# Latinos and Society: Culture, Politics, and Class

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> Culture is historically derived, fluid, composed of both positive and negative aspects, and is malleable to conscious action. In domination and resistance, culture is of salient importance. It is inseparably interrelated to the life of a people and their struggle. Culture is the context in which struggle takes place; however conflict or resistance is primarily economic and political and constitutes class resistance. The relationship between culture and class is a historical phenomenon, observable over time.
>
> *Juan Gomez-Quiñonez*[1]

In this important, but neglected essay, published in 1977, Juan Gomez-Quiñonez, a leading Chicano historian, proclaimed the inseparability of culture and class in an effort to understand and address the political economy of Mexican communities in the United States. Twenty years later, despite the changing political economy and its "observable" deleterious effects on the Latino population, we find ourselves still struggling to contextualize the analysis of Latinos in this country within an economic sphere that forthrightly engages material conditions, class structure, and cultural change as central to the discourse.

Without question, the closing years of the twentieth century represent the culmination of major changes in the socioeconomic landscape of US society. Nowhere is this more evident than in the "Latinization" of the United States. Latinos currently number 24 million and, according to recent Census Bureau data, Latinos will become the largest ethnic minority group by the year 2009. Despite this increase in population and the political, educational, and economic advances of Latinos during the last 20 years, 30.3 percent (or 8.4 million) of Latinos continue to live in poverty. Latino workers continue to occupy the lowest rungs of the US economy, finding themselves increasingly displaced and reconcentrated in conditions of structural underemployment and unemployment.

These economic conditions faced by Latino communities in the United States are linked to the transnational realities shared by populations of Latinos in Latin America and the Caribbean, despite specific regional histories which give rise to particular sociocultural configurations – configurations that are fundamentally shaped within the context of the ever-changing global economy.

## LATINOS AND THE GLOBALIZATION OF THE ECONOMY

The current socioeconomic conditions of Latinos can be directly traced to the relentless emergence of the global economy and recent economic policies of expansion, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which have weakened the labor participation of Latinos through the transfer of historically well-paying manufacturing jobs to Mexico and other "cheap labor" manufacturing centers around the world. Such consequences highlight the need for scholars to link the condition of US Latinos to the globalization of the economy.[2] This is to say that the study of the social, cultural, economic, and political changes that have historically taken place in the conditions of Latinos must be understood with respect to the particular role

that Latinos, as a racialized group, have played in the economic system of this country. In his work on the global economy and Latino populations in the US, William Robinson (1993) argues that:

> Much sociological writing on Latino groups has focused on demographic phenomena, language, culture, and other descriptive or ascriptive traits. Other studies have stressed emerging ethnic consciousness, pan-Latino political action, and other subjective factors as causal explanations in minority group formation. These factors are all significant. However, in my view there are broad, historic "structural linkages" among the distinct groups that constitute the material basis and provide the underlying causal explanation for Latino minority group formation. In other words, cultural and political determinations are relevant, but subsidiary, in that they only become "operationalized" through structural determinants rooted in the U.S. political economy and in an historic process of capital accumulation into which Latinos share a distinct mode of incorporation. (pp. 29–30)

In light of this perspective, the history of US Latinos can only be fully understood and articulated within the context of the US political economy and the new international division of labor. Without question, the United States is the wealthiest country in the world today; yet it is the nation-state with the greatest economic inequality between the rich and the poor and with the most disproportionate wealth distribution of all the "developed" nations of the world. To overlook these facts in the analysis of Latino populations is to ignore the most compelling social phenomenon in US society – the growing gap between rich and poor.[3]

Further, we must address the impact of US economic globalization on cultural production, particularly that of popular culture, in this country and worldwide. Stuart Hall's (1991) writings on culture, globalization, and the world system clearly address the relationship between global mass culture (which he identifies as American) and the economy.

> Global mass culture is dominated by the modern means of cultural production, dominated by the image which crosses and recrosses linguistic frontiers much more rapidly and more easily, and which speaks across languages in a much more immediate way. It is dominated by all the ways in which visual and graphic arts have entered directly into the reconstitution of popular life, of entertainment and of leisure. It is dominated by television and by film, and by image, imagery, and styles of mass advertising. Its epitome is in all those forms of mass communication of which one might think of satellite television as the prime example. Not because it is the only example but because you could not understand satellite television without understanding its groundings in a particular advanced national economy and culture and yet its whole purpose is precisely that it cannot be limited any longer by national boundaries. (p. 27)

Hall's analysis of the globalized economy and its impact on transnational cultural formations has a theoretical and political significance for understanding the concept of *mestizaje* as transcultural styles of Latino border crossing. Victor Valle and Rodolfo D. Torres (1995) argue that, although the notion of *mestizaje* has links to Mexican and Latin American history, its lived experience is radically transformed amid the realities of US political economy. They describe this phenomenon in the following manner.

> Mestizaje on this side of the border thus expresses a refusal to prefer one language, one national tradition, or culture at the expense of others. Culturally speaking, then, mestizaje is radically inclusive. At other times, it takes the form of a deliberate transgression of political borders. These transgressions, however, are not overtly ideological, but adaptive and strategic. Stated in economic terms, the globalization of capital, with its power to penetrate and

> dominate regional markets and undermine native economies, obliges the Mexican peasant or Guatemalan worker to ignore state boundaries to survive. (p. 148)

The globalization of capital and its changes in class relations form the very backdrop of contemporary Latino politics and cultural formations, but is conspicuously absent in most contemporary "postmodern" accounts of Latino life in the US – accounts which ignore the increasing significance of class and the specificity of capitalism as a system of social and political relations of power.

## LATINOS AND THE "POSTMODERN" PROJECT

At this precipitous historical juncture, when an analysis of and challenge to capitalism is so urgently needed (perhaps more than in previous decades) many Chicano and Latino scholars have largely conceptualized the ideas of capitalism, labor, and class struggle out of existence. The increasingly fashionable trends of social and literary theories of "post-Marxism," with their rejection of Marxist theories of history, class, and the state, have failed to engage subtantively the dynamics of racialization within the context of the capitalist world economic system.

An acerbic critic of "culturalist" arguments, Ellen Meiksins Wood (1995) forcefully challenges the underlying assumptions that give rise to the postmodern project. Postmodernists claim that an epochal shift from modernity to postmodernity took place in the early 1970s. This "structural" shift is considered to move the economic priorities of capitalists from the mass production of standardized goods and the forms of labor associated with it to "flexible accumulation" with its new forms of production, diversification of commodities for niche markets, a flexible workforce, and mobile capital. This movement is primarily attributed to the development of new technologies, new forms of communication, the internet, and the "information superhighway."

Wood (1996) begins her analysis by challenging the tendency of the postmodernist to equate capitalism with "modernity" and to see capitalism as a "natural" outcome of technological development, a notion which, she argues, not only "disguises the specificity of capitalism" as a particular social form of domination and exploitation but is also false. Secondly, she forcefully criticizes postmodern "blanket" arguments against the Enlightenment project (particularly its universal human emancipatory ideal) as fundamentally destructive to the project of human rights and social justice. And most importantly, Wood argues that constant technological changes and changes in the marketing strategy do not constitute a major epochal shift in capitalist logic and capitalism's laws of motion. In addressing more specifically this point, she writes:

> The old fordism used the assembly line as a substitute for higher-cost skilled craftsmen and to tighten the control of labor-process by capital with the obvious objective of extracting more value from labor. Now, the new technologies are used to the same ends: to make products easy and cheap to assemble . . . to control the labor-process, to eliminate or combine various skills in both manufacturing and service sectors, to replace higher with lower wage workers, to downsize workers altogether – again to extract more value from labor. So what is new about this so-called new economy is not that the new technologies represent a unique kind of epochal shift. On the contrary, they simply allow the logic of the old mass production economy to be diversified and extended. (p. 35)

We acknowledge that changes in the economy have occurred, but there is a question as to how we can best analytically characterize these changes.[4] And if a historical shift actually took place, it would be more accurately identified in the mid-twentieth century when capitalism approached becoming a universal system that managed to penetrate every aspect of life, the state, the

practices and ideologies of the culture of society. From this analysis, capitalism is alive and well, as a totalizing force that must be confronted and addressed frontally in order to restore the possibility of effective emancipatory movements worldwide. Postmodern arguments that refuse to engage with the universalizing phenomenon of capitalism and any notion of a universal human emancipatory project are problematic in guiding our efforts to transform a political economy of greed that creates and sustains the subordination and exploitation of racialized groups.

## LATINOS AND IDENTITY POLITICS

Over the last three decades, there has been a tendency among Latino studies scholars to primarily focus on the question of "Latino culture," following the scholarly tradition of many African American intellectuals who have historically focused on the problem of "race" as the central category of analysis for interpreting the social conditions of inequality and marginalization faced by African Americans. The resulting discourses, which have often focused on a politics of identity, have led to a serious blind spot or absence of depth in much of the theoretical writing about Latino life and culture in the US.

As we consider the conditions of Latinos today and the responses to these conditions by theories and practices shaped by identity politics, we must wholeheartedly agree with the criticisms articulated by Wood (1994) in her article entitled "Identity Crisis." Here we are reminded that capitalism is the most totalizing system of social relations the world has ever known. Yet, in most "postmodernist" or cultural-based accounts of Latinos, capitalism as a totalizing system does not exist. And even when it is mentioned, the emphasis is primarily on an undifferentiated plurality of identity politics and particular oppressions, while ignoring the overwhelming tendency of capitalism to homogenize rather than to diversify human experience.

No matter where one travels around the world, there is no question that racism as an ideology is integral to the process of capital accumulation. The failure of scholars to confront this dimension in their analysis of Latinos as a racialized group or to continue treating class as one of a multiplicity of (equally valid) perspectives, which may or may not "intersect" with the process of racialization, is a serious shortcoming. In addressing this issue, we must recognize that identity politics, which generally glosses over class differences and/or ignores class contradictions, have often been used by even radical intellectuals and activists within Latino communities in an effort to build a political base. By so doing, they have unwittingly perpetuated the dangerous notion that the political and economic are separate spheres of society which can function independently – a view that firmly anchors and sustains prevailing class relations of power in society and fails to deconstruct the cultural myths and internalized notions that serve to perpetuate the advancement of capitalist formations in the US and around the world.

Ramón Grosfoguel and Chloé S. Georas (1996) posit that "social identities are constructed and reproduced in complex and entangled political, economic, and symbolic hierarchy" (p. 193). Given this complex entanglement, what is needed is a more dynamic and fluid notion of how we think about Latino identities in this country. Such a perspective of identity would support our efforts to deconstruct static and frozen notions that perpetuate ahistorical, apolitical, and classless views of life. However, how we analytically accomplish this is no easy matter. Yet again, we are inspired by the words of Wood (1995)

> We should not confuse respect for the plurality of human experience and social struggles with a complete dissolution of historical causality, where there is nothing but diversity, difference and contingency, no unifying structures, no logic of process, no capitalism and therefore no negation of it, no universal project of human emancipation. (p. 263)

We must fundamentally reframe the very terrain that gives life to our understanding of what it means to live and work in a society with widening class differentiations and ever-increasing inequality. Through such an analytical process of reframing, we can expand the terms by which Latino identities are considered, examined, and defined, recognizing that reconfigurations of Latino identities are fundamentally shaped by the profound organizational and spatial transformations of the economy.

## THE LANGUAGE OF "RACE"[5]

The unproblematized "common sense" acceptance and use of "race" as a legitimate way to frame social relations finds its way into the literature on Latinos in this country. The use of this term among Latino scholars in the 1960s can be linked to academic acts of resistance to the term "ethnicity," and theories of assimilation which were generally applied to discuss immigrant populations of European descent. In radical efforts to distance Chicano (and Latino) history from this definition and link it to a theory of internal colonialism, cultural imperialism, and racism, Latinos were discussed as a colonized "racial" group in much the same manner that Marxist theorists[6] positioned African Americans. Consequently, the term's association with power, resistance, and self-determination has veiled the problematic of "race" as a social construct. Protected by the force of liberation movement rhetoric, "race" as an analytical term remained a "paper tiger"[7] – seemingly powerful in discourse matters but ineffectual as an analytical metaphor, incapable of moving us away from the notion of "race" as an innate determinant of behavior.

We recognize that we would be hard pressed to find a progressive scholar writing about Latinos who would subscribe to the use of "race" as a determinant of specific social phenomena associated with inherent (or genetic) characteristics of a group. Yet the use of "race" as an analytical category continues to maintain a stronghold in both academic and popular discourse. What does it mean to attribute analytical status to the idea of "race" and use it as an explanatory concept in theoretical discussion of Latinos? The use of "race" as an analytical category means to position it as a central organizing theoretical principle in deconstructing social relations of difference.

Unfortunately, the continued use of the notion of "race" in the literature and research on Latinos upholds a definition of "race" as a causal factor. In other words, significance and meaning are attributed to phenotypical features, rather than the relationship of difference to the historically reproduced complex processes of racialization. Further, the use of the term "race" often serves to conceal the particular set of social conditions experienced by racialized groups that are determined by an interplay of complex social processes, one of which is premised on the articulation of racism to effect legitimate exclusion (Miles and Torres, 1996).

Yet, despite the dangerous forms of distortion which arise from the use of "race" as a central analytical category of theory-making, scholars seem unable to break with the hegemonic tradition of its use in the social sciences. Efforts to problematize the reified nature of the term "race" and consider its elimination as a metaphor in our work are quickly met with major resistance even among progressive intellectuals of all communities – a resistance that is expressed through anxiety, trepidation, fear, and even anger. Often these responses are associated with a fear of delegitimating the historical movements for liberation that have been principally defined in terms of "race" (*raza*) struggles or progressive institutional interventions that have focused on "race" numbers to evaluate success. Although understandable, such responses nonetheless demonstrate the tenacious and adhesive quality of socially constructed ideas and how through their historical usage these ideas become common-sense notions that resist deconstruction. As a consequence, "race" is retained as "an analytical category not because it corresponds to any biological or epistemological absolutes, but because of the power that collective identities acquire by

means of their roots in tradition" (Gilroy, 1991).

It is within the historical and contemporary contexts of such traditions that differences in skin color have been and are signified as a mark which suggests the existence of different "races." As a consequence, a primary response among many progressive scholars when we call for the elimination of "race" as an analytical category is to reel off accusations of a "color-blind" discourse. This is not what we are arguing. What we do argue is that the visibility of skin color is not inherent in its existence but is a product of signification. This is to say, human beings identify skin color to mark or symbolize other phenomena in a variety of social contexts in which other significations occur. When human practices include and exclude people in the light of the signification of skin color, collective identities are produced and social inequalities are structured (Miles and Torres, 1996).

In order to address these structural inequalities, an analytical shift is required, from "race" to a plural conceptualization of "racisms" and their historical articulations with other ideologies. This plural notion of "racisms" more accurately captures the historically specific nature of racism and the variety of meanings attributed to evaluations of difference and assessments of superiority and inferiority of people. In other words, progressive scholars, whether in the social sciences, humanities, or in the new legal genre of critical race theory, should not be trying to advance a critical theory of "race."[8] For to persist in attributing the idea of "race" with analytical status can only lead us further down a theoretical and political dead-end. Instead, the task at hand is to deconstruct "race" and detach it from the concept of racism. This is to say, what is essential for scholars is to understand that the construction of the idea of "race" is embodied in racist ideology that supports the practice of racism. It is racism as an ideology that produces the notion of "race," not the existence of "races" that produces racisms (Guillaumin, 1995).

Hence, what is needed is a clear understanding of the plurality of racisms and the exclusionary social processes that function to perpetuate the racialization of Latinos. Robert Miles (1993) convincingly argues that these processes can be analyzed within the framework of Marxist theory without retaining the idea of "race" as an analytical concept.

> Using the concept of racialisation, racism, and exclusionary practice to identify specific means of effecting the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production, one is able to stress consistently and rigorously the role of human agency, albeit always constrained by particular historical and material circumstances, in these processes, as well as to recognise the specificity of particular forms of oppression. (p. 52)

Miles' work also supports the notion that efforts to construct a new language for examining the nature of differing racisms requires an understanding of how complex relationships of exploitation and resistance, grounded in differences of class, ethnicity, and gender, give rise to a multiplicity of ideological constructions of the racialized Other. This knowledge challenges the traditional notion of racism as solely a Black/White dichotomous phenomenon and directs us toward a more accurately constructed, and hence more politically and analytically useful way to identify a multiplicity of historically specific racisms.

There are critics, even within Latino studies, who cannot comprehend a world where the notion of "race" *does not exist.* Without question, mere efforts to undo and eliminate the idea of "race" as an analytical category in the social sciences is not sufficient to remove its use from the popular or academic imagination and discourse of everyday life. Moreover, in a country like the United States, filled with historical examples of exploitation, violence, and murderous acts rationalized by popular "race" opinions and scientific "race" ideas, it is next to impossible to convince people that "race" does not exist as a "natural" category. So in Guillaumin's words "Let us be clear about this. The idea of race is a technical means, a machine, for

committing murder. And its effectiveness is not in doubt" (p. 107). But "races" do not exist. What does exist is the unrelenting idea of "race" that fuels racisms around the world.[9]

## RETHINKING ETHNICITY

In the sixties, the common academic practice of using "ethnicity" to refer to Latino populations declined and "race" became the term of analysis. This shift in terms represented a major political strategy by Chicano and other Latino intellectuals to embrace the "race" paradigm of the internal colony model, widely prevalent in the major writings of radical scholars addressing the conditions of African Americans. Thus, in addition to distancing Latinos from traditional assimilation theories of ethnicity used to explain the process of incorporation of other European ethnic groups, the idea of Latinos as the (brown) "race" provided a discursively powerful category of struggle and resistance upon which to build in-group identity and cross-group solidarity with African Americans. This mostly unchallenged appropriation of the term "race" (or *raza*) was widely reflected in the academic and popular discourses of Chicano and Puerto Rican intellectuals, literary writers, and activists. This was particularly the case, for example, with the identity politics of "Chicanismo" which "meant identifying with 'la raza' (the race or people), and collectively promoting the interests of 'carnales' (brothers) with whom they shared a common language, culture, and religion" (Gutierrez, 1995: 214).

In rethinking ethnicity and its potential as a category of analysis in Latino studies, the intellectual project of diaspora should not be ignored. A critical definition of "ethnicity" is also of vital concern to diasporan scholars, particularly those who are rethinking notions of Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Dominican identities here and in the homeland. There is no question that the assumptions of such a term as "ethnicity" are inextricably linked to the ideology and figurative language that gives rise to the media debates and the public policy discourse on Latinos and other racialized populations in the United States. But the assumption that seems most promising to a radical politics of diaspora is the notion that ethnicity is "a mobile and unstable entity which contains many possibilities, including that of becoming a diaspora" (Tölöyan, 1996: 27).

Further, Khachig Tölöyan (1996) argues that the lines which divide ethnic groups from diasporas are not clear-cut, changing in response to the complex transnational dynamics of political events and the global economy. But what seems most characteristic of diasporan populations is an emphasis on the collective identity of the dispersed community and its connection to the homeland.

> For example, the Cuban-American "community" contains a few assimilated members identifiable only by name and kinship affiliation, but otherwise wholly inactive in and for the community; a much larger number of ethnics, a group whose size is fervently debated, that forms an "exile" community, which is committed to the overthrow of Cuban communism and to a physical return to the island; and a diasporan fraction which is active in political and cultural representation, cares about maintaining contact with Cuba and Cuban communities in other countries, like Mexico and Spain, and re-turns, turns repeatedly towards Cuba, without actually intending a physical return. (pp. 17–18)

The ideologies of group identity and the specific terms used to identify particular populations cannot be overlooked as important political dimensions of Latino life. As with all historically racialized populations, Latino "identities are never complete, never finished . . . always as subjectivity itself is, in process" (Hall, 1996). Further, this process is driven by a variety of efforts to build community, engage tensions surrounding class and nationality differences, revitalize and expand cultural boundaries, and redefine the meaning of group identity within the context of an ever-

worsening economy. This phenomenon is influenced by persistent efforts by Latinos to establish a "sense of place" from which to counter changing relations of material and cultural domination. In light of this, we can draw from the work of Hall (1990) who argues that a critical notion of ethnicity is required in order to "position" the discourse of racialized populations within particular histories related to the structure of class formations, regional origins, and cultural traditions. This is particularly the case with US Latino populations whose different national, class, gender, and sexual identities have been homogenized in terms of public policy under the all-encompassing categorical label of "Hispanic"[10] which, not surprisingly, is divided in terms of "white" and "non-white" subcategories.

As scholars attempt to move away from a language of "race" and the common practice of negating the multiplicity of Latino identities, critically rethinking the category of ethnicity comes to the forefront as an important intellectual and political project. Robert Blauner (1992), a major early proponent in the 1960s of the internal colony and the "race" paradigm, has begun to rethink the category of "race" and the common distinction between "race" and ethnicity, acknowledging that the "peculiarly modern division of the world into a discrete number of hierarchically ranked races is a historic product of Western colonialism" (p. 61). Moreover, he argues that:

> Much of the popular discourse about race in America today goes awry because ethnic realities get lost under the racial umbrella. The positive meanings and potential of ethnicity are overlooked, even overrun, by the more inflammatory meanings of race. (p. 61)

We must point out that rethinking the category of ethnicity does not imply that scholars should simply substitute the term "ethnicity" for "race." For in our intellectual pursuit of more precise and accurate language to reflect the conditions of Latino populations in this country, we must keep in mind Miles' (1982) warning that the theoretical use of "ethnicity" divorced from its historical and material context would be marred with a number of "analytical, logical, and empirical contradictions" constituting another analytical trap.

## THE LIMITS OF CULTURAL NATIONALISM

The politics of "cultural nationalism" has commonly been used to consolidate power within Latino communities, often ignoring or deliberately obfuscating serious class differences and severe contradictions present among different sectors of the Latino population. Conflicting views on the validity of this position among Latino intellectuals has been the topic of ongoing debate since the early 1970s. Carlos Muñoz (1989), in his seminal work on the Chicano movement, documented the criticisms of Chicanos who at a 1973 student conference urged the adoption of a Marxist ideology. These students framed their objections to cultural nationalism in the following manner.

> Cultural nationalism . . . points to a form of struggle that does not take into account the inter-connectedness of the world and proclaims as a solution the separatism that the capitalist has developed and perpetuated in order to exploit working people further . . . It promotes the concept of a nation without a material basis and solely on a spiritual basis and tends to identify the enemy on a racial basis, ignoring the origin of racism and that it is simply an oppressive tool of capitalism. (p. 91)

But for Puerto Ricans, as Clara Rodriguez (1995) points out, the politics of cultural nationalism was more akin to that of Native Americans. Puerto Ricans shared with Native Americans "a historical and still unresolved issue – political sovereignty in relation to the United States" (p. 224). Unlike the "imagined" homeland of Aztlán for Chicanos, Puerto Ricans contended with the 1898 invasion and conquest of Puerto Rico (Borinquen) and its

continued status as a US colony. Drawing strength from the Cuban socialist revolution, there was a greater tendency among Puerto Rican intellectuals and activists to frame arguments about conditions that Puerto Ricans faced within the context of US imperialism and capitalist development. Under the legendary leadership of Frank Bonilla, faculty, staff, and students associated with the Centro de Estudios Puertorriquenos at Hunter College produced theoretically rich structural analysis of economic factors affecting Puerto Ricans in the United States and in the homeland. Many of these works focused on the political economy of migration within the context of a colonial relationship and the world capitalist system.

Yet, in much the same way, Chicano and Puerto Rican cultural nationalists discussed the construction of identity in terms of colonialism and the struggle for nationhood, while remaining noticeably silent about gender issues, heterosexism, and racialized relations among Puerto Ricans here in the US and on the island (Ramos, 1995). Addressing this issue of racism within the Puerto Rican community, Roberto Rodriguez-Morazzani (1996) explains:

> The question of "race" and racism proved difficult and problematic within the context of an anti-colonial struggle based on a nationalistist imaginary that denied or subordinated the significance of the African, and denied or subordinated the question of racism as it existed within Puerto Rican society. (p. 157)

Alma Garcia's (1989) writings on Chicana feminist discourse echo the disagreements of Latina feminists across the country with the ideological tenets of cultural nationalism.

> One source of ideological disagreement between Chicana feminism and cultural nationalist ideology was cultural survival. Many Chicana feminists believed that a focus on cultural survival did not acknowledge the need to alter male-female relations within Chicano communities . . . They challenged the view that machismo was a source of masculine pride for Chicanos and therefore a defense mechanism against dominant society's racism. Chicana feminists called for changes in the ideologies responsible for distorting relations between women and men. One such change was to modify the cultural nationalist position that viewed machismo as a source of pride. (pp. 177–8)

A blatant absence of commitment to address sexism, heterosexism, and homophobia within the social and political milieu of cultural nationalism forcefully silenced and alienated Latino gays and Latina lesbians within movement organizations. In a political environment that already viewed feminist ideology as divisive and destructive to the Latino community, lesbians and gays experienced much hostility and political attack from "within." Without question, a cultural nationalist ideology that utilized its power, on the one hand, to perpetuate stereotypical images of Latina women as sacrificing and long-suffering mothers and wives, and on the other, to legitimate an unrelenting machismo, could hardly support a politics of inclusion and equality for homosexuals and lesbians who were considered a danger to the "raza."

In considering these serious limitations, most troubling is the recognition that the primacy of cultural nationalism in political discourse and its effectiveness as a tool of mass mobilization in the Latino community rests on the unfortunate fact that a national (or racialized) consciousness is generally much more developed than class consciousness. Furthermore, whatever its historical specificities, cultural nationalism as an ideology tends to not only grossly ignore or negate the legitimacy of class, gender, and sexual oppression, but also serves to block the development of critical consciousness in Latino communities.

## GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND POWER

The significant omissions in the intellectual and political discourse of Latinos in the US

can best be attributed to the powerful ideological hegemony of patriarchy that shaped much of the collective ideal of cultural nationalism and its steady retreat from class analysis over the last 20 years. The ideological formations of class rooted in the "naturalist discourse" of machismo are considered by many Latina feminists to represent the building blocks of gender and sexual oppression. Antonia Castañeda (1993) argues that "women are placed in opposition and in an inferior position to men, on the assumption that in the divine order of nature, the male sex of the species is superior to the female" (p. 27). Here, we can also turn to the writings of the French sociologist, Colette Guillaumin (1995), on racism, sexism, power, and the belief in nature.

> Each of our actions, each of the actions which we engage in in a specific social relationship (speaking, laundering, cooking, giving birth, taking care of others) is attributed to a nature which is supposed to be internal to us, even though that social relationship is a class relationship imposed on us by the modalities and the form of our life. (p. 229)

Despite the courageous efforts of many Latina feminists to break down the sexist barriers which prevented their full participation in the movement, their challenge to patriarchal ideology was often perceived as a threat to political unity. Unfortunately, attacks against Latina feminists were not limited to men. Chicana "loyalists," for example, insisted that Chicana feminism was anti-family, anti-cultural, anti-men, and therefore anti-Chicano movement. Such attacks often contributed to both the suppression of feminist activities and the erosion of critical political analysis (Garcia, 1989). In shedding light on this conflict and its impact, we once again turn to the work of Guillaumin.

> But an ideology characteristic of certain social relations is more or less accepted by all the actors concerned: the very ones who are subjected to the domination share it up to a certain point – usually uneasily, but sometimes with pride and insistence. Now the very fact of accepting some part of the ideology of the relationship of appropriation (we are natural things), deprives us of a large part of our means, and some of our potential, for political thinking. And this is indeed the aim of this ideology, since it is precisely the expression of our concrete reduction to powerlessness. (p. 232)

The conflicts and inequality reproduced by exclusionary practices and the reluctance to address the growing contradictions posed by class, gender, and sexual differences among Latinos served as primary catalysts for the development of Latina feminist, lesbian, and gay scholarship and organizations. Radical Latinos who had been formerly silenced in movement organizations boldly challenged traditional social norms, deconstructed languages of oppression, and publicly renounced the power relations which perpetuated inequality and discrimination within and outside of Latino communities.

It is worth noting here that, since the early 1900s, the involvement of Latinas in social movements, labor unions, civic activities, and church organizations was an important step toward a growing political consciousness. The political influence of Mexicana feminists in Mexico was definitely felt by Chicana women in this country. These influences can be linked to the establishment of feminist organizations such as the Liga Feminil Mexicanista in 1911 and direct involvement or support of a variety of labor strikes in the Southwest (Cotera, 1977). In a similar vein, Puerto Rican organizations such as the Liga Feminea de Puerto Rico in 1917 and the Liga Social Sufragista in the 1920s were established. Puerto Rican women working in the tobacco industry and needlework joined together, demanding improved conditions, an end to sexual harassment, and greater social opportunities. Yamile Azize-Vargas (1990), in her writings on the roots of Puerto Rican feminism, argues that the oppression faced by Puerto Rican women "in the needlework and tobacco industries contributed to conditions for the

emergence of class and feminist consciousness" (p. 77). But alongside, she reminds us of the strident opposition of the Catholic Church to feminist demands, claiming "it could interrupt women's destiny, according to God and Nature, to be mothers and housewives" (*El Mundo*, September 4, 1920).

Such opposition points to the fact that as Latinas became more vocal about the power relations that reproduced conditions of sexism within Latino communities, labor, and social movement organizations, many of these women were ridiculed, slandered, and ostracized by their male counterparts. In a seminal essay, Maria Linda Apodaca (1986) eloquently addresses the dilemma of women within the Chicano movement.

> Chicanas were integral in the Chicano movement, but in time they began to question their lack of recognition as leaders within the movement. Their ideas regarding political strategy and action were also being ignored or considered insignificant. When demands of these women became too loud, or when Chicano men were forced to accept Chicana leadership, the Chicana was chided for her unwomanly behavior. The chastizing increased when Chicanas began to focus on women's issues, like abortion, forced sterilization, and discrimination on the job. As conflict within the group increased, Chicanas began to re-evaluate their primary task and primary role. It became a question of deciding which came first: change as individuals, change as women, or over-all social change? (p. 107)

In their efforts to counter the sexism they faced within Chicano and Latino organizations, many Latinas turned their focus on the women's movement in this country. For most, this move was disappointing. Although now women's issues were at the forefront of the political rhetoric, issues of working-class and racialized women were nowhere to be seen. Latina women again faced a wall of silence. Some Latinas and Chicanas chose to continue their work for social change with in the political constraints of already existing organizations. Others began constructing and defining their own brands of feminism through the establishment of Latina community, civic, and professional organizations. But as Apodaca is quick to point out, many of these efforts, founded on liberal feminist ideals, only nurtured the desires of aspiring middle-class Chicanas/Latinas and reaffirmed the political economy of mainstream interests.

Within the academy, scholars researched, theorized, and documented the lives of Latina women, seeking to construct feminist perspectives that would more accurately reflect the conditions faced by different populations of Latina women in the United States. Edna Acosta-Belén (1992) documents in her work the emergence of a literary cultural discourse among Latina writers that moved beyond national origins and more inclusively addressed issues of class position, sexual orientations, and racialized relations. But even with the best intentions, some of the most respected Latina scholars unwittingly continued to embrace essentialist arguments, depoliticized theories of culture, and/or "race"-centered arguments that often failed to engage with depth the notion of class structure and the differences in gendered class formations among Latinas and other racialized women. Regretfully, few scholars responded to Rosaura Sánchez' (1990) call for more theoretical research grounded in a materialist analysis of Chicana (and Latina) life and culture in the United States.

The demons of naturalist discourse also reared their ugly heads in vehement attacks against Latino gays and lesbians, with accusations that they were not only traitors to the movement, but to all Latinos. Addressing one dimension of this issue, Aida Hurtado (1996) speaks to the conflict between lesbianism and partriarchal notions of the "nature" of women.

> Lesbianism is subversive because it undermines the unconquerable biological divide of patriarchal inheritance laws through biological ties. How can race (and to a certain extent class) privilege be maintained if there are no "pure" biological offspring?

> Furthermore, the seat of patriarchal subordination is in the intimacy of the domestic sphere – how can lesbians be kept in check if the patriarch is only present in the public sphere? (p. 22)

In 1981, *This Bridge Called My Back*, edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa hit the bookstores like a lightning bolt. It encompassed all of what Hurtado calls "the poetics of resistance" and loudly proclaimed that "radical women of color" would not be "kept in check." Latina, African American, Asian, and Native American women were not only collectively challenging the language, style, and discourse of the patriarchy, they were actively involved in counter-hegemonic activities that would open up political spaces where their particular issues and struggles would never again remain silent.

> We are the queer groups, the people that don't belong anywhere, not in the dominant world nor completely within our own respective cultures. Combined we cover so many oppressions. But overwhelmingly oppression is the collective fact that we do not fit, and because we do not fit *we are a threat.* (p. 209)

Anzaldúa's words were a manifesto for the growing number of Latino radical intellectuals, artists, and activists who didn't "fit" into the narrow and confining definitions of political conservatives, cultural nationalists, or liberal feminists.

## IMMIGRATION AND THE LATINO METROPOLIS[11]

Despite an "official" national history shaped by the mass migration of European immigrants to the Americas, an increasingly "scapegoat" attitude toward new immigrants has been the prevailing force shaping the politics of (im)migration in this country. Much of the repression at the heart of immigration public policy today still stems from the growing problems left unresolved during the period of industrial urbanization in this country. These unresolved problems later became exacerbated as the political economy of the United States strengthened its financial stronghold in the world and expanded its capitalist enterprises into the global arena. "Today, as military, political, and ideological power conspire to extend and consolidate the reach of the US global empire, the national economy continues its downward spiral and civil society descends further into breakdown and chaos" (Hamamoto and Torres, 1997: 3).

Although Mexican immigration to the Southwest, heavily influenced by Mexico's historical ties to the region and proximity to the border, represented an everyday occurrence, it was the 1924 Immigration Act restricting European migration to the United States that accelerated the massive migration of Caribbean migrants to New York. Several waves of Caribbean immigrants were to follow, along with refugee populations from Central America escaping from poverty and civil war in their countries. James Petras and Morris Morley (1995) argue that the new immigration from Latin America and other parts can be best understood as the direct outcome of the postwar advance of transnational capitalism while at the same time being symptomatic of US imperial decline.

Nowhere have the impact of anti-immigrant sentiments and the economic consequences of globalization been felt more than in the metropolitan areas of Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Boston, and Miami. The increasing "Latinization" of these cities due to both legal and "illegal" immigration from Mexico, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean, coupled with higher birthrates among Latino immigrants, has come under attack by conservative anti-immigrant organizations. Despite numerous studies that show otherwise, poor and working-class Latino immigrants have been blamed for poor urban conditions, soaring welfare rates, and the deteriorating national economy. This rapidly increasing immigrant population has also had to face the growing tensions which stem from the reconfiguration of "race

relations" beyond Black and White in the Latino Metropolis.[12]

In the early 1990s, the new nativism manifested itself in a number of Latino anti-immigrant political proposals in the state of California. Most recently, in 1994 Governor Pete Wilson and his constituents fought for the passage of Proposition 187. Latino educators, students, parents, community advocates, and their supporters launched a dramatic campaign across the state to defeat a proposition that, if passed, would not only prohibit school enrollment to undocumented students but eliminate the provision of all health services to immigrants who were not in the country "legally." In the end, Proposition 187 passed, but still remains in the courts, awaiting decision on its constitutionality.

Highly influenced by huge immigrant populations, Los Angeles and Miami represent excellent examples of the archetypal late twentieth-century "global city." Los Angeles has become a refuge to tens of thousands of Central Americans who began their flight to the US in the 1970s. The penetration of international capital and resultant economic dislocations, the war between El Salvador and Honduras, domestic political repression, and the availability of low-skill jobs in the US caused a huge leap in the number of Salvadoreans, Guatemalans, and Nicaraguans who joined both newly-arrived Mexicanos and well-established Mexican American communities in the state of California.[13]

While the historical pattern of Mexican settlement in Southwestern US cities such as Los Angeles continues, the nearly century-old colonial relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico becomes further strengthened as the world economy becomes ever more closely integrated, replenishing established ethnic enclaves in New York City, New Jersey, Chicago, and Boston.[14] The "circulating migration" of Puerto Ricans between the mainland and a home island economy dominated by US corporations benefiting from a combination of favorable tax policies, the availability of low-wage labor, and lack of regulatory controls has resulted in the anomaly of fully 40 percent of the population living outside Puerto Rico. Although formally US citizens since 1917, albeit with limited political rights, the benefits accruing to Puerto Ricans as a result of such status have been minimal when compared to more recently arrived Latino groups such as Cuban Americans.

The post-revolutionary migration of Cubans to southern Florida during the 1960s illustrates the centrality of collective group identity and social class position as key determinants of immigrant success in the United States.[15] For among all Latino groups, Cuban Americans by all objective measures – average income, level of education, occupational status, political representation – stand alone as having achieved solidly a privileged class status within the larger society. The valorization of white European "Spanish" ethnic identity over that of Indian or African infusions and the well-educated urban professional composition (Habaneros in particular) of first-wave Cuban immigrants served them well in adapting to the new social setting. The rabid anti-communist fervor of the times further aided in the perception of Cubans as being "good" immigrants because of their explicit renunciation of state socialism led by Fidel Castro.

To better understand the Latino immigrant population of today, gender patterns must also be noted with analytical specificity.[16] Unlike earlier decades, newly arrived immigrants entering the country are more likely to be women, particularly among Caribbean-born US residents. The reason for this preponderance of female immigrants is the relative ease with which immigrant women can find work, often as domestics or in garment factories. A typical pattern is for a woman to migrate first, leaving her children and/or her husband behind, then to apply for their immigration as kin, after she has attained permanent resident status for herself (Sunshine, 1994). Hence, Catherine Sunshine (1994) provides the following description of the current prototype of the "new" Latino immigrant in New York.

> . . . a woman from the Dominican Republic who migrates directly from her rural village. She leaves her children with her mother and goes to live with a cousin in a Manhattan tenement, earning $130 a week as a sewing machine operator. After she has been in the United States long enough to legalize her status, she sends for her children. The portion of her wages sent home are a major source of support for her extended family in the Dominican Republic. (p. 76)

The description above points to the notion that all Latino immigrant communities, to one extent or another, are connected to their native countries by transnational economic and social pressures. Whether we are speaking about the Cuban "exiles" in Miami who wield distinctive economic power there, or Puerto Ricans with fluid economic and migration patterns to and from the island, or seasonal Mexican laborers in California, or Dominican working women in New York, "the material forces that determine their migration, their present production relations, and their class positions are similarly determined by the larger social structure and the global economy" (Torres and Ngin, 1995: 60).

## THE READINGS: AN OVERVIEW

### *Culture, history, and society: a conceptual map*

> Conventional historical accounts of the formative years of the United States tend to regard everything that preceded the establishment of the British thirteen colonies as unimportant . . . this confined view of U.S. territorial expansion and the formative years of the nation, tends to fragment or obscure the entire history of the past and its links to the present, leaving us with an impoverished understanding of how groups, such as Latinos, have been and continue to be an integral part of this country's multicultural patrimony and have at different times played a perceptible role in the shaping of U.S. history and society.
>
> *Acosta-Belén and Santiago (1995: 5)*

It is impossible to grasp the complexity of Latino culture and history, as well as the contemporary issues affecting Latinos in the United States, without reconstructing the boundaries of conventional perspectives. It is precisely this challenge that the writers in this section address through their efforts to develop new conceptual frameworks for rethinking the changing identities and cultural formations of Latinos in this country. These theoretical and analytical reformulations of traditional paradigms boldly engage a variety of highly provocative cultural, historical, and social themes.

In "Merging Borders: The Remapping of America," Edna Acosta-Belén and Carlos E. Santiago call for a rethinking of traditional notions of Latino culture in ways that discard reified conceptualizations that perpetuate static, ahistorical, apolitical, and classless views of life. US Latinos must be understood within a historical context of "a shared legacy of colonialism, racism, displacement, and dispersion," linking their conditions to the transnational realities of Latinos in Latin America and the Caribbean. Acosta-Belén and Santiago underscore the need to extend the cultural parameters of analysis beyond those already imposed by geographical frontiers or arbitrary boundaries. Further, they argue that contemporary discussions of US Latino identity must be reformulated within a conceptual framework where existing capitalist formations and economic inequality are central to any theory, practice, or public policy that claims to further cultural democracy.

The political theories and practices of "cultural nationalism" have united and divided radical scholars and activists committed to social and economic justice worldwide. In "Aztlán, Borinquen, and Hispanic Nationalism in the United States" Klor de Alva provides a strident critique of parochial notions of cultural nationalism and challenges the limitations of social movement ideologies founded exclusively on such a

paradigm. He argues that although nationalism is shaped by socioeconomic imperatives, it tends to not only negate class but often serves to block the development of class consciousness. Central to Klor de Alva's analysis is the notion that "culture and identity are circumscribed by historical and material limitations, nevertheless people do not live out their lives as abstract categories." Through providing a comparative analysis of competing forms of nationalism in the political discourses of Chicano and Puerto Rican communities, Klor de Alva provides us with an opportunity to address current debates, given the renewed focus on cultural nationalism as a political and intellectual project in the US and around the world.

"Chicano History: Transcending Cultural Models" reinforces the dynamic and significant role of historical dimensions to understanding the changing conditions of Latino populations in this country. In this essay, Gilbert González and Raúl Fernández eloquently employ a Marxist framework that emphasizes a historical perspective founded on an integrated economic analysis. Moving away from culture-based models of history, they avoid perpetuating a traditionally narrow and stagnant cultural paradigm of Chicano life. Arguing against the distortions of traditional scholarship that keep culture and economic life in separate compartments, González and Fernández examine the systemic roots of conflict inherent in the prevalent economic organization of US society. González and Fernández accomplish this feat through providing a historical analysis that positions Chicanos and their participation in the US economy as central to their articulation of the social and cultural changes experienced by Spanish-speaking populations of the Southwest during the last two centuries.

In any text about Latinos, it is impossible to ignore the importance of language and its particular impact in shaping the cultural, social, and economic conditions of this population. Unlike traditional discussion of language issues in Latino communities, "Mapping the Spanish Language along a Multiethnic and Multilingual Border" takes a bold step in providing a linguistic analysis that is fundamentally linked to questions of the global political economy and the structure of class formations. Rosaura Sánchez argues against the popular notion of Latinos as a synthesis of "races" or a "mystical *raza cosmica*." Instead, she posits that although a heterogeneous and politically fragmented population, Latinos are united by a history of conquest and colonialism, a history of proletarianization and disempowerment, and, to a large extent, by a common language – Spanish. And although language and culture may be considered irrelevant in political movements, Sánchez asserts that language, culture, and ethnicity are strategies for struggle because they are often tools used by hegemonic forces to oppress, exploit, and divide populations.

While paradigms founded on the notion of the diaspora have been quite abundant in the writings of African Americans, it is only recently that it has begun to emerge more consistently in the literature on Cubans and Puerto Ricans in the United States. Maria de los Angeles Torres in "Encuentros y Encontronazos: Homeland in the Politics and Identity of the Cuban Diaspora" calls for a "new vision of identity that requires a vision of power and organization across borders of nation-states" that "inevitably leads to an expansion of the boundaries of citizenship beyond any one single nation-state." This breakdown of physical boundaries, de los Angeles argues, creates a complex border place within struggle and affirmation in which there exists an ongoing process of cultural resistance and negotiation of internalized hegemonic notions that confront us daily. Most important, she stresses that the conditions faced by members of diaspora communities toss them into interactions with organizations which force them into constant negotiation of their identities and new ways of thinking about multiple identities.

### *Cultural politics and border zones: recasting racialized relations*

> Nepantla is the Nhuatl word for an in-between state, that uncertain terrain one crosses when moving from one place to another, when changing from one class, race or gender position to another, when traveling from the present identity into a new identity . . . The border is on a constant Napantla state. It is the locus of resistance, of rupture, of implosion and explosion, and of putting together the fragments and creating a new assemblage . . . Border artist cambian el punto de referencia. By disrupting the neat separations between cultures, they create a culture mix, una mestizada.
>
> *Gloria Anzaldúa (1993: 39–40)*

One of the most heavily contested theoretical terrains of our times is that of culture and identity. It is perhaps the arena in which traditional definitions of culture and identity have most failed in rendering a critical perspective of Latino populations in this country. Major limitations are found even in cultural studies and postmodernist articulations of ethnic and "racial" identities. "The Politics of Biculturalism: Culture and Difference in the Formation of Warriors for Gringostroika and the New Mestizas" represents a necessary move away from recurring essentialized notions of multiple identities. By considering the myriad of cultural, social, political, and economic forces at work in the formation of ethnic identities, Antonia Darder points to the complexity of issues that must be simultaneously addressed in order to arrive at an accurate conceptualization of difference within subordinate cultural communities. Drawing on recent works in cultural studies and political economy, Darder argues that an understanding of cultural identity formation must be fundamentally rooted in both political and economic theories of society.

The need to recast racialized relations in the social sciences is at the heart of Roberto P. Rodriguez-Morazzani's essay, "Beyond the Rainbow: Mapping the Discourse on Puerto Ricans and 'Race'." His work seeks to analyze the history of racial formation among Puerto Ricans, in an effort to better identify how social agents are defined or define themselves as racial subjects and the processes which result in the production of racialized and racializing practices within society. Rodriguez-Morazzani provides a useful review of the dominant discourses and counter-discourses on Puerto Ricans and "race" which he discusses through the use of the metaphor of "moments." Hence, his discussion moves the reader from looking at "race as sociopathology" (*The First Moment*) to a focus on "countering the dominant discourse" (*The Second Moment*) to an emphasis on "obfuscating racial formation and signification" (*The Third Moment*) with a discussion of its most prominent theory of the "rainbow people."

In her discussion of "Chicana Artists: Exploring Nepantla, El Lugar de las Fronteras" Gloria Anzaldúa ushers the reader into the place of *Nepantla*, an in-between zone of cultural production at "the border" where cultures are transformed and remade. "The border is a historical and metaphorical site, *un sitio ocupado*, an occupied borderland where individual artist and collaborating groups transform space and the two home territories . . . become one." As she attempts to unveil the complexity of border existence, Anzaldúa proclaims the strengths and difficulties associated with living multiple identities. For Chicana artists, for example, one of the many obstacles is simply being identified as a "border dweller" which places the artist in danger of illegitimacy in the eyes of the outside world. Given the existing social and economic conditions, Anzaldua argues that Chicanas must acknowledge the multiplicity of their identities as a strategy of resistance and survival.

In Rubén Martinez's "The Shock of the New" themes of resistance, survival, and the reconstruction of cultural identities are central to his poignant analysis of the "Mexican" Quebradita dance craze in the Southwest. In a most effective manner, the significance of popular culture as both a medium and site for

cultural production and the formation of new hybrid cultural identities is powerfully illustrated. Martinez provides a revealing example of the transcultural dynamics of resistance inherent in the experience of border crossing, emphasizing that the forces of cultural assimilation are as much an "economic rite of passage as a cultural one."

Earl Shorris, a contributing editor of Harper's Magazine brought together two well-recognized scholars, Cornel West and Jorge Klor de Alva, to engage in a highly controversial and provocative debate. The stated intention was to move the discourse on power and ethnicity beyond black and white. The result of that debate, "Our Next Race Question: The Uneasiness between Blacks and Latinos," is included here to illustrate the range of views that can be found in the field of cultural studies. What is most apparent from this dialogue between West and Klor de Alva is their highly contrasting views on the analytical value of the term "race," despite their shared objection to essentialized concepts of "race" and the idea that differences are innate and outside of history. While Klor de Alva makes the case that West can only be considered Black "within a certain reductionist context," West asserts the value of continuing to identify himself as Black (a racialized label) "as a way of affirming ourselves as agents, as subjects in history." The debate becomes even more intensified when Klor de Alva argues that West is, in fact, an *Anglo* (an ethnic label) asserting that "Anglos may be of any race." A critical analysis of this debate supports the argument to eliminate the language of "race" from both academic and popular discourses and the need to make central the differing forms of racism(s) that impact on Latino and other racialized populations in this country – a feat that seems almost insurmountable given the historical discourses of power linked to the notion of "race" by both dominant and subordinate populations alike.

### *Critical discourses on gender, sexuality, and power*

> Emerging from the experience of colonization, the *chignon/chingada* dynamic locks women into subordinate roles, inscribes inflexible definitions of masculinity and femininity, and on a larger scale, becomes the surveillance test of true nationalism. Whoever is penetrated, in other words, is immediately interpreted by dominant Latino culture as passive. Passivity, within this system, is understood to mean open to sexual betrayal and, and therefore, a threat to the nation.
>
> *David Román (1995: 349)*

The expression of sexuality and its relationship to ethnicity, gender, and class relations cannot be overlooked in our efforts to understand the social, cultural, and political formations of men and women within Latino communities in the United States. Without question, we must engage critically the manner in which cultural productions emerging from gender and sexual relations are fundamentally rooted in relations of power. Further, it must be recognized that despite US Latino movements for liberation, the particular needs of Chicana and Latina women, Latina lesbians, and Latino gay men have often been either ignored or deemed divisive and destructive to the community by the powerful ideological hegemony of cultural nationalism that has shaped the history of these movements.

It is precisely the struggle against this powerful ideological hegemony of cultural nationalism, on the one hand, and the contradictions and exclusionary practices of the women's movement, on the other, that most informs the history and development of Chicana feminisms in the United States. In "Chicana Feminisms: Their Political Context and Contemporary Expression" Denise A. Segura and Beatriz M. Pesquera provide an excellent overview of the historical and contemporary views of Chicanas and their collective efforts to overcome their limited access as "second-class citizens." In their

discussion they point to the destructive practice within the "male-dominated" Chicano movement of using labeling as "a tool of repression against Chicanas who advocated a feminist position." Segura and Pesquera also argue that class location has played a fundamental role in shaping the identity and political consciousness of Chicanas in this country. Of special interest is their description of Chicana organizations and their efforts to anchor feminist struggles within the social, economic, and political realities of the Chicano/Latino community at large.

Through the reflective power of youthful memories, Lourdes Arguelles, in "Crazy Wisdom: Memories of a Cuban Queer" ushers the reader through a series of "gender bending" recollections of two lesbian women in Cuba who disappeared from her life at the beginning of the Cuban revolution. It is, in many ways, an example of how Latina lesbians have often, quietly and inconspicuously, created spaces for themselves, even if only within the confines of their personal lives. Arguelles uses the knowledge gathered from her personal experiences with the two women to challenge the racialized "norms" of feminist psychology that have traditionally shaped concepts of individual freedom and fusion in intimate relationships.

David Román's essay, "Teatro Viva! Latino Performance and the Politics of AIDS in Los Angeles," examines questions of cultural production through the medium of Chicano theater and performance, linking his analysis to the realities faced by Latino gay and bisexual men with HIV or AIDS. Through carefully deconstructing the performance of *Culture Clash*, for example, Román exposes the unwitting perpetuation of oppressive discourses and images of sexuality that render gays and lesbians virtually invisible or a danger to Latino community life. Román clearly supports the notion that issues of people of color cannot be viewed without an analysis of race and class relations. Further, he critiques the limitations and contradictions of identity politics, particularly with respect to the manner in which cultural nationalism conflates all Chicano experiences into a unified Chicano subject, failing to account for the differences in lifestyles, sexual orientation, and class location among Latino populations. In contrast, Román looks at the performances of Luis Alfaro to provide an example of the "multifocality" necessary to accurately depict the differences in class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity among Latinos, and hence, to counter the hegemonic configurations that insist on the conflation of difference.

Ilán Stavan's treatise on "The Latin Phallus" boldly examines the persistent images and themes of machismo in Latino historical accounts and literary renditions of Latino sexuality. Stavans argues that patriarchal conquest, domination, and violent eroticism are overriding themes that continue to shape the sexual identity and attitudes of Latino men (and women) in this hemisphere, more than 500 years after the first Spanish *conquistadores* first set foot in the Americas. Reminiscent of Freudian analysis, Stavans describes the phallus "as an object of intense adoration, the symbol of absolute power and satisfaction . . . The Latin man and his penis are at the center of the Hispanic world." Yet despite such macho bravado, he identifies "a deep seated inferiority complex" at the root of this exaggerated obsession with the phallus. Through the writings of such major literary figures as Jorge Luis Borges, John Rechy, Julio Cortázar, Reinaldo Arenas, and Manuel Puig, Stavans further discusses the disturbing impact of an unrelenting machismo on Latino homosexuality.

## *Labor and politics in a global economy: the Latino metropolis*

> The growth of America's Latino population in the last ten years, which includes the rapidly growing number of legal and undocumented Latino immigrants in the United States, is taking place within the context of economic globalization. Global economic integration has restructured the US . . . Latino workers are the workers most exposed to the ravages from the restruc-

> turing of the American economy and therefore are persistently plagued by such ills as high unemployment rates and a lack of job security. Though Latinos represent a broad range of working experiences, they undergo a process of proletarianization exacerbated by [racialization]. Along with African Americans, Latinos occupy the lowest rungs of a segmented labor market that has been produced by the racism of employers, unions, and US foreign policy in Mexico, Central and Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean.
>
> *Zaragosa Vargas (1996)*

The failure to engage the logic of late capitalism and the changing modes of capital accumulation worldwide is a serious limitation of "postmodern" discourses of identity politics and Latino cultural studies. In a counter-position to this problematic stance, Zaragosa Vargas clearly addresses the global changes in class formation and the social structure of post-industrial capitalism and how these changes have altered the face of Latino immigration, labor force participation, and economic inequality in the US. In "Rank and File: Historical Perspectives on Latina/o Workers in the US" Vargas' thoughtful, comparative discussion of these issues provides a historical analysis of the interplay of the restructuring of the American economy and its destructive impact on the power of unions and Latino labor in this country. But despite the economic difficulties faced by Latino communities, he argues against the folly of utilizing "nationalism" to consolidate power within Latino communities – a political strategy that has served to ignore or deliberately obfuscate serious class differences and severe contradictions present among different sectors of the Latino population.

"Latinos in a 'Post-industrial' Disorder: Politics in a Changing City" examines the impact of "post-industrial" change in Latino communities, with special emphasis upon the contours of industrial development in Greater East Los Angeles. Victor Valle and Rodolfo D. Torres posit that the economic forces that have transformed the Greater Eastside into one of the nation's most dynamic industrial landscapes requires a rethinking of Latino politics, space, and culture. At the heart of their rethinking of Latino political and economic life is an overriding concern with finding a conceptual language that can more accurately depict the consequences of the global economy's reorganization of industrial production to poor and working communities. In addition, Valle and Torres argue that an understanding of the dialectics of landscapes of consumption and production can help significantly to reveal locations of actual and potential political space. Finally, the authors provide a framework for a "strategic agenda" in a changing political economy. As such, this work can be understood as a first step toward creating a post-Fordist epistemology and politics that suggest new opportunities for democratic economic reform and social change in late twentieth-century capitalism.

The concept of creating political space, framed within a context of identity, resistance, and survival, is also an overriding theme in "What's Yellow and White and has Land All Around It? Appropriating Place in Puerto Rican Barrios." Through an analysis of the phenomena of *casitas* in New York as "architecture of resistance," Luis Aponte-Parés eloquently challenges static and absolute notions of Puerto Rican urban culture. His work distinctly shows the significance of migration patterns to the appropriation of urban space and the formation of *casitas* culture in Puerto Rican communities. His discourse of Puerto Rican *barrio* resistance in New York challenges us to rethink the meaning of urban political space and its relationship to cultural identity and changing class relations.

"Caribbean Colonial Immigrants in the Metropoles: A Research Agenda" contrasts the experience of Caribbean immigrants through a comparative study of the migration process and societal modes of incorporation for different Caribbean groups. Ramón Grosfoguel accomplishes this through an analysis of the impact of "race" and ethnic

relations upon economic public policies affecting different immigrant populations in the metropoles. Through his insightful analysis, he provides a critical framework for better understanding of the immigrant experience, based on a variety of significant factors. These factors include the origin of the immigrant population, institutional dimensions of the migration experience, the context of reception, and the cultural discursive impact associated with the process of incorporation in the receiving society. Most importantly, Grosfoguel's work strongly reinforces the use of a comparative research approach to studying the social and economic conditions of different ethnic populations.

## THE PURPOSE OF THE READER

In discussing our analytical framework in the first section of this introduction, we have attempted to draw attention to both competing and complementary theoretical narratives in the very diverse field of Latino cultural studies. Needless to say, the essays in this volume are not theoretically congruent or politically continuous with each other. The collection has incompatibilities, divergences, and edges of disagreement as to paradigms and theories used to understand Latino culture, politics, and society.

But one issue is very clear. Despite a rampage of critiques that argue against a return to theories of historical materialism and economic determinism, we call for a recovery and renewal of a critical historical materialism and class analysis of late capitalist formations as these relate to racialized relations in the US and abroad. We recognize that there is an apparent theoretical tension between our insistence on a structural analysis of class and class structure and the constructionist and discursive accounts of "race" and "identity." We argue, nonetheless, that much of the new analysis of the changing nature of American society and the much talked-about "Latinization" will be influenced by new approaches to class, inspired by a renewed Marxist political economy. In a recent interview, Stuart Hall (1996) voiced concern about the silence of class and those theoretical writings that ignore the impoverishing consequences of capitalism. Upon being questioned on this issue, he responded:

> I do think that's work that urgently needs to be done. The moment you talk about globalization, you are obliged to talk about the internalization of capital, capital in its late modern form, the shifts that are going on in modern capitalism, post-fordism, etc. So those terms which were excluded from cultural studies . . . now need to be reintegrated . . . In fact, I am sure we will return to the fundamental category of "capital". The difficulties lie in reconceptualizing class. Marx it seems to me now, was much more accurate about "capitalism" than he was about class. It's the articulation between the economic and the political in Marxist class theory that has collapsed. (p. 401)

In addition, our intention was to include articles that represent major theoretical currents, rather than attempt to survey the discipline of Latino studies. The guiding perspectives that informed our choices are complex and multifaceted. But fundamentally they arise from an emphasis, to one extent or another, on the political economy and the globalization of capital, an understanding of capitalism as a worldwide phenomenon, the centrality of a renewed class analysis in theories of cultural life, a recognition of the traditional ideological expressions of power in prevailing views of women, gays, and lesbians, a view of Latinos as a diverse and changing population, the significance of immigration politics, and the overriding historical impact of these perspectives on the "Latinization" of large urban metropolitan areas in the United States.

But most importantly, the volume is informed by an urgency to break away from language and theoretical constructs that limit or obstruct our ability to address the changing conditions of late capitalism, as racialized structures, inequalities, and representations continue to be of immense importance. This

includes calling for a new conceptual apparatus and critical lexicon to grapple with new racialized social relations and the ever changing class structure in late capitalism.

## Notes

1 J. Gomez-Quiñonez, *On Culture* (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Center Publications, Popular Series No. 1, 1977).

2 We would like to emphasize here that the notion of globalization is not new. In fact, Marx and Engels recognized a shift in 1848, arguing that the State had begun to serve the interest of the global economy and in furthering this objective they predicted that modern industry would create a world market; the bourgeoisie would settle everywhere and establish connections everywhere; old-established national industries would be destroyed and replaced by new industries whose existence would become a matter of life or death for all nations; raw materials would be sought in the remotest regions; industry products would be consumed at home and worldwide; instead of self-sufficiency, universal interdependence would result; national one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness would become more impossible; and there would soon be a world literature and a world culture.

3 Economic inequality has been on the rise in the United States since the 1970s. Since 1992, when Bill Clinton charged that Republican tax cuts in the 1980s had broadened the gap between the rich and the "middle class," it has become more sharply focused as a political issue.

4 For an indispensable introduction to this debate, see *Post-Fordism: A Reader*, edited by Ash Amin (Blackwell, 1994).

5 Parts of this section have appeared in Miles and Torres, "Does Race Matter? Transatlantic Perspectives on Racism After 'Race Relations'" in *Resituating Identities: The Politics of Race, Ethnicity, and Culture*, ed. V. Amit-Talai and C. Knowles (Ontario: Broadview Press, 1996); and in Darder and Torres, "From Race to Racism: The Politics of 'Race' Language in 'Postmodern' Education," in *New Political Science*, 38/39 (Winter 1996).

6 Critics of the internal colony model working within a Marxist political economy framework fell into a similar analytical trap in their failure to break away from the "race relations" paradigm. These writers representing different strands of "materialist" approaches retained "race" as an analytical concept, while working within the language of class, capital accumulation, and the reserve army labor. For more on this topic see Gilbert Gonzalez, "A Critique of the Internal Colonial Model," in *Latin American Perspectives* (Spring 1974), pp. 154–61. Also see, *Structures of Dependency*, ed. Frank Bonilla and Robert Girling (1973).

7 In addition to the works of Robert Miles (1989, 1993), the recent work by K. Anthony Appiah (1996) makes a similar argument on the problematic nature of the idea of "race."

8 For recent examples of scholarly works that focus on "critical theories of race," see *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, ed. Richard Delgado (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); *Critical Race Theory: the Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, ed. Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendal Thomas (New Press, 1995); and Critical Race Feminism: A Reader, ed. Adrien Katherine Wing, (New York University Press, 1997).

9 Additional works that have been important in shaping our analysis of racism, modernity, and identity include: *The Arena of Racism*, by Michel Wieviorja (London: Sage, 1995); *Racism*, by Robert Miles (London: Routledge, 1989); *Racialized Barriers: The Black Experience in the United States and England in the 1980s*, by Stephen Small (London: Routledge, 1994); *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning*, by David Theo Goldberg (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993); *The Meaning of Race: Race, History and Culture in Western Society*, by Kenan Malik (New York University Press, 1996); *On Race and Philosophy*, by Lucius T. Outlaw (New York: Routledge, 1996); *Racial Formation in the United States: From 1860s to the 1990s*, by Michael Omi and Howard Winant, 2nd edn (New York: Routledge, 1994); *The Future of the Race* by Henry Louis Gates and Cornel West (New York: Knopf, 1996).

10 For an insightful discussion on the labeling of Latinos in the United States, see Suzanne Oboler, "The Politics of Labeling: Latino/a

Cultural Identities of Self and Others," in *Latin American Perspectives*, 19 4 (Fall 1992), pp. 18–36.

11 Excerpts from this section first appeared in the introduction of *New American Destinies: A Reader in Contemporary Asian and Latino Immigration*, ed. Darrell Y. Hamamoto and Rodolfo D. Torres (New York: Routledge, 1997).

12 See the path-breaking work of Andres Torres, *Between Melting Pot and Mosaic: African American and Puerto Ricans in the New York Political Economy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press) 1995.

13 See "Central American Migration: A Framework for Analysis," by Nora Hamilton and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla, in *New American Destinies*, ed. D. Hamamoto and R. Torres.

14 For an excellent analysis of the past and present conditions of Latinos in New York, see *Latinos in New York: Communities in Transition*, ed. Gabriel Haslip-Viera & Sherrie L. Bauer, (University of Notre Dame Press, 1996).

15 For a book-length treatment of the history of Cubans in the United States, see Maria Cristina Garcia's *Havana USA: Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Florida, 1959–1994* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

16 For an excellent study of Mexican immigrants that treats gender with analytical primacy see *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration*, by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (University of California Press, 1994).

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