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SANTA CRUZ

**MILITARY FORMATIONS: MEXICAN AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS AND
COMMUNITY BELONGING DURING THE WORLD WAR II ERA**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

HISTORY

by

Marianne M. Bueno

September 2012

The Dissertation of Marianne M. Bueno
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Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURESIV

LIST OF TABLES V

ABSTRACT VI

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTSVII

INTRODUCTION THE MAKING OF A GENERATION1

CHAPTER 1 “INTELLECTUALLY HE WAS COURAGEOUS; IN PUBLIC ACTION HE WAS PRUDENT:” A REASSESSMENT OF CARLOS E. CASTAÑEDA’S WARTIME SERVICE.....14

CHAPTER 2 WOMEN, WAR AND WORK IN MEXICAN AMERICAN SAN ANTONIO.....45

CHAPTER 3 “EVEN THE MEN JUMPED THE RIVER:” MEXICAN AMERICAN WOMEN’S MILITARY SERVICE AND THE DIALECTICS OF INTERPELLATION.....100

CONCLUSION142

BIBLIOGRAPHY153

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	Emelia M. Sanchez, World War II ‘Kelly Katie’	46
Figure 2.2	Kelly Air Force Base Veteran’s Monument.....	46
Figure 2.3	Longing Won't Get Him back Sooner . . .Get a War Job!.....	49
Figure 2.4	Victory Waits on Your Fingers.....	49
Figure 2.5	We Can Do It!.....	49
Figure 2.6	Life imitates art.	49
Figure 3.1	Ensign Beatrice Amado Kissinger, Navy Nurse Corps.....	136

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1	Case Load Region X, July 1943 – December 1943	30
Table 1.2	Disposition of Case Load Region X, July – December, 1943.....	31
Table 1.3	Disposition of Case Load Region X, January – June, 1944.....	31
Table 1.4	Disposition of Case Load Region X, January – June, 1944.....	31
Table 1.5	Summary of Case Load Activity in All FEPC Regions, January – June, 1944.....	31

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the World War II experiences of the “Mexican American Generation.” More specifically, this study focuses on home front civilians and active duty military personnel as a means to examine the relationship between war, people of Mexican descent and their notions of belonging to the nation state. In doing, so I illustrate that while military service, defined here to include the work of non-soldiers on the home front, functioned as a catalyst for the upward social mobility of Mexican Americans it also operated as a means for them to situate themselves in oppositional ways to state apparatuses not yet fully accounted for in Chicana/o or U.S. history. I argue that this country’s state of total war ultimately served to consolidate a Mexican American war of position that commenced long before the Second World War. In linking race, gender and war, offers an understanding of Mexican American civil rights efforts that date to the early 20th century. The Mexican American Generation’s participation in World War II did not merely reflect blind loyalty, but a tense and conflicted loyalty based on prewar endeavors to advance social movement. By examining the Mexican American Generation’s participation in “the good war,” this dissertation contributes to a new understanding of ethnic, women’s and World War II history, as well as Chicana/o Studies.

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INTRODUCTION

THE MAKING OF A GENERATION

This dissertation explores the relationship between people of Mexican descent in the United States and their efforts to advance their individual and collective civil rights during World War II.¹ While World War II serves as the primary historical backdrop of this study, the prewar and postwar lives of the *mexicana/os* upon whom this project is based also inform the analysis of the “Mexican-American Generation” that follows.² But rather than recount the often told assimilationist and accommodationist narrative of the Mexican American Generation, *Military Formations* examines how that generation’s negotiation of social, cultural, economic and political structures reflects a more complicated subject position than generally acknowledged by Chicana/o scholars.³ I contend that whether as wartime workers, a civil servant in a federal agency or as active duty military personnel, the participation of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the war effort is indicative of a subject position simultaneously interpellated and oppositional.⁴ This project brings together

¹ The terms *mexicana/o*, Mexican, Mexican American, and Chicana/o refer to all people of Mexican descent living in the United States. They are not necessarily synonymous. The first two generally, but not exclusively, refer to Mexican nationals, with the Spanish language gender variants. Mexican Americans generally refers to those who have “legal” citizenship status in the United States while Chicana/o usually refers to people of Mexican descent who understand their identity as politicized. In this dissertation I use the terms interchangeably.

² Mario T. García defines the “Mexican-American Generation” as a political generation defined by its “shared historical experiences of the Great Depression and World War II” and by its “affinity to the organic changes affecting the Mexican-American communities and the resulting and significant civil rights movement that emanated from these changes.” Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, & Identity, 1930 – 1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 6.

³ Benjamin Márquez, *LULAC: The Evolution of a Mexican American Political Organization* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993); Lorena Oropeza, *¡Raza Sí! ¡Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism during the Viet Nam war Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

⁴ Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1989), 170 – 186; Chela Sandoval, “U.S. Third World Feminism:

two facets of U.S. social history. The first is an examination of Mexican American civil rights endeavors that predated the Chicano Movement of the late 1960s and 1970s; the second is about the relationship between war, people of Mexican descent and their notions of belonging to the nation state. By mapping the historical trajectory of each facet and putting them in conversation with each other I illustrate that while military service, defined here to include the work of non-soldiers on the home front, functioned as a catalyst for the upward social mobility of Mexicans it also operated as a means for Mexicans to situate themselves in oppositional ways to state apparatuses not yet fully accounted for in Chicana/o or U.S. history. In doing so I argue that this country's state of total war ultimately served to consolidate a Mexican American war of position that commenced long before the Second World War.⁵

This project is designed as a study of war and the wartime experiences of Mexicans, yet this is not a traditional "military history." Instead, military historians' concept of total war, Antonio Gramsci's notion of war of position and feminist studies on the historical, cultural, social and political role of women of color in the United States inform both the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of this investigation. War, as theorized by military historians, occurs along a spectrum. At one end of the spectrum is the absence of war, while total war is at the opposite end of the spectrum. During total war every resource available to a belligerent, including

The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World," *Genders* 10 (Spring 1991): 2-24 and *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 40 – 64.

⁵ David Forgacs, ed., *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916 – 1935* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 225 – 229.

all civilian resources on the home front, is mobilized to achieve military objectives.⁶ For the U.S., World War II is understood as a total war. On the other hand, according to Gramsci a war of position, unlike a war of maneuver wherein direct control of the state is seized through a “frontal attack,” is a prolonged struggle against civil society. In using military analogies in his theorization of political tactics Gramsci explains that an “immediate economic element (crises, etc) is seen as the field artillery which in war opens a breach in the enemy’s defences [sic] – a breach sufficient for one’s own troops to rush in and obtain a defense (strategic) victory...”⁷ This study argues that the U.S.’ state of total war between 1941 and 1945 served as the crisis that opened up a breach in the ranks through which Mexican Americans shored up their war of position. In other words, in appropriating the state’s antidiscrimination rhetoric that promoted fair and equal employment Mexican Americans fortified their efforts to achieve the rights and privileges of first-class citizenship. Because the war effort required a rhetoric of democracy, nationalism, citizenship, and equality, Mexican Americans were able to leverage this discourse to advance their civil rights despite pre-existing institutionalized racial and gender discrimination. Moreover, this study uses Chicana feminist theory to assert that the Mexican American Generation’s wartime subjectivity intervened in power and transformed social relations.⁸

⁶ Lt. Col. John F. Votaw, “An Approach to The Study of Military History,” in *A Guide to the Study and Use of Military History*, eds. John E. Jessup, Jr. & Robert W. Coakley (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1988), 47 – 48; Col. Lance Betros, *Civil-Military Relations*, United States Military Academy, West Point, Highland Falls, NY, 23 June 2004.

⁷ Forgacs, ed. *The Antonio Gramsci Reader*, 225.

⁸ Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 58 – 64.

Historiography, Civil Rights and War

My focus on Mexican Americans, civil rights and war is intended to problematize Chicana/o scholars' interpretations of the Mexican American Generation, and interrogate notions of belonging while highlighting the nuanced positionality of seemingly interpellated subject positions. Although studies of Mexican Americans during the World War II era are not lacking, and in fact reflect a fairly diverse range of topics, the Mexican American generation is generally understood as a middle-class and integrationist generation.⁹ That is, in spite of scholarship that offers a more complex understanding of the Mexican American Generation, the overly narrow framework utilized by Chicano Movement-era scholars to interpret the political activities of the previous generation prevails even 30 years later. Nonetheless, as early as the 1989 publication of Mario T. García's *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, & Identity, 1930 – 1960* and as recent as 2009's *No Mexicans, Women or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement and Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas: Mexican Workers and*

⁹ Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans*; Mario T. García, "Americans All: The Mexican-American Generation and the Politics of Wartime Los Angeles, 1941 – 1945," *Social Science Quarterly* Vol. 68 (June 1987): 278 – 289; Christine Marin, "Mexican Americans on the Home Front: Community Organizations in Arizona during World War II" *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies* 4 (1993): 75 – 92; Richard Santillan, "Rosita the Riveter: Midwest Mexican American Women during World War II, 1941-1945," *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies* (1989): 115-147; Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1987); Benjamin Márquez, *LULAC: The Evolution of a Mexican American Political Organization* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993); Eduardo Obregón Pagán, *Muder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime Los Angeles* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Mauricio Mazón, *The Zoot-Suit Riots: The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984).

Job Politics during World War II by Cynthia E. Orozco and Emilio Zamora

respectively, some Chicana/o historians have sought to revise the broad generalizations made in the name of Chicano nationalism.

From the very inception of Chicano Studies, the field as a whole assumed an oppositional stance to this country's "master" narrative. The first generation of Chicano scholars took their cues from the cultural nationalism of the Chicano Movement, and thus took on a decidedly bottom-up, insider approach to their studies. By the end of the 1970s their research produced a relatively small but intellectually rich field of literature. The first wave of scholarship, moreover, simultaneously functioned as a counternarrative to U.S. history *and* the basis for a Chicano "master" narrative. Chicano scholars constructed a "master" narrative that, among other things, disparaged what they perceived to be the Mexican American Generation's strategy of assimilation and integration and privileged the revolutionary tactics of the Chicano Movement. Rather than place pre-Chicano Movement Mexican American civil rights efforts and identity formation within the social and political context of the early 20th century, Chicano social scientists, political scientists and sociologists in particular, examined the ethnic politics of an earlier generation through the lens of contemporary direct action.¹⁰ Chicano scholars constructed a Chicano "master" narrative that interpreted Chicano history according to the perceived political sensibilities of people

¹⁰ Rodolfo Alvarez, "The Psycho-Historical and Socioeconomic Development of the Chicano Community in the United States," in *The Mexican American Experience: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, eds. Rodolfo O. De La Garza, et al. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), 33 – 56; Juan Gómez-Quiñones, "Toward a Perspective on Chicano History," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* Vol. 2, No. 2 (Fall 1971): 31 – 39; Armando Navarro, "The Evolution of Chicano Politics," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* Vol. 2, No. 1 & 2 (Fall 1971): 57 – 84.

and into periods that reflected their own political (Chicano generation) sensibilities. Consequently, because of the Mexican American Generation's ostensibly integrationist ideology, the period between the 1930s and 1950s is known as the Mexican-American Era and symbolized by the Mexican American GI. In their haste to construct a usable Chicano political history, Chicano scholars ultimately disregarded the wide range of tactics used by Mexican Americans to secure the rights and privileges of first-class citizenship.

In the late 1980s, Mario T. García's study *Mexican Americans* emerged as an early revision to the sometimes reductive analysis of the Mexican American Generation put forth by Movement-era academicians. His study examines "ethnic leadership" as manifested among middle-class civil rights activists, proletariats and trade-union organizers, leftist radicals and academicians. García, much like previous studies, applies a social science framework to understand a wide range of political activity. More specifically, he employs political scientist Marvin Rintala's notion of a political generation to interrogate the relationship between ethnicity and generational change.¹¹ In doing so, he challenges static definitions of ethnicity and emphasizes the role of ethnicity in the Mexican American Generation's attempt to effect positive social change for Mexicans in the U.S. García explains that "the Mexican-American Generation experiencing the frustrating tensions between loyalty to ethnic background and Americanization resorted to embracing not full assimilation...but cultural pluralism...and a pluralism as much as possible on Mexican-American

¹¹ García, *Mexican Americans*, 3 – 7.

terms.”¹² García’s assertion that identity formation and ethnic politics was a dynamic process, and not a one way street toward assimilation, for the Mexican American generation was reinforced soon thereafter with Vicki L. Ruiz’s and George J. Sánchez’s studies of Mexican women in the twentieth century U.S. and Mexican Americans in early twentieth century Los Angeles respectively.¹³ Nonetheless, in spite of a growing academic record reflecting otherwise, the Mexican American Generation’s ostensibly assimilationist identity and integrationist political practices continued to figure prominently in the Chicano historical consciousness.

For instance, while the 1996 release of the four part documentary series *Chicano! History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* uses a combination of archival photos, film footage and personal interviews with Chicano Movement participants to create a striking portrayal of the social and political conditions of people of Mexican descent in the U.S., in doing so it also reifies Movement-era interpretations of Chicana/o history in general and Mexican American social and political activism in particular.¹⁴ Filmmakers, in other words, craft a narrative wherein the Chicano Movement represents the first time people of Mexican descent in the U.S. publicly articulated a political ideology.¹⁵ If *Chicano!* temporally

¹² Ibid., 25.

¹³ Vicki L. Ruiz, “Dead Ends or Gold Mines?: Using Missionary Records in Mexican-American Women’s History,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1. (1991), 33-56; Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

¹⁴ *Chicano! History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*. Video. NLCC Educational Media, 1996.

¹⁵ *Chicano!* ultimately reflects a Chicano historical consciousness constructed out of what Emma Pérez refers to as the “Great Events” and Chicano “heroes.” Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 8.

binds the Chicano political consciousness to the 1960s, then Cynthia E. Orozco's monograph, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement*, seeks to redefine the Chicano "master" narrative to account for pre-Movement Mexican American civil rights activism. Orozco reconsiders ideas of "class, culture, consciousness, ethnicity, immigration, nation, citizenship, social movements, genders, and periodization" to trace the origins of a Mexican American civil rights movement not to the 1960s and 1970s but to early twentieth century South Texas.¹⁶ The origins of that movement, Orozco argues, lies in the efforts by Mexicans to challenge their racial subordination and redefine hegemonic ideas of race as early as the 1910s. In providing a history of the League of United Latin American Citizens' (LULAC) she sheds light on a Mexican American subjectivity that reflected both Mexican and American nationalism, transcended U.S. processes of racialization and was simultaneously situated within and outside of state structures. In the end Orozco's work suggests a need to not only rethink the periodization of Mexican American civil rights activism, but also the analytic frameworks that have fashioned the Mexican American Generation as middle-class assimilationists and otherwise historically insignificant.

In his recent work on discrimination against Mexican workers in World War II Texas, Emilio Zamora illustrates how Mexican American civil rights advocates "righting wrongs" in Texas is significant for historians of the WWII home front, Chicana/o historians, historians of race relations and civil rights, *and* for historians of

¹⁶ Cynthia Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 9.

diplomacy and international relations. Zamora's focus on Mexican workers in Texas calls attention to a collaborative effort between Dr. Carlos E. Castañeda, through his wartime position with President Roosevelt's Committee on Fair Employment Practices (FEPC), LULAC and the Mexican consul to eradicate discrimination against Mexicans in Texas. The U.S. responded by extending the Good Neighbor Policy domestically, Zamora argues, underscoring the state's strategy of "promot[ing] racial understanding and goodwill as long as such initiatives did not interfere with the high production levels that the war effort required."¹⁷ His study of wartime job politics situates people of Mexican descent at the intersection of anti-Axis hemispheric alliances and domestic civil rights struggles thereby revealing a more sophisticated Mexican American Generation-era political strategy with wider-reaching implications than previously acknowledged. As a result Zamora challenges historiographic practices that privilege a black-white racial paradigm in U.S. civil rights narratives, disregard the role of everyday people in intergovernmental relationships and military strategy, and bind politicized Mexican American subjectivities temporally to the 1960s and 1970s and spatially to the geographic parameters of the U.S.

Building on the work of García, Orozco and Zamora this project challenges static interpretations of Mexican American World War II era subjectivity. In what follows I contend that the Mexican American Generation was not simply a generation of accommodationists determined to assimilate into the body politic. Informed by

¹⁷ Emilio Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs: Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 3.

Louis Althusser's notion of interpellation, I aim to portray what Chela Sandoval refers to as "differential consciousness," or the manner in which "the citizen-subject can learn to identify, develop, and control the means of ideology, that is, marshal the knowledge necessary to 'break with ideology' while at the same time *also* speaking in, and from within, ideology..."¹⁸ As such, I argue that the Mexican American Generation's wartime subjectivity is hegemonic even as it is oppositional, and that as patriotic citizen-subjects, the Mexican Americans discussed below "function[ed] within, yet beyond, the demands of dominant ideology." In other words, the Mexican American Generation occupied a third space wherein they moved "between and among varying power bases," from loyal and patriotic citizen-warrior, to civil rights advocate to rebellious pachuca/os, to challenge social and cultural structures of oppression. Furthermore, when Sandoval's differential consciousness is used to understand the Mexican American Generation's seemingly integrationist ideology and politics, the generation's presence in the "decolonial imaginary" is illuminated. According to Emma Pérez, the decolonial imaginary is that third space wherein crafters of the Chicano master narrative relegated the Mexican American Generation, among other subjectivities, "to silences, to passivity, to that third space where agency is enacted..."¹⁹ In the decolonial imaginary the Mexican American GI, the personification of the Mexican American Generation, is symbolic of a politics of contestation and not a politics of accommodation.

¹⁸ Chela Sandoval, "U.S. Third World Feminism," and *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 44; Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary*, xvi.

¹⁹ Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary*, pg. xvi.

Chapter one examines how a state in total war allowed historian and archivist Dr. Carlos E. Castañeda an opportunity to advance his long-standing “war of position” against the racial and social order of the U.S. Through an examination of Castañeda’s wartime work with the FEPC, the chapter demonstrates how Dr. Castañeda used the federal agency to not only improve the wartime work conditions for Mexicans, but he also used it as a means to effect long-term social, economic and racial equality for all people of Mexican decent in the U.S. By examining Castañeda’s actions to achieve equal employment opportunities in the defense industry I illustrate how he too demonstrates a Mexican American Era subject position at odds with the state and the historical narrative. That is, Castañeda’s service with the FEPC reflects a strategy to locate his subject position within yet in opposition to the state, and in doing so he managed to disrupt normative understandings of race and racial formation, and to consolidate inter- and intra-ethnic alliances with postwar implications. Carlos E. Castañeda’s work with the wartime agency, hence, suggests a more complicated subjectivity than mere accommodationist.

Chapter two emphasizes Mexican American women’s third space agency, and investigates Mexican worker acts of contestation, and the raced and gendered dynamics that served as a catalyst for individual claims to their civil rights. The chapter focuses on the labor experience of *mexicanas* who worked in the mobilization industry at San Antonio’s Kelly Field during World War II. Among Kelly’s women war workers, dubbed the ‘Kelly Katies,’ emerged three Mexican American women

whose patriotic and nationalistic sensibilities were called into question after they filed complaints of discrimination with the FEPC. It explores the dynamic of an Army Air Force shop floor in the context of total war, and highlights how Mexican women articulated a complex subjectivity in an effort to claim their rights, as citizen subjects, to fair and equitable treatment at work and to upward social mobility. It contends that their FEPC complaints reflect a differential consciousness, or a subjectivity simultaneously interpellated and oppositional. In enacting a differential consciousness these three Mexican American ‘Kelly Katies’ self-consciously transformed their wartime subjectivity into a site of resistance against the prevailing racial and gender hierarchy.

Chapter three examines the experiences of nine women who served in the U.S. Armed Forces during World War II. It argues that the Mexican American women’s decision to enlist in the U.S. military reflects a lifetime of behavior wherein the *mujeres* situated themselves in opposition to not only familial and cultural power structures, but also in opposition to power structures of the nation-state that relegated them to “that third space where agency is enacted through third space feminism.”²⁰ Through their early childhood educational endeavors, employment outside of the home, their eventual military service and postwar activities these nine Mexican American women consistently invoked a tactical subjectivity. They, in other words, self-consciously inhabited, and often times simultaneously, diametrically opposed subject positions to pursue personal and community goals of self-empowerment.

²⁰ Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*; Perez, *The Decolonial Imaginary*, xvi.

While their military service alone provides a critical intervention into the Mexican American GI narrative, read male experience, their prewar differential consciousness underscores Mexican American women's political subjectivities of the early 20th century that have remained un- and under-historicized.

CHAPTER I

“INTELLECTUALLY HE WAS COURAGEOUS; IN PUBLIC ACTION HE WAS PRUDENT:” A REASSESSMENT OF CARLOS E. CASTAÑEDA’S WARTIME SERVICE²¹

On August 23, 1943 in Dallas, Texas Carlos E. Castañeda, librarian and professor at the University of Texas at Austin, took an oath and became the first senior examiner for the Fair Employment Practice Commission’s (FEPC), a federal agency within the executive branch charged by President Roosevelt to ensure fair and equal employment opportunities for workers in the mobilization industry during World War II, Region X.²² It seems that in Castañeda’s quest to support his country’s effort to defeat fascism abroad he also, first as a senior examiner, then as Region X’s Regional Director and then as the Special Assistant to the FEPC Chairman for Latin American Problems, contributed to advancing the social and economic rights of Mexicans in the U.S

In fact, Dr. Castañeda actively pursued a position with the FEPC as a means to fulfill his long-term goal of effecting positive social change for people of Mexican descent. Born and raised along the U.S./Mexico border of South Texas at the turn of the twentieth century, Castañeda not only witnessed the political and social implications of the Mexican Revolution for Mexicans on both sides of the border, but also the economic and structural changes in the state, or what Richard R. Flores refers to as the Texas Modern, whereby Texas transformed from a Mexican cattle-based

²¹ Félix D. Almaráz, Jr., *Knight Without Armor: Carlos Eduardo Castañeda, 1896-1958* (College Station: Texas A & M Press, 1999), 68.

²² In 1943 the FEPC’s Region X included Texas, Louisiana, New Mexico and Arizona.

society into an Anglo-dominated industrial and agricultural society, and Anglo dominance was predicated on the subjugation of Mexicans.²³ Dr. Castañeda, thus, began his fight on behalf of Mexicans and Mexican Americans long before his appointment to the President's Commission. He and his Mexican American contemporaries made gallant efforts to challenge formal and informal practices that perpetuated anti-Mexican discrimination and socio-economic inequities against *mexicana/os* in Texas.²⁴ For people of Mexican descent in South Texas the Texas Modern instigated a race war that left Mexican communities terrorized and upwards of 250 Mexicans deaths due to Anglo vigilante violence and lynchings.²⁵ In the context of such indiscriminate and unchecked brutality Castañeda's generation developed a new, less violent strategy of resistance. Their collective effort manifested in a number of civil rights organizations aimed to combat the rise in severe racial

²³ Almaráz, Jr., *Knight Without Armor*, 4 – 19; Richard R. Flores, *Remembering the Alamo: Memory, Modernity, and the Master Symbol* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 1 – 12.

²⁴ From 1933 to 1935 Castañeda worked as Superintendent of San Felipe Public Schools, a school district for Mexican students, in Del Rio, Texas. Castañeda worked diligently as superintendent to broaden and improve the quality of education for Mexican students and to secure the district's accreditation from the State Department of Education. During his tenure he implemented a reduced lunch program for low-income students, established departments of physical education and music and organized San Felipe High School's first marching band, pep squad and track meet. Superintendent Castañeda also sought to combat the poor quality of life for Mexicans in the larger Del Rio community, and subsequently implemented a Spanish-language health campaign aimed to decrease the rate of typhoid and tuberculosis in the *barrio* and an evening education program for local adults. Other Mexican and Mexican American leaders across the state, in particular LULACers (members of the League of United Latin American Citizens), organized poll tax committees, voter registration drives, ran for political office and led local desegregation efforts on behalf of Mexicans in Texas. For information on Castañeda and his Mexican American contemporaries pre-World War II civil rights efforts see Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009); Mario T. Garcia, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, & Identity, 1930 – 1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 25 – 61; and Almaráz, Jr., *Knight Without Armor*.

²⁵ William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, "The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin or Descent in the United States, 1848 to 1928," *Journal of Social History* Vol. 37, No. 2 (Winter 2003): 411 – 438; Benjamin Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

discrimination in Texas. Of special importance was a strategic decision to predicate their fight for Mexican *American* civil rights on their status as U.S. citizens and not on their racial or ethnic background.²⁶ Castañeda and his generation's reliance on their citizenship status to gain equal rights also reflects an understanding that doing so meant they would need to work within the U.S. power structure, in particular with Anglos in power. Dr. Castañeda's work with the FEPC is a clear reflection of this newfound strategy for demanding equitable rights and privileges of first-class citizenship for Mexican Americans.

In his biography of Castañeda, historian Félix D. Almaráz, Jr. describes Castañeda's public life in early twentieth century Texas as overwhelmingly "apolitical." Almaráz explains that because Dr. Castañeda was a Mexican national, he became a U.S. citizen in 1936, and employed by the state of Texas he made only intermittent forays onto the Mexican American political scene where he remained on the periphery at best.²⁷ Instead, according to Almaráz, Castañeda used his role as a librarian, professor, and historian of the Spanish borderlands to communicate his opinion on public affairs on a hemispheric level. Mario T. García's mini-biography of Dr. Castañeda, like Almaráz's, also foregrounds Castañeda's intellectual work as his most meaningful contribution to the advancement of Mexican American political

²⁶ The League of United Latin American Citizen's (LULAC) establishment on February 17, 1929 in Corpus Christi, Texas is the most obvious manifestation of this *new* Mexican American political consciousness. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women or Dogs Allowed*, 65 – 91.

²⁷ According to Almaráz, Jr., Castañeda's decision to become a U.S. citizen was in part motivated by Texas' "centennial observance, which was reinforced by the reality that he had lived in Texas for nearly thirty years and the need to provide security for his family." Almaráz, Jr., *Knight Without Armor*, 153.

rights.²⁸ His academic record of "eighteen books and nearly fifty articles" clearly reflects an intellectual genealogy concerned with Texas history in general and with foregrounding the positive contributions of Mexicans to that history in particular. Much of Castañeda's work, as evident in the seven volume publication of *Our Catholic Heritage of Texas, 1519 - 1936*, is firmly rooted in his Catholic faith and reflects a positivist understanding of history. Castañeda, in other words, adhered to a Eurocentric and Catholic worldview wherein progress is marked by the expansion of a "European-Christian civilization."²⁹ Through his unpublished writings, Dr. Castañeda indicts racist and classist structures of oppression for the contemporary and historical condition of Mexicans in the U.S. and advocates for a Pan-American pluralistic society to alleviate Anglo-Mexican conflict. Nonetheless, according to Almaráz and García, Castañeda's writings underscored his belief that history should and could be used as a means to mend cultural and racial animosities between Anglos and Mexicans. Hence, Almaraz's characterization of Castañeda's academic work as "courageous" and his public action as "cautious," and García's contention that it "predated the efforts by the larger number of Chicano intellectuals a generation later to link the world of scholarship to the social realities of the Mexican American community."³⁰

²⁸ García, *Mexican Americans*, 231 – 251.

²⁹ Ibid., 233. See Castañeda, "The Rhythm of History," *Man* (Feb. 1949), 27 – 28; and his unpublished essays "Why History Today," Manuscripts, 1923 – 1957 File; Box 52, File 23; "Origins of Culture in the Americas," Box 50, File 13; and "The Broadening Concept of History Teaching in Texas," Box 46, File 15; Carlos E. Castañeda Papers (hereinafter CEC Papers); Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin (hereinafter BLAC).

³⁰ Ibid., 232; Almaráz, Jr., *Knight Without Armor*, 68.

On the other hand, in his study of Mexican workers in Texas during World War II Emilio Zamora argues that “Castañeda contributed more than well-written statements against discrimination and the second-class status of Mexicans.”³¹ Through his investigation of Castañeda’s appointment with the FEPC, his affiliation with LULAC, Mexican consulates and his strategic use of the Good Neighbor Policy Zamora demonstrates how Dr. Castañeda’s wartime service enabled him to shore up his fight against the discriminatory treatment of Mexicans in Texas. Following Zamora’s lead, this chapter asserts that through his work during World War II Carlos E. Castañeda did indeed take bold public action on behalf of people of Mexican descent, and thus supports García and Zamora’s assertion that Castañeda and his generation’s political work represents more than that of mere middle-class accommodationists.³² I argue that in his various roles with the FEPC, Dr. Castañeda consistently worked to disrupt the country’s prevailing black-white racial paradigm while he demanded, often to the chagrin of his superiors, the rights and privileges of first-class citizenship for workers of Mexican descent. I argue, moreover, that during Castañeda’s tenure with the FEPC he also managed to consolidate a Texas-originated Mexican American historical bloc that ultimately coalesced with other historical blocs in an attempt to permanently alter racial and civil rights discourses in the U.S.

The Rise and Demise of Roosevelt’s Fair Employment Practice Commission

³¹ Emilio Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas: Mexican Workers and Job Politics During World War II* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 8.

³² García, *Mexican Americans*; Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas*.

Unhappy with the New Deal, African Americans launched an attack to end racial discrimination in the growing U.S. defense industry and desegregate the armed forces. A. Philip Randolph, founder of the March on Washington Movement and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, threatened President Roosevelt with a massive “March on Washington” in July 1941 of at least 100,000 African Americans if he did not take immediate action to rectify the Jim Crow conditions of the war industries and the military.³³ More specifically, Randolph informed Roosevelt that African Americans would not accept anything less than an executive order that mandate industry employers hire African Americans. Only when President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802 (EO 8802) to prohibit discrimination in the defense industry and establish the FEPC on June 25, 1941 did Randolph call off the march. Roosevelt charged the FEPC with reaffirming the state’s policy of “full participation in the defense program by all persons regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin.”³⁴ While EO 8802 ostensibly granted the commission the duty of ensuring that no discrimination took place in the defense industries, the executive order lacked any mechanism to effectively police, reverse, and enforce nondiscriminatory practices. Staff, allies and advocates of the FEPC, nonetheless, spent the next year staging a series of public hearings in different parts of the country to not only assess, and when

³³ First in a letter and then in a meeting, Eleanor Roosevelt, a strong supporter of equal rights for African Americans, requested that A. Philip Randolph cancel the “March on Washington.” Mrs. Roosevelt not only feared for the safety of African American demonstrators in the southern-like town of Washington, D.C., but she also worried the “March on Washington” would “set back the progress which is being made, in the Army at least, towards better opportunities and less segregation.” Louis Ruchames, *Race, Jobs and Politics: The Story of FEPC* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), 17 -18; Herbert Garfinkle, *When Negroes March: The March on Washington Movement in the Organizational Politics for FEPC* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1959), 42.

³⁴ Executive Order 8802, June 25, 1941; General Records of the United States Government, 1778 – 2006, Record Group 11; National Archives Building, Washington, DC (hereinafter NAB).

possible correct, discriminatory practices, but to also publicize the commission's role on the home front.

After a series of hearings in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Washington and Birmingham wherein the commission's work successfully publicized its existence, and in some cases actually secured the "voluntary compliance" of offending parties, President Roosevelt transferred the FEPC from the War Production Board and established it as an "organizational entity" of the War Manpower Commission (WMC).³⁵ Roosevelt transferred the FEPC to the WMC at the behest of Paul V. McNutt, WMC chair, who viewed the FEPC as encroaching on his administrative oversight of manpower issues, and who in spite of being a New Dealer did not necessarily support racial equality.³⁶ As a result, life for the FEPC at the WMC indeed proved to be quite difficult. While under the auspices of the War Production Board the FEPC functioned as an autonomous agency and secured its operating budget directly from Roosevelt himself, but upon reassignment the commission fell under the direct supervision of McNutt, and the southern-controlled Congress had complete discretion over the FEPC's budget. It was a Southern-

³⁵ "The President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice: Its Beginning and Growth and How it Operates," A Report of the Division of Review and Analysis (FEPC), Washington, D.C., March 1944; Histories of the FEPC, Folder 14; Reference Files, July 1941 – April 1946; Headquarters Records, Division of Review & Analysis; Records of the Committee on Fair Employment Practice, 1904 – 1946, Record Group 228 (hereinafter RG 228); National Archives at College Park, MD (hereinafter NACP).

³⁶ Andrew E. Kersten, *Race, Jobs, and the War: The FEPC in the Midwest, 1941 – 1946* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 38.

controlled Congress, that is, who represented a political constituency antagonistic to the idea of government-imposed equal employment opportunities.³⁷

Proponents of the FEPC, in fact, spent the better part of 1942 and 1943 battling enemies from both within and outside of the agency. McNutt proved very quickly to be unsupportive of the commission's work. He seemingly undermined the FEPC with his nominal integration of the agency into the WMC and his unexpected cancellation of a long-anticipated commission hearing on discrimination against African American railroad workers on Southern lines and carriers. U.S. business owners and lobbyists and advocates of business vehemently opposed the mandates outlined in EO 8802. This faction generally sought to destabilize the FEPC for one of three reasons: 1) they saw the work of the FEPC as government intervention into the business sector; 2) they feared the reaction of white workers; or 3) they themselves held prejudices against ethnic minorities.³⁸ Individual business owners, business associations and chambers of commerce wrote letters, saturated communities with fliers and also aggressively campaigned to dismantle any and all state and federal legislation that imposed fair and equitable hiring and promotion practices in their respective industries. Unions and union members in the north and south repeatedly employed hate and wildcat strikes as a means to reinforce racist ideology and practices in the workplace.³⁹ But white Southern business owners, politicians, women

³⁷ Kersten, *Race, Jobs, and the War*; Ruchames, *Race, Jobs and Politics*; C. Kesselman, *The Social Politics of FEPC: A Study in Reform Pressure Movements* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948).

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ White employees used work stoppages, also known as hate strikes, as a means to protest "the hiring or upgrading of blacks or other minority workers or because these industrial newcomers challenged

workers, newspapers and the general public represented the FEPC's biggest obstacle in maintaining full and equitable employment in the war industries. Southern newspapers wrote inflammatory articles about the FEPC, officers of southern courts made public statements in support of white supremacy, and still other Southerners threatened violence in order to prevent the FEPC from implementing equal employment opportunities for African American workers and thus disrupt the racial order in the South.⁴⁰

In a concerted effort FEPC supporters, including the March on Washington Movement and numerous African American civil rights groups, staged their own multi-front offensive in an attempt to reinstate the FEPC's autonomy, secure an increase in its operating budget and to strengthen the political and social efficacy of the commission in general. Allies wrote letters and sent telegraphs to President Roosevelt, the Black press wrote articles and editorialized on Jim Crow's presence outside of the South, and Randolph and his supporters threatened another march on Washington. Between the FEPC's precarious position in the WMC, McNutt's sabotage, the aggressive tactics of unions and business, the political and social wrangling of white Southerners and the mass mobilization of FEPC supporters, the commission's work reached a virtual standstill in January 1943. On Feb. 3, 1943 President Roosevelt, apparently vacillating under pressure, publicly ordered McNutt

racial discrimination in defense factories." Kersten, *Race, Jobs, and the War*, 52. For a comprehensive list of hate strikes in the Midwest see Appendix B in Kersten, *Race, Jobs, and the War*. According to Ruchames, between July 1943 and December 1944 the FEPC settled 18 strikes initiated by white workers who protested equal employment opportunities for African American workers. Ruchames, *Race, Jobs & Politics*, 187.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

to call a meeting between civil rights leaders and WMC representatives to discuss the reorganization of the FEPC. Roosevelt and McNutt, ostensibly unwilling to acquiesce to recommendations made by community members and FEPC officials at the mid-February meeting, retreated and proceeded to reconstitute the commission in private. Friends of the commission waited impatiently, and after a month-and-a-half of silence Earl Dickerson, a prominent African American attorney and civil rights leader and acting chair of the FEPC, announced hearings in Detroit on May 24 and 25, 1943, and in St. Louis, Cleveland, Philadelphia and Baltimore soon thereafter.⁴¹

Whether Roosevelt felt pushed into action by Dickerson's announcement or whether he really intended to reconstitute the commission on May 27, 1943, he issued EO 9346 and therein created a new, independent FEPC housed within the Office of Production Management and thus under the sole purview of the President himself.⁴² Even when it was under the direct control of the executive branch, the FEPC continued to sustain political, social and even judicial attacks for the next two years. The political influence of southern politicians, lobbyists and business owners, needless to say, proved to be far-reaching because after numerous Congressional battles over its budget, southern Democrats eventually underfunded the FEPC into obliteration in 1945.⁴³

⁴¹ Ruchames, *Race, Jobs & Politics*, 54 - 55.

⁴² Executive Order 9346;" Executive Orders 8802 and 9346, Folder 14; Office Files of Cornelius Golightly, 1943 – 1945; Headquarters Records, Division of Review & Analysis; RG 228; NACP.

⁴³ Ibid. During the FEPC's first year of existence it operated with a budget of \$80,000. At the close of the FEPC's first year committee members and allies, and upon approval of President Roosevelt, anticipated a budget of over \$100,000 for fiscal year 1943. Unfortunately, Roosevelt's unexpected transfer of the FEPC to the War Manpower Commission prevented the increase in the Commission's operating budget. Nonetheless, upon Roosevelt's issuance of Executive Order 9346 the Commission's

Race, Citizenship and the Making of a Historical Bloc

Castañeda's stellar reputation as a historian of the U.S./Mexico borderlands, his prolific scholarly record and his unfailing commitment to the fight for Mexican American civil rights undoubtedly made him an outstanding candidate to serve on Roosevelt's Commission on Fair Employment Practice, as he and a number of key political allies believed. As such, within days of the announcement of EO 9346 Professor Castañeda mobilized a diverse support base for his bid for an appointment to the President's commission. Castañeda promptly secured letters of support from religious, civil rights and political leaders at the local, state and national levels. He appealed to Robert E. Lucey, Archbishop of San Antonio, and Alonso S. Perales, a prominent Texas attorney, to advocate on his behalf directly to the FEPC Chairman Reverend Monsignor Francis J. Haas, a labor arbitrator and former member of the National Recovery Administration and National Labor Board, and FEPC Executive Secretary Lawrence W. Cramer, former governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands, respectively.⁴⁴ New Mexico Senator Dennis Chavez and John Haynes Holmes, Chairman of the American Civil Liberties Union's Board of Directors, also encouraged the FEPC Chairman and Executive Secretary to consider Dr. Castañeda

budget increased, and he subsequently requested the House appropriate \$585,000 for the FEPC for the fiscal year beginning on July 1, 1944. While the House Committee on Appropriations approved an appropriation of \$500,000 it did so with much opposition from Southern politicians. On March 21, 1945, less than a month before President Roosevelt's death on April 12, he requested a \$599,000 appropriation for the FEPC's upcoming fiscal year. This time the House Appropriations Committee granted the FEPC a mere \$250,000 budget. While allies of the FEPC, such as Senators Dennis Chavez and Vito Marcantonio, attempted to secure the FEPC a larger budget, their lobbying proved unsuccessful. Because of the insufficient funds the Commission reduced its staff and closed all but three field offices. Ruchames, *Race, Jobs & Politics*, 27, 46, 88, 122 and 132.

⁴⁴ Carlos E. Castañeda, Archivist and Professor, to Alonso S. Perales, Attorney at Law, 29 May 1943; Alonso Perales, 1937 – 1957; Correspondences, 1920 – 1958; Personal and Biographical Material, 1911 – 1960; CEC Papers; BLAC.

for an appointment to the FEPC national board.⁴⁵ While his efforts may have fallen short of securing a seat with the FEPC his campaign serves as testament to his dedication to achieving the rights and privileges of first-class citizenship for Mexicans and his preferred strategy of inter-ethnic solidarity to do so. Nonetheless, Msgr. Haas placed a phone call to Dr. Castañeda within weeks of receiving Senator Chavez' and Chairman Holmes' letters and thus began Castañeda's relationship with the FEPC.⁴⁶

After Dr. Castañeda received FEPC Chairman Haas' initial phone inquiry in late June 1943 his appointment with the Commission was simultaneously fast-tracked *and* slowed by the bureaucratic process of the federal government. Though Haas invited Castañeda to DC in July for "an interview and a consultation" it appears as if he never went through a formal interview process with a FEPC hiring committee.⁴⁷ Instead Castañeda communicated with Monsignor Haas through written correspondences that seemed to entail both an interview and negotiation process. In mid-July Professor Castañeda wrote a letter to University of Texas at Austin President Homer P. Rainey in which he claimed, perhaps while still in the midst of negotiations with the FEPC and in haste to begin the process to secure a leave of absence from his academic appointment, that he had received a formal offer from the Commission to serve as "Associate Director of the Regional Office" to be established

⁴⁵ Francis J. Haas, FEPC Chairman, to Dennis Chaves, US Senator, New Mexico, 21 June 1943; C, Folder 3; Carbon Copies of Letters Sent, Feb. 1943-May 1945, Office Files of the Chairman (hereinafter OFC); Office of the Committee, Entry 6 (hereinafter E 6); RG 228; NACP; and Lawrence W. Cramer, FEPC Executive Secretary, to John Haynes Holmes, Chairman, American Civil Liberties Union Board of Directors, 5 June 1943; H, Folder 8; OFC; E 6; RG 228; NACP.

⁴⁶ Almaráz, *Knight Without Armor*, 217.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

in Dallas, Texas.⁴⁸ Although it is unclear whether Haas and Castañeda actually negotiated his official title and Civil Service rank, Castañeda apparently spent the latter part of July awaiting word from Washington DC regarding his federal appointment. By August 13 negotiations were over as Monsignor Haas dispatched a rather urgent telegram to Archbishop Robert E. Lucey of San Antonio seeking help in locating Castañeda “to supply us with proof of citizenship so his appointment can become effective without delay.”⁴⁹ Ten days later Professor Castañeda temporarily left his position as librarian and archivist of the University of Texas at Austin's Latin American Collection and part-time faculty member in the Department of History to assume his role with the FEPC's Region X.⁵⁰

As the sole staff member in the Dallas office, he diligently spent his first week on the job securing and setting up an office space, and meeting with no less than six individuals, including the Mexican Consul in Dallas and officials with the local office of the War Manpower Commission, regarding the FEPC's role on the home front and the status of “Latin Americans in the city.”⁵¹ On September 3, less than two weeks into Dr. Castañeda's tenure with the Commission, Monsignor Haas appointed him Acting Director of Region X and before the year ended he was upgraded to Special

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Francis J. Haas, FEPC Chairman, to Robert E. Lucey, Archbishop, San Antonio, Texas, 13 August 1943; Folder 9; OFC; E 6; RG 228; NACP.

⁵⁰ At the time Castañeda first assumed his position with the FEPC in 1943 Region X included Texas, Louisiana, New Mexico and Arizona.

⁵¹ Carlos E. Castañeda, Senior Examiner, to Francis J. Haas, FEPC Chairman, 27 August 1943; Mexicans (Miscellaneous), Folder 5; Aliens in Defense, US Government, Central Files, 1941 – 1946; Administrative Division, Entry 25 (hereinafter E 25); RG 228; NACP; and Carlos E. Castañeda, Senior Examiner, to Francis J. Haas, FEPC Chairman, 2 September 1943; Ibid.

Assistant to the Chairman for Latin American Problems.⁵² Castañeda's original assignment with the FEPC was to specifically address discrimination complaints filed by "Latin Americans" in Region X, while his reassignment as the Chairman's Special Assistant expanded his focus to include Mexican American workers in all FEPC jurisdictions. Castañeda subsequently spent his two and a half years with the FEPC traveling extensively to conduct personal interviews with and collect affidavits from workers, employers, union representatives, civil rights leaders and government officials from across the Southwest. He staged conferences with oil company officials, local labor organizers and African American and Mexican workers in Corpus Christi and El Paso, Texas, in order to carry out his mandate of ensuring all workers in general, and Mexican workers in particular, receive equal pay for the same work with equal access to promotion opportunities.⁵³ In February 1945 Dr. Castañeda once again received the assignment to serve as Region X's Director, but unfortunately by June he learned that he had a mere \$133 to run the office through the end of the fiscal year in July.⁵⁴ Political wrangling in DC subsequently ensured the Commission

⁵² Will Maslow, Director of Field Operations, to Carlos E. Castañeda, Special Assistant to the Chairman, 17 December 1943; H, Folder 8; OFC; E 7; RG 228 NACP; Almaráz, *Knight Without Armor*, 220.

⁵³ William Maslow, Director of Field Operations, to Carlos E. Castañeda, Special Assistant to the Chairman, 23 June 1944; Folder 3; OFC; E 6; RG 228; NACP. In Castañeda's effort to secure fair and equitable employment opportunities for African American and Mexican workers in Corpus Christi he met with officers and members of Zinc Workers' Federal Labor Union (Local 23245, American Federation of Labor) and Alkali Workers' Industrial Union (an affiliate of United Gas, Coke, Chemical and Allied Workers, Local 153, Congress of Industrial Organization). In West Texas, New Mexico and Arizona Castañeda conferred with leaders and rank-and-file members of affiliates of the Congress of Industrial Organization, the American Federation of Labor, the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen and the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers. Almaraz, Jr., *Knight Without Armor*, 226, 235 - 249. Also see Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas*; and Daniel, *Chicano Workers and the Politics of Fairness* for a more detailed look at Castañeda's work with the FEPC.

⁵⁴ Almaráz, *Knight Without Armor*, 265.

would not receive a reasonable budget to continue its work into the next fiscal year, and on December 15, 1945 Carlos E. Castañeda closed the doors to Region X's office for the last time.

Wartime Democracy and Carlos E. Castañeda's Challenge to the Black-White Racial Paradigm

Given the nature of the FEPC's creation as a direct response to African American civil rights demands and this country's rigid and deep-seated understanding of race as a black-white phenomenon, it is no surprise that the historiography on the Commission, and on WWII home front workers in general, also reflect that black-white racial paradigm.⁵⁵ In spite of the Commission's nominal effort to address the wartime grievances of all ethnic workers in the mobilization industry, the FEPC seemed to be preoccupied with prevailing notions of race.⁵⁶ In at least seven official FEPC reports and studies produced during and immediately after the war focus primarily on the plight of African American workers and contain minimal references to workers of other ethnic groups.⁵⁷ That is, FEPC discourse conflated race with African Americans and consequently federal policy and governmental resources privileged recourse for African American workers over workers with grievances

⁵⁵ See footnote 12 for a list of citations.

⁵⁶ Francis J. Haas, FEPC Chairman, to Robert W. Kinney, Attorney General, Los Angeles, CA, 13 August 1943; H, Folder 8; OFC; RG 228; NACP.

⁵⁷ "The Wartime Enforcement of the Non-Discrimination Policy in the Federal Government," Folder 5; Studies & Reports Issued by FEPC, Reference Files, July 1941 – April 1946; Division of Review & Analysis; Headquarters Records, Entry 33 (hereinafter E 33); RG 228; NACP; "The Fair Employment Practice Committee and Race Tensions in Industry," Folder 12; Ibid; "The President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice: Its Beginning and Growth and How it Operates," Folder 14; Ibid; "Justification for Continuation of Functions and the Appropriation During Period of Reconversion," Folder 14; Ibid; "Outline for Study of Nonwhite Unemployment During Reconversion," Folder 18; Ibid; "Impact of Reconversion on Minority Workers: A Report to the President," Folder 19; Ibid; "Minorities in Defense," Folder 1; Ibid.

based on creed, color (other than black) or national origin. As noted above, the first FEPC primarily conducted hearings in cities, such as Birmingham, Baltimore and Detroit, with large African American populations, or in industries (railroads and shipyards) where African American workers predominated. Carlos E. Castañeda's role with the FEPC can quite literally be understood as an extension of both his academic work and his long time service to the Mexican community in Texas. Castañeda, in other words, used his position with the Commission to not only bring light to, and reverse the deplorable work conditions of Mexicans, but he also used his position to also expand the country's racial perspective and alter the national discourse on racism.

Upon the FEPC's formation, the Commission paid little attention to the struggles of Mexican American workers. For example, the cases of African American workers dominated their October 1941 hearings in Los Angeles, where only two Mexican Americans were among the fifty people whom testified before FEPC staff.⁵⁸ Due to this disparity by the FEPC, Dr. Castañeda wasted little time in addressing concerns of *mexicana/o* workers in Region X's mobilization industry. His commitment to securing equal employment opportunities on behalf of Mexican workers is most evident in the drastic increase of cases docketed, or filed, in Region X during the first ten months of his term. Mexican workers filed complaints of discrimination with the FEPC based on unequal pay scales and unfair work

⁵⁸ Public Hearing in the Matter of Complaints of Discrimination in Employment in Defense Industries because of Race, Creed, Color or National Origin, Oct. 20 – 21, 1941, Los Angeles, CA; Employment in Defense Industries, Folder 1; Cook Country Plumbers Union – Employment in Defense Industries (Public Complaints), Hearings, 1941 – 1946; Legal Division, Entry 19; RG 228; NACP.

assignments among other reasons. Field Examiner Castañeda began his assignment with twenty-six cases pending; but by the year's end, he quadrupled that number to 106 pending cases (see Table 1.1). He also seemed able to sustain his early pace of docketing more than 150 new cases every six months through at least June of the following year (see Tables 1.2 and 1.3). This productivity, moreover, fared higher than seven of the twelve other FEPC regions in the average number of monthly cases docketed between January and June 1944 (see Tables 1.4 and 1.5).⁵⁹

Though not all of Region X's new cases docketed between August 1943 and June 1944 focused on *mexicana/o* laborers, Castañeda's fastidious work in the field undoubtedly served to expand the FEPC's attention to concerns of Mexican Americans. This became glaringly evident when in June 1944 he finally received the long-awaited approval from the Washington office to conduct a conference with American Smelting and Refining Company executives and local labor leaders in El Paso, Texas to ascertain the status of Mexican workers in their mines.⁶⁰ And if Dr. Castañeda's impressive caseload did not oblige the FEPC or the general public to pay heed to Mexican American struggles and to expand notions of race then his public actions surely did.

Table 1.1 Case Load Region X, July 1943 – December 1943⁶¹
Month Docketed Closed Pending Percent Closed

⁵⁹ Region X's average of docketing 28.7 new cases a month did not measure up to Region II's average of 72.7, but it certainly outdid Region VIII and XI's monthly average of 1.6 and 3.7 respectively.

⁶⁰ William Maslow, Director of Field Operations, to Dr. Carlos E. Castañeda, Special Assistant to the Chairman for Latin American Problems, 23 June 1944 (hereinafter Maslow to Castañeda, June); C, Folder 3; OFC; RG 228; NACP.

⁶¹ Summary Table of Disposition of Case Load, July 1, 1943 – December 31, 1943; Operational Statistics & Case Loads, Folder 1; Docketed Cases, 1944 – 1945, Operational Statistics; Division of Review & Analysis, Entry 35 (hereinafter E 35); RG 228; NACP.

July	7	0	17	0
August	10	1	26	3.7
September	18	4	40	9.1
October	45	10	75	11.8
November	64	25	114	18
December	20	26	108	19.4

Table 1.2 Disposition of Case Load Region X, July – December, 1943⁶²

<u>Total Complaints</u> <u>Docketed</u>	<u>Total Complaints</u> <u>Handled</u>	<u>Total Cases</u> <u>Closed</u>	<u>Percent Closed</u>
164	174	66	38

Table 1.3 Disposition of Case Load Region X, January – June, 1944⁶³

<u>Month</u>	<u>Docketed</u>	<u>Closed</u>	<u>Pending</u>	<u>Percent Closed</u>
January	19	33	75	30.6
February	46	18	103	16.7
March	40	18	125	12.6
April	39	32	132	19.5
May	32	27	127	17.6
June	6	10	123	7.6

Table 1.4 Disposition of Case Load Region X, January – June, 1944⁶⁴

<u>Total Complaints</u> <u>Docketed</u>	<u>Total Complaints</u> <u>Handled</u>	<u>Total Cases</u> <u>Closed</u>	<u>Percent Closed</u>
172	261	138	52.9

Table 1.5 Summary of Case Load Activity in All FEPC Regions, January – June, 1944⁶⁵

<u>Region</u>	<u>Total Cases</u> <u>Handled</u>	<u>Monthly</u> <u>Average</u> <u>Docketed</u>	<u>Monthly</u> <u>Average</u> <u>Closed</u>	<u>Percent</u> <u>Closed</u>
I	50	5.2	5.3	64
II	582	72.7	50.3	51.9
III	540	34.8	41.7	46.3
IV	292	16.2	26.8	55.1
V (Cleve)	291	19	24.8	51.2

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Case Load Activity by Month, Jan 1, 1944 – June 1944; Docketed Cases, 1944 – 1945; E 35; RG 228; NACP.

⁶⁴ Ibid; and Comparative Summary of Office and Examiner Case Load Activity, January 1, 1944 – June 30, 1944; Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

V (Det)	268	11.5	27.3	61.2
VI	471	35.3	39	49.7
VII	377	39	12.2	19.4
VIII	33	1.6	3	54.5
IX	212	20	13.5	38.2
X	261	28.7	23	52.9
XI	40	3.7	1.3	20
XII (SF)	333	32.8	30.7	55.3
XII (LA)	293	31.3	24.3	49.8

Carlos E. Castañeda spent his early days on the job acutely aware of the constraints his civil service position put on his ability to speak freely about racial, social and economic discrimination in the U.S. After he attended a convention of the Texas Mid-Continent Oil and Gas Association in October 1943 he composed a letter to William Maslow, Director of Field Operations and his immediate supervisor, stating “I took no part in the discussion but I took full notes...”⁶⁶ Maslow, nonetheless, still felt compelled to remind Castañeda to “AVOID PUBLIC CONTROVERSY OR THREATS OF HEARINGS” in a concisely worded letter in mid-1944.⁶⁷ By early 1945 Castañeda’s public actions came to exemplify his efforts to extend notions of wartime democracy, fair employment practice policies as a means to secure military victory abroad, specifically economic and social equality for Mexicans, beyond the realm of the mobilization industry and most certainly beyond the current hostilities. His actions were particularly striking perhaps because of the FEPC’s inability to actually enforce fair and equitable employment practices and the slow pace by which the agency seemed to prefer to effect positive social change. Dr.

⁶⁶ Almaráz, *Knight Without Armor*, 222 - 224

⁶⁷ Maslow to Castañeda, June; Folder 3; OFC; RG 228; NACP.

Castañeda thus brought Mexican American civil rights issues to national attention by publicly testifying before the Senate Committee on Labor and Education on March 13, 1945; a point I will come back to shortly. Chairman Ross did not take issue with Castañeda's testimony before the Senate Committee; instead, his distress stemmed from an opinion column, "Ley Antidiscriminatoria o Comision de Buena Vecinidad," Castañeda subsequently wrote for *La Prensa*, San Antonio's Spanish-language newspaper. It appears Ross' concern was Castañeda's not-so-subtle critique of Texas' Good Neighbor Commission. More specifically, Castañeda criticized the Good Neighbor Commission's opposition to antidiscrimination legislation, known as the "Spears Bill," introduced by J. Franklin Spears from San Antonio that would ensure Mexican American civil rights. In regards to the Commission's resistance to the Spears Bill, Castañeda writes, "Si lo que quiere es seguir haciendonos la illusion de que estamos eliminando la discriminación por medio de dulces palabras, sonrisas halagiieñas y palmaditas en la espalda, muy bien."⁶⁸ Ross firmly reminded Castañeda that "complete abandon of opinion, publicly expressed, is one of those things which public servants must [not] do."⁶⁹ He offered Castañeda a stern admonishment:

The only safe rule is not to make any public statements which criticize other agencies or which take sides on legislative matters. Does that mean that you cannot continue to explain to the public the work of the Committee? Certainly not. Do so by all means. Our purposes and how we operate offer a wide

⁶⁸ "Ley Antidiscriminatoria o Comision de Buena Vecinidad," *La Prensa*, 24 March 1945, pg. 5. The English translation is "If the Commission wants to continue with the illusion that we are eliminating discrimination with nice words, smiles and pats on the back, very well."

⁶⁹ Malcolm Ross, FEPC Chairman, to Dr. Carlos E. Castañeda, Regional Director, 15 May 1945; Folder 3; OFC; RG 228; NACP; Ibid.

platform which you have usefully utilized on many occasions. Keep it up – but keep out of the political field!⁷⁰

Regional Director Castañeda's piece is indicative of his frustration with FEPC policy and his vested interest in and long-term efforts to dismantle systems of oppression used to subjugate Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the U.S. He understood, moreover, that to do so meant to expose to the nation the fallacy that *mexicana/os* did not experience racial discrimination and that they were in fact treated as second-class citizen regardless of their citizenship.

“The Problem of the Mexican:” Third Space Subjectivity and the Fight for First-Class Citizenship⁷¹

Castañeda's fight to achieve first-class citizenship for Mexicans in the U.S. reflects the same steadfast resolve he applied to his scholarly endeavors.⁷² His academic research subsequently informed his understandings of the racialization of *mexicana/os* in the U.S., notions of citizenship and the precariousness of Mexican American wartime subject positions in the body politic. In an unpublished essay, “The Problem of the Mexican,” he not only outlines the way in which U.S. Mexicans occupy a “third” racial category, he also notes the general disregard for all Mexicans in the U.S. regardless of their citizenship status. He explains:

Because of the predominance of the darker shades of brown in pigmentation, the tendency to class them as ‘non-white’ has become general. They are not classed as ‘colored’ or ‘black,’ but they are definitely not considered ‘white.’

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ The Problem of the Mexican; Manuscripts, 1923 – 1957 File; Literary Productions, 1924 – 1958; Personal and Biographical Material, 1911 – 1960; CEC Papers; BLAC.

⁷² For a detailed study of the panamerican identity Castaneda outlined in his work with the FEPC please see Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas*.

With the general acceptance of this false assumption, the prejudice against the Negro, which characterizes the South, from which the larger part of the English speaking settlers of the Southwest came, have attached to the ‘Mexican,’ who is not only generally looked upon as non-white, but also as ‘non-American’ or foreign, regardless of his nationality. In other words, it makes little to no difference in the Southwest whether a member of this group is or is not an American citizen. He is still a ‘Mexican.’⁷³

His wartime work ultimately served to illuminate the third space subjectivity of Mexican Americans as “impossible subjects” even as he advocated for their access to equal rights as first-class citizens.⁷⁴ His efforts are particularly evident in the arguments he carefully crafted in correspondences, meetings, speeches, and personal conversations and most significantly in his testimony before a U.S. Senate Committee hearing.

Castañeda’s monotonous bureaucratic duties and a federal mandate limited to wartime industries ultimately restricted the “official” measures he could take in his crusade for Mexican American civil rights. He made sure, nonetheless, to craft his written and verbal arguments in a manner that called attention to the unconstitutionality of discriminating against U.S. citizens regardless of their racial or ethnic background. Dr. Castañeda, moreover, frequently invoked language from the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution in written correspondences

⁷³ The Problem of the Mexican; Manuscripts, 1923 – 1957 File; Literary Productions, 1924 – 1958; Personal and Biographical Material, 1911 – 1960; CEC Papers; BLAC.

⁷⁴ Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

and in meetings with business owners, work supervisors, union officials and military personnel to buttress his position. His letters subsequently reflected his moral authority over those who dared to exhibit unpatriotic behavior during a time of total war and deny the rights inherent to all citizen-workers. In a 1944 letter to the Commanding General at Kelly Field, Texas, in San Antonio, Castañeda argued that “in presenting the complaint this complainant has exercised the inalienable right of all citizens to voice a protest against what she conscientiously considers a violation of her rights.”⁷⁵ In another letter to the same Commanding Officer he again reiterated how informal and formal practices used to discriminate against U.S. citizens of Mexican descent did not reflect “...the basic principles of true Americanism.”⁷⁶ Dr. Castañeda’s simple but profound argument that Mexican Americans, as citizens of the U.S., deserved the same rights and treatment as Anglo workers underscored what he saw as the untenable contradiction of expecting Mexican Americans to participate in the fight against fascism abroad while continuing to be subjugated on the home front. A year later Dr. Castañeda expanded his campaign to access the rights and privileges of first-class citizenship for all Mexican Americans by going directly to the floor of the U.S. Senate.

New Mexico Senator Dennis Chavez proved early on to be a formidable ally to not only Carlos E. Castañeda but also to the FEPC. Sen. Chavez’ commitment to

⁷⁵ Carlos E. Castañeda, Special Assistant to the Chairman, to Commanding General, Kelly Field, Texas, 16 March 1944; 10-GN-246, Kelly Field, Folder 33; Closed Cases, Entry 70 (hereinafter E 70); RG 228; National Archives and Record Administration Southwest Region, Fort Worth, Texas (hereinafter NARA FW).

⁷⁶ Carlos E. Castañeda, Special Assistant to the Chairman, to General Vanaman, Commanding General, Kelly Field, Texas, 14 July 1944; 10-GN-283, Kelly Field, Folder 36; E 70; RG 228; NARA FW.

the struggle for Mexican American civil rights is evidenced by his nomination of Castañeda to the FEPC, as mentioned above, but more importantly it manifested in his Senate bill to create a permanent post-war FEPC. Senator Chavez and five colleagues introduced Senate Bill 2048 on June 28, 1944.⁷⁷ Chavez's introduction of the bill provided him with the occasion to call a hearing of the Senate Committee on Labor and Education in order to discuss the merits of equal opportunity employment, and ultimately gave Dr. Castañeda the chance to make the case for Mexican American civil rights before a national committee of elected officials. Regional Director Castañeda's testimony, in his oral statement and subsequent question and answer session with committee members, reflected his generation's chosen strategy of highlighting the unjust ways U.S. citizens of Mexican descent experienced discrimination in their economic, social, and political lives *prior to* and during the war. Almost immediately upon beginning his statement he emphatically articulates the citizenship status of Mexican Americans. He proclaimed, "Our Spanish-speaking population in the Southwest, made up almost entirely of American citizens of Mexican extraction and Mexican nationals are ill-dressed, ill-fed, ill-cared for medically, and ill-educated...."⁷⁸ He subsequently provided the Senators a litany of examples where institutionalized discrimination in the mobilization industry not only hampered the war effort, but also denied Mexican American workers the rights to

⁷⁷ S. 2048, A Bill, 78th Congress, 2nd Session; Chavez Bill, Folder 17; C – D, Office Files of Marjorie M. Lawson, 1942 – 1945; Division of Review & Analysis, Entry 27; RG 228; NACP.

⁷⁸ Statement of Dr. Carlos E. Castañeda, Special Assistant to the FEPC Chairman, before Senator Chavez's Subcommittee of the Senate Education and Labor Committee, March 12 – 14, 1945; Miscellaneous, Folder 1; Unarranged, Office Files of Evelyn H. Cooper, 1943 – 1945; Legal Division, Entry 18; RG 228; NACP.

which they were entitled. Castañeda spoke of dual wage labor systems, glass ceilings and moratoriums on hiring workers of Mexican descent in virtually every aspect of industry across the Southwest. Yet the most intriguing attempt to convince the committee and the national public of the evils of racism toward Mexicans in the U.S. came during the question and answer session following his statement.⁷⁹

In the question and answer session Regional Director Castañeda and Senator Chavez colluded to advance the argument that Mexican Americans deserved to be treated as first-class citizens at their workplace and in their everyday lives. In Castañeda's response to the Senator's question regarding economic discrimination he deviated from the topic at hand and instead discussed Mexican experiences during the Great Depression:

During the days of relief, the various agents who distributed relief, allowed much less to Mexican families on relief than to Anglo-American families, anybody with a Spanish name, be he an American citizen or not, and they did it on the assumption that a Mexican does not have to eat so much, that he is not used to eating butter and bacon and other rich foods, and that if they gave it to them it might make them sick.⁸⁰

Chavez added, "Well, we have heard that a similar argument was used by some of the State governments in the South. So it is not particularly new."⁸¹ At first glance their exchange appears seemingly innocent or even dismissive, but when understood in the

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Carlos E. Castañeda, "Statement of Dr. Carlos E. Castañeda, Regional Director, Fair Employment Practice Committee, Region 10, San Antonio, Texas," in *Are We Good Neighbors*, comp. Alonso S. Perales (New York: Arno Press, 1974), 102.

⁸¹ Ibid.

context of Castañeda and his Mexican American colleagues' shift in strategy the dialogue gains significance. Chavez equated strategies to subordinate *mexicana/os* with similar tactics used against African Americans in order to foreground the absurdity of discriminating against U.S. citizens. Unlike some scholars' assertion that Mexicans of Castañeda's generation primarily claimed racial privilege by using "the other white" strategy, Castañeda's comment reflects an effort to expand the black-racial paradigm and put discrimination against *mexicana/os* on par with the experience of African Americans.⁸² Because it was more generally acknowledged that African Americans experienced widespread systematic discrimination, linking the treatment of these two groups is invaluable for a long-term solution to systemic inequities because it broadens the scope and urgency of this enduring social problem. The success of this shift from a war of maneuver to a war of position, one fought not in the streets but through discourse, depended on successfully challenging normative ideological discourses regarding race and citizenship.⁸³

Intra- and Inter-Ethnic Organizing: The Mexican American Generation and the Making of a Historical Bloc

Carolos E. Castañeda and his *mexicana/o* contemporaries across the state, in particular LULACers (members of the League of United Latin American Citizens), worked in tandem to expand the social and civic services in Mexican communities, improve the quality of education for Mexican students and ultimately to challenge Texas' social and racial order. Cynthia E. Orozco argues that for these men of

⁸² Ian F. Haney Lopez, "White Latinos," *Harvard Law Review* 6 (2003): 1 – 7.

⁸³ David Forgacs, ed., *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916 – 1935* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 225 – 229.

Mexican descent numerous factors, necessitated the rise of a Mexican American political consciousness in early 20th century South Texas. Those factors, Orozco said, included the Mexican consulate's inability to intervene on behalf of U.S. citizens and a nationwide preoccupation with "the Mexican problem."⁸⁴ Dr. Castañeda's and his colleagues' shift in strategy at once honored their lived reality as second-class citizens while it simultaneously undermined the racialization processes that indiscriminately classified them as nonwhite immigrants. Their new tactic, moreover, predicated their subject position on U.S. hegemony thereby constituting themselves into what Gramsci refers to as a "historical bloc."⁸⁵ That is, Castañeda and his cohort's political project of privileging their American citizenship simultaneously located their subject position within, but insubordinate to, the state.⁸⁶ Castañeda's tenure with the Commission represents the Mexican American historical bloc's deliberate attempt to reconstitute hegemonic understandings of racial equality even while it relied on affirming the legitimacy of the state to expand a coalition to reform state practices. In other words, Castañeda's work with the FEPC allowed him to nurture old relationships with colleagues and allies in the fight for racial justice, but also gave him the opportunity to establish new alliances with other ethnic and racial minorities, religious groups and other institutions fighting for wartime but more importantly postwar advancements for equal rights.

⁸⁴ Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women or Dogs Allowed*, 59 – 91.

⁸⁵ David Forgacs, ed., *The Antonio Gramsci Reader*, 193 - 194.

⁸⁶ I would like to thank Luis Alvarez who encouraged me to pursue Gramsci's notion of historical bloc as a theoretical apparatus. His comments on an early draft of this essay proved invaluable.

The material conditions of total war provided the Mexican American historical bloc the opportunity to further its war of position against the nation state, and they used state rhetoric, wartime democracy and equal opportunity employment, and state institutions, the FEPC specifically, to do so. Castañeda's tenure with the Commission, in particular, allowed him to appropriate the ideological underpinnings of wartime rhetoric to shore up each distinct element of the Mexican American historical bloc in Texas, and in fact managed to expand the sphere of that bloc across state lines, or at least throughout Region X. Through his almost constant FEPC-related traveling he managed to cultivate new relationships with Mexican American civil rights leaders and rank and file union members in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. He spent his time -- sometimes weeks on end--in field meetings, listening and talking, essentially gathering evidence, and organizing Mexicans of all socioeconomic backgrounds to use the rhetoric of wartime democracy to dismantle institutionalized racism in the mobilization industries. His time in the field in essence functioned as state-sanctioned organizing on behalf of an ever-expanding Mexican American historical bloc. Moreover, Dr. Castañeda's service with the President's Commission also presented the Mexican American historical bloc with access to a nationwide cohort of like-minded individuals.

As Zamora claims, Carlos E. Castañeda's service with the FEPC subsequently served as a foundation to foster new alliances with African American leaders and various civil rights organizations from across the country, and thus ally seemingly

separate historical blocs.⁸⁷ Senator Chavez' and ACLU Chairman Holmes' nominations of Professor Castañeda to the FEPC were an early indication that Castañeda's appointment would bridge the Mexican American historical bloc with others also committed to an anti-racist political agenda. Senior Examiner Castañeda's alliance-building activities became glaringly evident three months after his appointment to Region X when his supporters organized a drive to name him permanent director of the region. Chairman Ross received at least seven letters in support of Castañeda's promotion, not just from supporters in Region X but from across the country. Field Examiner Castañeda garnered local support from the Texas Negro Chamber of Commerce, the Progressive Voters League, the Dallas NAACP and the Dallas Council of Negro Organizations among others, and national support from the Secretary General of the Catholic University of America and New Mexico Congressman Antonio M. Fernández.⁸⁸ Castañeda's political strategy to cultivate interethnic solidarity stands as a testament to his long-term goal of dismantling structures of oppression through the politics of negotiation. He, in other words, seems to have understood the importance of political strategies that transcended ethnic and racial lines, and realized that a state in total war had to offer some concessions to the masses of mobilized citizens who had heretofore been treated as permanent outsiders.

⁸⁷ Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs*, 136 – 137.

⁸⁸ Malcolm Ross, FEPC Chairman, to A. Maceo Smith, President, Texas Negro Chamber of Commerce, 30 Nov. 1943; Untitled, Folder 7; Carbon Copies of Letters Sent (Feb. 43 – May 45), J-Z; Ross to M. H. Jackson, President, Progressive Voters' League, 30 Nov. 1943; Untitled, Folder 11; Carbon Copies of Letters Sent (Feb. 43 – May 45), J-Z; OFC; Entry 6; RG 228; NACP; Ross; to Ernest C. Estell, 14 Dec. 43; Untitled, Folder 5; OFC; Entry 6; RG 228; NACP; Ross to B. W. Goodwin, Jr., Dallas NAACP, 30 Nov. 43; G, Folder 7; OFC; Entry 6; RG 228; NACP; Ross to Roy J. Deferrari, 29 Nov. 43; D, Folder 4; OFC; Entry 6; RG 228; NACP; Almaráz, *Knight Without Armor*, 228..

Dr. Castañeda and Texas' Mexican American historical bloc's work to achieve social justice for people of Mexican descent in the U.S. preceded the country's entry into WW II, and as such their efforts continued long after the war's conclusion. In anticipation of the Commission's demise and subsequent postwar fight for racial and class equity, Castañeda and his Texas Mexican colleagues crafted a political platform designed to advance racial equality *for all* and not just Mexicans. Castaneda's long-time friend and colleague Alonso S. Perales, among other Mexican American activists, also testified before Chavez's Senate Committee to the efficacy of a permanent FEPC. Castañeda and his Mexican American colleagues stood before the Senate as part of a diverse coalition that also included African American and Jewish leaders advocating not only for equal employment opportunities, but for federal action in altering the racial dynamics of a postwar U.S.⁸⁹ Their fight to save the FEPC from ruin and to establish a permanent Commission represents Castañeda's and his Mexican American colleagues' participation in an increasingly growing and diverse historical bloc.

While the war certainly gave rise to this newly formed bloc, its collective goal of social justice had far-reaching implications. Castañeda continued to work with his Texas Mexican American cohort and his new allies to create a viable resolution, albeit a state-sponsored resolution, to end formal and informal practices of discrimination following the war. In 1946 Senator Chavez called upon Professor Castañeda to assist him in raising funds for his reelection campaign to the Senate,

⁸⁹ Perales, *Are We Good Neighbors*, 86 – 133.

while former FEPC officials Clarence Mitchell and Malcolm Ross both asked for his support in their respective postwar social justice work.⁹⁰ He continued his work with LULAC and played an instrumental role with the Mexican American civil rights organization the Committee of One Hundred of Bexar County Texas who advocated for “the progress and welfare of ALL the people of our community.”⁹¹ Dr. Carlos E. Castañeda, Alonso S. Perales, the rest of Texas’ Mexican American historical bloc and their wartime allies ultimately stand as agents of historic change whose social justice work paved the way for the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

⁹⁰ Carlos E. Castañeda, Professor, to Clarence Mitchell, FEPC Director of Field Operations, 15 March 1946; Folder 6; Correspondence, 1920 – 1958; and Malcolm Ross, FEPC Chair, to Carlos E. Castañeda, Professor, 13 March 1946; Folder 3; Activities and Organizations, 1428 – 1958; Personal and Biographical Material, 1911 – 1960; CEC Papers; BLAC.

⁹¹ Newsletter, Committee of One Hundred, 1946; Minorities Affected, Folder 8; Office of the Committee; Entry 8; RG 228; NACP.

CHAPTER II

WOMEN, WAR AND WORK IN MEXICAN AMERICAN SAN ANTONIO

Introduction

In a 1999 article in the *Kelly Observer* David Stokes reports on the imminent unveiling of an addition to the “Veteran’s Monument” at Kelly Air Force Base.⁹² “Kelly’s World War II Kelly Katies, the local name for Rosie the Riveter, will be honored next Monday at 8:30 a.m. at the base’s Veteran’s Monument. At that time a bust of representative Kelly Katie, Emelia M. Sanchez, will be dedicated. Some 80 World War II ‘Katies’ are expected to attend the ceremony” notes Stokes.⁹³ Ms. Sanchez, who worked as an electrician and sheet metal worker during World War II, is one of five Kelly “heroes” honored with a bronze bust at the monument. Like thousands of women Sanchez responded to mobilization efforts that swept the nation during World War II, and sought work at Kelly Field where approximately 8,000 women found employment as mechanics, riveters, electricians, maintenance workers, welders and other aircraft related jobs.⁹⁴ Kelly Field Heritage Foundation’s original plan for the monument only intended to honor military personnel who served in Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield. Base officials later decided to honor both military and civilian personnel who served at Kelly and by implication also

⁹² Founded as Kelly Field, the site’s name was officially changed to Kelly Air Force Base in January 1948, a few months after the Air Force became a separate branch of the US military.

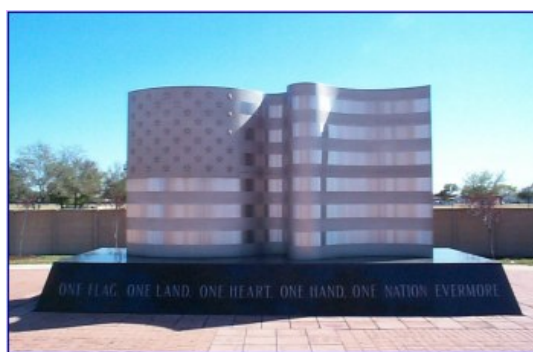
⁹³ David Stokes, *Kelly Observer* (San Antonio), 16 Sep 1999. On 21 September 1999, surrounded by military personnel and local civilians, representatives of the Kelly Field Heritage Foundation revealed five new bronze busts to be placed in the “ring of honor” at the Kelly Veteran’s Monument.

⁹⁴ Tech. Sgt. Carl Norman, “Kelly’s Past: A Strong Part of Aviation History,” in *Air Force Link* (2002): <http://131.84.1.31.newsJul2001/mn20010712-0945.shtml>. Presumably these are average numbers over the war period. As noted below, specific annual reports may identify lower numbers for a given year. A 1944 report by Carlos E. Castañeda reports that there were 5,000 Latin Americans working at Kelly Field.

served the U.S.⁹⁵ The inclusion of Sanchez in the “ring of honor” is significant for two reasons: 1) Sanchez’s presence, as *the* representative for Kelly’s World War II women workers, highlights the long-term contribution of *mexicana* workers to Kelly’s military mission, and 2) calls attention to the role of Mexican women in a local, and statewide, labor force predicated on racial and gender difference.⁹⁶



**Fig. 2.1 Emelia M. Sanchez,
World War II ‘Kelly Katie’**



**Fig. 2. 2 Kelly Field Air Force Base
Veteran’s Monument**

While Sanchez’s designation as a Kelly “hero” suggests an uncontested role in “the good war,” at least three of her Mexican American women coworkers had less than a “heroes” experience at Kelly Field. Consuelo Molina, a mechanic’s helper, Consuelo Villarreal, a junior clerk typist, and Dora G. Huerta, a mechanic learner, all filed cases with the FEPC against Kelly Field in 1944. While only Molina and Huerta make overt claims of racial discrimination all three women speak to their perception of strategies utilized by supervisors to ensure their termination. According to the

⁹⁵ Kellyforver.org, accessed on 10 Dec. 2008 (<http://www.kellyforever.org/learnmore.html#>). Kellyforver.org functions as a virtual monument to Kelly Air Force Base.

⁹⁶ Richard R. Flores, *Remembering the Alamo: Memory, Modernity, and the Master Symbol* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 1 – 12.

women efforts deployed by their supervisors to hinder their job security or upward mobility in the workplace included transfers to other departments with unpleasant or undesirable work conditions as a way to secure resignations, threats of termination based on insubordination, and the utilization of tests to “prove” their incompetence. Once this particular group of ‘Kelly Katies’ filed complaints with the FEPC, military and civilian personnel subsequently called the *mujeres*’ character and work ethic into question. Based on their FEPC case files this chapter examines the relationship between war, nationalism and notions of belonging. I argue that as wartime workers Consuelo Molina, Consuelo Villarreal and Dora G. Huerta represent more than mere interpellated subjects who blindly responded to their country’s call to action. I contend that Molina, Villarreal and Huerta reflect a differential consciousness wherein they break from state ideology even as they speak “in, and from within, ideology.”⁹⁷ More specifically, I assert that the subjectivity these three Mexican American ‘Kelly Katies’ expressed through their FEPC complaints is one that astutely moves “between and among varying power bases” in order to challenge the institutionalized racism and sexism prevalent on Texas’ shop floors. In other words, as interpellated subjects Molina, Villarreal and Huerta used state discourse and institutions, wartime rhetoric of democracy and equality and the FEPC, to advance their civil rights.

‘Rosie the Riveter’ Revisited

⁹⁷ Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 44.

One of the more obvious ways in which World War II transformed our understanding of social and cultural norms, as embodied in notions of public and private spaces, was through the massive mobilization of women into the workforce. As thousands of men left factories, service jobs, shipyards, mills and a plethora of other industries to enter the armed forces, the U.S. government, the mobilization industry and the U.S. military called upon women to fill the vacancies. Government officials and industry leaders did not simply encourage women to take over these jobs, they systematically recruited them. Military personnel, government officials and leaders of the media industry initiated a multi-faceted media communications campaign, including radio, film shorts and newspapers, in a massive effort to “draft” women workers into defense industries. Architects of the campaign circulated nationwide ads with images of hard working patriotic women, namely ‘Rosie the Riveter,’ to inspire women to attain jobs in the defense industries. Popular icons of women ranged from women as workers, women as supporters of war as well as women in need of defense.⁹⁸ The media campaign exemplifies Benedict Anderson’s notion that print capitalism cuts across class and culture lines and opens up a space for imagining a new sense of belonging to the nation.⁹⁹ The WW II era images thus served the propaganda needs of the government by providing a shared image and shared message that could be experienced as a common touchstone by all who sought to prove their “Americanness.”

⁹⁸ Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender and Propaganda during World War II*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 12.

⁹⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 46.

World War II Propaganda Posters



Fig. 2.3 Longing Won't Get Him back Sooner . . .Get a War Job!

By Lawrence Wilbur, 1944
Printed by the Government Printing Office for the War



Fig. 2.4 Victory Waits on Your Fingers

Produced by the Royal Typewriter Company for the US Civil Service Commission



Fig. 2.5 We Can Do It!
by J. Howard Miller
Produced by Westinghouse for the War Production Co-Ordinating Committee



Fig. 2.6 Life imitates art.

Real women welders posing in Richmond, Virginia. They look sexy, happy, and even clean.

Women, inspired by ‘Rosie the Riveter,’ sought employment in defense industries by the thousands. Women found jobs in lumber mills, automobile factories, steel mills, shipyards and aircraft repair factories and labored as electricians, welders, mechanics, riveters, taxi and bus drivers, clerical workers, police officers and a number of other stereotypically “male” jobs.¹⁰⁰ About three million women worked as Red Cross Volunteers, and thousands of other women served in the Women’s Air Force Service Pilots (WASP), Women’s Auxiliary Ferrying Service (WAFS), the Women’s Auxiliary Corps (WAC) and their naval counterpart, the WAVES.¹⁰¹ Women entered the workforce at unprecedented levels and moved into occupational categories previously inaccessible to them. In all approximately six million women joined the workforce during World War II.¹⁰² But at the same time that women entered public spaces formerly off limits to them, they also found that they had to contend with the transference of definitions of “women’s work” and “men’s work” into the workforce that served to legitimate extending the

¹⁰⁰ Mark Aldrich, "The Gender Gap in Earnings during World War II: New Evidence," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 42, 3 (1989): 415-429; Penny Colman, *Women Working on the Home Front in World War II* (New York: Crow Publishers, Inc., 1995); Alice Kessler-Harris, "'Rosie the Riveter': Who Was She?" *Labor History* 24, 2 (1983): 249-253; Sherrie A Kossoudji and Laura J. Dressler, "Working Class Rosies: Women Industrial Workers during WW 2," *Journal of Economic History* 52, 2 (1992): 431-446; Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex During World War II* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Marc Miller, "Working Women and World War II," *New England Quarterly* 53, 1 (1980): 42-61; Michael Nash, "Women and the Pennsylvania Railroad: The World War II Years," *Labor History* 30, 4 (1989): 608-621; Jim Rose, "'The Problem Every Supervisor Dreads': Women Workers at the U.S. Steel Duquesne Works during World War II," *Labor History* 36, 1 (1995): 24-51; Mary M. Schweitzer, "World War II and Female Labor Force Participation Rates," *Journal of Economic History* 40, 1 (1980): 89-95.

¹⁰¹ See Lisa Meyer, *Creating G.I. Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women’s Army Corps During World War II*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), particularly Chapter 2, “The WAC Strikes Back,” for an illuminating exploration of the racial and gender exclusion and discrimination within these women’s military units.

¹⁰² Kossoudji and Dresser, “Working Class Rosies;” Colman, *Women working on the Home Front in World War II*.

realm of female domesticity into mobilization efforts. Notions of republican motherhood, in addition to ideas of patriotism and nationalism, became vital to the mass recruitment and employment effort mentioned above.¹⁰³ Employers and supervisors ultimately devised strategies to incorporate women into the workforce so as not to disrupt the prevailing order of sexual division of labor. Managers applied prewar standards of sex-typing to explicitly define some war jobs as ‘suitable’ for women, and others as ‘unsuitable,’ rather than hire women workers to fill openings as vacancies occurred.¹⁰⁴ Clearly women were expected to mobilize in support of the war effort abroad while simultaneously maintaining prewar gender norms as much as possible.

As men enlisted in the armed services, a significant number of previously unattainable jobs became available not only to women but also to workers of color. Approximately one million African Americans entered defense industries seeking jobs that paid more than employment in domestic and service work.¹⁰⁵ The division of labor in the U.S. during World War II did not simply fall along sexual lines but also along racial lines. Not unlike the gendered nature of hiring practices that tracked women into very specific jobs, employment in industrialized jobs was predicated on the “racial” status of workers. Private companies and unions deployed tactics such as persuasion, strikes, threats of physical violence and intimidation to maintain racial

¹⁰³ See: Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*; Also see, “Motherhood, Social Service, and Political Reform.” <http://www.nmwh.org/exhibits/toc.html>

¹⁰⁴ Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work*, 49.

¹⁰⁵ Ronald Takaki, *Double Victory: A Multicultural History of America in World War II* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 2000), 38-49; Maureen Honey, ed, *Bitter Fruit: African American Women in World War II* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 127-254.

boundaries and hierarchies in the workplace, and thus keep black workers in their racially-designated jobs.¹⁰⁶ Companies applied the same logic used to “integrate” women into the shop floor to incorporate racialized notions of work in mobilization efforts to track black workers into non-skilled jobs. In this manner employment segregation in the mobilization industries became systematized along race-ethnic-gender lines.

Even as government officials and industry leaders use the idea and image of ‘Rosie the Riveter’ to represent women’s participation in the war effort they also reinscribed notions of a racialized patriotism and republican motherhood where white women’s identity and experience were centralized. When they emblemized ‘Rosie’ in posters, movie shorts, and newspaper ad images of married, white women seeking employment outside of the home for the first time were invoked to represent the quintessential woman worker. While the government did make attempts to tailor recruitment efforts to particular ethnic communities, the racially homogenous ideal and image of American womanhood is transparent in some of the most popular propaganda posters, and stands in stark contrast to the experience of the thousands of women of color, many of whom had a long work history outside of the home before

¹⁰⁶ Honey, *Bitter Fruit*; Karen Tucker Anderson, “Last Hired, First Fired: Black Women Workers during World War II,” *Journal of American History* 96 (1982): 82-97; Eileen Boris, “‘You Wouldn’t Want One of ‘Em Dancing With Your Wife’: Racialized Bodies on the Job in World War II,” *American Quarterly* 50 (1998): 77-108; Pete Daniel, “Going Among Strangers: Southern Reactions to World War II,” 77 (1990): 886-911; Bruce Nelson, “Organized Labor and the Struggle for Black Equality in Mobile during World War II,” *Journal of American History* 80 (1993): 952-988; Barbara Tucker, “Agricultural Workers in World War II: The Reserve Army of Children, Black Americans, and Jamaicans,” *Agricultural History* 68 (1994): 54.

WW II, who worked in the defense industries.¹⁰⁷ As part of the mobilization effort thousands of African American women migrated from the south to metropolitan cities in Michigan, Illinois and Pennsylvania to work in automobile factories. In the San Francisco Bay Area African and Asian American women worked in the ammunition factories in and around the city of Richmond. In Los Angeles and other parts of the southwest *mexicanas* worked in aircraft repair factories, shipyards and other defense industries. Women of color in the work place ultimately problematize ‘Rosie the Riveter’ as the quintessential icon of women workers during the war.

‘Rosita the Riveter:’ A National and Local Story

As is the case with soldiers of Mexican descent there are no accurate records of the exact number of *mexicanas* who worked in the mobilization industry during World War II.¹⁰⁸ Scholars estimate that approximately 5,000 – 10,000 *mexicana* workers worked in the defense industries nationwide. *Mexicanas* of all ages contributed to the national effort to secure victory abroad, and could predominantly be found in jobs in the Midwest and Southwest. In the Midwest Mexican women primarily worked in munitions factories, steel mills, railroad yards and in the packinghouses of the meatpacking industry. Mexican women worked for low wages and in extremely dangerous conditions building bombs, grenades and rocket launchers for the nation’s munitions factories, and are included among the women

¹⁰⁷ Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Tera Hunter, *To ‘Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labor after the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

¹⁰⁸ Because people of Mexican descent were categorized as Caucasian it is hard to determine their exact numbers.

workers who made up only ten percent of steelworkers. In the steel mills of Chicago, Detroit, Gary and Bethlehem Mexican women produced the iron and steel that fortified the U.S. Armed Forces. *Mexicanas* in the Southwest, not unlike *mexicanas* in the Midwest, worked as welders and riveters for companies such as Cessna, Boeing, North American Aviation and Douglas. In the aircraft factories women workers took on the industrialized jobs that produced engines, fuel tanks and bombers. *Mexicanas* also worked in the shipyards of Richmond, Los Angeles and Long Beach, California.¹⁰⁹

According to historian Emilio Zamora while women made up 23.1 percent of the workforce in Texas' defense industries by December 1943, segregationist workers, employers and job placement practices of the United States Employment Services (USES), the War Manpower Commission's unit responsible for overseeing the FEPC and farm labor, "enabled an unequal rate of entry into wartime industries and further reinforced [a] kind of racial division of labor." Texas' mobilization industries, in other words, reflected the same racialized and gendered division of labor that operated on shop floors across the home front. For instance, Anglo women represented 55.8 percent of San Antonio's female residents, and unsurprisingly amounted to 64.4 percent of registered USES workers. African American women made up less than 10 percent of the women in the city, yet tended to register with USES at higher rates (17.9 percent of USES registrants). In contrast, out of the 98,901 Mexican women in San Antonio (33.8 percent of the total population) only 254 (17.7

¹⁰⁹ Richard Santillán, "Rosita the Riveter: Midwest Mexican American Women during World War II, 1941-1945" *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies* (1989): 115 – 147.

percent of all registrants) signed up with USES. In spite of the fact that Mexicans provided the second largest female work force in San Antonio, ‘Rosita the Riveter’ secured substantially fewer jobs in the defense industries through USES job placement services than both Anglo and African American women. Furthermore, Zamora also notes that although African American and Mexican women in urban areas fared better in securing work in the mobilization industry, the former tended to replace upwardly mobile Anglo women more frequently.¹¹⁰ Mexican women, then, are not only one of the most underrepresented groups in wartime industries, but they also moved up the labor hierarchy at a slower rate than white and black women in Texas; a racial dynamic based on Texas’ transformation from a Mexican cattle-based society to an Anglo-dominated industrial and agricultural society during the late-19th and early 20th centuries.¹¹¹

In San Antonio geographic location and wartime circumstances converged in a manner that provided women of Mexican descent with a unique opportunity. Mexican women in San Antonio not only had access to jobs in the city’s factories, but they also had the opportunity to look to local military bases for employment. Because the city’s military installations needed workers beyond the duration of the war when *mexicanas* joined their labor forces they often did so with the potential of long-term employment. Kelly Field’s location on the city’s Westside, a predominantly Mexican neighborhood, made the installation easily accessible and

¹¹⁰ Emilio Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas: Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 50 – 62. USES functioned as a branch of the War Manpower Commission charged with regulating the supply of farm labor.

¹¹¹ See David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas* (University of Texas Press, 1987); and Flores, *Remembering the Alamo*, 1 – 12.

familiar to *mexicanas* living in San Antonio. As the military's most important aircraft maintenance and repair station, workers at Kelly played an instrumental role in keeping U.S. planes flying in both reconnaissance and combat missions throughout the war.¹¹² According to government documents, in 1944 Kelly employed roughly 18,000 workers of which women constituted approximately one third of the workforce (5,918). "Non-whites" comprised less than ten percent (1,295) of Kelly's wartime laborers.¹¹³ Although Mexican women could be subsumed in either category, it is unclear how military personnel classified them. In fact, beyond the bronze bust of Emilia M. Sanchez at Kelly's Veteran's Monument little is known about the experience of Mexican American 'Kelly Katies.' Kelly's military personnel's compulsion to classify Mexican American women either as women or as "non-white," but not as both, is indicative of the way in which Mexican American women's World War II-era subjectivity are typically assimilated into one of two narratives: 1) the 'Rosie the Riveter' narrative wherein patriotic women entered the workforce in unprecedented numbers, and then quietly retreated to the domestic realm at the end of the war, or 2) the soldier/pachuco paradigm where the Mexican American GI proved his loyalty to the U.S. through his bravery on the front lines while the rebellious pachuco "flaunted" his deviant otherness on the home front. Mexican American

¹¹² Karen Weitze, *Keeping the Edge: Air Force Material Command Cold War Context, 1945-1991*, vol. 2, *Installations and Facilities* (Wright-Patterson Air Force Base: United States Department of Defense, 2003), 237.

¹¹³ FEPC Compliance Report generated by Carlos E. Castañeda, 24 November 1944; Box A18-67-5; Records of the Fair Employment Practice Commission, Record Group 228 (hereinafter RG 228); National Archives and Record Administration Southwest Region, Fort Worth, Texas (hereinafter NARA FW). It is unclear what is meant by "non-white," but in the context of Texas one could assume this number includes African American as well as Mexican men and women.

women's unique experiences are subsumed by the more socially empowered racial or gender group.

Whereas issues of race and class preclude Mexican American women from the typical 'Rosie the Riveter' experience of white women, notions of gender and masculinity leave little room for women in the soldier/pachuco paradigm.¹¹⁴ Mexican American women, in other words, "exist in the interstices between normalized social categories," or in a third space.¹¹⁵ As Chela Sandoval argues the "social space represented by these 'third-term' identities is that place out of which a politicized differential consciousness arises."¹¹⁶ In the context of Mexican American 'Kelly Katies' that differential consciousness is reflected in complaints of discrimination filed with the FEPC to address inequalities at the workplace.¹¹⁷ Between September 1941 and April 1946 four African American men, twenty-five *mexicanos*, three *mexicanas* and one woman with no reference to her racial classification filed complaints of discrimination against the military installation. Thirty-two workers filed complaints on the grounds of racial discrimination while the woman whose

¹¹⁴ See Elizabeth R. Escobedo, "The Pachuca Panic: Sexual and Cultural Battlegrounds in World War II Los Angeles," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 38, 2 (Summer 2007): 133-156, and Catherine S. Ramírez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism and the Cultural Politics of Memory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009) for illuminating analyses of Mexican American women's wartime experiences.

¹¹⁵ Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 46.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹¹⁷ On June 25, 1941 President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 (EO 8802) prohibiting discrimination in the mobilization industry and government based on "race, creed, color, or national origin." EO 8802 also established the FEPC to police discriminatory practices. See chapter one for a more detailed history of the FEPC.

ethnicity is unclear filed her complaint based on religious discrimination.¹¹⁸ The majority of the complainants charged their employer with utilizing techniques that hindered their economic well-being or mobility based not on work performance, but solely on their racial status. Of the civilian employees who filed complaints of discrimination with the FEPC one worker achieved an immediate and satisfactory adjustment, and thirty-two did not.

The “Inalienable Right of all Citizens to Voice a Protest:” Consuelo Molina’s Contested Citizenship

During the fall of 1942 Consuelo Molina entered a technical training program administered at San Antonio Technical School by the Works Project Administration. Soon after the start of the new year Ms. Molina successfully completed her training as a machinist and subsequently began to search for a job. Like many young women in the U.S. at the time she sought work in the mobilization industry. As it turned out Molina’s job search did not last long. On January 17, 1943 Consuelo Molina secured a position as a Mechanic Helper in the Supercharger Unit at Kelly Field with an annual salary of \$1500. According to Molina, supervisors in the Supercharger Unit treated all employees alike regardless of their ethnicity, and everyone worked together in “harmony.”¹¹⁹ Apparently such a work environment fostered employee productivity as Molina performed her job duties to the satisfaction of her supervisor

¹¹⁸ Because Executive Order 8802 prohibited discrimination in the defense industries based only on “race, creed, color, or national origin” women of color were compelled to file complaints based solely on their experience as racialized laborers and not on their experience as racialized *and* gendered laborers.

¹¹⁹ Personal interview of Consuelo Molina by Dr. Carlos Castañeda (hereinafter Statement by Molina), 16 March 1944; Box A18-67-5 RG 228; NARA FW.

Mr. Hogan. Regardless of the status of her work performance and job satisfaction three months after she began her employment with Kelly Molina received a transfer out of the Supercharger Unit. In March she began her tenure in the Machine and Tool Unit where she worked under the immediate supervision of Mr. Ernesto Vidales.¹²⁰ Consuelo Molina's trouble began, unfortunately, upon her arrival in the Machine and Tool Unit.

Not unlike 'Rosita the Riveters' across the home front, employees at Kelly worked alongside men and women of different ethnic backgrounds.¹²¹ Ms. Molina's assignment to Machine and Tools brought the unit's number of employees of Mexican descent to seven. Shortly after her transfer to the new unit Molina began to feel "uncomfortable" among her coworkers, and consequently expressed her discomfort to Supervisor Vidales. Molina explained to Vidales that she sensed an air of animosity on the part of Anglo workers toward the Mexican workers. She complained, furthermore, of "attempts at unnecessary familiarity" between the men and women in the department. According to Consuelo Molina this unnecessary familiarity manifested in the telling of crude jokes on the shop floor.¹²² Perhaps Vidales felt implicated in this inappropriate behavior because he reacted negatively to Molina's observation. Vidales, instead, turned the focus back onto Molina and accused her of desiring a transfer to the Supercharger Unit rather than attempt to address the work climate issues she raised. Without articulating it as such, yet

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives*.

¹²² Statement by Molina, 16 March 1944; Box A18-67-5 RG 228; NARA FW.

underscored by Vidales' reaction, Ms. Molina's observations reveal her keen awareness of the gendered and racialized dynamics of her work site; circumstances that would not come to a head for her for at least another year.¹²³ Despite Ms. Molina's uneasiness and Vidales' accusation she remained working in the same unit, and received a pay raise of \$5 dollars a month in late spring 1943.¹²⁴

For approximately the next year Consuelo Molina worked in the Machine and Tool Unit without incident. She worked without incident, that is, until she inquired into the reasons why she had not yet received an upgrade to Junior Mechanic and awarded the accompanying pay raise. On March 7, 1944 Molina again took her concerns directly to Mr. Vidales. Molina questioned Vidales as to the fairness in not receiving an upgrade even though she qualified for one in January 1944. For Ms. Molina the fact that all of the Anglo workers in Machine and Tools received promotions to Junior Mechanics and the pay raise as soon as they became eligible only compounded the unfairness of the situation. Molina suggested to Mr. Vidales that if the supervisors in the Machine and Tool Unit did not deem her work to be satisfactory then she should be transferred back to the Supercharger Unit. Mr. Vidales refuted Molina's accusation, and claimed that the Anglo workers received upgrades because they performed more duties than required of them as Mechanic Helpers; a trait she did not exhibit according to him. Ms. Molina refused to concede the point, and insisted that all of the Mechanic Helpers performed the exact same

¹²³ Honey, *Bitter Fruit*; Anderson, "Last Hired, First Fired;" Eileen Boris, "'You Wouldn't Want One of 'Em Dancing With Your Wife.'"

¹²⁴ Ibid.

duties. Mr. Vidales did not attempt to press his point any further.¹²⁵ Not surprisingly it is this particular conversation, one in which Molina again pointed out the racial inequities of the workplace, which served as the catalyst for all of Molina's ensuing problems at Kelly. In other words, Molina's supervisors did not react kindly to her challenge to the institutionalized racism and sexism prevalent in Texas' mobilization industry that, as Zamora illustrates, typically left Mexican women as the last workers to experience upward mobility.¹²⁶

Immediately after Consuelo Molina drew attention to what she considered to be racial inequities in the Machine and Tool Unit she began to feel the repercussions. The effects of raising her concerns with Mr. Vidales took shape in Molina's white supervisors use of tactics to label her an insubordinate worker.¹²⁷ While still on the shop floor, and within hours of her conversation with Vidales, Mr. Sharp, a supervisor in Machine and Tools, approached Ms. Molina. In what seems to be an indirect attempt to provoke Molina, Sharp asked her if she wanted to wash engine parts. Ms. Molina refused to take the bait, and declined the opportunity to perform the duties because she was busy with another task.¹²⁸ On the surface the immediate situation seemed to be defused. Underneath the surface Molina must have felt uneasy about the events of the day because she left her workstation in order to secure a transfer to a department where she could utilize her skills to the best of her abilities. Upon walking out of Machine and Tools Ms. Molina paid a visit to her former

¹²⁵ Statement by Miss Consuelo Molina, 16 March 1944; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

¹²⁶ Zamora, *Claiming Rights, Righting Wrongs*, 55 – 58.

¹²⁷ This is a point to which I will return.

¹²⁸ Statement by Molina, 16 March 1944; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

supervisor in the Supercharger Unit. Molina explained to Mr. Hogan the “intolerable work conditions” in Machine and Tools, and asked him if he would accept her back into his unit. Mr. Hogan claimed to need Molina’s services, and agreed to her request. Supervisor Hogan then filled out the necessary paperwork to secure Molina’s release from her department. Molina immediately took the Release Form to an Employee Counselor in the Personnel Office in order to begin the process of her transfer.¹²⁹

With Hogan’s agreement to take her back in the Supercharger Unit and the Release Form already filled out Consuelo Molina anticipated securing her transfer fairly easily. Molina’s visit to the Personnel Office, unfortunately, did not turn out as she expected. Much to her surprise the Employee Counselors in Personnel did not eagerly come to her assistance. Upon her arrival at the Personnel Office she asked to see Mr. Foster who immediately pawned her off to Mr. Metzger and Mr. Malberger. Employee Counselors Metzger and Malberger appeared outwardly disturbed with the initiative Molina exhibited in securing a transfer with Mr. Hogan. This action, above all other actions, seemed to arouse their ire with her. The Counselors consequently “flew into a rage, talked to her sharply, and told her she had no business to go and see Mr. Hogan.”¹³⁰ They not only disapprove of Ms. Molina’s actions, but they also aggressively demanded her resignation. Consuelo Molina refused to acquiesce to a resignation, and insisted she be allowed to the transfer she had arranged with Mr.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid. According to Zamora, the Employee Counselors’ demand for Molina’s resignation is consistent with Kelly Field policy wherein civilian workers were dismissed for insubordination. Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas*, 154.

Hogan. Molina attempted to explain that the transfer would allow her to work to the best of her abilities, but Metzger and Malberger refused to accept her rationale and continued to demand her resignation. Molina subsequently left the Personnel Office without securing a transfer, and with a sick and defeated feeling she went home rather than return to her job site. Ms. Molina did not return to work for quite some time, and did not pursue a resolution again for over a month.¹³¹

Claiming Space, Claiming Rights

Beginning in 1942 Consuelo Molina took a range of actions which, when taken as a whole, claim and establish her space in a mobilized home front. Molina claimed her space, her role, in the effort to support the war abroad when she heeded the call of government officials and industry leaders to seek work in the defense industry. But Molina did not simply apply for an industrialized job for which she had no training; she first enrolled in a War Vocational Training Program to become a certified machinist before she looked for work in the mobilization industry. Given the country's state of total war Ms. Molina probably would have found work in the local defense industry without the certified training, but nevertheless she took extra steps to ensure she made positive contributions to the war effort. Molina's decision to enroll in a certified training program, in fact, can be understood as an intention to participate in the industrialized labor force not just for the duration of the war, but also in a postwar U.S. For over a year Ms. Molina did claim her space, and made a positive contribution to the fight against fascism as a Mechanic Helper in the Super

¹³¹ Ibid.

Charger Department and in the Machine and Tool Unit at Kelly Field . And even after Molina’s supervisors in Machines and Tools attempted to label her as an insubordinate worker, she took action to secure her space in the mobilized workforce at Kelly and sought a transfer out of the unit. Molina’s experience with her seemingly irrational superiors’ unfair treatment, unfortunately, did not end in the Machine and Tool Unit. And while she initially reacted to the attempts to terminate her employment at Kelly by retreating to her bed with a sick and defeated feeling, Consuelo Molina ultimately used her established claim to space in the mobilized home front, namely her certified training and good work record, to assert her right to upward mobility, a fair, equal and productive work assignment and filed a complaint of discrimination against Kelly Field with the FEPC.¹³²

Consuelo Molina did not return to Kelly Field for over a month subsequent to the day she left the base without securing a transfer. The defeated and sick feeling she left post with that day did not subside quickly. The anxiety and stress caused by the events of that workday manifested into a minor health problem for Ms. Molina. Molina took to her bed with a case of “the nerves” for approximately one month after her altercations with Vidales, Sharp, Meztger, Malberger and Foster. Consuelo Molina did not get out of bed again until March 16, 1944, the day she visited the FEPC. During her visit with the FEPC Ms. Molina gave a personal statement to Dr. Carlos E. Castañeda, Assistant to the Chairman, regarding her work environment, and

¹³² William V. Flores & Rina Benmayor, eds., *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 1 – 23; Statement by Molina, 16 March 1944; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

the conditions surrounding her request to be transferred back to the Supercharger Unit.¹³³ In light of Consuelo Molina's discriminatory work assignment, the refusal to upgrade her and then the refusal to release her for a transfer Dr. Castañeda determined that Molina's immediate supervisors and her superiors in the Employee Relations Office discriminated against her based on her national origin. He subsequently sent an official letter of complaint on her behalf to the Commanding General at Kelly Field. In the letter Castañeda requested the General launch an investigation into the allegations of discrimination, and submit a report to the FEPC outlining the actions taken to rectify the situation.¹³⁴ While the letter of complaint seems to have been standard protocol for the FEPC, Dr. Castañeda's letter includes an additional request of the U.S. military.

Castañeda, beyond requesting an official inquiry into the racial implications of Ms. Molina's grievance, requested an interim resolution be implemented on her behalf. In short, Dr. Castañeda called for Molina's immediate reinstatement to her former position pending the outcome of the General's inquiry. Castañeda reaffirmed this demand in a separate correspondence, presumably written for Molina's supervisor, attached to the General's letter.¹³⁵ While I argue that Molina's actions to claim her space and secure her rights represent articulations of her cultural

¹³³ Dr. Carlos E. Castañeda worked as a librarian and professor of History at the University of Texas at Austin before his appointment with the FEPC. Castañeda first served as Senior Examiner for Region X (FEPC's Region X included Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and Louisiana) then as Region X's Director and finally as Special Assistant to the FEPC Chairman for Latin American Problems. See chapter one for a more detailed discussion of Castañeda's work with the FEPC.

¹³⁴ Dr. Carlos E. Castañeda, Special Assistant to Chairman, to Commanding General, Kelly Field, 16 March 1944 (hereinafter Castañeda to Commanding Gen.); Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

¹³⁵ Dr. Carlos E. Castañeda, Special Assistant to Chairman, to Whom it May Concern, Kelly Field, 16 March 1944; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

citizenship, Castañeda quite literally asserted Ms. Molina's right as a United States citizen to contest her mistreatment by her employers and seek redress. In Castañeda's initial correspondence to Kelly's Commanding General he, without overtly calling attention to her citizenship status, summoned language from the Declaration of Independence to assert Molina's "inalienable right" to lodge her complaint of discrimination. Dr. Castañeda invoked Molina's right, moreover, to not be retaliated against for claiming her space. Castañeda's invocation of the spirit of the Declaration of Independence ultimately suggested that he would perceive any challenge to Molina's reinstatement that might result in retaliatory action against her to be wholly un-American.¹³⁶ Apparently the specter of having the behavior of Kelly Field employees deemed un-American during a time of war did not sit well with the Commanding General because the FEPC managed to secure a satisfactory adjustment – which in this case meant Molina's discharge for refusal to obey orders was cancelled, she was imposed with a three day suspension and reassigned to the Supercharger Unit – on Consuelo Molina's behalf.¹³⁷

Ms. Molina's official complaint of discrimination instigated a flurry of activity at Kelly Field. While it is unclear if Castañeda managed to negotiate a resolution on Molina's behalf because of the nature of her charges or because of his appeal to the Commanding General's patriotic sensibilities, he did so within a month of her filing her grievance with the FEPC.¹³⁸ Although the speedy adjustment might

¹³⁶ Castañeda to Commanding Gen.; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

¹³⁷ Final Disposition Report, 11 July 1944; Box A18-67-5; RG 228. NARA FW.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

signal the General's concern with the specifics of Molina's case, he did not reply to Castañeda on behalf of Kelly. Captain Thurman J. Beene, Assistant Chief of the Civilian Personnel Section, assumed the responsibilities of conducting the investigation into Molina's allegations.¹³⁹ The U.S. military, regardless of who presided over the concession, directly addressed all three of Molina's allegations. Captain Beene gave each individual charge careful consideration, and took the necessary steps to contest each point. Beene argued that Molina received a transfer to the Machine and Tool Unit based on her certified training, and that because she did not display "versatility by being anxious to learn" the ins-and-outs of the unit she did not merit a promotion and the accompanying raise. Beene also claimed that Ms. Molina's supervisors did not refuse her release to transfer, but that she applied for a transfer without permission *and* left her unit without the authority to do so.¹⁴⁰ And furthermore, according to Beene, Molina's incentive to secure a transfer and leave her workstation to do so violated post regulations. Beene, in other words, called upon all of his resources to refute the umbrella charge of discrimination based on national origin.

As Beene explained to Dr. Castañeda it is precisely because Ms. Molina underwent specialized training as a machinist that she received a reassignment to Machine and Tools. Molina, according to Beene, originally received a temporary assignment to the Supercharger Unit until a permanent position in another unit where

¹³⁹ Captain Thurman J. Beene, Captain, Kelly Field, to Dr. Carlos E. Castañeda, Special Assistant to the Chairman, 4 April 1944 (hereinafter Beene to Castañeda); Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

she could employ her specialized skills became available.¹⁴¹ While Captain Beene can easily account for Molina's transfer to Machine and Tools, the underlying racial tensions she experienced on the shop floor cannot be justified. Beene, rather than conduct a thorough investigation into the gendered and racialized dynamics of the unit, instead utilized the strategies of Consuelo Molina's white supervisors in Machine and Tools to deflect attention away from the issue of racial discrimination. Beene labeled Ms. Molina an insubordinate worker as a means to explain the refusal to upgrade her to Junior Mechanic: in other words, he blamed the victim.

When Machine and Tool Unit management employed tactics to label Consuelo Molina an insubordinate worker they laid the groundwork to discredit her, and by implication discredit her work record. Captain Beene used information obtained from Molina's supervisors to establish a pattern of disobedience on her part. Beene fittingly used Ms. Molina's last day of work as a prime example of her insubordinate nature, and emphasized it as only one incident among numerous similar instances. Beene, thus, identified the fact that Molina asserted her agency and requested a transfer out of a hostile work environment as the supreme act of insubordination. In calling forth Consuelo Molina's last day of work in Machine and Tools as evidence Captain Beene reinforced her image as a bad worker. In turn, however, he also exposed the weakness in the U.S. military's rebuttal. The Captain betrayed the shortcomings of the case not by using Molina's last day as an example, but rather by bringing to light the literal and symbolical significance of her actions on

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

her final day of work. According to Beene it was simply Molina's habit of refusing to perform additional tasks that explained her inability to develop a more diverse set of skills, and thereby receive a promotion to Junior Mechanic. He argued that the steps Molina took after she left her workstation not only highlight the numerous infractions committed along the way, but also reinforced his claim that she is an unruly worker. Each attempt Molina made to secure a decent work environment apparently constituted a violation of base regulations. Beene, in other words, invoked military policy as a means to denigrate the initiative Consuelo Molina exhibited by leaving her post and securing her own transfer to the Supercharger Unit. "It was not until this time," explains Captain Beene, "that her foreman agreed to accept her resignation and directed her to the Employee Relations Branch" where Molina's resignation was cancelled and she instead received a three day suspension.¹⁴² Beene's effort to justify the refusal to upgrade Ms. Molina to a Junior Mechanic forced him to acknowledge the Personnel Office's "disciplinary suspension" of Molina.

The efforts mentioned by Beene of an Employee Counselor to cancel Molina's resignation, and instead impose a three-day suspension for bad behavior implies that she indeed submitted a resignation. The fallacy of the insinuation lies not only in Molina's claim that she did not submit a resignation to Vidales, but also in her contention that when she left the Supercharger Unit with her Release Form she went directly to the Personnel Office. In other words once Molina left Machine and Tools to secure her transfer she never went back to the unit, and therefore could not have

¹⁴² Ibid.

submitted her resignation to Foreman Vidales as he claims she did. According to Molina once she secured her transfer with Mr. Hogan she immediately went to the Personnel Office to process her Release Form.

It is Beene's account of Consuelo Molina's visit to the Personnel Office that suggests a second cover-up. Based on her interview with Dr. Castañeda Ms. Molina did not go to Personnel to process her resignation. Molina refers to her visit to the office in regards to the arrangement she made with Supervisor Hogan to transfer to his unit. Upon her arrival to Personnel Ms. Molina expected the Employee Counselors to honor her application for transfer and to process the necessary paperwork. Much to her surprise the counselors reacted to her in a verbally aggressive manner, and adamantly insisted she resign her position at Kelly. The level of physical discomfort brought on by her interaction with the counselors and the subsequent confinement to her bed conflicts with the purportedly positive visit Beene claims she had. In recounting her visit to the Personnel Office Consuelo Molina never mentioned the prospect of a disciplinary suspension to Dr. Castañeda. In fact, the first and only mention of a suspension is in Captain Beene's letter of rebuttal to the FEPC, and served only to emphasize the "extremely lenient penalty" given Molina's grave "misconduct."¹⁴³ In light of the nature and timing of the disciplinary suspension Captain Beene's motives must be called into question. It appears that the Captain's intense focus on Ms. Molina's transgressions was his only option given the blatant mistreatment of Molina by her superiors. Beene is then forced to cover-up the

¹⁴³ Ibid.

misdeed, and integrate her back into the workforce at Kelly. Furthermore the late-in-the-game disciplinary suspension suggests it was only imposed after Carlos E. Castañeda insisted Molina be reinstated to her former position pending the outcome of the investigation, and not on her last day of work.

Captain Beene's effort to dispute Consuelo Molina's claim of discrimination constituted a comprehensive effort to undermine her claim to space in the mobilized home front and her right to economic and social mobility. Beene, in addition to arguing that Molina was a bad worker, also called upon the ethnic background of a number of people involved in the case in an attempt to discredit her grievance. According to the Captain because "Miss Molina's foreman and the Employee Counselor who effected a satisfactory adjustment on her case were both of Latin American origin" and thus Molina could not have possibly experienced any discrimination in the process of her resignation.¹⁴⁴ Beene also claims, "No complaints of dissatisfaction or racial discrimination have been received from other Latin Americans employed in the same Unit with Miss Molina, even though they are subject to the same work conditions."¹⁴⁵ He ultimately delegitimizes Molina's complaint by offering the presumably positive group experience of her *mexicana/o* colleagues as evidence of a discrimination-free work site. Beene, once again, invoked Ms. Molina's "bad" work record to account for her "personal difficulty" and emphasized the personal, rather than structural, nature of her problems. Consuelo Molina, according to Beene, did not excel on the shop floor and receive an upgrade to

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

Junior Mechanic because she was an inefficient and insubordinate worker, and not as a result of racial discrimination.

The actions Consuelo Molina took between 1942 and 1944 to claim her space, and eventually her rights, in the mobilization industry reflect a subjectivity dialectically situated to ideological state apparatuses. That is, while Molina's enrollment in a War Vocational Program and her subsequent entry into the local defense industry underscore her interpellation into a good citizen subject, her refusal to adhere to the racial and gender norms on the shop floor is indicative of an oppositional positionality. More precisely, as an interpellated subject Molina employed the state's rhetoric of democracy and equality to contest racial and gender dynamics that hindered her upward social mobility. Consuelo Molina maneuvered between and among subject positions and effectively transformed an otherwise subordinated subjectivity— a Mexican American wartime women worker – into a site of resistance against institutionalized structures of oppression. She self-consciously mobilized her wartime subjectivity, or enacted a differential consciousness, to secure long-term economic stability and ultimately consolidate her place in the body politic.¹⁴⁶ While Molina successfully secured her place in Kelly's workforce, unfortunately her colleague's, Dora G. Huerta, attempt to stake her claim there was not as fruitful.

“I am Ready and Willing to Work:” The Exile of Dora G. Huerta

Dora G. Huerta's employment at Kelly Field began on February 3, 1943 where she worked as a Mechanic Learner in the Reclamation Section of the

¹⁴⁶ Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 54 – 62.

Maintenance Division. Less than a year later, in January 1944, Huerta received a reclassification to a Mechanic Helper and the accompanying pay raise of \$420 a year. Ms. Huerta resigned from her position at Kelly Field that same month.¹⁴⁷ On February 1, 1943, almost a year after she began working at Kelly, Huerta sent a letter to the Civil Service Commission in an effort to lodge a complaint based on “race prejudice” and favoritism in the workplace.¹⁴⁸ The Commission responded to Huerta with a written request of her to submit additional evidence to them that would support her charge of discrimination.¹⁴⁹ Perhaps Huerta found the request intimidating because after she received it she waited for more than a month to contact the FEPC to file an official complaint of discriminatory discharge based on her national origin against Kelly Field. For the next five months Carlos E. Castañeda worked to secure Ms. Huerta a satisfactory adjustment until 8 August 1944 when, unfortunately, he dismissed her case on merits.¹⁵⁰

Dr. Castañeda originally filed Huerta’s case not only on her behalf, but also on the behalf of two of her coworkers.¹⁵¹ Esther Aguilar and Bonnie Hilliard (an African American woman) also worked in the Reclamation Section, and apparently were forced to resign at the same time as Ms. Huerta.¹⁵² In an interview with Castañeda Ms. Huerta’s claims that at about 3:30 pm on 29 January 1943 “Mr.

¹⁴⁷ Carlos E. Castañeda interview with Dora G. Huerta (hereinafter Castañeda interview with Huerta), March 29, 1944; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

¹⁴⁸ William C. Hull, Executive Assistant, US Civil Service Commission, to Dora G. Huerta (hereinafter Hull to Huerta), 29 March 1944; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

¹⁴⁹ William C. Hull, Executive Assistant, US Civil Service Commission to Miss Dora G. Huerta, 9 February 1944; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

¹⁵⁰ Final Disposition Report, 28 August 1944; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

¹⁵¹ While case records name two other complainants, Esther Aguilar and Bonnie Hilliard, the case is primarily based on Huerta’s personal experience.

¹⁵² Castañeda interview Huerta, March 29, 1944; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

Garrigal came to me and without previous notice ordered me to put up my tools, that we were going to go to the Personnel Office and that I was going to be reassigned to another department.”¹⁵³ Once Huerta, Aguilar and Hilliard arrived at the Personnel Office employees told them that in the interest of downsizing they were terminated effective immediately; they received no other reason for their termination. Two days after her termination Huerta received a Notification of Personnel Action in the mail stating that the Personnel Office received her voluntary resignation.¹⁵⁴ Soon thereafter Robert Flores, a supervisor in the Reclamation Section, contacted Huerta to inquire into the reasons for her dismissal. In that conversation Huerta learned that not only did Mr. Garrigal request thirty additional employees for his department two days prior to her termination, but that he replaced her, Esther Aguilar and Bonnie Hilliard with new employees – three Anglo women.¹⁵⁵

A Contested Exile

Dora G. Huerta’s decision, like Consuelo Molina’s, to find work in the mobilization industry, her support of the U.S.’s effort to achieve victory abroad, and her subsequent attempt to challenge discrimination at her work place are a clear expression of her cultural citizenship. Ms. Huerta “claim[ed] and establish[ed] a distinct social space” at Kelly Field, worked hard and established a good, strong work

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.; Dora G. Huerta, Notification of Personnel Action, War Department, Army Air Forces, 31 January 1944; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

¹⁵⁵ Castañeda interview with Huerta; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW; Carlos E. Castañeda, Special Assistant to the Chairman, to Commanding General, Kelly Field, 10 April 1944; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

record.¹⁵⁶ She did, after all, receive a promotion and pay raise less than a year after she began work at Kelly. Huerta surely felt as if she rightfully belonged to the Kelly workforce or she would not have aggressively pursued a reinstatement to the Kelly community. Ms. Huerta did, in fact, make two attempts with two different federal agencies to reverse her exile from the Kelly community and the larger home front community. Huerta seemed to be particularly motivated to reclaim her space once she learned her supervisor replaced her with an Anglo woman. As a result Dora G. Huerta not only invoked her right to work in her chosen community, but she also invoked her right to have her work community reflect the diversity of the larger San Antonio and U.S. communities to which she belonged.¹⁵⁷

Dora Huerta's efforts to address her dismissal from her job began just two days after she received her Notification of Personnel Action from the Civilian Personnel Section of Kelly Field. The Notification of Personnel Action regarding Ms. Huerta's "voluntary resignation" did not reflect her experience with the termination process, and in fact contradicted her memory of the events.¹⁵⁸ But before Huerta had a chance to contest the classification of her resignation she had a conversation with a former supervisor regarding the reason for her dismissal. Robert Flores, a supervisor in the Reclamation Section, informed Huerta that two days before

¹⁵⁶ Flores & Benmayor, eds., *Latino Cultural Citizenship*, 1.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 1 – 23.

¹⁵⁸ A Notification of Personnel Action is a standardized form generated by the Army Air Forces under the auspices of the War Department. Notifications are filed for employees upon any action taken, such as a promotion, resignation or pay increase, regarding their employment with the Army Air Forces. Notifications contain basic information such as the employee's name, the nature of and effective date of action taken, position, and salary. There is a section on the form for any additional remarks regarding the employment action. Notifications are filled out and signed by a Civilian Personnel Officer; in other words active-duty military personnel.

she submitted a “forced” resignation another supervisor in the Section, Mr. Garrigal, requested additional employees for the unit. According to Huerta’s statement to the FEPC Mr. Flores told her that not only did Mr. Garrigal request thirty additional workers for the unit on January 27, but that he also replaced Huerta, Hilliard and Aguilar with Anglo women.¹⁵⁹ This new information conflicted with the reason given to Ms. Huerta for her termination – a necessary reduction of employees in the Maintenance Division – by a counselor in the Personnel Office. Consequently it did not take long for Huerta to make a connection between her forced resignation, her national origin and the hiring of an Anglo woman to replace her.

As a result, three days after her last day of work at Kelly Dora Huerta wrote a letter to the U.S. Civil Service Commission to address the unsettling circumstances surrounding her termination. The letter, written as a formal complaint, apparently stated that Huerta believed Garrigal exhibited favoritism on the shop floor because of his “race prejudice,” and thus she lost her job.¹⁶⁰ To help substantiate her claim Huerta included the Notification of Personnel Action with her letter to the Commission. Unfortunately beyond basic employment information the Notification does not offer any insight regarding the racial dynamics of Huerta’s workplace. What the Notification does contain is information that undermined the foundation of Huerta’s grievance; namely, her contention that she did not voluntarily resign her position. The remarks section of the Notification not only reflects Ms. Huerta’s

¹⁵⁹ Castañeda interview with Huerta; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

¹⁶⁰ I do not have an actual copy of Huerta’s letter to the Civil Service Commission. I possess a copy of the Commission’s response to Huerta that directly refers to her letter. Hull to Huerta, March; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

voluntary resignation, but more importantly it expresses her purported intention “to seek employment elsewhere.”¹⁶¹ It is not quite clear why Huerta would include the Notification as evidence on her own behalf given the fact that she aimed to prove that she did not voluntarily resign from Kelly. Huerta’s enclosure of the Notification, nonetheless, brings to light the contradiction between the voluntary resignation indicated on the Notification and Huerta’s letter reflecting her perceived forced resignation. Huerta, by merely enclosing the Notification with her letter to the Commission, implies that personnel at Kelly Field falsified her records; she in effect situates the word of the U.S. military against her own word.

William C. Hull, an Executive Assistant with the Commission, assumed the responsibility of dealing with Dora Huerta’s complaint to the U.S. Civil Service Commission. Based on Hull’s response to Ms. Huerta it is clear that the Commission’s primary concern is not Huerta’s claim of racial discrimination, but rather her insinuation that employees at Kelly Field falsified her personnel records. In light of the contradiction underscored by Huerta’s Notification Mr. Hull immediately uses her intimation to de-center Huerta’s complaint of race prejudice. In a very curt and terse tone Hull wastes little time before he introduces his contention of Huerta’s implicit allegation. He argues, “The notice of personnel action which you attach to your letter shows that you voluntarily resigned, stating that you wished to seek employment elsewhere. Therefore, your letter saying that you were dismissed

¹⁶¹ Dora G. Huerta, Notification of Personnel Action, War Department, Army Air Forces, 31 January 1944; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

implies that the records at Kelly Field have been falsified.”¹⁶² Hull’s assertion is immediately followed by an otherwise innocuous list of evidence requested from Huerta to presumably substantiate *her* claim and not that of the Commission’s. Mr. Hull asked for two items regarding Huerta’s work record at Kelly Field, while the third, and final, item requested are “facts and evidence which will substantiate your claim of racial discrimination on the part of your supervisor which led to your dismissal.”¹⁶³ While it is not unreasonable for Mr. Hull to request supplementary information his effort to collect evidence appears to be self-serving, and essentially allows him to not conduct an investigation of his own. The priorities outlined in the content, structure and tone of Hull’s letter do little to hide the fact that the ramification of Huerta’s insinuation weighs far heavier than does her complaint of racial discrimination. Whether or not Huerta meant to make an allegation of falsified records her intended complaint is subsumed by the implied charge. The challenge to the U.S. military’s honor, embodied in the Notification of Personnel Action, subsequently becomes the central component of Huerta’s case.

The larger implication of Dora Huerta’s challenge to the integrity of the U.S. military, courtesy of William C. Hull, does not appear to be lost on Ms. Huerta. After she received the letter from the U.S. Civil Service Commission it took Ms. Huerta another month and a half before she again pursued her complaint of racial discrimination. The precise nature of Huerta’s actions and thoughts during that month

¹⁶² Hull to Huerta, March; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

¹⁶³ Ibid. The first piece of evidence requested of Ms. Huerta was the date of her initial employment with Kelly Field. The second item requested was whether or not she had submitted or signed a statement of resignation.

and a half is unclear, but based on the fact that she had the wherewithal to raise her concern of racial bias with the Civil Service Commission it is not surprising that she accessed Dr. Carlos E. Castañeda and the Fair Employment Practice Commission as an alternative avenue for justice. On March 29, 1944 in San Antonio Dora Huerta gave a detailed account of her grievance against Kelly Field to Dr. Castañeda. Huerta's statement to the FEPC is more than just a grievance though; it provides background information about Huerta and details her work history at Kelly in addition to documenting the racial undertones of her perceived forced resignation. In other words Dora Huerta's statement to the FEPC includes all the information asked for by Mr. Hull without relegating her claim of racial discrimination to the margins of military procedure. In fact Huerta's full testimony highlights improprieties committed by the U.S. military in order to secure her resignation.¹⁶⁴ Armed with this information Dr. Castañeda filed an official complaint of discriminatory discharge against Kelly Field on behalf of Dora Huerta, Bonnie Hilliard and Esther Aguilar.

Soon after his interview with Ms. Huerta Dr. Castañeda sent a grievance to the Commanding General, Brigadier General A. W. Vanaman, of Kelly Field on behalf of Huerta, et al.¹⁶⁵ Castañeda's two-page letter closely follows the personal statement given to him by Dora Huerta, and serves as the foundation for all subsequent

¹⁶⁴ According to Huerta among the improprieties committed by the US military are the use of trickery in order to get Huerta, Hilliard and Aguilar to leave their work stations and go to the Personnel Office; the Personnel counselor gave the women an inaccurate reason for their termination; the subsequent hiring of Anglo women to replace Huerta, Hilliard and Aguilar; and Personnel's claim that the women stated they were going to pursue jobs elsewhere and therefore resigned their positions at Kelly Field.

¹⁶⁵ Although the complaint was filed on behalf of Dora Huerta, Bonnie Hilliard and Esther Aguilar the case is based on Huerta's personal experience. There are no documents, personnel records, transcripts of statements or otherwise, that reflect the experiences of Hilliard and Aguilar.

correspondences between the FEPC and military officials regarding this case. As Castañeda details Ms. Huerta's positive work history at Kelly Field (as evidenced in her promotion and pay raise) and the events leading up to her dismissal his tone remains firm and resolute throughout the letter. And although Castañeda had ample opportunity to make overt connections between *all* of the improprieties committed by various employees at Kelly and Ms. Huerta's process of termination, Huerta's claim of racial injustice is the primary issue at hand. Castañeda's explicit concern is the nature of Dora Huerta's discharge and the way in which Kelly personnel "accomplished" her discharge. In the letter Dr. Castañeda uses Ms. Huerta's case as an example of an "established pattern of discriminatory discharges based on false assumptions" on the part of civilian personnel officials working at Kelly.¹⁶⁶ By foregrounding the pattern of discriminatory discharges Dr. Castañeda flips Mr. Hull's assertion that Huerta claims Kelly personnel falsified her records on its head, and redirects attention to the action of military personnel. Castañeda's strategy ultimately puts the onus on the military to prove Huerta's assertion that she did not resign, verbally or in writing, as untrue.

Dr. Castañeda's effort to direct attention toward the behavior of officials working on behalf of the U.S. military proves to be only mildly successful. In Castañeda's attempt to put the military on the defensive he provides them with the opportunity to again marginalize Ms. Huerta's charge of the racial discrimination. As such, General Vanaman does not miss the occasion to do just that. In his response

¹⁶⁶ Carlos E. Castañeda, Special Assistant to the Chairman, to Commanding General, Kelly Field, 10 April 1944; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

Vanaman makes a token reference to Huerta's complaint of discriminatory discharge at the same time he, not unlike Captain Beene, depersonalizes her termination from Kelly. The General does not deal with the specifics of Huerta's grievance, but instead categorizes her as one of a few hundred employees "separated" from Kelly due to a shift in personnel policy. According to Vanaman Huerta's resignation is simply "the result of a tentative overall decrease of personnel in the Maintenance Division."¹⁶⁷ In the General's matter-of-fact account of Huerta's separation his implicit suggestion of the insignificance of her claim is what is most telling. By placing Huerta's discharge within the context of the group termination Vanaman privileges the group's experience over the specificity of her individualized experience. In doing so General Vanaman ultimately disregards Huerta's contention that she experienced a discriminatory discharge because of her national origin.

Dora Huerta's experience with military policy is completely dismissed by General Vanaman as he simultaneously establishes a case against her as a person with a bad work record at Kelly. The new personnel policy identified employees with a high rate of absenteeism and a record of poor work performance as those worthy of termination. According to General Vanaman those employees had the option to either resign their position or be terminated for the above stated reasons. Despite Huerta's claims to have a good work and attendance record, her superiors presumably identified her as an expendable employee and subsequently asked her to resign. Even if Kelly personnel used the new personnel policy as a legitimate basis for decreasing

¹⁶⁷ A.W. Vanaman, Brigadier General, Kelly Field, to Dr. Carlos Castañeda, Special Assistant to the Chairman, 11 May 1944; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

the size of the Maintenance Division its application to Ms. Huerta seems to be misapplied, and in fact directly counters the work record she presents in her official statement to the FEPC.¹⁶⁸ According to Huerta's statement on January 5, 1944, less than a year after she began her tenure at Kelly Field, she received a reclassification in her job from a Mechanic Learner to a Mechanic Helper.¹⁶⁹ While Ms. Huerta remained in the same department after her reclassification she did receive an increase in pay from \$1080 per year to \$1500 per year. Shortly after Huerta's promotion and almost \$450 (approximately 42%) a year raise her time at Kelly ended with her forced termination on the 29th of January. Castañeda, unfortunately, does not address the seemingly contradictory act of categorizing Dora Huerta as an employee with a bad work record just weeks after her promotion and pay raise.¹⁷⁰ In the end, the General's attempt at labeling Dora Huerta a bad worker in order to draw attention away from her complaint and onto her poor performance as an employee does not work on his behalf.

General Vanaman's two-pronged strategy to depersonalize Ms. Huerta's forced resignation and categorize her as a bad worker ignores the basis of Huerta's complaint; the fact that she did not resign verbally or in writing, and the subsequent replacement of her with an Anglo woman constitutes a discriminatory discharge. Vanaman's failed attempt to explain away Dora Huerta's claim of "race prejudice" only serves to strengthen Carlos Castañeda's resolve to seek justice on Huerta's

¹⁶⁸ The need to decrease the number of employees at a key aircraft maintenance base seems contradictory in light of the massive mobilization efforts in San Antonio and nationwide.

¹⁶⁹ Castañeda interview with Huerta; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

¹⁷⁰ The records do not indicate whether or not General Vanaman is aware of Dora Huerta's promotion and raise weeks before her forced resignation.

behalf. Dr. Castañeda's response to the General indicates a refusal on his part to accept the military's overly simplistic tactic of blaming the victim. Castañeda's reply, more importantly, directly challenges the relegation of all things racial to the periphery of the military's perspective, and reestablishes the racial dynamics at play in Huerta's forced resignation as central to her case. As a result Castañeda is again forced to turn the table on the military and demand that Vanaman not only disprove that Ms. Huerta did not resign, but also that Garrigal did not replace her with an Anglo woman. In his determination to contest the military's brand of racism Castañeda invokes notions of Americanism to underscore the injustice of Huerta's forced termination.¹⁷¹ Whether it was Castañeda's insistence that General Vanaman answer to Ms. Huerta's claim of discriminatory discharge, or the contention that her forced resignation is a betrayal of "the basic principles of true Americanism" the General rallied the troops in order to protect the honor of the U.S. military.¹⁷²

The change in commanding officers at Kelly Field that occurred during the period in which the FEPC pursued Dora Huerta's case did not prevent a complete mobilization of the troops in order to deal with Huerta and counter her claim. Brigadier General Morris Berman calls on both civilian personnel and military policy in order to substantiate the paper trail created by Huerta's termination.¹⁷³ Even so the documents submitted on behalf of Kelly Field raise more questions as to the veracity

¹⁷¹ Carlos Castañeda, Special Assistant to Chairman, to A.W. Vanaman, Brigadier General, Kelly Field, 14 July 1944; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

¹⁷² Some time between 11 May and 25 July 1944 there was a command change at Kelly Field. Brigadier General A. W. Vanaman was replaced with Brigadier General Morris Berman as the Commanding General of Kelly.

¹⁷³ Morris Berman, Brigadier General, Kelly Field, to Carlos E. Castañeda, Special Assistant to Chairman, 25 July 1944 (hereinafter Berman to Castañeda); Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

of the military's claim that Ms. Huerta has a history as a bad employee and was rightfully terminated. In answering the charge that Mr. Garrigal requested thirty additional employees just days before Huerta forcibly resigned her position General Berman offers a signed statement by Mr. J. Jackal, an Assistant Foreman in the Reclamation Section.¹⁷⁴ According to Mr. Jackal at the time of Huerta's resignation on 29 January 1944 seven employees worked in the Nut and Bolt Unit. Jackal explains that at the time of his statement "there are only three persons actively assigned to duties" in Nuts and Bolts, and that since Huerta's resignation there have not been more than seven employees assigned to the unit at any one time. In other words Mr. Garrigal did not hire an Anglo woman to replace Dora Huerta. This particulate piece of evidence unfortunately seems to satisfy Castañeda as he fails to request further details regarding the three remaining employees in the Nut and Bolt Unit. Perhaps information on the gender and ethnic background of the employees who continued to work in this unit would have revealed a pattern of racial and gender discrimination at the base, or at least in the Nut and Bolt Unit. As it is, three of the four employees no longer working in the unit were women of color.¹⁷⁵ If indeed the three remaining employees in Nuts and Bolts were Anglo workers and retained at the expense of Huerta, Aguilar and Hilliard Dora Huerta's grievance could have been further substantiated.

¹⁷⁴ Mr. Garrigal is a former supervisor of Ms. Huerta's.

¹⁷⁵ Three of the four employees include Dora Huerta, Bonnie Hilliard and Esther Aguilar. I am not able to ascertain why the fourth employee is no longer assigned to the Nut and Bolt Unit. The fourth employee could have been terminated at some after Huerta's termination, or simply could have been reassigned to another unit.

Dr. Castañeda's unquestioning acceptance of the evidence introduced by General Berman does not end with Mr. Jackal's statement. In his attempt to disprove Ms. Huerta's claim that she did not resign the General provides Castañeda with a copy of Ms. Huerta's Problem Sheet. Berman directs Dr. Castañeda's attention to the fact that Huerta's Problem Sheet indicates "a resignation was accomplished by the employee."¹⁷⁶ To add force to the information reflected in the Problem Sheet General Berman again invokes military policy. It is not an equal employment opportunity-type policy that the General summons, but rather a paper processing policy. According to General Berman War Department and Civil Service regulations stipulate that Problem Sheets cannot be processed without a signed resignation. Firm in his belief that governmental policies are never broken or applied unfairly Berman thus concludes that because Kelly personnel generated a Problem Sheet for Ms. Huerta she *must* have signed a resignation letter. But even as Berman stands confidently behind the facts he presents his conclusion regarding Ms. Huerta's case is based on the presumption that military procedure is never violated, and as such Huerta did indeed sign a resignation. Berman explains in his letter to Dr. Castañeda that Ms. Huerta's personnel file is not in his possession. In fact, Huerta's personnel file with her "signed resignation" was forwarded to the Discontinued Projects Branch in Omaha, Nebraska.¹⁷⁷ In light of this glaring hole in the facts – a signed resignation letter is never produced – Dr. Castañeda accepts General Berman's contention that

¹⁷⁶ Berman to Castañeda; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

Dora Huerta did resign her position at Kelly and subsequently dismisses Huerta's case.

Dora G. Huerta's actions to fight her discriminatory discharge and her contention that she is "ready and willing to work" again at Kelly Field reflects a sophisticated understanding of her subject position.¹⁷⁸ In claiming her space in the local defense industry Ms. Huerta implicitly signals her interpellation, yet upon learning of the racist undertones of her dismissal she shifts into an oppositional mode. In putting the two seemingly distinct subject positions in dialectical relation to one another, Huerta mobilizes each one, or a differential consciousness, to intervene in the prevailing racial and gender order. That is, Huerta used a state institution, the FEPC, to indicate her refusal to adhere to societal norms that placed the upward social mobility of white women over that of Mexican women. Huerta's tactical subjectivity, one that fluctuates between hegemonic and oppositional, thus self-consciously de- and re-centers state ideology in order to secure her civil rights.¹⁷⁹

"I am Willing to Work as Always:" The Insubordinate Consuelo E. Villarreal and the (Mis)Use of Tests

In spite of the minimal contextual information regarding Consuelo E. Villarreal's grievance against Kelly Field her case offers a unique opportunity for a more integrated analysis of the racialized 'Kelly Katie' experience. Villarreal's case, fortunately, is one in which the voice of a *mexicana* 'Kelly Katie' is not completely filtered through the efforts of the FEPC. The bulk of Villarreal's case-file consists

¹⁷⁸ Castañeda interview with Huerta; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

¹⁷⁹ Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 59.

not of government-produced documents concerning her case, but rather a hand written letter from Consuelo Villarreal to the Commanding Officer (CO) at Kelly Field. Villarreal's nine-page letter painstakingly details for the General the unsettling circumstances regarding her forced termination from Kelly. In addition to documenting the discriminatory treatment of Ms. Villarreal by officials at the post the letter also offers insight into the (mis)use of competency tests in order to secure her separation from Kelly. Villarreal's case against Kelly centers on the alleged resignation, and the measures taken by military officials to ensure that she resign.

Consuelo Villarreal, not unlike the other two Kelly Katies discussed above, claimed her space in the mobilization industry and applied for a job at Kelly Field. On September 11, 1942 she began work as an entry-level clerk, where for the next year and a half she established a satisfactory work record. In fact Villarreal's work record on post only improved with time.¹⁸⁰ At the end of a six-month probationary period Villarreal's supervisor deemed her work "good," and promoted her to the rank of Junior Clerk Typist. Apparently over the course of the next six months Ms. Villarreal honed her skills as a clerk typist because for her one-year evaluation she received a ranking of "very good" for her job performance.¹⁸¹ Villarreal's work on post went unimpeded until the spring of 1944 when she received a reassignment from the Engine Repair Unit to the Classification Branch. In the Classification Branch Villarreal continued her work as clerk typist in the Manning Table Unit. After

¹⁸⁰ Consuelo E. Villarreal to Thomas H. Chapman, Colonel, Kelly Field, June 16, 1944 (hereinafter Villarreal to Chapman); Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

¹⁸¹ Carlos E. Castañeda, Special Assistant to Chairman, to Commanding General, Kelly Field, 11 July 1944 (hereinafter Castañeda to Commanding Gen., July); Box 5; RG 228; NARA FW.

working at the Table for a month and a half Ms. Villarreal found herself involved in an incident that served as the catalyst for her difficulties at Kelly Field.

Some time between the end of April and early May 1994 Ms. Villarreal received a personal phone call to her workplace. The caller, an unidentified woman, informed Villarreal that her grandmother fell sick, and that she “should come home immediately.”¹⁸² Villarreal, as the primary caretaker of her grandmother, made the appropriate arrangements to leave work early that day. Evidently as she waited for a shuttle at one of the base’s bus stops Villarreal aroused the suspicion of two gentlemen – Captain Jones and Mr. Edward.¹⁸³ For reasons I am unable to determine Jones and Nelson not only wanted to know why Ms. Villarreal was at the bus stop, but they also appeared skeptical of her grandmother’s health crisis. Upon arriving at home Ms. Villarreal discovered that her grandmother was in good health, and unaware of a phone call made to the base on her behalf. Villarreal, realizing the precarious position she now found herself in, phoned the Captain and Mr. Edwards to apprise them of her situation, but they both remained unavailable for the rest of the evening. When Villarreal arrived at work the following day and explained the mix up to Mr. Nelson, presumably a supervisor in the Manning Table Unit, he refused to believe her. Mr. Nelson went so far as to even insinuate that Villarreal arranged the phone call to her workplace in an attempt to leave work early. Nelson, instead, informally reprimanded Villarreal as he refused to believe her.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Villarreal to Chapman; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

¹⁸³ Based on the documents I am unable to determine the nature of Captain Jones and Mr. Edward’s relationship with Ms. Villarreal; presumably they are her supervisors.

¹⁸⁴ Villarreal to Chapman; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

Soon after Consuelo Villarreal's incident with the suspicious phone call her supervisors once again approached her about a reassignment. Ms. Villarreal subsequently met with Colonel Tunks to discuss a potential reassignment to the Military Personnel Section. During the meeting the Colonel described to Villarreal the various duties expected of a Junior Clerk Typist in Personnel; one of which required her to work overtime. Tunks proceeded to explain to Villarreal that as a clerk typist she would be expected to work "one or two Sundays out of the month" in addition to possible overtime during the regular workweek.¹⁸⁵ At the time of the initial interview, Consuelo Villarreal agreed to the conditions, including the overtime responsibilities, finding them reasonable and acceptable. Colonel Tunks subsequently submitted an "R & R sheet" for Villarreal's transfer to the Military Personnel Section pending the outcome of the customary Provost Marshall investigation.¹⁸⁶

The topic of her pending overtime in the Military Personnel Section came up in a conversation Consuelo Villarreal had with her fiancée, Mr. Martinez, on June 4, 1944. Mr. Martinez, in light of their upcoming nuptials and her role as her grandmother's caretaker, encouraged Villarreal to inquire into the specificities of her overtime duties. While processing the paperwork for her reassignment with the Employment Branch the next day Ms. Villarreal asked about the overtime shifts she would be required to work. In the course of Villarreal's conversation with Ms.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ I am unable to determine the exact nature of a "R & R Sheet." It appears to be related with transferring employees from one unit on base to another unit.

Learcher, an employee in the Employment Branch, she mentioned her desire in “trying to make plans and make working hours and off duty hours coordinate.”¹⁸⁷ It appears that in sharing the details of her personal life with Ms. Learcher she completely misunderstood Villarreal. Learcher ultimately interpreted Villarreal’s inquiry as a demand not only for a job of her choice, but also for one with preferential working conditions. Unsure with how to proceed, Ms. Learcher approached Lieutenant (Lt.) Williams, Women’s Army Corps, for help in determining a course of action. Lt. William’s involvement in the incident unfortunately did not result in an amicable resolution. She too perceived Ms. Villarreal as demanding a job of her choice, and informed Villarreal that she would take the position “or else.”¹⁸⁸ Lt. Williams subsequently sent Consuelo Villarreal to an Employee Counselor in order to submit her resignation.

Ms. Villarreal’s troubles continued even after she left the Employment Branch. Upon her arrival at the Civilian Relations Office Villarreal spoke with Mrs. Arnold, an Employee Counselor, who then proceeded to call Lt. Williams in the Employment Branch. Although the details of Mrs. Arnold’s phone conversation with the Lt. are unknown it seemed to have quite an impact on her. When Mrs. Arnold got off of the phone with Lt. Williams she told Villarreal that she could not do anything on her behalf, and should therefore resign. When Ms. Villarreal made another attempt to explain the miscommunication to Mrs. Arnold she used the same tactic Lt. William initially used on Villarreal. Employee Counselor Arnold told Consuelo Villarreal that

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

she could not be “choosey,” and that she had to take the position in the Military Personnel Section “or else.” With few options remaining Ms. Villarreal returned to the Employment Branch. Once Villarreal made her way back to Lt. Williams’ office she again demanded Villarreal’s resignation, and attempted to expedite the process by confiscating her base pass. Consuelo Villarreal, nervous and frustrated by the day’s events, ultimately conceded to the Lieutenant’s demand that she resign. The Lt. ordered Villarreal’s letter of resignation to be typed up, and then sent her to the appropriate office for her final clearance.¹⁸⁹

Over the course of the next few days Consuelo Villarreal continued to contest her forced resignation. With the help of her fiancée, Mr. Martinez, Ms. Villarreal managed to secure an appointment with Major Chesser who assured her he would process her reassignment to the Military Personnel Section. Unfortunately when Villarreal arrived at the Major’s office he sent her back to the Employment Branch where without any forewarning she was required to take a test; a test she purportedly failed. The next day Mr. Martinez, accompanied by Consuelo Villarreal, went to the base to see Major Chesser. For unspecified reasons they did not see the Major, and instead were referred to Captain Beene. The Captain appeared to be sympathetic to Villarreal’s precarious situation because he gave her an opportunity for a transfer on condition that she pass a test. In a sign of good faith Ms. Villarreal agreed to the stipulation, and returned the next day to take the test. After waiting for the results of the test for a few hours Captain Beene and Mrs. Learcher told Villarreal that she did

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

not pass. Beene and Learcher never explained the grading rubric to Villarreal. They simply told her she failed the test, and suggested she use a week of her annual leave to look for another job.¹⁹⁰

Ten days later, on July 16, 1944, Consuelo Villarreal wrote a nine-page letter detailing the conditions of her forced resignation to Colonel Thomas Chapman of Kelly Field. Written in her own hand the letter is an eloquent description of her situation that is respectful in tone, and written in a clear, well punctuated, grammatically correct prose. From her perspective Ms. Villarreal felt Kelly personnel forced her to resign because she asked questions regarding the schedule for her new assignment. In the letter Villarreal references the ease with which she took the second test, and insists that she had no intention of being insubordinate in her attempt to coordinate her personal responsibilities with her work duties. In the closing of her letter Consuelo Villarreal makes the rationale for lodging her complaint clear; it is one based on a moral imperative. She tells Colonel Chapman that she will ultimately accept any action taken against her, be it a reassignment or termination, by her superiors at Kelly, and that she is “willing to work as always.”¹⁹¹ Ms. Villarreal took issue with what she perceived to be the unethical manner in which military personnel treated her based on a simple misunderstanding. In Villarreal’s opinion the basis of the confusion between herself and various employees at the base did not merit the treatment meted out by them on behalf of Kelly Field. The meticulous

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

detail Villarreal included in the nine-page letter stands in direct contrast with a person merely being insubordinate.

The Rights of an “Occupational Misfit”

As mentioned above Consuelo Villarreal’s case offers an important opportunity to gain insight into how she negotiated her marginalized status at Kelly Field, and processed the discriminatory practices of military personnel and racism at her place of employment. As an interpellated subject Ms. Villarreal applied for and secured a job in Kelly Field’s mobilization industry, and subsequently developed into a productive participant in the war effort. Villarreal’s work performance apparently pleased her supervisors because she managed to work her way up to Junior Clerk Typist and earn the accompanying pay raise. Villarreal’s strong work record remained intact until she inquired into the conditions of her transfer to the Military Personnel Section. Once military personnel perceived Ms. Villarreal to be “choosy” in regards to her work assignment they persistently, and quite aggressively, attempted to secure her termination from Kelly. Villarreal, in an effort to hold on to her claimed space in Kelly’s workforce, even agreed to submit herself to a series of tests ostensibly used to ascertain her next work assignment. When military personnel informed Ms. Villarreal that she did not pass the tests, she took even stronger measures to assert her right to work at Kelly Field. Ms. Villarreal wrote a nine page letter directly to Colonel Thomas H. Chapman, the Commanding General of Kelly Field, not to demand her job back, but simply to assert her right to be treated in an ethical manner based on her contribution to the war effort.

While the agency Villarreal asserted in order to remain employed at Kelly is clearly documented, aspects of the contextual information regarding her grievance remain vague. Details concerning the FEPC's role in Villarreal's resolution are particularly lacking. Unlike the majority of the FEPC's case-files hers does not include the standard FEPC paperwork outlining the specifics of each case. Despite the minimal information as to how or when the FEPC gained jurisdiction over Consuelo Villarreal's case once they became involved, Carlos E. Castañeda's efforts to secure a satisfactory adjustment for Ms. Villarreal remained consistent with FEPC protocol. Castañeda's attempt to reverse Villarreal's forced resignation even included a visit to Kelly Field. During Castañeda's visit to the base on July 7, 1944 he personally met with Brigadier General Morris Berman, Commanding General of Kelly, and Major Chesser to discuss the events that led to Consuelo Villarreal's separation from Kelly.¹⁹² In what seems to be an attempt by Major Chesser to justify the action taken against Villarreal he allowed Castañeda access to her personnel file. The documents contained in her personnel file reflect Villarreal's entire work history at the base. Major Chesser's effort to use Ms. Villarreal's work record against her consequently backfired because, ironically, information in her personnel file subsequently served as the basis for her grievance against Kelly.

Four days after Castañeda's visit to Kelly Field he sent an official letter of complaint on Consuelo Villarreal's behalf to Commanding General Morris Berman. Based on Ms. Villarreal's entire personnel record, and not just the documents

¹⁹² Two FEPC cases were on Carlos Castañeda's agenda for his visit to Kelly.

pertaining to her separation, Carlos Castañeda firmly objected to her forced resignation. Castañeda not only invoked Ms. Villarreal's satisfactory job history at Kelly to highlight the absurdity of the claim that she acted in an insubordinate manner, but he specifically took issue with the tests that military personnel administered to Villarreal. Although Castañeda could not reconcile Ms. Villarreal's job performance rating of "good" and "very good" with her two failed tests her intellectual capacity to successfully pass the tests did not become the basis of his claim. Carlos E. Castañeda called Kelly's (mis)use of tests into question, and directly charged Kelly Field employees with administering the tests as a means to establish "an irrefutable legal excuse to refuse her employment."¹⁹³ Implicit in Castañeda's charge is the military's use of placement tests to limit the upward mobility of workers of Mexican descent, and ultimately rid the mobilization industry of undesirable others. He took issue, moreover, with the unpatriotic act of dismissing an employee with much needed skills during a time of total war. The General responded to Carlos E. Castañeda's charge with an attack on Consuelo Villarreal's work skills.

General Bermans' response to Castañeda did not directly address the charge that military officials used placement tests as a means to maintain the second-class status of Mexican workers at Kelly Field. Berman instead underscored Consuelo Villarreal's limited skills, her lack of initiative and her own misconduct as the reasons for her inability to sustain her employment on post. The General explained to Castañeda that because Ms. Villarreal rated a good and a very good in the

¹⁹³ Castañeda to Commanding Gen., 16 March 1944; Box 5; RG 228; NARA FW.

performance of duties such as filing and typing it did not mean she had the capacity to work beyond menial clerical tasks. Berman, in other words, laid out an argument to justify Personnel's expulsion of Villarreal from defense work, and the larger mobilized home front, based on her perceived mental deficiencies. General Berman not only insinuated that Villarreal did not seem adept enough to handle responsibilities beyond that of a Junior Clerk Typist, but that she also did not possess the initiative to handle more responsibilities.¹⁹⁴ Berman contends that supervisors in the Classification Branch deemed Ms. Villarreal's work performance below average, and thus when they needed to reduce personnel in the unit they approached her for a transfer. Berman maintains that only after Villarreal declined a transfer to the Military Personnel Section did personnel ask her to take a competency test. General Berman also asserts that once employees determined that Consuelo Villarreal did not pass a series of test she willingly submitted her resignation because "she was dissatisfied with the hours of duty assigned her and also stating that it was her desire to be married."¹⁹⁵ After Berman sufficiently attacked Ms. Villarreal's work performance he proceeded to make the case for her classification as an insubordinate employee.

According to General Berman the basis for Consuelo Villarreal's label as an insubordinate worker is based on War Department policies. Berman explained to Castañeda that War Department policies stipulate Villarreal's "refusal" to accept a

¹⁹⁴ Berman's claim that Villarreal lacks initiative directly contradicts the initiative shown in her nine page letter to the CO of Kelly Field.

¹⁹⁵ Morris Berman, Brigadier General, Kelly Field, to Carlos E. Castañeda, Special Assistant to Chairman, 27 July 1944; Box A18-67-5; RG 228; NARA FW.

transfer to the Military Personnel Section as an act of insubordination, and grounds for her immediate termination. Berman argued, moreover, that military personnel did not immediately dismiss Villarreal from Kelly Field because an Employee Counselor intervened on her behalf, and attempted “to make the situation as agreeable as possible” by administering a competency test for “occupational misfits.”¹⁹⁶ Berman concludes that Ms. Villarreal’s experience is simply the result of her own misconduct, and not the result of discrimination based on race. The General’s assessment of Ms. Villarreal’s skills and work ethic falls in line with the primary strategy of defense utilized by supervisors and their superiors at Kelly Field. As discussed in the two above cases, while military personnel appeared very careful and strategic in how they responded to allegations of discrimination unspoken policy seemed to advocate turning the allegations around by questioning the work ethic, character, and trustworthiness of the complainant. Although Carlos Castañeda must have realized this pattern of defense on the part of the U.S. military upon receiving General Berman’s letter, he subsequently dismissed Consuelo Villarreal’s case on merits.¹⁹⁷

Although Castañeda dismissed Consuelo Villarreal’s case on merits she, like her abovementioned counterparts, exhibited more than a mere interpellated subjectivity. Villarreal enacted an interpellated subjectivity and chose to support the military mission abroad through her work in the local mobilization industry, but she did not care to do so at the expense of “her duties after work.” In other words, she did

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ The strategy of blaming the victim was also employed in Dora Huerta’s case. Because Carlos Castañeda worked on Huerta’s and Villarreal’s cases simultaneously this pattern could and should have been challenged by the FEPC.

not interpellate into a woman who prioritized the nation's military mission in all aspects of her life. Instead, she, contrary to state expectations of 'Rosies,' dared to balance her patriotic duty with her domestic role. In doing so, Villarreal shifted into a mode of differential consciousness in an attempt to mediate state control over her public and private lives. Villarreal, moreover, mobilized a differential consciousness to protect her integrity and contest the way in which she was ultimately deemed an occupational and intellectual misfit. Hence, Villarreal's letter to Kelly's Commanding General is indicative of a subjectivity fluctuating between and within interpellated and oppositional; one based on a claim to moral authority over a nation in the midst of a fight against fascism abroad.

Within the context of total war the above three Mexican American 'Kelly Katies' developed strategies to claim their space and assert their rights as a means to challenge their unequal treatment in the U.S. Molina, Huerta and Villarreal's collective actions represent everyday practices, strategies and negotiations employed by people of Mexican descent in the U.S. to lay legitimate claim to their jobs, homes, and basic civil liberties. For these three *mexicana* wartime workers, and many others like them, they not only sought redress by filing claims with the FEPC, but in doing so they also exhibited a subjectivity dialectically situated to state apparatuses. As interpellated wartime workers they gained entry to Kelly's workforce, yet because of their racial *and* gender status they were prohibited from the upward social mobility experienced by white and African American women. As a result, Molina, Huerta and Villarreal strategically engaged two seemingly diametrically opposed subject

positions, hegemonic and oppositional, to maneuver the racial and gender dynamics of Kelly Field's shop floor. That is, they engaged a differential consciousness that "function[ed] within, yet beyond, the demands of dominant ideology" to access the equality and democracy espoused in the state's battle cry of fighting fascism abroad.¹⁹⁸ In fact, Molina, Huerta and Villarreal's tactical subjectivity and their use of state rhetoric and the FEPC to advance their civil rights is a strategy employed by many of the Mexican American Generation.

¹⁹⁸ Chela Sandoval, "U.S. Third World Feminism," and *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 44.

CHAPTER III

“EVEN THE MEN JUMPED THE RIVER:” MEXICAN AMERICAN WOMEN’S MILITARY SERVICE AND THE DIALECTICS OF INTERPELLATION

When an interviewer with the University of Texas at Austin’s Voces Oral History Project asked María Sally Salazar why she enlisted in the Women’s Army Corp (WAC) during World War II she replied, “I just felt that I did something. Because a lot of them wouldn’t go, and even the men jumped the river.”¹⁹⁹ In contrast to the often told narrative of the droves of Mexican American men who enlisted into the U.S. armed forces to prove their loyalty to the nation, it seems that in Salazar’s hometown of Laredo, Texas some men, presumably men of Mexican descent, chose not to serve in the U.S. military but to instead relocate to Mexico. In light of these men’s decision to evade military service by moving south of the Rio Grande River, María’s enlistment seemingly highlights her interpellation into a good citizen subject.²⁰⁰ Yet a closer look at María Sally’s life narrative, not unlike her contemporaries’ discussed below, reveals a pattern of behavior that suggests a more nuanced wartime subjectivity than mere patriotic citizen-soldier. In fact, the prewar, wartime and postwar lives of the nine Mexican American servicewomen on which this chapter is based underscores a subjectivity dialectically situated to familial and Mexican cultural expectations, Anglo social and educational practices and heteronormative and racial norms of the larger nation state. Their service records, if

¹⁹⁹ María Sally Salazar, interviewed by Nicole Muñoz, video recording, 28 Sept. 2002, U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project (hereinafter U.S. L&L), Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin.

²⁰⁰ Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1989), 170 – 186.

not collective life experiences, are not only historiographically significant, but also invite scholars to pose new questions in their studies of Mexican Americans and World War II.

Mexican American men's experiences during World War II figure prominently in Chicana/o historiography. That is, although there are countless Mexican American war narratives yet to be told, the GI and his civilian counterpart, the pachuco, cast a shadow over Mexican subjectivities on the home front and in the second half of the twentieth century. Chicana/o scholars' focus on pachucos, in particular the Sleepy Lagoon murder and the Zoot Suit Riots, and Mexican American servicemen's battlefield skirmishes ultimately privilege men and masculinity as the primary lens through which to understand Mexican Americans, nationalism and war in the mid-twentieth century U.S. Moreover, Chicana/o scholars have predominantly used the GI's wartime service and postwar "politics of supplication" as the basis for characterizing the "Mexican American generation" as assimilationist and integrationist.²⁰¹ In other words, men, whether as the rebellious pachuco or the patriotic service member, served as the touchstone for scholarly and popular accounts of an entire generation. Though Richard Santillan and Christine Marín both made early interventions into the narrowly focused field, until recently Mexican American women have largely been excluded from discourse on Mexican Americans and World

²⁰¹ Benjamin Márquez, *LULAC: The Evolution of a Mexican American Political Organization* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993); Lorena Oropeza, *¡Raza Sí! ¡Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism during the Viet Nam war Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

War II.²⁰² Elizabeth R. Escobedo and Catherine S. Ramírez's studies on pachucas in wartime Los Angeles and Joanne Rao Sánchez's article on Latina servicewomen highlight the ways in which Mexican women's subjectivity offers us much insight into the changing social and cultural landscape of World War II.

This chapter seeks to add to this growing body of scholarship by foregrounding the experiences of nine Mexican American women who enlisted in the U.S. Armed Forces during the Second World War. It unveils how for some young Mexican American women military service represented more than a mere act of loyalty to "win full acceptance and citizenship in the nation."²⁰³ The chapter is based on archival materials and interviews conducted with nine *mujeres* who served either in the Women's Army Air Corps (WAAC), the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), the Army Nurse Corps or the Navy Nurse Corps during the war.²⁰⁴ All of the women were born between 1918 and 1923. Rafaela

²⁰² Richard Santillán, "Rosita the Riveter: Midwest Mexican American Women during World War II, 1941 – 1945." *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies* 2 (1989): 115 – 147; Christine Marin, "Mexican Americans on the Home Front: Community Organizations in Arizona during World War II" *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies* 4 (1993): 75 – 92; Elizabeth R. Escobedo, "The Pachuca Panic: Sexual and Cultural Battlegrounds in World War II Los Angeles," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 38, 2 (Summer 2007): 133-156; Catherine S. Ramírez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism and the Cultural Politics of Memory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Culture: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (University of New Mexico Press, 1987); Joanne Rao Sánchez, "The Latinas of World War II: From Familial Shelter to Expanding Horizons," in *Beyond the Latino World War II Hero: The Social and Political Legacy of a Generation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 63 – 89.

²⁰³ Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 171.

²⁰⁴ The University of Texas at Austin's U.S. Latino & Latina Oral History Project collected all nine of the oral histories examined here. In order to reflect the project's revised mission "to document and create a better awareness of the contributions of Latinos and Latinas of the WWII, Korean War and Vietnam War generations" its name was changed to Voces Oral History Project. As of February 1, 2011 the project has conducted interviews with nine Mexican American women and one Puerto Rican woman who served in the U.S. Armed Forces during World War II.

Muñiz Esquivel, Felicitas Cerda Flores, María Sally Salazar, Else Schaffer Martinez, Concepcion Alvarado Escobedo and Emma Villareal Hernandez grew up in Texas; Carmen Romero Phillips and Beatrice Amado Kissinger spent their childhood and early adulthood in Arizona; and Anna Torres Vazquez lived her life in East Gary, Indiana. The *mexicanas* discussed below all responded to their country's call to action, and in doing so they revealed a complicated subject position in dialogue with, and not simply submissive to, the nation state and its accompanying ideological structures of oppression.

'The Only Real Issue...Was That of Militarization versus Civil Service:' Race, Class, Gender and the Making of Women Soldiers

On 28 May 1941 Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers of Massachusetts introduced H.R. 4906, A Bill to Establish a Women's Army Auxiliary Corps for Service with the Army of the United States, to the U.S. House of Representatives. Rogers' original intent, largely based on her own military experience during World War I, in introducing H.R. 4906 was to fully incorporate women into the regular army and to ensure women soldiers access to the same pension, medical and disability services granted to men soldiers. When H.R. 4906, otherwise known as the Rogers Bill, made it to the House floor it called for a Women's Army Auxiliary Corp of 25,000 noncombatant women "for the purpose of making available to the national defense the knowledge, skill, and special training of the women to the nation." The Rogers Bill also outlined seemingly unfair, and oftentimes murky, differences between Waacs and men soldiers in regards to medical care (Waccs would receive medical care while on active duty, but upon discharge they lost all medical benefits),

pay rates, military grades, the WAAC chain of command and veteran's benefits.²⁰⁵ Women, in other words, did not receive full soldier status or the accompanying benefits and were instead designated as second-class military workers. Congresswoman Rogers apparently encountered considerable opposition from both elected officials and military leaders, and thus after much political brokering the Rogers Bill manifested as a watered down version of its initial intent. War Department officials, furthermore, buried the bill until they were able to develop a suitable plan for their utilization of women's military work without granting them the status, rights and privileges of men soldiers. Rogers consequently, with help from War Department-sanctioned lobbyist Oliveta Culp Hobby, negotiated the official status of women with Army officers and members of the House and Senate for the next six months. As a result, on December 31, 1941 she resubmitted H.R. 4906 as H.R. 6293. At the insistence of elected officials and the upper echelons of the War Department, H.R. 6293 once again denied women full military status and upheld their standing as an auxiliary of the U.S. Army, a serious political compromise on behalf of Congresswoman Rogers, thereby prohibiting women from receiving military pensions and veteran's benefits. Once it became apparent that any and all opposition to auxiliary status was quelled, Congress approved the Rogers Bill on May 14, 1942 and President Roosevelt officially enacted it as Public Law 554, An Act to Establish a

²⁰⁵ Following Leisa D. Meyer's lead, I use Waac and Wac to refer to women who served in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps and the Women's Army Corp and WAC and WAAC to refer to the organizations. Leisa D. Meyer, *Creating GI Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women's Army Corps During World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 2. For simplicity I use the term soldier to refer to all of the women discussed here even though not all of the women served in the Army.

Women's Army Auxiliary Corps for Service with the Army of the United States, the following day.²⁰⁶

While the “official” history of the WAAC began in the mid-twentieth century, women have soldiered in support, of U.S. military endeavors since the late 18th century. Many scholars, unfortunately, scarcely recognize the role women play, unless as nurses, camp followers and home front workers, in the development of military strategy. In fact, one military historian argues “serious consideration of an official women's corps was scarcely possible before the twentieth century. Until then, war was not *organized and mechanized* (emphasis added) to an extent that required more manpower than a nation could provide from among its men; the great supply systems and fixed headquarters of total war were yet to come.” Treadwell further contends that before the twentieth century women did not possess the skills needed by U.S. military forces. Her argument, which certainly perpetuates gendered and racialized notions of paid and unpaid labor, is predicated on the belief that industrialization facilitated the status of women as laborers outside of the home and that military need for women workers would only occur in the context of total war.²⁰⁷ I argue that in addition to total war and the Industrial Revolution, the U.S. military’s development from a small, defensive army to a larger multi-faceted imperial army served as a critical element to the states political manipulation of gender as a means to support short- and long-term military goals, and thus Congress established the

²⁰⁶Mattie E. Treadwell, *The United States Army in World War II, Special Studies, The Women’s Army Corp* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1954), 18 – 20.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 4

Army Nurse Corps a mere three years after the U.S.' first real show of imperial might in the Spanish-American War in 1898.

The Army Nurse Corps' establishment in 1901 ultimately set the parameters for the militarized status of women performing military work that lasted well into the 1930s in two critical ways. First, elected officials and military leaders strongly adhered to hegemonic beliefs that women simply did not belong in the military, let alone outside the house, and consequently established the Army Nurse Corps as a quasi-military organization. Women who served in the Nurse Corps, in other words, did so without Army rank and no access to officer status, an equitable pay scale, or retirement and veteran's rights.²⁰⁸ The abridged military status given to Army nurses not only situated women as second-class military workers, but also undoubtedly set precedent for the auxiliary status of the WAAC once it was established in 1942. Second, Congress established the Army Nurse Corps, in spite of its marginal status, during a time of peace. Thus, the formation of the Army Nurse Corps in 1901 anticipates U.S. imperial desires and the need for women's military work to support imperialistic efforts. While the Corps' founding highlights the importance of militarized women for U.S. empire building, it also signals the extent to which early twentieth century political and military leaders went to veil their efforts at militarizing women. Turn of the century power brokers, that is, understood their growing need for women to support the U.S.' expanding global presence, but also preferred to

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 6. Although members of the Army Nurse Corps did not receive equal pay to men soldiers they did acquire nominal military rank and some retirement benefits post-World War I. In 1944 Army nurses finally received full military status.

circumscribe militarized women to work and duties that did not disrupt normative gender roles. Politicians and military leaders ultimately did not oppose the Corps' establishment because Army nurses' military labor included duties that were typically understood to be feminine work. The U.S. Army subsequently maintained the strategic use of heteronormative understandings of gender to achieve military objectives through World War I, and quite frankly remained uninterested in altering women's militarized status until Secretary of War Newton D. Baker created the Office for the Director of Women's Relations during the inter-war years.

Before Anita Phipps resigned her position as Director of Women's Relations in 1930 she submitted a detailed proposal to establish a Women's Service Corps in the Army.²⁰⁹ She based her plan on a questionnaire of eight corps areas, three territorial departments, and eighteen chiefs of branches or similar services.²¹⁰ Though her study identified a need for approximately 170,000 women workers, it also revealed that military leaders desired women to service the military in areas such as laundry service, meal preparation, cleaning, messengers, chauffeurs and seamstresses only during times of war.²¹¹ Phipps' study and a subsequent plan authored by Major Everett S. Hughes, Army Planner for a Women's Corps, also show that military

²⁰⁹ In 1920 Secretary Baker created the Office for the Director of Women's Relations with a position in the Division of the General Staff. Phipps served as the second Director from 1921 – 1930. She primarily served as the liaison between the War Department and women of the general public, namely upper-middle class and upper class white women, to ensure their loyalty to the U.S. military and militaristic ideas and consequently consolidate their militarized status. Baker's goal was to convince them that the U.S. Army was not a merciless mechanism of death and destruction but "a progressive, socially minded human institution" that should not be disbanded based on the hysterical whims of fanatical women.

²¹⁰ Treadwell, *The United States Army in World War II*, 12.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

officers only wanted women laborers during times of total war.²¹² Much like their predecessors, military personnel of the interwar years acknowledged a need for women's wartime work that simply relegated women to menial, unskilled tasks needed in total war. More specifically, both reports reveal an unspoken martial need for women of color and working-class white women workers as most upper-middle class and upper class white women would not likely seek employment in any of the trades just mentioned. The War Department, rather than contend with the issues of gender, class and race implied in both reports, unsurprisingly shelved both plans until the country was on the brink of total war.

Discussions regarding a women's corps in the Army did not resume again until General George C. Marshall assumed the position of Chief of Staff on September 1, 1939. General Marshall renewed the conversation but did so unaware of both the Phipps and Hughes studies as they were deemed unworthy and consequently buried deep in military files.²¹³ Marshall, just like military personnel discussed above, understood the strategic need for women's military labor, but refused to subvert prevailing gender norms and expand the realm of militarized women beyond the home and the attendant duties of motherhood. Marshall's plan, thus, differed from the Phipps and Hughes studies. Namely, his plan denied women full military status and maintained their second-class standing, and designated "hostess, librarian, canteen clerk, cook and waitress, chauffeur, messenger, and strolling minstrel" and the like as the only suitable military jobs for women. Even

²¹² The first ever chief Army Planner for a Women's Corps was appointed in 1928.

²¹³ Treadwell, *The United States Army in World War II*, 15 – 18.

with the General's plan though, the War Department delayed committing to any use of women's military labor for the next eighteen months. Leaders in the War Department, in fact, only took decisive action on "the woman question" in 1941 upon learning that Eleanor Roosevelt had two proposals for the use of women's military work and that Congresswoman Rogers was about to introduce her bill to Congress, H.R.4906, for consideration. Decisive action for War Department officials meant that the only proposal suitable for political deliberation would be one crafted by their own hands that limited women to gender-specific jobs while relegating them to auxiliary status. Regardless of the War Department stipulations and the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Rogers Bill, now H.R. 6293, continued to face powerful opposition on the House floor.²¹⁴ In the end, the U.S. Army would get its auxiliary corps of white- and blue-collar women workers. On March 17, 1942 the Rogers Bill passed by a vote of 249 to 86 in the House of Representatives and a vote of 38 to 27 in the Senate two months later.²¹⁵ President Roosevelt's signing of Public Law 554 on May 15, 1942 officially established the WAAC.

At the heart of the opposition's argument were the militarized circumstances of women in the U.S. and popular notions of manhood and womanhood. Military leaders consistently maintained that members of the auxiliary corps would be militarized minimally as they would only be employed in positions that civilians would otherwise occupy. In other words, Corps women would not be given full military status nor would they be assigned the same duties as male soldiers and

²¹⁴ Ibid., 15 – 23.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 45.

consequently marginally militarized.²¹⁶ The political debate surrounding the Rogers Bill reflects the belief that processes of militarization only affect those performing military service, generally understood as those soldiering in battle, and not civil service work. This notion ultimately disregards the way in which military power is deployed away from the battlefield in very gendered, and very subtle, ways. As feminist scholars have shown, whether women, or men for that matter, soldier in support of the U.S. military as camp followers, nurses, home front workers, civilian advocates of martial ideas or fully incorporated military personnel their sheer efforts to sustain militaristic goals in effect militarizes them.²¹⁷ Consequently, any role women played in supporting martial goals and objectives, in times of peace and war, is militarized. Thus, elected officials' insistence on keeping women out of the ranks of the military is indicative of their concern for maintaining the masculinized and patriarchal nature of the armed forces, and society in general, and not about the militarization of women. Women soldiers, in other words, represented a threat to heteronormative understandings of men and women's "proper" role in military and civilian life.

Furthermore, political leaders ostensibly believed that the only suitable auxiliary was one composed of semi-militarized educated middle-class white women; a stark contradiction to what military leaders asked for in the Phipps and Hughes'

²¹⁶ Ibid., 24.

²¹⁷ Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Katherine H.S. Moon, *Sex Among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Grace M. Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy and the Forgotten War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

interwar years studies. H.R. 6293's characterization of women's martial labor as the equivalent of civilian, or skilled, work and not merely that of unskilled proletariats is indicative of a discursive shift intended to attract "respectable" women to military service. The Women's Auxiliary Corps outlined in Rogers Bill would be a small elite corps of women of high moral character with advanced clerical skills. Army Corps leaders, in the meantime, seemed to anticipate both the country's descent into total war and the opportunity to expand its imperial presence on the global stage, and as a result expressed the need for women to also fill the jobs that civilian workers avoided. Hence, in addition to the women's corps of highly skilled white women clerical workers originally outlined in H.R. 6293, military personnel subsequently requested women to perform jobs such as "maids, charwomen, janitresses, cooks, mess attendants, messengers, hostesses, mail orderlies, housekeepers, and hospital attendants."²¹⁸ In addition to confirming traditional ideas of gender, military leaders also deployed hegemonic notions of race and class to support their military mission. The martial sexual division of labor, in other words, was predicated on racial and class difference.²¹⁹ The Army's late request for proletariat women ultimately ensured a place for women of color and working-class women in the auxiliary and a continued militarized place in the U.S. imperial project. As a result, these nine Mexican American servicewomen not only disrupted heteronormative gender roles, but they also subverted hegemonic notions of race and class.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 25 – 27.

²¹⁹ Eileen Boris demonstrates how similar tactics were used on the shop floors of World War II's mobilization industries. Eileen Boris, "'You Wouldn't Want One of 'Em Dancing with Your Wife;': Racialized Bodies on the Job in World War II," *American Quarterly* 50, 1 (Mar., 1998): 77-108.

Mexican American Women in War

As noted in chapter II, the advent of total war in 1941 mobilized every facet of U.S. society. Men heeded Uncle Sam's call to serve their country and entered the ranks of the armed forces in unprecedented numbers. Likewise, images of 'Rosie the Riveter' enticed millions of women to support the war effort through their paid labor. In both cases, prevailing historical narratives more than adequately document the contributions made by battlefield soldiers and home front civilians to the U.S.' fight against fascism. While historians have recounted African American disdain with a segregated military, the African American-devised "Double Victory" campaign and how normative gender roles were disrupted by white women workers in the mobilization industry, the experiences of Mexican Americans have all too often been omitted from the narrative.²²⁰ Ken Burns' 2007 seven-part documentary, "The War," which he claims was never meant to be a "comprehensive treatment of the subject," is

²²⁰ Mark Aldrich, "The Gender Gap in Earnings during World War II: New Evidence," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 42, 3 (1989): 415-429; Penny Colman, *Women Working on the Home Front in World War II* (New York: Crow Publishers, Inc., 1995); Alice Kessler-Harris, "'Rosie the Riveter': Who Was She?" *Labor History* 24, 2 (1983): 249-253; Sherrie A Kossoudji and Laura J. Dressler, "Working Class Rosies: Women Industrial Workers during WW 2," *Journal of Economic History* 52, 2 (1992): 431-446; Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex During World War II* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Marc Miller, "Working Women and World War II," *New England Quarterly* 53, 1 (1980): 42-61; Michael Nash, "Women and the Pennsylvania Railroad: The World War II Years," *Labor History* 30, 4 (1989): 608-621; Jim Rose, "'The Problem Every Supervisor Dreads': Women Workers at the U.S. Steel Duquesne Works during World War II," *Labor History* 36, 1 (1995): 24-51; Mary M. Schweitzer, "World War II and Female Labor Force Participation Rates," *Journal of Economic History* 40, 1 (1980): 89-95; Honey, *Bitter Fruit*; Karen Tucker Anderson, "Last Hired, First Fired: Black Women Workers during World War II," *Journal of American History* 96 (1982): 82-97; Eileen Boris, "'You Wouldn't Want One of 'Em Dancing With Your Wife': Racialized Bodies on the Job in World War II," *American Quarterly* 50 (1998): 77-108; Pete Daniel, "Going Among Strangers: Southern Reactions to World War II," 77 (1990): 886-911; Bruce Nelson, "Organized Labor and the Struggle for Black Equality in Mobile during World War II," *Journal of American History* 80 (1993): 952-988; Barbara Tucker, "Agricultural Workers in World War II: The Reserve Army of Children, Black Americans, and Jamaicans," *Agricultural History* 68 (1994): 54.

perhaps the most egregious disregard for the wartime contributions of people of Mexican descent.²²¹ The University of Texas at Austin's Voces Oral History Project, established in 1999, surely could have provided Burns and countless other World War II scholars an abundance of source material by which to construct a more comprehensive account of the war.

Maggie Rivas-Rodríguez, Associate Professor of Journalism, established the U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project as a means to recuperate Mexican American, and all U.S. Latina/os, wartime subjectivities, and by implication disrupt the black-white racial paradigm so often found in academic and popular accounts of the war. Since 1999 Rivas-Rodríguez and her team of students, staff, faculty and community members have collected more than 500 oral histories with Latina/os from all over the continental U.S. (including Puerto Rico) that account for both frontline and home front experiences as well as the prewar and postwar lives of the interviewees. As a whole, the project has assembled an amazing repository of primary source material in the form of oral histories, pictures and other supporting documents. James E. Garcia's play "Voices of Valor," a photographic exhibit entitled "Images of Valor," and at least three anthologies have all relied on oral histories in the collection to dismantle conventional knowledge of World War II in

²²¹ Burns In 2007 a grassroots effort emerged to challenge Burns' omission, and PBS' complacency with his less than comprehensive view of World War II, of Latina/os from his documentary. The Defend the Honor campaign included national and Latino organizations, elected officials and thousands of individuals who wrote letters, signed petitions, staged protests and meetings with PBS officials. The campaign resulted in the inclusion of two Mexican American veterans and one Native American veteran in the film's final cut. Defend the Honor continues to work "for a more fair and accurate inclusion of Latinos and Latinas in our nation's consciousness." Dr. Maggie Rivas-Rodríguez was at the forefront of the Defend the Honor campaign.

general and Mexican Americans specifically. Undoubtedly the interviews serve as the basis to construct a more comprehensive Mexican American World War II narrative.

In spite of the shortcomings in the scholarship and military records, more often than not Mexican Americans were racialized as white on military enlistment and discharge papers.²²² Nevertheless, we know that between 250,000 and 500,000 men of Mexican descent served in the armed forces during the Second World War.²²³ Mexican American soldiers, sailors, and marines served in all theaters of conflict, and established themselves as one of the most highly decorated ethnic groups of the war; twelve were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.²²⁴ As discussed in chapter II, upwards of 5,000 of their *mexicana* counterparts, ‘Rosita the Riveter,’ mobilized on the home front as welders, machinists, steelworkers and shipyard workers.²²⁵ Countless other Mexican American women grew victory gardens, rationed and recycled essential materials and organized themselves into patriotic associations.²²⁶ While Chicana/o wartime narratives offer us a more nuanced understanding of “the Good War,” seemingly absent are accounts of Mexican American women who served in the armed forces. Even with the Voces project, the service record of WW II-era Mexican American women military personnel is drastically underdocumented and undercounted. In fact, I am unable to find even an estimate of the number of active

²²² In the 1910 and 1920 U.S. Census Mexicans were classified as “white,” and were reclassified as “Mexicans” in 1930, but by the 1940 Census they were again categorized as “white.”

²²³ Refugio I. Rochin and Lionel Fernandez, “U.S. Latino Patriots: From the American Revolution to Afghanistan: An Overview,” (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Latino Center, 2002): 10.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Santillan, “Rosita the Riveter,” 115-147.

²²⁶ Marin, “Mexican Americans on the Home Front,” 75 – 92.

duty *mexicanas* who served during the war. Mexican women, because of processes of racialization mentioned above, were also categorized as Caucasian, and thus their numbers are merely subsumed under the military rolls of white servicewomen or Mexican American men. Fortunately, among the hundreds of oral histories collected by Rivas-Rodríguez and her colleagues are interviews with nine Mexican American women whose wartime military service enables us to construct a more nuanced understanding of what many Chicana/o scholars consider to be a turning point for people of Mexican descent in the U.S. – World War II.

“It takes Guts:” U.S. Hegemony, Mexican Patriarchy and Mexican American Women Behaving Badly

The pre-World War II lives of the *mujeres* discussed below reflect a number of characteristics understood in the historiography as typical of their generation. Their class background, interethnic relations and family and cultural life remain consistent with Mexican experiences in the early- to mid-twentieth century U.S. Eight of the nine women, whether her father worked in the Arizona mines, as a cattle rancher in Arizona or a mechanic in Texas, came from fairly stable but working-class or working-poor families who subsisted primarily on beans, rice, potatoes and, unless a cattle rancher’s daughter, little meat. They lived in neighborhoods segregated by race, if not segregated by race and class.²²⁷ All of the women survived the Great Depression wherein they either witnessed or were likely aware of the forced

²²⁷ Julia Kirk Blackwelder, *Women of the Depression: Caste and Culture in San Antonio, 1929 – 1939* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1984), 14 – 15; Gabriela Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916 – 1939* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 37 – 79.

repatriation and deportation of people of Mexican descent.²²⁸ They all attended schools where, unlike the countless Mexican children who were forced to attend substandard “Mexican schools,” they were not segregated, but they were also not allowed to speak Spanish. All of the women expressed a strong Mexican heritage that was reflected in religious celebrations, family gatherings, food, music, dance and language. Each of the *mujeres* also exhibited of a strong commitment to family that usually manifested in the rearing of younger siblings, performing house duties and contributing financially to the family’s well-being.²²⁹ While, according to the historiography, all of the above patterns make the lives of Muñiz Esquivel, Cerda Flores, Torres Vazquez, Salazar, Schaffer Martinez, Alvarado Escobedo, Romero Phillips, Amado Kissinger and Villareal Hernandez ordinary, they also exhibited behavior in their prewar lives that reveals a tendency toward the extraordinary.

This group of Mexican women, even long before they enlisted in the military, all claimed a sense of independence and independent thinking that led them to be reliable, self-assured young women who had active lives outside of the home. These self-proclaimed independent thinkers consistently asserted themselves in their childhood and early adulthood in ways that often put them at odds with familial expectations and the cultural norms of their time. Concepcion Alvarado Escobedo’s father believed that women belonged at home and he was unhappy when her mother

²²⁸ Balderrama, Francisco E. and Raymond Rodríguez, “Deportation: Adíos, Migra,” In *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 63 – 87.

²²⁹ Beatrice Amado Kissinger, interview by Ernesto Portillo, Jr., video recording, 4 March 2003, U.S. L&L; Carmen Romero Phillips, interview by Delia Esparza, video recording, 5 Jan. 2003, U.S. L&L; Concepcion Escobedo, interview by Sandra Freyberg, video recording, 20 Sept. 2003, U.S. L&L; Elsie Schaffer Martinez, interviewed by Raquel C. Garza, video recording, 28 Sept. 2002, U.S. L&L.

took a job outside of the home in order to afford school supplies for their six daughters. Concepcion, whether following her mother's lead or simply thinking for herself, sought employment outside of the home while she was still a high school student. She attended school half a day, and worked in the alteration department, where she was the only woman worker, at a local department store the other half of the day.²³⁰ Else Schaffer Martinez, on the other hand, stopped attending San Antonio's Sidney Lanier High School during her ninth grade year.²³¹ She left Lanier not because of familial or cultural expectations that she belonged in the home, but rather because she "did not like what they were teaching [me]. I wanted to learn what I wanted to learn." Else, in fact, loved school, but she did not enjoy Lanier's vocational curriculum.²³² She had aspirations for a white-collar career and knew she would not gain the necessary skills at Lanier. Instead, she left Lanier High School to be homeschooled in a curriculum appropriate for her long-term professional goals of being "an interpreter or a business owner."

In addition to asserting their independence at home and school, these *mujeres* also established themselves as productive members of their communities. As scholars have recently shown, Mexican women of this generation often worked with benevolence associations, *mutualistas* and women's auxiliary groups.²³³ Before

²³⁰ Concepcion Escobedo, interview by Sandra Freyberg, video recording, 20 Sept. 2003.

²³¹ Sidney Lanier High School is located on San Antonio's Westside; a predominately working-class and working-poor Mexican neighborhood. Lanier High School was San Antonio's first vocational high school.

²³² Elsie Schaffer Martinez, interviewed by Raquel C. Garza, video recording, 28 Sept. 2002.

²³³ Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010); Gabriela González, "Carolina

Concepcion Alvarado Escobedo enlisted in the WAAC she served as the air-raid warden of her city block. During air raid drills “[she] walked down [her] street and made sure everybody turned off their lights” to ensure the safety of her neighborhood and the nation.²³⁴ Alvarado Escobedo’s service as an air-raid warden pushes the parameters of *mexicana* volunteerism beyond their local community or ethnic group to include service to the nation state. From an early age the women, whether by choosing to work outside of the home, to be homeschooled or by serving their country, collectively displayed a self-determination that refused to abide by cultural and social standards that relegated them to the domestic and industrial workforce. The independent thinking and assertiveness the women exhibited early on, moreover, served them well in their educational pursuits; a realm where Mexican women of their time were not always welcomed or encouraged to pursue.

Rafaela Muñiz Esquivel, Else Schaffer Martinez, Concepcion Alvarado Escobedo, Beatrice Amado Kissinger, Carmen Romero Phillips, and María Sally Salazar all “loved school,” and from a young age expressed a proclivity toward educational endeavors. They also came from families that whole-heartedly supported their academic interests. Accordingly, school figured quite prominently in their lives. Amado Kissinger, though, is the only woman who speaks candidly about the discrimination she experienced as a young student. As scholars have noted, Anglo teachers in the early- to mid-twentieth century U.S. used corporal punishment on

Munguía and Emma Tenayuca: The Politics of Benevolence and Radical Reform,” *Frontiers* 24 no. 2 (2003): 200 – 222.

²³⁴ Concepcion Escobedo, interview by Sandra Freyberg, video recording, 20 Sept. 2003.

Mexican students caught speaking Spanish at school, while Anglo children often taunted them for their accented English.²³⁵ Amado Kissinger used the anger she felt for the Anglo students who made fun of her English-speaking abilities to excel in the classroom. She explains, “I had great, great grades, and in English, I could speak better English than most of my Anglo peers.” She graduated high school in three years and, like many in this cohort of women, had aspirations to attend a college or university. Amado Kissinger and Carmen Romero Phillips both knew their parents would never be able to afford college tuition for them. Instead, they enrolled in the Nursing School at St. Mary’s Hospital in Tucson, Arizona where they worked full time to compensate for a free education.²³⁶ In middle school Rafaela Muñiz Esquivel decided she wanted to be a registered nurse and subsequently pursued her academic interests with vigor. Although Rafaela did not know how she was going to afford nursing school, she made sure to enroll in academic courses and not the vocational ones Mexican students were typically tracked into at San Antonio Vocational and Technical High School.²³⁷ Her father, as it turned out, not only secured a \$60 loan to pay Rafaela’s first year registration fees for nursing school, but he also opened a charge account at Joske’s, a leading San Antonio department store, for her to purchase the appropriate nursing student attire. According to the historiography,

²³⁵ Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 53.

²³⁶ Beatrice Amado Kissinger, interview by Ernesto Portillo, Jr., video recording, 4 March 2003; Carmen Romero Phillips, interview by Delia Esparza, video recording, 5 Jan. 2003.

²³⁷ Rafaela Esquivel, interview by Joanne Sanchez, video recording, 12 April 2001, U.S. L&L. San Antonio Vocational and Technical School was established in 1879 and first known as San Antonio High School. In 1932 it became San Antonio Vocational and Technical School, and in 1961 it was renamed Louis W. Fox Vocational and Technical High School.

people of Mexican descent of the *mujeres*’ generation generally received a substandard education in segregated and deplorable schoolhouses, commonly known as “Mexican schools.”²³⁸ Muñiz Esquivel, Schaffer Martinez, Escobedo, Amado Kissinger, Romero Phillips, and Salazar each displayed a boldness and strong sense of self in their academic lives at a time when public school administrators were more concerned with “Americanizing” and preparing *mexicana/os* to be a part of the industrial workforce than they were with providing them with a meaningful, academically rich education that would open avenues for social mobility. This group of young women displayed an assertiveness that empowered them to not only reach their intellectual goals, but to also pursue life choices that satisfied their emerging social consciousness.

All of the women, as noted above, expressed a sincere commitment to their families and familial duties and responsibilities, yet they clearly subverted familial control over their personal and professional lives. Their enlistment, even as they surrendered themselves to the hyper-masculine U.S. armed forces, ultimately served as a means to assert control over their subject positions. Else Martinez was nineteen years old when a WAAC recruiter arrived in Laredo, Texas. She immediately visited the recruiting office not only to find out more information about the WAAC, but to also enlist. Upon learning that she was too young to join the service, she immediately volunteered to work in the recruiting office until she was of legal age.²³⁹ Else’s family

²³⁸ Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women or Dogs Allowed*, 31 – 33.

²³⁹ WAAC enlistees had to be between the ages of 21 and 45 to enlist. Judith A. Bellafaire, *The Women’s Army Corps: A Commemoration of World War II Service* (Washington, D.C.: Army Center of Military History, 1993)

expected her to remain living in their home until she married, so accordingly her grandmother and mother both vehemently disapproved of her decision. Else obviously did not believe she “need[ed] to get married to go out of the house,” and in spite of her family’s admonishment she enlisted in the WAAC in 1943.²⁴⁰ Concepcion Escobedo’s awareness of the country’s general discontent with the idea of women’s military service did not prevent her from enlisting in April 1943.²⁴¹ According to Escobedo, popular discourse reflected the belief that a woman’s proper place was in the home, and that women needed parents and husbands to guide them in leading a respectable life because women inherently did “not know how to behave when [they] are on [their] own.” Her mother apparently adhered to the same belief. Concepcion, who was underage at the time of her enlistment, convinced her mother to sign the requisite enlistment paperwork only after the WAAC recruiter assured Mrs. Escobedo that her daughter would be assigned to Randolph Field, a military installation approximately 18 miles from the family home in San Antonio, Texas.²⁴² María Sally Salazar, on the other hand, managed to enlist in the WAC when she was nineteen, and she did so without her parent’s consent. María used an older sister’s birth certificate to enlist in the WAC while on a trip to San Antonio. Her parents only found out when the postal worker delivered her letter of acceptance to their home. Her father wanted to report her as an underage enlistee to military officials, but her mother convinced him not to for fear that María would get into trouble with the

²⁴⁰ Elsie Schaffer Martinez, interviewed by Raquel C. Garza, video recording, 28 Sept. 2002.

²⁴¹ Meyer, *Greating GI Jane*, 11 – 50.

²⁴² Concepcion Escobedo, interview by Sandra Freyberg, video recording, 20 Sept. 2003.

authorities.²⁴³ “It takes guts,” explains María in her interview, to volunteer to serve in the armed forces during war. Apparently these nine Mexican American women not only had the guts to enlist, but they also had the guts to confront U.S. hegemony and Mexican patriarchy in their everyday lives.

“It Was Just Like Having a Regular Job:” Military Service and Mexican American Women’s Social Mobility

Although there is not a Mexican American women’s service record in the U.S. or Chicana/o historical narrative by which to compare with this group, there are a number of similarities between the women that suggest larger patterns in their subjective experience. According to their interviews, the women primarily entered the armed forces for two reasons. First, most of the *mujeres*, not unlike their Chicano counterparts, speak about joining the service out of a sense of patriotism and loyalty to the United States. Second, the majority of the women had dreams to “get out of dodge” and see the world, and for them the military provided the only means to do so. Upon their enlistment Beatrice Amado Kissinger, Carmen Romero Phillips, Else Schaffer Martinez, Concepcion Alvarado Escobedo, Emma Villareal Hernandez, Felicitas Cerda Flores and Anna Torres Vazquez all received assignments within the continental U.S., while María Sally Salazar and Rafaela Muñoz Esquivel served in war zones in the Pacific and European theaters respectively. Whether they served on the home front or in a war zone, if they did not serve as a nurse, as Amado Kissinger, Romero Phillips and Muñoz Esquivel did, then they primarily worked in menial jobs.

²⁴³ María Sally Salazar, interviewed by Nicole Muñoz, video recording, 28 Sept. 2002. Once Salazar was discharged she hired an attorney to change the name on her military records from Amelia Salazar, her sister’s name, to her name so that she could access her Veteran’s benefits.

Nonetheless, all but one of the women speaks fondly of their time in the service, and they all proudly claimed they would do it again. Even María Sally Salazar, who developed serious health issues during her tour in the Pacific, is 100% disabled and still has nightmares about her time in the war zone, declared, “It was an experience I would not change for anything in the world.”²⁴⁴ And, while that wartime experience is strikingly similar to their fellow women warriors whom either enlisted in the armed forces or labored in the mobilization industry it is also markedly different. Unlike the “respectable” upper-middle and upper class white corpswomen General Marshall and Congresswoman Rogers originally sought, the *mujeres* all entered the armed forces with a work record that predated the war. Their entry into the service, in other words, was not their first foray into the paid workforce. It was though, in contrast with ‘Rosita the Riveter’ who predominately worked in a fairly diverse mobilization industry, their first encounter with an overwhelming white labor force. This generation of *mexicanas*, whether as ‘Rosita the Riveters,’ “deviant” pachucas or Mexican American servicewomen, refused to adhere to cultural pressures that limited their social mobility, however the transitory nature of military service seemingly provided Muñiz Esquivel, Cerda Flores, Torres Vazquez, Salazar, Schaffer Martinez, Alvarado Escobedo, Romero Phillips, Amado Kissinger and Villareal Hernandez with a larger stage on which to assert their Mexican American subjectivities.

In U.S. history, the Second World War is considered a major touchstone for women. Women, studies show, left the domestic sphere for the first time and entered

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

the industrial ranks “to take the place of a man so that he could go to the frontline and fight.”²⁴⁵ According to this narrative, at the end of the war women quietly returned home and resumed their primary roles as wives and mothers. Yet, a number of scholars have shown that thousands of women of color and working class women in the mobilization industry had a history of paid labor in and outside of the home long before “the good war.”²⁴⁶ That is also the case for this group of Mexican American servicewomen; many who began working at a very early age. In Texas, Arizona and the Midwest, the women worked as at home piece-meal laborers, pecan shellers, garment manufacturers, seamstresses, as factory workers and in other service related industries. They primarily worked in order to contribute to the household income, but a few also used their earnings to socialize with friends or to buy “lippystick” and other accoutrements.²⁴⁷ A number of the interviewees, perhaps because of a prolonged presence in the workforce, frame their time in the military as a mere continuation of their prewar labor experience. The military not only functioned as another employment opportunity for them, but the raced and classed nature of the civilian sexual division of labor provided them with an otherwise seamless transition to the similarly organized martial workforce.

²⁴⁵ Concepcion Escobedo, interview by Sandra Freyberg, video recording, 20 Sept. 2003.

²⁴⁶ Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives*; Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labor after the Civil War* (Harvard University Press, 1995); Julia Kirk Blackwelder, *Women of the Depression*.

²⁴⁷ Rafaela Esquivel, interview by Joanne Sanchez, video recording, 12 April 2001; Concepcion Escobedo, interview by Sandra Freyberg, video recording, 20 Sept. 2003; Roberto and Ann Torres Vazquez, interview by William Luna, video recording, 20 June 2002; Beatrice Amado Kissinger, interview by Ernesto Portillo, Jr., video recording, 4 March 2003; and Else Schaffer Martinez, interviewed by Raquel C. Garza, video recording, 28 Sept. 2002.

After Concepcion Escobedo's job in San Antonio's garment industry did not work out (she suffered physical ailments from the chemicals used in the factories) she looked to the armed forces for employment. She describes her time as the baker for the women's squadron at Randolph Field as "just like having a regular job."²⁴⁸ As a member of the WAVES Emma Hernandez was assigned to the control tower at Rodd Field in Corpus Christi, Texas where she logged air flight hours for the trainees. She portrays her work in the WAVES as a rather mundane office job and "not all that interesting." Else Schaffer Martinez's foray into the labor force before the war, on the other hand, seems to have anticipated the racial and gender hierarchy she would contend with in the military. After she completed basic training she had three options to choose from for her first assignment: to work in a lab, in the motor corps, or as a secretary. Else claims to have informed her superiors "that I do [not] want to be a secretary for [anyone], so I'll take the lab."²⁴⁹ Although she chose the job that gave her a sense of autonomy, the job remains consistent with military leaders' intent to fill menial jobs with women of color and working-class women. Nevertheless, adjusting to life in the military proved to be easy for these *mujeres* precisely because of their working-poor to working-class background and the similar nature of their martial labor to their prewar jobs. Their wartime labor, furthermore, simultaneously situated them in a workplace where they were the clear minority and yet provided them with an even broader social experience than *mexicanas* on the home front.

²⁴⁸ Concepcion Escobedo, interview by Sandra Freyberg, video recording, 20 Sept. 2003.

²⁴⁹ Else Schaffer Martinez, interviewed by Raquel C. Garza, video recording, 28 Sept. 2002.

Before the start of the war, most women of Mexican descent labored in industries that kept them in close proximity to immediate and extended family members, as well as friends from their neighborhoods.²⁵⁰ This made for a workplace wherein people of Mexican descent primarily worked alongside other *mexicana/os* and under the supervision of Anglo bosses. While business owners used prevailing gender and racial hierarchies to organize the mobilization industry, wartime necessity also created a more diverse work environment as women from different class, ethnic and religious backgrounds responded to the nation's need for workers.²⁵¹ Tensions, nevertheless, ran high on the industrial shop floor and among service personnel on military installations as Euro-Americans clashed with ethnic minorities, predominantly African Americans, whom they perceived to be transgressing racial lines. Emma Hernandez and Beatrice Amado Kissinger both witnessed the segregated nature of the armed forces while in basic training and tending to wounded soldiers in military hospitals respectively. Yet for this group of servicewomen, and unlike African American servicewomen, the context of an all woman workforce overwhelmingly made for a wartime labor experience free of racial animosity.²⁵² Felicitas Cerda Flores, María Sally Salazar, Concepcion Escobedo and Beatrice Amado Kissinger, and most likely the rest of the *mujeres*, served in units, and largely on military posts, where they were the only person of Mexican descent. In retrospect Concepcion believes that the Waacs who never made an effort to befriend her might

²⁵⁰ Kirk Blackwelder, *Women of the Depression*, 60 – 74; Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives*.

²⁵¹ Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives*; Santillán, “Rosita the Riveter.”

²⁵² Brenda L. Moore, *To Serve My Country, To Serve My Race: The Story of the Only African American Waacs Stationed Overseas during World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 49 – 83.

have done so because of racist attitudes, but otherwise none of the women experienced any discrimination while in the service.²⁵³ Felicitas describes her relationship with white Waacs as “beautiful.” She explains, “I fit in real good with the girls from all over the United States...I think that the way I got along with, was, is that because I thought I was quite like them. Nobody made me look different. They just took me as one of them.”²⁵⁴ Indeed, notions of racial, class and gender difference shaped these *mujeres*’ collective experience in the armed forces, but apparently overt acts of racism were absent from their particular ranks. The predominately white workspace, as well as the majority white U.S. military, did not seem to phase the women who came from communities segregated by race and class, and they certainly did not feel compelled to adhere to the rigid social and cultural parameters imposed upon them by U.S. society in general and their families in particular.

As scholars have shown, the Second World War created an opportunity for young women of Mexican descent to push the boundaries of what their families deemed “acceptable.” Through their wartime labor and the accompanying social activities, Mexican American women increasingly ventured away from the domestic sphere and developed public lives beyond the realm of their family homes and neighborhoods. Young Mexican American women (and men) enjoyed a home front life that included attending dances unchaperoned, listening to English-language music, trips to the movie theater and their ever increasing participation in American consumerism. More and more, they developed social lives outside of the *barrio* that

²⁵³ Concepcion Escobedo, interview by Sandra Freyberg, video recording, 20 Sept. 2003.

²⁵⁴ Felicitas Cerda Flores, interview by Paul R. Zepeda, video recording, 2 Mar. 2002, U.S. L&L.

included interethnic friendships. Some Mexican American women even moved out of their parents' home and into apartments with other single women with whom they worked.²⁵⁵ As a result of their military service, a number of these Mexican American women experienced even more social freedom than their home front counterparts. While *mexicanas* on the home front expanded their social circles and ventured to “typically white public arenas,” these Mexican American servicewomen developed their public lives in cities, states and countries far from home. While stationed in Colorado Else Schaffer Martinez enjoyed beers with, and even dated, some of the young servicemen on post. She and a few of her Waac colleagues used their four-day passes to travel to Wyoming, California, the Grand Canyon and North Texas.²⁵⁶ In May 1945, just days after Germany's surrender, Rafaela Esquivel celebrated her birthday in Paris where she visited the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe and ate in sidewalk cafes.²⁵⁷ Beatrice Amado Kissinger had a very active social calendar while she was in the Navy Nurse Corps. She claims, “I was having a ball” and too busy with her “beautiful social life” in San Francisco to miss living in small town Arizona.²⁵⁸ World War II undoubtedly served as a historical moment wherein second-generation Mexican American women redefined notions of *mexicanidad* to reflect their bicultural, bilingual and highly mobile life in the U.S., and this group of

²⁵⁵ Elizabeth R. Escobedo, “The Pachuca Panic: Sexual and Cultural Battlegrounds in World War II Los Angeles,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 38, 2 (Summer 2007): 133-156; Catherine S. Ramírez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism and the Cultural Politics of Memory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Culture*; Richard Santillán, “Rosita the Riveter,” 115 – 147.

²⁵⁶ Else Schaffer Martinez, interviewed by Raquel C. Garza, video recording, 28 Sept. 2002.

²⁵⁷ Rafaela Esquivel, interview by Joanne Sanchez, video recording, 12 April 2001.

²⁵⁸ Beatrice Amado Kissinger, interview by Ernesto Portillo, Jr., video recording, 4 March 2003.

mexicanas went to great lengths to extend their wartime sensibilities to their postwar lives.

“Uncle Sam said ‘I Need You!’” State Ideology and Mexican Women’s Cultural Citizenship

Undoubtedly, state-designed propaganda produced during the Second World War served to interpellate women in the U.S. into “good” citizen subjects who in turn mobilized en masse to serve their country during its time of need. Posters, newspaper advertisements, film reels and radio campaigns, just to name a few of the mediums used, encouraged women to extend their “traditional” roles as mothers, wives and caretakers to the entire nation state and take care of the country’s wartime needs through paid labor outside of the home. Women took up this call to action that in essence functioned as a state sanctioned disruption of cultural norms that otherwise relegated women to the domestic sphere. Women of all ethnic, class and religious backgrounds, thus, took part in the nationalist project of preserving “American democracy” when they responded to ‘Uncle Sam’s’ demand for help. Moreover, their wartime contribution often served as the basis for their long-term investment in U.S. democratic values and patriotism as manifested during the mid-twentieth century. Yet like the countless women who sustained their public roles beyond the war years, the nine *mujeres* discussed here also refused to adhere to societal expectations and retire to the domestic sphere at the end of the war. Given their lives before the war, these Mexican American women unsurprisingly spent much of their postwar lives in very public spheres wherein they continued to pursue long-held personal goals and objectives and demonstrated a deep-seeded commitment to community activism. As

interpellated subjects the women worked to ensure that they and their local communities had access to the democratic principles they were recruited to preserve during “the good war.” In other words, they asserted their cultural citizenship on behalf of themselves, their families and communities as a means to claim the rights implicitly guaranteed to this country’s citizen-soldier.

As discussed in Chapter I, in spite of the racialized patriotism reflected in World War II woman-centered propaganda, the media campaign ultimately served as a means for women to stake a claim in their country and prove their “Americanness” in ways the state previously denied them. For Mexican American women wartime notions of Americanness and the accompanying propaganda certainly resonated with early twentieth century Americanization programs wherein public school officials, religious missionaries and social workers worked to assimilate Mexican children into the hegemonic social and industrial order through instruction in English, vocational training, dance, hygiene, cooking and of course civics.²⁵⁹ Felicitas Flores’ understanding of citizenship and civic duty, for example, is grounded in childhood experiences at her local Methodist church where, she explains, church leaders and church programs “put it in my head that we were American.”²⁶⁰ These self-appointed purveyors of “the American way of life” and their Americanization programs undoubtedly laid the ideological groundwork for the state propaganda of World War II that encouraged, almost demanded even, all Americans to “take up arms” and preserve that way of life. Mexican American women’s mobilization, thus, is not only

²⁵⁹ Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows*, 33 – 50.

²⁶⁰ Felicitas Cerda Flores, interview by Paul R. Zepeda, video recording, 2 Mar. 2002.

a response to “war nationalism” but also to internalized processes of Americanization that fashioned them into “good” citizens.²⁶¹ This is not to say that these nine women were passively interpellated into citizen soldiers. In fact, María Sally Salazar, Concepcion Alvarado Escobedo, Felicitas Cerda Flores and Beatrice Amado Kissinger reflect the varied ways in which propaganda and war nationalism informed their wartime subjectivity. More specifically, the *mujeres*’ experiences with state ideological structures, both prewar and wartime, allows us to draw connections between nationalism and subjectivity in a manner that lends new insight into the ideological subject position of World War II-era Mexican Americans.

Wartime propaganda manifested in the lives of María Sally Salazar and Concepcion Escobedo in fairly negligible ways. In their interviews, both María and Concepcion focus less on the particulars of the state-sponsored media blitz and more on the reasons why they decided to enlist in the armed forces. When asked why she enlisted María Sally Salazar matter-of-factly claims, “We all wanted to go.” Concepcion Escobedo, on the other hand, merely states, “I felt like I should do something.”²⁶² Ms. Salazar does not specify whom she means by “we,” but one could infer she is referring to the group of friends with whom she attended school and socialized. Similarly, Ms. Escobedo provides a fairly nondescript justification for her enlistment. One could argue that their ostensibly underwhelming reasons for taking up arms is a reflection of their ambivalence towards a country unfriendly to

²⁶¹ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 171.

²⁶² María Sally Salazar, interviewed by Nicole Muñoz, video recording, 28 Sept. 2002; Concepcion Escobedo, interview by Sandra Freyberg, video recording, 20 Sept. 2003.

Mexicans, but if Salazar's and Escobedo's statements are understood in the context of Americanization programs they likely encountered as young people, then their comments offer insight into their sense of belonging to the nation state. I contend that like most Mexicans of their generation, María and Concepcion understood themselves to be American precisely because of their early exposure to Americanization programs. Vicki L. Ruiz argues that in the face of Americanization "immigrants and their children pick, borrow, retain and create distinct cultural forms," or what she calls cultural coalescence, and she and other scholars have shown how through fashion, language, morals and values Salazar and Escobedo's generation was conspicuously Mexican *American*.²⁶³ That is, the Mexican American generation, whether as 'Rosita the Riveter,' the countercultural *pachuca/o* or the patriotic soldier, exemplifies the dialectics of interpellation even as they situated their subject positions firmly within an American, imagined or otherwise, community. Thus, the "we" María refers to and Concepcion's commitment to her community can be understood to simultaneously mean their local Mexican community and the nationwide community of citizen subjects of which they considered themselves to be a part of long before the U.S.' entry into World War II. The *mujeres*, in other words, did not enlist in the service as a means to prove they were worthy of belonging to a nation that otherwise considered them second-class citizens, but because they felt as if they already belonged to the nation.

²⁶³ Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows*, 33 – 50; Ramirez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit*; Escobedo, "The Pachuca Panic;" Luis Alvarez, *The Power of the Zoot: Youth Culture and Resistance During World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

For Felicitas Flores, on the other hand, war nationalism and the accompanying propaganda played an integral role in her decision to become a soldier. Apparently one of the country's most iconic wartime images inspired Felicitas to enlist in the WAC in 1943. One day in transit from her job as a secretary she simply "...got off [of] the bus and 'Uncle Sam' said 'I need you!'"²⁶⁴ Flores surely spent the first two years of the war inundated with newsreels, posters and the like all carefully crafted to entice her into the war effort, yet she responded not to those images but to the embodiment of her metaphoric family – the nation state. 'Uncle Sam' seemingly evoked Felicitas' sense of responsibility to family *and* to nation simultaneously, hence revealing her, and arguably Mexican Americans in general, status as a permanent outside. Ms. Flores, as was the case with most Mexican Americans of her generation, indeed considered herself to be a patriotic American in spite of this country's persistent treatment of Mexicans as "a problem."²⁶⁵ 'Uncle Sam,' as the personification of her American family, enabled Felicitas to override the inherent tension between her sense of "Americanness" and belonging to the nation state and her status as a second-class citizen by functioning as the bridge between her familial duty and duty to nation. Her immediate and almost visceral reaction to her American *tio*'s request for help therefore was to enlist in the armed forces. Ms. Flores' response, moreover, suggests an interpellated subject position in negotiation with and not blindly loyal to the ideological underpinnings of the state sponsored propaganda. Whereas the direct correlation between Flores' enlistment in the WAC and wartime

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women or Dogs Allowed*, 59 – 61.

propaganda highlights the tenuous subject position of Mexican Americans in pre- and wartime America, the use of Beatrice's image in the media campaign is symbolic of a re-imagined nation state.

Beatrice Amado Kissinger has a keen awareness of the role of war nationalism and propaganda in mobilizing Americans to work and fight on behalf of their country. In discussing “the good war” Beatrice explains, “It was a different kind of war. No one questioned why we were at war. It was a different kind of patriotism and you didn’t want to be left behind.”²⁶⁶ Given the contentiousness surrounding the long-term goals of, as well as some of the tactics used in, the U.S.’ current war, Ms. Kissinger can certainly be understood as distinguishing between patriotism of the



Fig. 3.1 Ensign Beatrice Amado Kissinger, Navy Nurse Corps. Courtesy of the Voces Oral History Project, Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin

mid-twentieth century with that of today. Without a doubt, the accompanying image of Navy Nurse Beatrice at the bedside of a wounded soldier serves as a testament of her patriotic commitment to the country, but I assert that it also represents a “different kind of patriotism” than the two she alludes to in the above

statement. The image of Beatrice in her Navy nurse’s uniform actually functioned as part of the state’s media campaign to ensure American hearts and minds remained committed to victory abroad. Government officials took this particular photo of Amado Kissinger while she served at a military hospital in San Francisco and subsequently published it in the local newspaper of her hometown Nogales,

²⁶⁶ Beatrice Amado Kissinger, interview by Ernesto Portillo, Jr., video recording, 4 March 2003.

Arizona.²⁶⁷ On one hand, it represents the loyalty and patriotism of interpellated Mexican American subjects who accordingly sacrificed their lives and those of their loved ones for a country that ultimately considered them unworthy of first-class citizenship; indeed a particular kind of patriotism in and of itself. On the other hand, the significance of print capitalism in transcending racial-ethnic, class and gender lines in a manner that allows for reimagining national community compels us to take a different look at Beatrice's picture. If the material reality for people of Mexican descent in wartime American is second-class citizenship, then the government's published image of Amado Kissinger in her military uniform symbolizes the Mexican American Generation's patriotism to a reimagined nation wherein Mexican subjectivities do not pose a threat to the body politic but instead belong to and function as full members of their community. Beatrice's image, furthermore, anticipates her and her Mexican American servicewomen colleagues' assertion of an interpellated postwar subject position intent on claiming their individual and community rights.

Even before the U.S. declared war on Japan, Felicitas, Else, Concepcion, Rafaela, Beatrice, Carmen, María, Emma and Ann exhibited behavior that undermines popular and academic understandings of Mexican women as subservient to patriarchal authority and passive political subjects. From an early age this group of *mexicanas* pursued public and private lives that often defied Mexican cultural norms and disregarded larger societal expectations of women of their class and racial-ethnic

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

background. Surely this group of women's prewar lives and their military service is a clear indication that at any given historical moment they embodied interpellated subject positions determined not just by external structures but also by themselves. As such, Felicitas, Else, Concepcion, Rafaela, Beatrice, Carmen, María and Ann spent their postwar lives consistently disrupting hegemonic beliefs that as Mexican women they should quietly remain in the home and tend to all things domestic. Instead, upon their discharge the women pursued long-held personal goals and objectives that included travelling to other parts of the country, continuing with their education and serving as activists for their Mexican American, religious and veteran's communities.

Almost from the moment Else Schaffer Martinez, Carmen Romero Phillips and Beatrice Amado Kissinger were discharged from the military they made it clear that home was not necessarily their first, let alone their final, destination. When Else enlisted in the WAAC she escaped a life confined to the domestic realm and the hyper-surveillance of her "female respectability" by her mother and grandmother. In spite of the military's tight control over the professional and personal lives of female inductees, Else's time in the service only reinforced her sense of autonomy and claim to a public life.²⁶⁸ After her honorable discharge Schaffer Martinez spent time travelling up and down the eastern seaboard before she took a job as a B-17 airplane inspector in Georgia. She only stayed in Georgia for three months because soon thereafter she moved to Mexico City where she used the GI Bill to attend El Colegio de México (a point I will come back to shortly). Likewise, Carmen and Beatrice

²⁶⁸ Escobedo, "The Pachuca Panic," 140.

travelled and worked in cities and states far from their families.²⁶⁹ Actually, after the war ended Carmen returned to Tucson and worked as a nurse at her alma mater, St. Mary's Hospital, for a few months before she moved to Corpus Christi, Texas to take a job with a flight surgeon she worked with in the Army. Beatrice's postwar life took her to Great Lakes Naval Hospital in Illinois where she continued her work as nurse. Else's "time on the road" ultimately enabled her to avoid "home" in both the literal and metaphorical sense. Else put distance between herself and her familial home in order to evade her Mexican family's sexual double standard that expected women to remain at home under the watchful eye of her family until marriage. In doing so, Else also sidestepped her family's expectation that she take on the role of dutiful wife and mother and establish her own home at an early age. Else, contrary to traditional Mexican cultural standards, did not get married until she was 29 years old. While both Carmen and Beatrice married shortly after the end of the war, the women utilized the public persona military service afforded them to make new claims to a life outside of the home.

As explicated above, a majority of the Mexican American women discussed here enjoyed the intellectual challenges of a rigorous education. Rafaela Muñiz, Carmen Romero Phillips and Beatrice Amado Kissinger, the nurses of the group, entered the armed forces with all the academic training necessary to build a long-term career. Though not all of the other women desired a career outside of the home,

²⁶⁹ Else Schaffer Martinez, interviewed by Raquel C. Garza, video recording, 28 Sept. 2002; Rafaela Esquivel, interview by Joanne Sanchez, video recording, 12 April 2001; Beatrice Amado Kissinger, interview by Ernesto Portillo, Jr., video recording, 4 March 2003; Carmen Romero Phillips, interview by Delia Esparza, video recording, 5 Jan. 2003.

Concepcion Escobedo, Felicitas Flores, María Sally Salazar and Else Schaffer Martínez all used the GI Bill to further their education. Concepcion might have left the service to get married, but that did not mean she intended to live her life as a stay-at-home mother. Escobedo used the GI Bill to attend both Beauty and Business school and subsequently owned her own beauty salon in Harlingen, Texas. Felicitas and María accessed the government assistance to attain credentials in education and business administration respectively. Unlike Else, Concepcion, Felicitas and María pursued an education while simultaneously serving as the primary caregiver for their children. In spite of Else's intense desire to evade the trappings of domesticity, her educational endeavors ended once she married in 1951. But until then Else lived in Mexico City where she used the GI Bill to enroll in a linguistics program in order to fulfill her childhood dream of becoming an interpreter. Her formal education ended when she became a wife, but the thirst for knowledge she and her cohort exhibited over the span of their lifetime underscores the significance education played in their articulation of an oppositional subject position. When, as young girls, this group rejected the vocational curriculum imposed on them by public school officials and insisted on an academically rigorous education they refused to be interpellated by the state and Mexican cultural standards into a proletariat or a women defined solely by domestic duties respectively. Similarly, the mere fact that Escobedo, Flores, Salazar and Schaffer Martinez accessed an education through the GI Bill situated them contrary to national and familial expectations that they return to the domestic sphere once the war ended. Their postwar educational undertakings only further enabled

them to reconstitute Mexican women's subjectivity, whether as stay-at-home moms, occasional workers, career women or something in between. Moreover, their ability to access college funding through the GI Bill, available only to a particular interpellated subject position, highlights a subjectivity that is simultaneously subjugated and oppositional.

The space Rafaela Muñoz Esquivel, Felicitas Cerda Flores, María Sally Salazar, Else Schaffer Martínez, Concepcion Alvarado Escobedo, Emma Villarreal Hernandez, Carmen Romero Phillips, Beatrice Amado Kissinger and Anna Torres Vazquez claimed in their families and society as young adults is indicative of an emerging social consciousness made manifest primarily through individual acts of self-determination. In their postwar lives, that same social consciousness compelled the women to carve out a distinct space not only for themselves but also for their community. In fact, all nine of the women spent much of their adult lives actively engaged in various activities and organizations committed to community empowerment. Through their involvement in church groups, civic organizations, veteran's associations, political parties and local schools, each of these women worked particularly hard to effect positive social change for Mexicans in the U.S. As PTA president of De Zavala Elementary School and Edison Junior High School, Felicitas ensured children in the predominantly Mexican neighborhood of Magnolia Park, Houston received an enriching education. María Sally and Ann participated in the electoral process as a volunteer on election campaigns of Democratic candidates in Laredo, Texas and as the only Latina to serve on the board of the Women's

Democratic Club in Crown Point, Indiana respectively. Ann's primary avenue to achieve social and political rights for people of Mexican descent, though, was as a member of LULAC. Ms. Torres Vazquez joined LULAC to directly challenge the unjust treatment of mexicana/os in the Midwest. Her success, as a regular member, District Director and as the first woman State Director in the Midwest, earned her an induction into the LULAC Hall of Fame.

In short, the pattern of everyday life choices the *mujeres* made to claim space, first on behalf of themselves and then their Mexican community, reflects what William V. Flores and Rina Benmayor refer to as cultural citizenship. According to Flores and Benmayor "cultural citizenship can be thought of as a broad range of activities of everyday life through which Latinos and other groups claim space in society and eventually claim rights."²⁷⁰ Informed by their prewar social consciousness and emboldened by their military service, these nine Mexican American women's postwar life choices crossed into the political realm and ultimately reshaped the U.S.

²⁷⁰ William V. Flores and Rina Benmayor, eds, *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space and Rights* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 15.

CONCLUSION

The Mexican American Generation, of which the individuals examined in this dissertation are part, emerged from the midst of the Great Depression and the accompanying deportation and forced repatriation of Mexicans to Mexico, a harsh period of Americanization in the educational system that was designed to track Mexican American students into vocational careers, and the hyper-nationalism and accompanying violence of a state in total war – which included the Sleepy Lagoon murder trial and the Zoot Suit Riots. Dedicated to advancing the civil rights of Mexicans in the U.S., this generation organized across the political spectrum, from radical affiliations with the Communist Party to the patriotic LULAC; they exercised their agency by forming unions and going on strike to confront discriminatory hiring practices, harsh work conditions and the dual wage system prevalent in U.S. industry, and they extended their battle against discrimination to include legal challenges to de facto segregationist practices. In doing so, the Mexican American Generation challenged state structures that disenfranchised, proletarianized and ultimately relegated Mexicans to a third racial category. Not unlike other members of their cohort, the Mexican Americans discussed in *Military Formations* deployed a range of everyday practices “which, taken together, “claim[ed] and establish[ed] a distinct social space” for Mexican Americans in the U.S.²⁷¹ While establishing that “distinct social space” served as a means for these citizen subjects to claim membership in the

²⁷¹ William V. Flores & Rina Benmayor, *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 1.

body politic and eventually their social and civil rights, it also foregrounds what Chela Sandoval theorizes as “ideology in opposition.” This group of Mexican Americans, in other words, inhabited and moved between various subject positions wherein they “function[ed] within, yet beyond, the demands of dominant ideology.” Their tactical subjectivity, or differential form of oppositional consciousness, served to contest hegemonic understandings of racial and gender hierarchies and to advance social movement.²⁷² They, like the rest of the Mexican American Generation, brought about significant material transformations for Mexicans in the U.S., yet in spite of their short- and long-term civil rights advances, their oppositional subjectivity remains under accounted for in, and often at odds with, U.S. and Chicana/o historiography.

Chicana/os scholars generally understand World War II as a watershed moment for Mexicans in the U.S. for two reasons. First, it afforded Mexicans travel, primarily in the form of military deployments, expanded job opportunities, increased their social mobility and provided them with new sources of income. In essence, “the good war” precipitated positive social change in Mexican communities. Second, Mexicans, emboldened by their high rate of military enlistment and as one of the most highly decorated ethnic groups of the war, gained a greater self-awareness of their Americanness, and subsequently shored up their claims to first-class citizenship and increased their participation in U.S. civic life. In other words, the prevailing frameworks asserts that Mexicans took on a decidedly *more American* identity post-

²⁷² Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 43 – 44, 58 – 59.

World War II, and therefore Mexican American civil rights struggles are primarily a post-war phenomenon. While this study does not challenge the assertion that the war effected social change for Mexicans in the U.S., it does contend that the Second World War is a key period of change for slightly different reasons. Undoubtedly the Mexican Americans who are the subject of this dissertation participated in the rampant “war nationalism” of the mid-twentieth century, but they also possessed a keen sense of their Americanness and belonging to the nation state long before the commencement of hostilities.²⁷³ More precisely, they did not predicate the ideological basis of their Americanness on their military service and “war nationalism” but on prewar processes of Americanization.

Formal and informal processes of Americanization inculcated the everyday lives of Mexicans long before the U.S. entered the war. From vocational curricula and industrial training, to religious-based youth groups, popular culture and patriotic civic organizations, prewar state ideological apparatuses operated to ensure they fit into the social and industrial order of the U.S. According to the historiography, this group of Mexicans responded to Americanization efforts in much of the same ways as the rest of their peers. Through their mass consumerism, commercialized leisure, their political and civic engagement, and through their time in the classroom, they seemingly adhered to the ideological underpinnings of Americanization campaigns and inhabited an American subject position.²⁷⁴ Even as state structures interpellated

²⁷³ Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 171.

²⁷⁴ Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 53 – 71.

this group of Mexicans into “good” American subjects who would eventually respond to their country’s ‘call to arms,’ they fashioned a distinct prewar subject position for themselves. More specifically, their American subjectivity reflects what historian Vicki L. Ruiz refers to as a cultural coalescence. This group, like countless Mexican immigrants and their children in the early twentieth century, did not mindlessly internalize processes of Americanization and interpellate into good subjects, but instead they “pick[ed], borrow[ed], retain[ed] and creat[ed] distinct cultural forms.”²⁷⁵ As children and young adults they manipulated, shaped and blended their Mexican and American sensibilities to embody a subjectivity neither Mexican nor American, but a subjectivity conspicuously Mexican American. In other words, the wartime workers and military personnel who have been central to my study claimed a decidedly Mexican American social space early in their lives thereby establishing their membership to the body politic. This is not to say that hegemonic society embraced Mexicans or even treated them as first-class citizens, but rather that the cultural coalescence evidenced in their prewar lives is indicative of a “broad range of activities of everyday life through which” they created social and cultural space and “fe[lt] a sense of membership and belonging” to the prewar nation state.²⁷⁶

This study contends, though, that in invoking a Mexican American subjectivity this group did much more than claim social and cultural space. This group’s prewar subjectivity reflects tactical interventions to state ideology, or what Sandoval theorizes as differential consciousness. More specifically, I have argued that

²⁷⁵ Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows*, 33 – 50.

²⁷⁶ Flores & Benmayor, *Latino Cultural Citizenship*, 1 – 15.

in situating themselves dialectically to state ideology these Mexicans embodied an interpellated subject position while simultaneously “transfigur[ing] [it] into [an] effective sit[e] of resistance to an oppressive ordering of power relations.”²⁷⁷

Furthermore, I assert that when the Mexican women examined here deployed their Mexican American subjectivity they effectively transformed it into a site of resistance against American state ideology *and* Mexican cultural expectations. In this sense the widely critiqued “Americanness” of the Mexican American Generation does not necessarily signify a unidimensional, assimilationist, integrationist subject position. Instead, this generation’s “Americanness” can be understood as “an ability to read the current situation of power and self-consciously choosing and adopting the ideological stand best suited to push against its configurations.”²⁷⁸ When this group and their peers seemingly privileged their Americanness and American citizenship they often did so by positioning themselves within, but in contestation, to the state. As such, though prewar Mexican American subjectivities did not manifest as revolutionary, they did serve as contestatory moments with implications for short- and long-term hegemonic understanding of race and gender.

In addition to processes of Americanization, Mexicans faced other social, cultural, political and economic structural limitations, including but not limited to immigration and legislative acts, and industrialization, that effectively transformed them into subjugated others and a core component of this country’s designated

²⁷⁷ Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 55.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

proletariats.²⁷⁹ In Gramscian terms, U.S. capitalism underwent a restructuring in the early-twentieth century wherein the state expanded its reach into society to deploy new mechanisms of hegemony. Instead of using siege warfare to force Mexicans into submission, the state's economic-based culture deployed domestic policy as a tactic to consolidate capital thereby transforming civil society into a "battleground" on which to maintain its hegemony. In an attempt to shore up power the state opened a "new" front, not a spatially grounded front but an ideological front, effectively blurring the distinction between front line and home front (the war at home). This, according to Gramsci, necessitates a shift in opposition from a war of maneuver to a war of position, or a transition from an attack fought on the streets to one fought through discourse. More specifically, he contends that to stage a war of maneuver against the state in the context of intense capitalist restructuring would result in the state "tak[ing] the offensive more openly against the oppositionists and organize permanently the 'impossibility' of internal disintegration – with controls of every kind, political, administrative, etc., reinforcement of the hegemonic 'positions' of the dominant group, etc." The state, in other words, would not tolerate political opposition in the form of direct confrontation and would take decisive action to

²⁷⁹ Francisco E. Balderrama & Raymon Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006); Natalia Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Kelly Lytle Hernandez, *Migra!: A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Benjamin Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

permanently eliminate political agitators.²⁸⁰ For Mexicans to directly challenge the U.S.' social and racial order in the early-twentieth century would almost certainly have resulted in armed repression, or their removal through deportation or other means of excising them from the body politic.²⁸¹ Hence, Mexican American prewar subjectivities as acts of contestation, whether staged as a group effort or by individuals within a seemingly apolitical context, can be understood as contributing to an early twentieth century war of position.

Moreover, this study argues that Mexican Americans consolidated their early twentieth century war of position during the Second World War. It maintains that the U.S.' state of total war during the "great war" opened a breach in its ranks sufficient enough for Mexican Americans "to rush in and obtain a definitive (strategic) victory" in its long-standing war of position.²⁸² This generation of Mexicans shored up their political offensive not by storming through (i.e., taking direct action against the state), but by slipping through the U.S.' "breach." In true Gramscian form, members of this cohort strengthened their offensive by deploying the U.S.' wartime ideological apparatuses against the state. They, quite simply, capitalized on the U.S' hyper-mobilized state by co-opting its wartime rhetoric of democracy and aligning it to suit their own social and political needs. As the evidence presented here suggests, their interpellation into good citizen-soldiers provided the opportunity to do so. The Mexican American Generation's tactical wartime subjectivity is precisely what

²⁸⁰ David Forgacs, ed., *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916 – 1935* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 225 – 230.

²⁸¹ William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, "The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin or Descent in the United States, 1848 to 1928," *Journal of Social History* Vol. 37, No. 2 (Winter 2003): 411 – 438.

²⁸² Forgacs, ed., *The Antonio Gramsci Reader*, 225.

Sandoval theorizes as a differential form of oppositional consciousness whereby citizen subjects “marshal the knowledge necessary to ‘break with ideology’ while at the same time *also* speaking in, and from within, ideology...”²⁸³ While the individuals discussed here, and the rest of their generation in general, did not confront state structures of oppression with the same level of direct action characteristic of the Chicano Movement, their simultaneously hegemonic and oppositional subjectivity did serve as “an important victory in the context of the strategic line.”²⁸⁴

When the Mexican Americans in this study inhabited the interpellated subject position of wartime worker on the home front or of active duty military personnel, they also managed to contest hegemonic notions of race and gender and thereby advance social movement. As a group, their wartime mode of differential consciousness undermined state structures that designated Mexican Americans as subjugated others and expendable and exploitable proletariats. All of the Mexicans discussed took up their country’s ‘call to arms,’ but soon after the home front workers mobilized they accessed the state’s very own institution, the Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC), to reconstitute hegemonic understandings of racial and gender equality. In filing complaints of discrimination with the FEPC, the three *mexicana* ‘Kelly Katies’ confronted Texas’ rigid racial division of labor wherein Mexican women were some of the least paid workers and experienced slower rates of upward job mobility than other women.²⁸⁵ Carlos E. Castañeda’s appointment with

²⁸³ Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 44; Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary*, xvi.

²⁸⁴ Forgacs, ed., *The Antonio Gramsci Reader*, 225.

²⁸⁵ Emilio Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas: Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 50 – 62

the FEPC proved strategic not only for their challenge to institutionalized racism and sexism on local shop floors. His tenure with the agency ultimately contributed to the building of hegemony between Mexican Americans themselves, and often between Mexicans and other emergent social groups. These four Mexican Americans, among hundreds of other Mexicans, used state apparatuses, in particular the FEPC, to bring to light the contradiction Mexican Americans, and other racialized groups, felt living in and fighting for a country founded on the principles of liberty for all, but built on a racially- and gender-based economic foundation. This is not to say that these Mexican American home front workers dismantled this country's oppressive economic structures, but they did assist in "bring[ing] about the necessary ideological concentration on the common objective to be achieved."²⁸⁶

While they primarily transformed their interpellated subject position into a "site of resistance" against the state's economic and ideological structures, when their nine service member counterparts interpellated into citizen-soldiers their subjectivity challenged American ideological apparatuses *and* Mexican social and cultural expectations. As this dissertation has argued, these nine Mexican American women spent much of their childhood and early adult lives defying Mexican cultural norms and larger societal expectations of women of their class and racial-ethnic background. The state sanctioned disruption of cultural norms during "the good war" essentially provided this group of women with the perfect opportunity to not only reinforce their prewar oppositional subject position, but to also step up their challenge to ideological

²⁸⁶ Forgas, ed., *The Antonio Gramsci Reader*, 225 – 226.

apparatuses that hindered Mexican Americans women's social mobility. Their literal "taking up of arms" allowed them to fortify their third space positionality, and mobilize it to effect positive social change for their Mexican communities in the postwar U.S. In essence, they utilized the public persona military service afforded them to reconstitute Mexican women's subjectivity, and ultimately reshape the hegemonic social order.

Whereas the Chicano "master" narrative characterizes the Mexican American Generation's wartime service and postwar political strategy as integrationist and assimilationist, this study has argued that that generation's interpellation into citizen subjects reflects a subjectivity in negotiation with and not blindly loyal to the state and its ideological apparatuses. It asserted, moreover, that this group of Mexicans' interpellation effected positive social change with wider-reaching implications than generally understood in Chicana/o and U.S. historiography. The group of Mexican Americans presented here, home front workers and military personnel alike, like many of their peers did not passively interpellate into good, citizen subjects. Instead, they self-consciously manifested an interpellated subjectivity that intervened in power and transformed social relations not only for themselves, but also for the larger Mexican community in the U.S.²⁸⁷ In an historical moment when U.S. capitalist restructuring compelled Mexicans to stage a war of position, these Mexicans manifested a subjectivity, an interpellated subjectivity no less, that crossed into the political realm. In a Gramscian framework, they "exercise[d] 'leadership,'" and

²⁸⁷ Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 58 – 64.

staged an ideological offensive; both necessary “before winning governmental power.”²⁸⁸ They, in other words, rightly inhabited an interpellated subject position, or exhibited the proper “leadership” (i.e., be hegemonic), and staged the war of position required before initiating a “frontal attack,” or a war of maneuver, against the state. In this sense, these twelve Mexican Americans in particular, and the Mexican American Generation in general, contributed to the building of and bringing shape to Mexican American hegemony and social movement that predates the Chicano Movement of the late 1960s and 1970s. They also bring to light a more nuanced relationship between Mexican Americans, war and notions of belonging to the nation state, and by implication illuminate the Mexican American GI’s presence, the personification of their generation, in the “decolonial imaginary” as a symbol of a politics of contestation and not a politics of accommodation.

²⁸⁸ Forgas, ed., *The Antonio Gramsci Reader*, 249.

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