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Introduction

ANTHONY QUIROZ

The serious, scholarly study of Mexican American history is a relatively recent development. Begun by a handful of researchers in the 1920s, the field grew slowly through the 1950s and expanded rapidly after the 1960s to the present. Through their research, scholars of the Mexican American historical experience have both contributed to our understandings of historical processes and discovered new directions for historical inquiry. Their findings have shed light on the broader sweeps of American history by showing the symbiotic relationship between Mexican Americans and the rest of the country. Mexican Americans were generally ignored, marginalized, and disrespected in the traditional canon of American history until the late twentieth century. But as their numbers grew, so too did the number of scholars interested in studying them. Mexican Americans have now become more firmly entrenched in scholarly discussions about historical issues such as race and ethnicity, gender relationships, class, politics, education, economics, culture, and in an ongoing negotiation of the meaning of *American*. This book contributes to that growing body of literature by providing students

of Mexican American history with a compilation of biographies of key Mexican Americans active from about 1920 through the 1960s. The purpose of this work is to offer readers a concise biographical overview of some of the actors who made Mexican American history during this period and to cast them in the context of their times in order to shed light on the historical significance of their contributions.

The folks who became socially active during this period inherited a social climate of hostility based on deeply rooted, pervasive racism. Anti-Mexican sentiments were born in the nineteenth century—first in Texas in the aftermath of the Texas Revolution against the Mexican government in 1835–1836 and across the entire American Southwest after the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848. Gradually dispossessed of their land, Mexican-descent farmers and ranchers experienced downward mobility throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Poor *trabajadores* (workers) remained mired in an economic system that disallowed opportunities for upward mobility. Anglo employers saw them as lazy, incompetent, and dishonest, and they relegated these laborers to low-wage, low-skill manual jobs. Those with agricultural skills could find work on farms and ranches. With the loss of land and opportunity came a degraded social and political status. Mexican Americans had been successfully relegated to second-class citizenship by 1900.¹

Immigration from Mexico remained slow but increased somewhat during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries due to the increasing resentment of the Porfiriato. The reign of Porfirio Diaz, the powerful president of Mexico from the 1880s through the Mexican Revolution that began in 1910, was marked by increased investment in Mexico by Europeans and Americans and an improved economy. But these successes came at a steep cost. Peasant farmers were displaced from their traditional lands and the economic prosperity was not equally distributed. The rich became wealthier while the poor and middling sorts declined financially. The revolution (which ended in 1921) and its aftermath sent over 1 million immigrants to the United States between 1910 and 1930. These immigrants came from all socioeconomic classes, although most were peasants. Mexicans who crossed over during these decades originally imagined that they would return to Mexico once the social unrest died down. The poor took low-paying jobs in cities and the countryside. Many middle-class émigrés opened their own businesses. Over time, many immigrants decided to stay, thereby boosting the numbers of the Mexican-descent

population. Through subsequent decades, they and their children adhered increasingly to a developing identity as Mexican Americans.²

Both internal and external forces shaped this new self-image. Internally, some Mexican Americans had been promoting an Americanized identity as early as the late 1800s. Ana Martinez-Catsam has shown how Pablo Cruz used the Spanish-language newspaper in San Antonio, *El Regidor*, to both criticize the Porfiriato and promote a stronger sense of American citizenship around the turn of the century.³ The same period saw the small but steady growth of a middle class comprised of shop owners (barbers, shoe repairman, neighborhood shopkeepers, and the like) and educators. Members of this segment of the population began to see their interests as resting on the northern side of the Rio Grande rather than on the southern side. As such, they gradually developed a sense of belonging in the United States and a desire to gain access to the American dream as full citizens.

The Mexican American worldview was reinforced by the experiences of World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II. By virtue of the draft and voluntary military service, Mexican Americans were, for the first time in American history, officially included on a large scale in a truly American project: making the world safe for democracy. Once the war ended, these veterans and their friends and family members believed that they had all earned the right to equal access to education, employment, and public places such as restaurants, beaches, and movie theaters. But the unrelenting pressure of discrimination crushed these hopes. Nothing changed for the mass of Mexican Americans in the post-World War I years. Indeed, the Great Depression witnessed the mass deportation of up to a half million Mexicans and Mexican Americans to Mexico. Seen as a drain on the limited welfare system and as competition for a decreasing number of jobs, Mexicans either voluntarily returned to Mexico or were rounded up in sweeps in several US cities between 1929 and 1939. Unfortunately, some of the people sent “back” were American citizens. Some were children born here who were legal citizens by birthright, and others were adults who were either born here or who had gained citizenship. But in the zeal to rid the nation of unwanted burdens, such differences went unnoticed. The bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, brought the United States into World War II. A quarter million to a half million Mexican Americans served in World War II. As such, they met other individuals from other parts of the country where Mexicans

faced far less discrimination. They gained new skills, traveled the nation and the world, and returned home after the war as changed men. But, yet again, home had not changed in their absence. Their children could still not attend Anglo schools. Restaurants displayed signs that read “No Mexicans” or worse. In many places they were disallowed to serve on juries.⁴

Several civil rights organizations emerged out of these decades of social ferment. The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) was created in Corpus Christi, Texas, in 1929. Members of LULAC—an amalgam of the League of Latin-American Citizens, the Order of Knights of America, and the Order of Sons of America—were inspired by the Mexican American community’s efforts to defend freedom in the Great War. Originating in and led by the developing middle class, LULAC challenged various types of segregation and employment discrimination. But the Great Depression severely cut into its abilities to wage war on social injustice. After World War II, however, LULAC regained its pre-Depression momentum and found a new ally in the American GI Forum (AGIF), created by Dr. Héctor P. García in Corpus Christi, in 1948. Originally conceived as a veteran’s rights group, the AGIF was quickly drawn into civil rights activities, a role that came to define them throughout the next several decades. At the same time and after, other groups, such as the Community Service Organization, were forming in California. These types of organizations filed successful lawsuits against segregated school districts, brought an end to jury discrimination, and promoted education at all levels (elementary through graduate school). They expressed through their publications (such as the AGIF’s monthly organ, *The Forumeer*) an identity as equal citizens deserving of the same rights and responsibilities as Anglo citizens. Not all activists belonged to organizations such as LULAC or the AGIF. Others were writers, teachers, academicians, and attorneys. All of them struggled to bring about an end to a multitiered society comprised of gradations of citizenship based on racial and ethnic definitions.⁵

The desire to attain citizenship was at the heart of their efforts. Officially, citizenship can be understood from a governmental perspective. One is a citizen of the United States by birthright or through naturalization. Citizenship carries rights and responsibilities such as voting, having to obey the laws, and submitting to selective service and jury duty. But citizenship’s meaning runs far deeper in the social and cultural layers of society. Natalia Molina shows how citizenship was legally defined in literal black-and-white terms

in the 1920s and 1930s; to be allowed citizenship, one had to fit one of those two racial categories. Such thinking denied citizenship to outside groups, including Asians and Asian Indians. Mexicans, however, proved a thorny lot. Anti-immigration forces argued that they were clearly African or Indian or a mixture and therefore did not qualify to be called Americans. Even though the nation embraced strong anti-immigrant attitudes, their desire to prevent Mexicans from gaining citizenship was trumped in Texas in the 1920s by the larger “need to preserve diplomatic and trade relations with Mexico, as well as the State Department’s commitment to protecting American-owned oil properties there.” As I argued in *Claiming Citizenship: Mexican Americans in Victoria, Texas*, citizenship also was defined by the acceptance of specific values (Christianity, family, patriotism), practices (political participation), traits (responsibility, loyalty), and beliefs (superiority of capitalism, dangers of socialism). The acceptance of these sensibilities did not mean a desire to abandon one’s Mexican heritage. Rather, it reflected a desire to create a complicated bicultural identity. This vision of citizenship dominated the Mexican American community throughout the 1940s and 1950s.

Struggles for equality continued through the 1960s and 1970s. Despite the gains made in the previous decades, social unrest, largely driven by the Vietnam War, marked the 1960s and 1970s. Mexican Americans found themselves caught up in a national whirlwind of agitation from African Americans, women, Native Americans, gays, and young people. While they benefited from passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Mexican-descent Americans still faced social, economic, and political discrimination. Although life had improved by the end of the twentieth century, Mexican Americans had not yet achieved full equality as equal citizens while poverty, crime, and other problems continued to plague portions of the community. This wide swath of Mexican American history, as just described, is long and complex. For it to make sense, it must be dissected.

Historians periodize. We examine wide sweeps of history and identify periods that offer explanatory insight into the human condition. We may speak of decades or centuries, but these are artificial structures imposed on human action. By focusing on the ways in which people think and act, scholars can more substantively discover meaningful patterns of behavior. In the preface to the third edition of *Mexican Americans in Texas: A Brief History*, Arnolfo De León notes that researchers of Chicano history take different positions on the

matter of periodization. Mainstream writers who researched and published works prior to the appearance of Mexican American history in the early 1970s focused primarily on colonial Spain and early Mexican history. They tended to believe that Spanish-Mexicans had a history only until the Spanish or Mexican eras ended in the borderlands (1821 or 1848, respectively) and then ceased being actors. De León notes further that generally, historians have differed on what specific date denotes the beginning of “Mexican American history.” One school argues that Mexican American history began in 1848 with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ceded the American Southwest to the United States following the Mexican-American War—that event transformed Mexicans into American citizens. A subset within this group argues for 1836 as the start of Mexican American history because of the successful Texas Revolution against Mexico. For another set of scholars, Mexican American history has its origins toward the end of the nineteenth or early in the twentieth century, when increased immigration from Mexico gave rise to a large presence of Mexican Americans in the United States. To this school, immigration, class, and conflict with corporate America now became the most salient identifiers of Mexican American history. De León explains that a third body of researchers posits that Mexican American history is part of a continuum dating back to the colonial Spanish period. These authors stress a connection of events from the time of the Spanish arrival in the borderlands to the present.⁶ By studying this long period of time, historians address the shortcomings of researchers who wrote and published prior to 1970, demonstrating that Mexican Americans had a distinct historical experience, apart from Anglos who were late arrivals in the borderlands. And while we cannot technically discuss Mexican Americans until after 1848, the people, the culture, and the traditions that define Mexican Americans trace back to the *mestizaje*.

In line with this train of thought, Juan Gómez-Quíñones lays out the following structure: “1600–1800, settlement; 1800–1830 florescence; 1830–1848 conflict; 1848–1875 resistance; 1875–1900, subordination.” The twentieth century falls into the second part and is organized as 1900–1920, a period of emigration and urbanization, and 1920–1941, a time marked by “intense repression, and major labor and political organizing.” He sees the World War II era as an interregnum, but the era from 1945 to 1965 witnessed a Mexican American population that sought inclusion through compromise. The Chicano movement marked the years from 1965 to 1971.⁷

Regardless of the varying views of the historical origins of a Mexican American people, historians have tended to follow a general periodization somewhat akin to the one laid out by Manuel G. Gonzales and Cynthia M. Gonzales in their book *En Aquel Entonces: Readings in Mexican-American History*. The authors explain Mexican American history in terms of the creation of a Mexican American people (1598–1846); racial tensions (1846–1900); migration and labor (1900–1940); the emergence of a middle class (1940–1965); and the Chicano movement and after (1965–2000).⁸ Theirs is an identity-driven model.

This anthology, however, speaks to a generational periodization of twentieth-century Mexican American history. Many scholars have employed this model, which identifies (with some variation) the following basic structure: 1848–1900, conquered generation; 1900–1930, immigrant generation; 1930–1960, Mexican American generation; 1960–1980, Chicano generation; 1980 to the present, Hispanic generation. All the actors in this anthology were active during a period that has been designated as the Mexican American generation.

When studying Mexican American history, the analytical tool called a generational model offers scholars valuable interpretive insights. Rodolfo Alvarez first proposed the idea of applying a generational periodization to organize Mexican American history in 1973 in “The Psycho-Historical and Socioeconomic Development of the Chicano Community in the United States.” Alvarez defines a *generation* as “a critical number of persons, in a broad but delimited age group, [that] had more or less the same socialization experiences because they lived at a particular time under more or less the same constraints imposed by a dominant United States society.” Alvarez argues that Mexican Americans’ history could be traced via four generations. First came the creation generation, which began in Texas in 1836 but spread to the rest of the Southwest with the end of the Mexican-American War and lasted until the turn of the century. The migrant generation occurred “after 1900 and before World War II.” The Mexican American generation was defined largely by the experience of World War II, beginning “somewhere around the time of the Second World War, and increasing in importance up to the war in Vietnam.” Alvarez dates the Chicano generation as occurring from the late 1960s through publication of his essay. For Alvarez, each generation was defined by a shared experience as defined by psychohistorical and socioeconomic factors as well as common responses to those conditions.⁹

In his 1987 book, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930–1960*, Mario T. García built upon Alvarez’s construct by drawing from a broad array of sources to further argue for the interpretive value of a generational approach to historical study. Although the general outline of the generations is similar to that of Alvarez, García’s formulation is driven not by psycho-historical factors so much as similar political, social, and economic environments that led to the creation of specific self-definitions. García explains that generational periods are “specific to a certain period which trigger a particular political response or responses by a collection of individuals who come of political age during this time.” He asserts that a political generation is not simply a result of history; it also becomes an active agent shaping the direction of history.¹⁰

This work is founded on the premise that García’s concept is still sound, on two fronts in particular. First, each distinct generation existed in a discrete social, cultural, and political environment. Each generation also came to represent a specific identity that expressed its definition of citizenship within the context of that milieu. But García does not imply that these temporal boundaries are concrete. This generation was built on the experiences of those that preceded it, just as it set the stage for events that followed. As discussed earlier in this introduction, the intellectual roots of the Mexican American generation were planted in the late nineteenth century. The labor activism of this era predated the class consciousness of the Chicano movement.

Second, García emphasizes the need to understand the complexity of this generation. Contrary to later scholarly critics of this period’s activists, García shows that leaders came from multiple backgrounds and had varying agendas. David G. Gutiérrez, in his 1993 essay “Significant to Whom? Mexican Americans and the History of the American West,” demonstrates that the oppression of previous generations informed and inspired writers of the Mexican American generation. Gutiérrez notes that the American story of westward movement was couched in terms of Mexican weakness and inferiority, which justified American expansion and subsequent discrimination. Further justification for the marginalization of Mexicans was the prevalence of stereotypes that homogenized Mexicans in negative terms—and Anglo-Americans in positive ones. But through their scholarship, individuals such as Ernesto Galarza, Jovita González, George I. Sánchez, and Arthur Campa, among others, proved that people of Mexican descent were no more homogeneous than any other

group of people. This was a significant discovery on the road to combatting racism based on commonly accepted stereotypes.¹¹

Informed by that argument, this collection applies a similarly malleable definition of *generation*. Yes, this cohort involved members of organizations such as LULAC, which was generally led by the middle class, or the AGIF, whose members hailed mostly from the working class. Yet both organizations made claims to equality based on patriotism and fealty to the nation's history as well as to its political and economic systems. At the same time, the efforts of labor activists such as Ernesto Galarza and Luisa Moreno targeted workers' immediate material needs rather than ideological struggles over definitions of citizenship. What unites this diverse array of people is a commitment to securing improved living and working conditions for Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Their ideas and actions marked the onset of a civil rights struggle that continues to the present.

As such, the Mexican American generation provides the first key to understanding the intellectual and civic transformation of a people who initially considered themselves primarily Mexican to those who now created a bicultural identity and saw themselves increasingly as Americans of Mexican descent. The emergence of this new vision shaped the course of Mexican American actions to the present day. Throughout subsequent decades, the Chicano movement and now the Hispanic generation have remained true in some measure to the basic ideals laid out by this group. To be sure, the Chicano movement fueled an increase in production of new forms of art, music, scholarship, and activism. But throughout the decades, Mexican Americans have continued to act through labor organizations and political activism, much as was done during the period under study in this work. Actions of the Hispanic generation have further contributed to our political empowerment and led to the increased presence of Mexican Americans (and Latinos in general) in the popular culture through an increased presence in sports, film, music, business, education, and politics. And although the Mexican American community has become more diverse over time, many of the values, practices, traits, and beliefs that defined citizenship for this generation remain relevant. One useful way to learn about the importance of this generation is through studying biographies of its leaders.

Biography has held a warm place in the public's heart as a form of historical production. History buffs are often fanatical about collecting biographies

of important politicians or military figures. Public and school libraries house voluminous collections of lively stories of past lives and their excitement, drama, and contributions to social progress. Nonprofessional historians, who generally tended to write uncritical hagiographies that enforced lessons about patriotism, religiosity, hard work, or other values, frequently produced these works. Even when written by academic historians, biographies sometimes focused too narrowly on their subjects to the detriment of deeper historical analysis. And so, as David Nasaw laments in his introduction to the *American Historical Review's* "AHR Roundtable: Historians and Biography," "Biography remains the profession's unloved stepchild, occasionally but grudgingly let in the door, more often shut outside with the riffraff."¹²

But Lois Banner notes in her contribution to this same roundtable, "At its best, biography like history, is based on archival research, interweaves historical categories and methodologies, reflects current political and theoretical concerns and raises complex issues of truth and proof."¹³ A truly well-written biography is steeped in rigorous research and holds itself to the same demands of truth claims as traditional analytical history. Indeed, she demonstrates how in the process of writing a comparative biography of Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead (two twentieth-century anthropologists who were also friends and lovers), she had to become adept with the fields of

intellectual history, the history of the professions, and the history of the concepts of race and racism. To write about Benedict's upbringing, I had to learn about the history of the Baptist Church. To write about Mead's religious beliefs, I had to learn about the Episcopal Church. To understand their anthropological fieldwork, I had to study the Pueblo Indians and the tribal indigenous people in Samoa and New Guinea. To elucidate Mead and Benedict's individual selves, sexually different from the norm, I had to investigate the history of lesbianism and bisexuality and to master "queer theory." Then I had to read and analyze the 50,000 letters, documents, and other written materials about their lives in the Margaret Mead Papers at the Library of Congress, and figure out how to intertwine the story of their individual lives with the times in which they lived.¹⁴

Thus, one can easily see that a conscientious, serious work of scholarly biography can do more than tell interesting stories about people's lives. It can help explain the nature of social relationships and the interplay between

individuals and their environments. Just as broad topics such as “the presidency” or “the Chicano movement” and narrower ones such as “community studies” offer their own specific types of historical insights, so too can biography bring its own kind of light to our understandings of the past.

Students of Mexican American topics, like other historians, largely ignored the genre of biography. An early biographical work came about when Americo Paredes published *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and its Hero* in 1958.¹⁵ This seminal work not only began the process of unraveling the imagined mythology surrounding the Texas Rangers, it also focused on the role of a South Texas rancher who suddenly became an outlaw because of a misunderstanding between him and local law enforcement agents. The story of Gregorio Cortez Lira is telling because it gets at the nature of relations between Anglos and Mexicans in Texas in early twentieth-century Texas. And it does so in a critical way that challenges much of the mystique surrounding Texas and western history. Paredes’s work, while influential in its own right, did not ignite a blaze of biographical studies. In 1973 Juan Gómez-Quiñones published *Sembradores: Ricardo Flores Magón y el Partido Liberal Mexicano: A Eulogy and Critique*.¹⁶ Biography as a central focus remained marginal until the next decade.

The field has seen an increase in biographical publications since the late 1980s. Perhaps one of the most prolific producers of individual biographies or collections of individual papers has been Mario T. García, who has produced no less than eight book-length works of individual biographies, collections of biographies, edited memoirs, and autobiographies as well as paper collections.¹⁷ García’s body of work sustains the argument that biography can serve as a valuable method of historical study by locating the subject squarely in the context of the times. As noted above, García’s book on the Mexican American generation strongly influenced this work. Apart from García’s impressive body of work, a short list of just some of the other book-length biographies produced since 1990 includes *César Chávez: A Triumph of Spirit* by Richard Griswold del Castillo and Richard A. Garcia (1995); Thomas H. Kreneck’s work on Houston entrepreneur and LULAC leader Felix Tijerina (2001); Ignacio M. García’s *Héctor P. García: In Relentless Pursuit of Justice* (2002); and Elliott Young’s *Catarino Garza’s Revolution on the Texas-Mexico Border* (2004).¹⁸

Apart from full-length biographies, scholars have produced shorter works that have appeared in various types of collections. In her latest work, *No*

Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement (2009), Cynthia E. Orozco offers a chapter dedicated to brief overviews of the lives of LULAC's founders. Biographies of Mexican Americans have also appeared in anthologies centered on women's history, such as Vicki L. Ruiz and Virginia Sánchez Korrol's *Latina Legacies: Identity, Biography, and Community* (2005). Others, like collections by Donald E. Chipman and Harriett Denise Joseph on important figures in Spanish Texas and by Jesús F. de la Tejas on biographies of key Tejano leaders from the nineteenth century, have focused on time periods, albeit not generationally defined ones. And Teresa Palomo Acosta and Ruthe Winegarten have provided biographical insights for a range of Tejanas over a span of 300 years.¹⁹

This collection is designed to fit into this last type of biography: the anthology. In an attempt to make itself as beneficial for as wide a range of readers as possible, this book presents a core of the era's leaders in order to share their ideas and contributions—all under one cover. One goal of the book, then, is to offer students a rich collection of historical biographies that will enlighten and enliven their understandings of Mexican American history.

The contributors to this anthology examine the lives of thirteen individuals and the conditions they faced as well as their reactions to their environment. By understanding the subjects' thoughts and actions, readers will gain richer insights into the key issues and conflicts of the day and the ways in which American society and Mexican culture helped create the Mexican American experience between 1920 and 1960—the Mexican American generation. By keeping entries relatively short and accessible, this book is designed primarily as an educational tool in the classroom as well as for the enjoyment of the general public.

A wide range of actors appear in this volume: men and women, professional and nonprofessional, the publicly visible and those less so. All of these individuals contributed to the idealization of the Mexican American generation. They identified and expressed an identity as Mexican Americans that shaped and was shaped by their experience. The reader will also notice that people highlighted in this work come from California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. This fact demonstrates that the majority of the Mexican American population was concentrated in the American Southwest during these years and that the leadership of that generation drew primarily from this area, particularly California and Texas. Further, the two major civil rights

organizations of the time, LULAC and the AGIF, were created in Texas and spread across the nation over time, moving through the Southwest first.

Readers will also notice a bit of overlap across the various essays. José de la Luz Sáenz (a founder of LULAC) and Dr. Héctor P. García (founder of the AGIF) both appear in this collection and are referred to in other essays in this collection. Some of the attorneys featured herein, such as Gustavo “Gus” L. García and John J. Herrera, often worked for one or the other of these organizations. The interactions between these individuals and others who do not appear in this collection speak to the web of connections between this generation’s activists and their determination to fight social injustice.

Readers should be aware that due to the variety of authors in this collection, many synonyms for “Mexican American” are used throughout these essays. Hence, Emilio Zamora refers to a “Mexican” struggle for civil rights, in keeping with the language use at the time. In another essay, María Eugenia Cotera uses the phrase “Texas Mexicans.” Other authors use other choices, but the topic is always focused on Mexican Americans.

The essays in this book are presented in two parts. Part 1 focuses on the ways in which a Mexican American identity was being formed during this time period. Emilio Zamora opens this segment of the book by discussing José de la Luz Sáenz, who stood as an icon of this generation. Cofounder of LULAC, author of *Los México-americanos en La Gran Guerra y su contingente en pro de la democracia, la humanidad y la justicia* (1933) (the first work to openly acknowledge the role of Mexican Americans in World War I), as well as a contributor to discussions and debates over the place of Mexican Americans in American society, Sáenz contributed solidly to the cause of Mexican American civil rights, helped shape the generation’s political and social agendas, and informed its goals and ideas. Throughout his life, Sáenz used his ideas and his writing to insert the Mexican American experience into the broader narrative of American history. Zamora helps us understand Sáenz by examining his writings and the factors that influenced the development of his ideology. Thus, we see more deeply into the heart and soul of this visionary leader who played a central role in the early struggle for Mexican American civil rights during this generation.

Cynthia E. Orozco offers a biographical interpretation of LULAC organizer and activist Alice Dickerson Montemayor. Countering traditional notions about the marginal nature of women in the formative years of

LULAC, Orozco demonstrates that many women participants were not married; many were single or lesbian. She further shows how, despite sexuality or marital status, all women involved in the organization sought their own course for social change. And while historians have noted a separation of ideology between the Mexican American generation and the subsequent Chicano generation, Orozco points out that the efforts of people such as Montemayor set the stage for increased levels of women's activism that came later in the 1960s and 1970s. Montemayor introduced progressive ideas to LULAC, decrying women's oppression decades before the Chicana feminist movement. She questioned the myth of male superiority and argued that women were as competent as men, if not superior. She identified machismo in action and fought to eradicate it through informed feminist reasoning. While she exhibited a feminist consciousness, she also embodied a female consciousness in her concern for children and family.

Richard A. Garcia argues that Alonso S. Perales was a major contributor to the ideals of the Mexican American generation. As a founding member of LULAC, Perales constantly struggled with questions of his identity as a Mexican and an American. At the heart of this belief system was his embrace of the concept of America as a society that held the promise of equality. Some historians have upbraided this generation for focusing on economic success and social status, frequently at the expense of their working-class compatriots. But Perales's close personal friend and LULAC organizer Adela Sloss-Vento noted, "The unity of Americans of Mexican descent was the dream of attorney Perales; [he was a] man of high morals, ethics and principles, who did not like to compromise his principles for material gain." Perales later wrote to Sloss-Vento, "My only purpose in forming the said organization [LULAC] . . . [was] to bring about the rapid intellectual, social and political evolution of Americans of Mexican descent, to promote the social welfare of all Latin people residing in Texas and to produce the highest type of American citizen." Thus, the very words of Perales himself counter such criticisms and indicate a dedication to the uplift of the Mexican American people as a group, not just a certain segment. Emphasizing Perales's dedication to the concept of pragmatic-realism, Garcia demonstrates the ways in which Perales developed a carefully constructed worldview that desired to marry the promise of American society with the needs and interests of his people.

Jovita González Mireles is well known to scholars of Mexican American history, literature, and culture as a teacher and a writer, but she is virtually unknown beyond these boundaries. And readers may be surprised to learn that this woman published six books during her lifetime. In her contribution, María Eugenia Cotera touches on these works but more strongly emphasizes González's literary contributions as a folklorist who worked closely with J. Frank Dobie of the University of Texas. Motivated by a desire to recapture Mexican American history and culture, she emphasized commonalities across ethnic boundaries and believed that only by understanding each other could Anglos and Mexican Americans attain some form of progress. In doing so, González was influenced by the intersections of race and gender. And while some critics have branded her writings and pedagogy as reductive and assimilationist, Cotera convincingly posits that, in fact, González sought to preserve memories of the Mexican American experience of her own time and thereby promote her own individual perspective.

Vicki L. Ruiz provides an intriguing look at the interaction of a historian with her subject by sharing the life story of Luisa Moreno, a Guatemalan-born labor activist who, as a Latina, worked toward improving life for workers, including Mexican Americans. Based on numerous sources, including her own personal interviews with Moreno, Ruiz provides an intimate glimpse into Moreno's world. Moreno worked with numerous labor organizations from Florida to California. Throughout her years of activism, she led an intriguing life until she left the country voluntarily. Although Mario T. García also dedicates a chapter of his book *Mexican Americans* to Moreno, Ruiz's essay targets the complexity of her life as a daughter and a woman along with her involvement in the labor movement. By artfully tracing the twists and turns in Moreno's life story, Ruiz deftly demonstrates how historians can engage in a fruitful, sensitive relationship with their historical subjects.

Félix Longoria was a Mexican American who died defending his nation in the Philippines toward the end of World War II. Upon return of his remains to Three Rivers, Texas, in January 1949, his widow was denied services at Rice Funeral Home, the only such facility in the small town. Drawing from his monograph on this incident, Patrick J. Carroll discusses a key moment in the struggle for Mexican American civil rights. South Texas had long been defined by racial and ethnic segregation in life and death (as cemeteries were often segregated). Carroll shows the ways in which this event sparked

a new national consciousness about Mexican Americans and their desires for social justice. Contacted by the sister of Longoria's widow, Dr. Héctor P. García quickly informed the media and elected officials, including the newly elected senator from Texas, Lyndon B. Johnson, about this injustice. An American hero who made the ultimate sacrifice for his country, Longoria suffered—even in death—from the racist attitudes that had so long defined relations between Anglos and Mexicans in South Texas. This episode, according to Carroll, served as a catalyst, spurring the post-1945 Mexican American civil rights movement. After negative national attention was drawn to the backward worldviews of Anglo South Texas, Senator Johnson arranged for Longoria's burial at Arlington National Cemetery. This event is significant because it shows the ways in which Americans around the nation considered Mexican Americans as true citizens, and it placed both Dr. García and the American GI Forum into national prominence as civil rights leaders. Thus, Longoria's story is salient to this collection because the circumstances surrounding his burial sparked a regeneration of civil rights struggles.

The second part of the book looks at the ways in which different people acted on the ideas developed by this first set of subjects. Apart from Longoria himself, Dr. Héctor P. García figures prominently in the story of the battle over Longoria's funeral arrangements. Carl Allsup adds to this story in his study of the life and significance of García. Immigrating to the United States during the Mexican Revolution, later attending medical school at the University of Texas, and subsequently joining the Army during World War II, García established a practice in Corpus Christi after the war. In response to complaints by the veterans he treated, García formed the American GI Forum in 1948. Thus, he helped pave the way for a renewed civil rights battle by Mexican Americans as equal American citizens. In many ways García stands as a giant of this generation. Laying out a patriotic definition of resistance (a loyal opposition), he influenced the course of the post-World War II civil rights struggle and placed the American GI Forum in the center of lawsuits to integrate schools and jury panels, the creation of Viva Kennedy clubs, and immigration policy. All these activities, according to Allsup, made García a "giant of the twentieth century."

Crucial to the legal fights waged by García, the AGIF, and LULAC were attorneys like Gus García. Graduating at the top of his high school class, he was allowed entrance at the University of Texas for his bachelor's degree. He

entered the university's law program in 1936, at which point he became friends with numerous luminaries, such as future Texas Governors John Connally and Allan Shivers. As a champion of Mexican American rights, García put his brilliant eloquence to work in a range of cases, including the landmark educational desegregation case, *Delgado v. Bastrop ISD* (1948), and the very significant jury discrimination case, *Hernández v. State of Texas* (1954). The *Delgado* decision ended legally segregated schooling for Mexican American students in Bastrop and the surrounding school districts. The *Hernández* case successfully challenged traditional practices in Jackson County of excluding Mexican Americans and other nonwhites from serving on juries. This victory succeeded on many levels. García was the first Mexican American to argue before the US Supreme Court, and the case became a significant victory for Mexican American civil rights as it allowed for jury service around the nation, not just in one location. García, as much as anyone, helped cultivate a legal framework for inclusion of Mexican Americans in public schools and on juries.

Thomas H. Kreneck shares his own personal insights into the "fabulous" life of John J. Herrera. Kreneck, like Ruiz, also knew his subject. He oversaw the acquisition of the John J. Herrera Papers by the Houston Metropolitan Research Center and interviewed him formally several times. Little known outside of historical and political circles, Kreneck shows Herrera to be a key figure in the promotion of the Mexican American agenda at mid-century. Herrera was the third attorney in the trio that argued the *Hernández* case before the Supreme Court in 1954. Herrera also helped arrange a talk by President John F. Kennedy to a LULAC audience at the Rice Hotel in Houston the night before Kennedy's assassination. Both acts indicate the ways in which this generation of activists tied the Mexican American community more closely to American society and the trajectory of American history. In many ways, Herrera represents the experience of members of his generation. For reasons explained in the essay, Herrera grew up poor and worked several full-time jobs while attending law school at night. Most people would have given up such a seemingly unattainable goal. But Herrera persevered, eventually earning his law degree. He went on to become a leading voice for the Mexican American population. So involved was Herrera with LULAC that he became known as "Mr. LULAC."

As a rhetorician, Michelle Hall Kells brings her own unique perspective to our study of the Mexican American generation as she shares her

understanding of the construction and use of rhetoric. In her examination of Vicente Ximenes, Kells argues that for a social movement to have a substantive, lasting impact it must become enmeshed with the political system and the administrative units that enforce the law. By engaging in nonthreatening, yet clearly articulated, rhetoric favoring the inclusion of Mexican Americans as equal citizens, Ximenes shaped and enforced policy in a number of government positions in the Johnson administration. Kells presents a political biography of Ximenes, followed by an examination of the role he played as chair of the Cabinet Committee Hearings on Mexican American Affairs, held in 1967 in El Paso. Identifying the pillars of Ximenes's rhetorical strategies, Kells demonstrates the ways in which he helped spur the Mexican American community to action. She argues that the 1967 hearings were crucial to the emergence of the Chicano movement. (Julie Leininger Pycior addresses a different perspective on these hearings in chapter 12.) Kells is also sensitive to the pressures of the Cold War on civil rights activists branded as subversives for criticizing the social and political status quo. It was not uncommon in the 1940s–1980s for civil rights opponents to level charges of radicalism at African American and Mexican American activists. Hence, Ximenes, as an AGIF organizer, countered such attacks by holding meetings at a Catholic church to maintain a respectable, God-fearing, patriotic appearance. Kells posits that Ximenes “represents one of the few civil rights leaders who functioned as an activist, agitator, and mobilizer as well as operated as a national-level government representative, administrator, and policy-maker.” In her opinion, these widespread actions helped move members of the Mexican American generation forward in their pursuit of citizenship in the United States.

Laura K. Muñoz reminds us that key civil rights struggles of this period were also fought in Arizona. Attorney Ralph Estrada, Muñoz argues, was a key figure in the Mexican American civil rights movement. Estrada came from a lower middle-class background. His father owned Estrada Brothers Grocery, a small store in Tempe. A three-sport letterman in baseball, basketball, and football, Estrada took that level of determination to heart as a lawyer, fighting the cases *Gonzales v. Sheely* and *Ortiz v. Jack* in 1951. Estrada's victory in the *Gonzales* case only applied to one school district in Arizona, yet it set the stage for the more important *Ortiz* case that same year in which segregated schooling across the state was found unconstitutional. Beyond his legal endeavors, Estrada also acted as attorney and president of the Alianza

Hispano-Americana. Further, like many other members of his generation, Estrada supported the Viva Kennedy clubs, helping to elect the nation's first Catholic president. Because of his assistance to Kennedy, Estrada was later sent to Nicaragua for two years as a representative of the US Agency for International Development.

Julie Leininger Pycior traces the life and contributions of Ernesto Galarza. Active in labor organizing into the 1960s, Galarza's experience predated the Chicano movement, going back to the 1940s. Born in the Sierra Madre de Nayarit, Galarza's family, persecuted by the Porfirio Díaz regime, fled to the United States, living in Arizona and then settling in Sacramento, California. One interesting difference about Galarza's early education in Sacramento was his good fortune in having teachers who encouraged him to use the Spanish language and learn more about his heritage; this was a very uncommon experience in the early twentieth century, a period marked by segregated schools for whites, blacks, and Mexican Americans. Galarza grew up poor. His older brothers did not attend school because they had to work. Ultimately, in contrast to most Mexican Americans of this period, Galarza earned a doctoral degree in 1944 from Columbia University, writing his dissertation on public policy. Throughout his life, he fought for the poor and dispossessed. Critical of business interests and governmental foot-dragging, Galarza battled overwhelming odds to protect the rights of workers and immigrants. At a 1967 conference on Mexican American civil rights in El Paso, Galarza and others pushed the needs of farmworkers, recognition of land rights under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and an end to the Vietnam War. He later was instrumental in the formation of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund and the National Council of La Raza. Defending poor and dispossessed Mexican Americans while promoting the need for education, Galarza famously argued that "Vale más la revolución que viene que la que se fue" (The revolution that is coming is more important than the one that passed).

Lastly, Kenneth C. Burt's chapter sheds new light on the political career of Edward R. Roybal of Los Angeles. Burt describes Roybal as being born to a working-class family with deep roots in American soil (four hundred years) and who served in the military during World War II. As with many veterans, he returned to the United States ready to make significant changes in conditions for Mexican Americans. And while Burt allows that

Roybal is perhaps best known for being the first Mexican American elected to a city council since 1881 and for his twenty years of service in the US House of Representatives, another key aspect of his legacy often gets overlooked. Scholars have not duly noted that what kept Roybal successful through those years was his ability to lead through coalition building. Burt notes how Roybal won election to the Los Angeles City Council in 1949. He put together a progressive coalition of left-leaning groups such as Mexican Americans, African Americans, Jews, other immigrant groups, and organized labor. Roybal cut his political teeth by helping organize the Community Service Organization and the Mexican American Political Association. Later he founded the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials. The essay shows the depths of Roybal's dedication to his people and the ways in which he represented this generation. It also shows that Mexican Americans did not act alone. As in this case, they often sought to work with other similarly oppressed groups. According to Burt, Roybal's coalition-building skills anticipated the later election of Antonio Villaraigosa as mayor of Los Angeles. As Burt puts it, "the Roybal model of coalition politics has proved to have enduring value in an increasingly multicultural society."

Here readers will see how these actors entered a world not of their own choosing, one that shaped and attempted to limit their life choices. They resisted such impositions and developed an ideology steeped in concepts of equality, as defined in the nation's governing principles and documents, using the limited tools at their disposal. Their thoughts and actions, then, reinforce the words of Karl Marx in *The German Ideology* (1845), "circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances." These men and women reconfigured their environment in ways that secured a somewhat brighter future for future generations, an environment that has been both edified and challenged in recent years.

Notes

1. See Arnaldo De León, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821–1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), for a detailed discussion of ethnic relationships and the history of the development of negative stereotypes.

2. For more information on the Porfiriato and its effects on immigration to the United States, see Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (Boston: Longman, 2011); and Michael C. Meyer, William L. Sherman, and Susan M. Deeds, *The Course of Mexican History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
3. Ana Martínez-Catsam, "Frontier of Dissent: *El Regidor*, the Regime of Porfirio Díaz, and the Transborder Community," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 112 (April 2009): 389–408.
4. Ignacio M. García, *White But Not Equal: Mexican Americans, Jury Discrimination, and the Supreme Court* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009); and Matt S. Meier and Feliciano Ribera, *Mexican Americans / American Mexicans: From Conquistadors to Chicanos*, rev. ed. (1972; repr., New York: Hill and Wang, 1994).
5. Benjamin Marquez, *LULAC: The Evolution of a Mexican American Political Organization* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993); Henry A. J. Ramos, *A People Forgotten, a Dream Pursued: The History of the American G.I. Forum, 1948–1972*, 2nd ed. (1982; repr., Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983); Carl Allsup, *The American GI Forum: Origins and Evolution* (Austin: Center for Mexican American Studies, University of Texas at Austin, 1982); Craig A. Kaplowitz, *LULAC, Mexican Americans, and National Policy* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005); and Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009).
6. Arnolde De León, *Mexican Americans in Texas: A Brief History*, 2nd ed. (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1999), 1–3.
7. Juan Gómez-Quiñones, "Toward a Perspective on Chicano History," *Aztlan* 2 (Fall 1971): 1–51.
8. Manuel G. Gonzales and Cynthia M. Gonzales, eds., *En Aquel Entonces: Readings in Mexican-American History* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2000).
9. Rodolfo Alvarez, "The Psycho-Historical and Socioeconomic Development of the Chicano Community in the United States," *Social Science Quarterly* 53 (March 1973): 920, 926, 931.
10. Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930–1960* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 4.
11. David G. Gutiérrez, "Significant to Whom?: Mexican Americans and the History of the American West," *Western Historical Quarterly* 24 (November 1993): 519–39.
12. David Nasaw, "AHR Roundtable: Historians and Biography. Introduction," *American Historical Review* 114 (June 2009): 573.
13. Lois Banner, "AHR Roundtable: Biography as History," *American Historical Review* 114 (June 2009): 580.
14. *Ibid.*, 584.

15. Americo Paredes, *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958).

16. Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Sembradores: Ricardo Flores Magón y el Partido Liberal Mexicano: A Eulogy and Critique* (Los Angeles: Aztlán Publications, 1973).

17. This list of biographical works includes a number of works by Mario T. García, such as *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930–1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); *Memories of Chicano History: The Life and Narrative of Bert Corona* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); *Ruben Salazar, Border Correspondent: Selected Writings, 1955–1970* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); *The Making of a Mexican American Mayor: Raymond L. Telles of El Paso* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, University of Texas at El Paso, 1998); *Luis Leal: An Auto/biography* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000); *A Dolores Huerta Reader* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008); with Francis Esquibel Tywoniak, *Migrant Daughter: Coming of Age as a Mexican American Woman* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); and with Sal Castro, *Blowout!: Sal Castro and the Chicano Struggle for Educational Justice* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

18. Richard Griswold del Castillo and Richard A. Garcia, *César Chávez: A Triumph of Spirit* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995); Thomas H. Kreneck, *Mexican American Odyssey: Felix Tijerina, Entrepreneur and Civic Leader, 1905–1965* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001); Ignacio M. García, *Héctor P. García: In Relentless Pursuit of Justice* (Houston: Arte Publico, 2002); and Elliott Young, *Catarino Garza's Revolution on the Texas-Mexico Border* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

19. Vicki L. Ruiz and Virginia Sánchez Korrol, eds., *Latina Legacies: Identity, Biography, and Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Donald E. Chipman and Harriett Denise Joseph, *Notable Men and Women of Spanish Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999); Jesús F. de la Teja, ed., *Tejano Leadership in Mexican and Revolutionary Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010); and Teresa Palomo Acosta and Ruthe Winegarten, *Las Tejanas: 300 Years of History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003).