editorial published on December 1, 1934, that the newspaper's editorials swear played a role in encouraging Cárdenas to break free from the former president's control.[559] Calles was removed as leader of the revolutionary party that had controlled Mexican politics since 1925 and exiled to Brownsville, Texas by 1938. That same year, President Cárdenas contributed a handwritten letter to *La Prensa*'s 25th anniversary publication that read:

> "*Por contacto del importante diario La Prensa de San Antonio Texas, envio a la colonia Mexicana mi cordial saludo y mis felicitaciones por su preocupación constante de mantener vivo en el corazón de sus hijos el recuerdo de la Patría*"

The letter was accompanied by a photo of the president on the front page of the newspaper's anniversary edition. Surrounding it, with the exception of three stories regarding events in Spain and San Antonio, were various headlines and news about events happening in Mexico. This front page serves as a perfect representation of the geographies with which *La Prensa* was most concerned, those of Mexico, San Antonio, and Spain.

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[558] "Un Hombre y un Periódico," *La Prensa*, February 13, 1938, pg. 45.
[559] "El Presidente Cardenas Oyo Un Consejo," *La Prensa*, September 11, 1936, pg. 1.

PRIMERA SECCION

LA PRENSA

DIARIO POPULAR INDEPENDIENTE

EDICION DE ANIVERSARIO

Victorias de las Tropas de Franco

La Fiesta de las 10 Reinas

UN SALUDO DEL PRESIDENTE CARDENAS A LA COLONIA MEXICANA

Juzgan a los Mexicanos Huelguistas a Petición del vice-Consul Urrea

SALIO EL GENERAL JUAN RICO PARA CHIHUAHUA

BOLETINES

SE ESTABLECERA UN CENTRO SOCIAL EN LA FRONTERA

Los niños mexicanos pusieron la nota alegre al iniciarse ayer las fiestas de "La Prensa"

PROGRAMA PARA HOY

Prensa (San Antonio, Texas), February 13, 1938: 1. *Readex: The Historical Dallas Morning News, 1885-1984*.

Despite having established his newspaper within every Mexican community in the United States and parts of Mexico, Lozano's deepest roots and greatest influence lay in San Antonio. In the city where *La Prensa* had been born, Lozano and his staff dominated not just the newspaper scene, but the political, religious, and social life of San Antonio's Mexican community. While Mexican-Americans organized their own organizations and social events, they often intermingled with Mexican migrants and participated in their events and organizations. Some of the earliest Mexican-American civil rights organizations, like the Sons of America in San Antonio, included Mexican citizens among their members.[560] Likewise, Mexican-Americans often took part in events and organizations led by Mexican immigrants, such as the Comisiónes Honoríficas organized by the Mexican Consulates starting in the 1920s.[561] *La Prensa* was frequently involved in the planning and promotion of social events in San Antonio that were open to all Mexicans regardless of

[560] Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*, Ebook (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 2009), 73.

[561] Orozco, 89.

citizenship status. Some of the celebrations promoted by newspaper for its anniversary on Sunday, February 13, 1938, include sporting events, beauty pageants, and movie screenings. According to coverage of the events, the newspaper's staff organized screenings of American westerns and cartoons at all the popular theaters in San Antonio in order to provide a full day of entertainment for Mexican children. For adults, the festivities started that Sunday at 9:30AM, as San Antonio hosted Día Deportivo Mexicano en el Tech Field in honor of *La Prensa*. Finally, at 8:15PM, Mexican adults were invited to participate in "*La Fiesta de las 10 Reinas*", a beauty pageant that drew contestants from Mexican communities across the United States, including Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona, California, and Northern Mexico. The free admission and open access offered at the anniversary events were typical for most gatherings organized by *La Prensa* and further demonstrates the level of accessibility that existed between the social spaces of Mexican-Americans and Mexican immigrants that left room for them to intermingle and collaborate.

The newspaper's anniversary celebration also demonstrates the political and social power wielded by *La Prensa* in San Antonio. The Tech Field sporting events in honor of *La Prensa* included a welcoming ceremony that was presided over by Charles Kennon Quin, then Mayor of San Antonio, and included Mexican and Texan politicians who had been invited as guests of honor.[562] While it is difficult to ascertain who these other politicians might have been, the pages of the anniversary edition contain dozens of greetings and congratulatory messages from men and women involved in Mexican and US politics. Recognizable names include District Prosecutor John A. Valls of Laredo, Postmaster D. J. Quill of San Antonio, U.S. Representative Mauvy Maverick, Presidente Municipal Leopoldo Treviño Garza of Monterrey, and Governor Anacleto Guerrero of Nuevo Léon.[563] Also present is a large number of the city's business owners, including the many

[562] "Deportes," *La Prensa*, February 13, 1938, pg. 7.
[563] *La Prensa*, February 13, 1938, pg. 11 and 40.

American business owners who advertised on the pages of *La Prensa*. These included men like Jack White, who owned and operated the Hotel Plaza chain in San Antonio and Corpus Christi, as well as more local businessmen, like Henry Metzger, owner of Metzger's Full Cream Milk delivery services.[564] The participation of these men in the newspaper's celebration hints at the social and economic ties connecting San Antonio's Mexican community to the rest of the city. As the most dominant Spanish-language newspaper in the city, *La Prensa* played a vital role in connecting Mexican consumers with American businesses through the advertising featured on its pages.

In addition to politicians and American business owners, the anniversary edition also includes many congratulatory messages from other Spanish-language newspaper owners, Mexican business owners, leaders of fraternal organizations like the Leñadores del Mundo, newspaper subscribers, and others who were a part of the social world of San Antonio's West Side.[565] Bound together within the pages of the newspaper's anniversary edition, these congratulatory messages represent some of the various communities that made up San Antonio in the 1930s. They also show the local community that *La Prensa* and its staff were a part of, one that included not just the publication's Mexican readers, allies, and workers, but also the American businessmen and politicians who participated in the newspaper's anniversary. Through the habitual action of paying for subscriptions, purchasing advertising space, or simply reading the newspaper, these business owners, politicians, and everyday people featured in *La Prensa*'s anniversary edition played a role in the success of Lozano's enterprise. Their contributions to the anniversary edition, their appearances as characters in images and names presented in print, serve as a tangible representation of the social and economic connections that made the newspaper possible.

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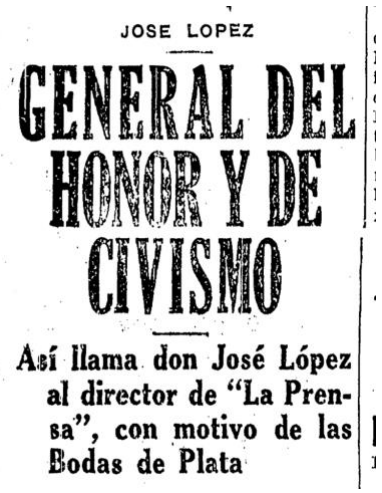
[564] *La Prensa*, February 13, 1938, pg. 16 and 20.
[565] *La Prensa*, February 13, 1938, pg. 15.



JOSE LOPEZ

GENERAL DEL HONOR Y DE CIVISMO

Así llama don José López al director de "La Prensa", con motivo de las Bodas de Plata

Prensa (San Antonio, Texas), February 13, 1938: 17. *Readex: The Historical Dallas Morning News, 1885-1984*.

The anniversary edition also serves to establish *La Prensa*'s continued role as the "*órgano altavoz del México de Afuera*" (leading organ of México de Afuera).[566] The letter by José López from Portland, Colorado, in which the headline featured above makes an appearance, demonstrates the militaristic character of the discourse surrounding the idea of México de Afuera. López's letter describes how his daughter, born in the United States, was drawn to *La Prensa* by its comics section, and, wanting to understand what she was looking at, taught herself to read and write Spanish. The newspaper's role in helping him fulfill his duty as a parent to teach his child the language of his patria made López a loyal subscriber to Lozano's publication. México de Afuera has been described by Alberto Varon as an extranationalist ideology that emerged starting in 1910 and "through which those fleeing Mexico came to see themselves as the last stronghold of an ailing national identity".[567] Most definitions of the term used by historians fall along these lines, chracterizing México de Afuera as an ideology that existed among Mexican exiles in the United States. However, Aaron E. Sánchez offers a definition of the term that better approximates the

[566] "Cartas Que Se Pierden," *La Prensa*, February 13, 1938, pg. 85.

[567] Alberto Varon, *Before Chicano: Citizenship and the Making of Mexican American Manhood, 1848-1959*, Kindle Edition (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 25.

emotions invoked by López's letter. Sánchez describes México de Afuera as an imagined temporary refugee homeland for Mexican nationals after the Mexican Revolution, "a space of belonging for those who were torn from their place of birth, a space where all the virtues of the nation were cultivated and sustained in expectation of an imminent and certain return".[568] México de Afuera was a response to the trauma of exile and the end of the world they knew. Most of its proponents, men like Lozano, Teodoro Torres, and Nemesio García Naranjo, had all been part of the social and intellectual world of the Porfiriato. From their perspective in exile, that world was erased by years of traumatic civil war and the adoption of Mexico's Constitution of 1917. Displaced from their cultural center, they used México de Afuera to emulate the moral and intellectual universe that no longer existed in Mexico within the United States.

*La Prensa'*s anniversary edition illustrates the recurring themes that make up the moral and intellectual universe of México de Afuera. Segments like "*Los Precursores Mexicanos del Diarismo Moderno*" (Mexican Precursors to Modern Journalism) are devoted to locating a place for *La Prensa* within the chronology of Mexico's national history.[569] It echoes the ideology's specific understanding of national belonging, which allowed men like Lozano to live in the United States but still claim membership in the distant homeland. This understanding extended to *La Prensa*, which was a Mexican newspaper despite being conceptualized and printed in the United States. The inserts chosen for the anniversary, all depicting art of European origin, and most historical narratives being about Spain, all reflect the fixation of México de Afuera with Mexico's Spanish heritage and its dismissal and opposition to the post-revolutionary government's adoption of indigenismo. Drawing on its Porfirian-inspired values, Lozano and other adherents of the

[568] Aaron E. Sánchez, *Homeland: Ethnic Mexican Belonging Since 1900,* Kindle Edition, New Directions in Tejano History (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2021), 1.

[569] "Los Precursores Mexicanos del Diarismo Moderno," *La Prensa,* February 13, 1938, pg. 26.

México de Afuera rejected the Mexican government's more recent attempts to glorify Mexico's indigenous past.[570] Finally, there is the use of militaristic language in the ways that Lozano and the staff of *La Prensa* described their contributions to México de Afuera:

Aquí estamos! afirman las infanterias de 'La Prensa'

IMPORTANTE TAREA DE LOS VOCEADORES

TRES VETERANOS

PENETRANDO EN LA VIDA DEL PAPELERO

DEFENDIENDO AL MEXICO DE AFUERA

GENERAL DEL HONOR Y DE CIVISMO

MODELO DEL EJERCITO DE LOS EE. UU.

Prensa (San Antonio, Texas), February 13, 1938: 18. *Readex: The Historical Dallas Morning News, 1885-*

The use of words phrases like "*defensor*" (defender) and the description of newspaper employees as "*infanterias*" (infantry), reflects the sense of besieged nationalism experienced by those adhering to the ideology, a response to the trauma of having the world they knew torn away,

[570] Roberto R. Treviño, "Prensa y Patria: The Spanish-Language Press and the Biculturation of the Tejano Middle Class, 1920-1940," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (1991): 451–72.

but also a response to existing within the geographical boundaries of a competing nationalism. As the letter by López illustrates, adherents to México de Afuera emphasized the importance of preserving the Spanish language by teaching it to their children. Above all, was the fear that exposure to life in the United States would lead to a degradation of their culture.[571] These fears manifested themselves in a disdain for *pochismos* (Mexican-American slang) and the perpetually embattled language found throughout the pages of *La Prensa*'s anniversary edition.

Despite this militarism towards preserving their culture, it was inevitable that adherents of México de Afuera would change as a result of their lives in the United States. Among the things that made it into the pages of *La Prensa*'s anniversary edition was the fascination of San Antonio's Mexican community with American cinema. An entire page is devoted to coverage of movies and theater shows currently playing across San Antonio's seven theaters, the Nacional, Texas, State, Empire, Palace, Aztec, and Majestic. The promotions for these theaters feature some of the first popular films to be produced in Mexico, *Amapola del Camino* and *Allá en el Rancho Grande*, which were shown at the Teatro Nacional.[572] Beyond that, the remainder of the page features American films and theater productions running at the rest of the city's theatres. The promotion of these films indicates an interest in them existed among readers of *La Prensa*. While Lozano's newspaper continued to promote Mexicanidad, the inclusion of crossword puzzles, the popularity of baseball games, and gatherings for recreational clubs like "*Happy Collegiates"*, shows that members of Lozano's imagined community were also embracing new pastimes that did not necessarily align with the identity promoted by México de Afuera.[573]

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[571] Sánchez, *Homeland*, 14.
[572] "Cinema," *La Prensa*, February 13, 1938, pg. 4.
[573] "Hogar y Sociedad," *La Prensa*, February 13, 1938, pg. 5.


PAGINA CUATRO • LA PRENSA • DIARIO POPULAR INDEPENDIENTE • SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS • DOMINGO 6 DE FEBRERO DE 1938

EN EL TEATRO NACIONAL

HOLLYWOOD ✯ CINEMA ✯ MEXICO

EL CINEMA EN MEXICO

"LA CUNA VACIA"

UNA ENTREVISTA CON EL ACTOR TINO ROSSI

El artista francés, de gran popularidad en Europa, a quien el cine norteamericano quiere llevar a su pantalla

EN EL TEATRO AZTEC

EN EL TEATRO TEXAS

EN EL TEATRO MAJESTIC

EN EL TEATRO STATE

COSAS DE HOLLYWOOD

CAMINO A LA CONQUISTA

EN EL TEATRO PALACE

NACIONAL

MAS Y MEJOR ESPECTACULO POR MENOS DINERO EN UN TEATRO GENUINAMENTE MEXICANO

HOY DOMINGO

VICTOR McLAGLEN Y BINNIE BARNES EN LA SUGESTIVA PELICULA

"MAGNIFICENT BRUTE"

PRINCIPIA MAÑANA LUNES POR 5 DIAS

"AMAPOLA DEL CAMINO"

por TITO GUIZAR, EL "CHATO" ORTIN, ANDREA PALMA, PEDRO ARMENDARIZ y MARGARITA MORA.

UNA PELICULA QUE HACE MAS GRANDE AL CINE NACIONAL!

PRODUCCION MUSICAL, DESBORDANTE DE ALEGRIA, EXPRESION CALIDA DE UNA RAZA QUE HA DEJADO DE SER TRISTE!

DIGA USTED A TITO GUIZAR CANTAR "AMAPOLA" y "UNA VEZ MAS" — VEA USTED AL "CHATO" EN SUS COMPOSICIONES POETICAS DE GRAN CHISPA!... ES ALGO SUPERIOR!

EMOCION — ROMANCE — MUSICA

LUNETA, 25c — ANFITEATRO, 20c — NIÑOS, 5c

PROXIMAS ATRACCIONES

Lunes 21 a Miérc.-les 23 de Febrero, NINO MARTINI y LEO CARRILLO en la película de ambiente mexicano "SUPER LOCO y NOVILLERO"

Jueves 24 a Sábado 26 de Feb. La interesante revista mexicana "ASI ES MEXICO"

con bellísimas escenas de nuestro país.

LUNES 28 DE FEBRERO — "ETERNA MARTIR"

TEATRO NACIONAL

HECHOS y no PALABRAS

AMAPOLA DEL CAMINO

ASI ES MI TIERRA

ALLA en el RANCHO GRANDE

A LA ORILLA DE UN PALMAR

QUE HAGO con la CEJATURA

SUPER LOCO y NOVILLERO

- - EMPIRE - -

TEATRO ZARAGOZA

HOY - Lunes y Martes

"NO BASTA SER MADRE"

Aztec Hoy!

MAE WEST

"EVERY DAY'S A HOLIDAY"

con EDMUND LOWE

Chas. BUTTERWORTH

CHARLES WINNINGER

MAJESTIC-HOY!

A TODO COLOR

Samuel Goldwyn presents

The GOLDWYN FOLLIES

con ADOLPHE MENJOU, THE RITZ BROTHERS, ZORINA-KENNY BAKER, ANDREA LEEDS, HELEN JEPSON, PHIL BAKER, EDGAR BERGEN & "CHARLEY McCARTHY", GERSHWIN SONGS

TEXAS

LESLIE HOWARD

JOAN BLONDELL

"STAND-IN"

con HUMPHREY BOGART

EMPIRE

"THANK YOU, MR. MOTO"

con PETER LORRE

PALACE

"THE AWFUL TRUTH"

con IRENE DUNNE, CARY GRANT

STATE

GENE AUTRY

"Boots and Saddles"

ANN SHIRLEY

"She Loved a Fireman"

"WILD WEST DAYS"

Prensa (San Antonio, Texas), February 13, 1938: 4. *Readex: The Historical Dallas Morning News, 1885-1984*.

To understand the complexity of this hybridization and the legacy of México de Afuera on the Mexican communities of the United States more research must be done. Within the last ten years, historians like Melita M. Garza, Gabriela González, Julia G. Young, and Aaron E. Sánchez have produced manuscripts that demonstrate the importance of publications like *La Prensa* in

understanding the full complexity of the Mexican experience in the United States. Further analysis is needed to understand the role conservative publications like those of Lozano played in the development of Mexican-American identity and intellectual thought. Such research may shed light on why socially and politically conservative points of view have found an audience among Mexicans in South Texas in recent years. Particularly useful in this endeavor would be an analysis of the impact that Lozano's publications had on local expressions of México de Afuera in less-covered Mexican communities in places like the US Midwest and the Atlantic coast. Further analysis of newspapers like *La Prensa* and *La Opinión* would also provide a better understanding of how the México de Afuera movement was impacted by the repatriation campaigns of the 1930s that targeted Mexican communities in the United States and resulted in the deportation to Mexico of anywhere between 500,000 to as high as two million of them.[574] Since George J. Sánchez wrote *Becoming Mexican American*, this era has been associated with the rise of a Mexican-American consciousness. The deportations and economic ruin of the era also had a direct impact on Lozano's subscription numbers, which fell by the thousands from 1929 to 1934. However, as the twenty-fifth-anniversary edition discussed here shows, *La Prensa* not only survived but continued to be an influential publication in 1938.

[574] Melita M Garza, *They Came to Toil: Newspaper Representations of Mexicans and Immigrants in the Great Depression* (University of Texas at Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018), 94.

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