

POLITICS

The Politics of Hispanic Identity

by Joseph E. Fallon

The federal government officially recognizes "Hispanic"—an artificial and arbitrary concept devoid of ethnic, racial, cultural, or linguistic meanings—as a legitimate collective identity for two reasons. Domestically, it is to create a "Hispanic nation" within the United States, to inflate the numerical size of that "nation," and to have all members of that "nation" eligible for affirmative action programs. Internationally, it is to legitimize "Hispanic" power in the 18 Spanish-speaking countries in the Western Hemisphere by recognizing the population of each as a homogenous "ethnic" group, thereby denying the existence of non-Hispanic peoples and enabling the suppression of their languages, cultures, and religions.

Achieving the domestic objectives, which virtually guarantees the realization of the international one, required rewriting the history of the United States. As George Orwell recognized in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: "Who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past." According to this historical revisionism, a significant Mexican population lived in what is today Texas and the Southwest of the United States before the arrival of the Americans; Mexican-Americans have always been loyal to the United States; and the status of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in the United States has historically been more comparable to that of African-Americans than that of "whites."

Between 1820 and 1900, the average annual number of Mexican nationals immigrating to the United States was only 350. The demographic impact of such numbers on the Mexican-American community was negligible since as many

Mexican nationals departed as entered. This changed dramatically after 1900, especially during the two decades spanning the "Mexican Revolution" and its aftermath. Between 1910 and 1930, nearly 700,000 Mexicans crossed the border into the United States—approximately three percent of the entire population of Mexico.

Most entered Texas. It was this post-1910 immigration which for the first time established a significant Mexican presence in Texas. In 1821, when American colonists began to arrive, there were only an estimated 3,000 Mexicans in the entire Mexican province of Texas, and most of them lived southwest of present-day Colorado. By 1834, Americans outnumbered Mexicans by ten to one. In 1860, there were only an estimated 12,000 ethnic Mexicans living in all of Texas—less than two percent of a total population numbering over 600,000. By 1900, the estimated number of ethnic Mexicans living in Texas was only 70,000—less than three percent of a total population in excess of three million. In San Antonio, ethnic Germans outnumbered ethnic Mexicans.

The estimated number of ethnic Mexicans living in the other Southwestern states in 1900 was similarly low: Arizona—14,172 out of a total population of 122,931, or less than 12 percent; California—8,096 out of a total population of 1,485,053, or less than one percent; and New Mexico—6,649 out of a total population of 195,310, or less than four percent.

Between 1910 and 1920, the politics of the Mexican Revolution followed the wave of Mexicans into the United States. It consisted of acts of violence by rival Mexican warlords—principally Victoriano Huerta, Venustiano Carranza, and Francisco "Pancho" Villa—and by Mexicans living in the United States—such as Agustín S. Garza, Luis de la Rosa, Aniceto Pizana, and Esteban Fierros, all from Texas. Those perpetrated by the former included armed raids into Texas and New Mexico, as well as threats of a general war against the United States. Those committed by the latter centered on the "Plan de San Diego," which called for a general insurrection by Mexicans living throughout the Southwest of the United

States and the extermination of European-American males residing in that region.

Many historians believe the Plan de San Diego had a foreign, chiefly Mexican, component to its origin. Some consider it to have been part of a conspiracy for returning the deposed Mexican dictator Huerta to power. In any event, the plan was then used by the reigning dictator of Mexico, Carranza, as a tool for extorting official recognition for his government from Washington, which is why many maintain that the Plan de San Diego originated with Carranza from the start. Further disagreement centers on the role, if any, of the Imperial German Government—which was endeavoring to keep the United States out of World War I—in formulating or funding the proposed insurrection.

However, several historians, including those who believe that Huerta and/or Carranza were involved in the conspiracy, judge the plan to have been "an authentic product of the border region." Championing this opinion, the militant Hispanic publication *AZTLAN: Chicano Journal of Social Science & The Arts* printed in its Spring 1970 issue: "Mexicans, citizens of the United States and Mexico, conceived, wrote, and attempted to implement a manifesto of liberation entitled the Plan de San Diego." The article included an English translation of the plan and justified its 15 points, "harsh as they may seem," on the ground that Mexicans in the United States had historically suffered from "the racism, brutality, and fear of the Anglo population."

Point One: "On the 20th day of February 1915, at two o'clock in the morning, we will arise in arms against the Government and country of the United States of North America . . . we will proclaim the independence and segregation of the States bordering upon the Mexican Nation, which are: TEXAS, NEW MEXICO, ARIZONA, COLORADO, AND UPPER CALIFORNIA, OF WHICH States the Republic of MEXICO was robbed in a most perfidious manner by North American imperialism."

Point Two: Our "army shall be known by the name of: LIBERATING ARMY FOR RACE AND PEOPLES."

Point Five: "It is strictly forbidden to hold prisoners . . . they shall be shot immediately without any pretext."

Point Seven: "Every North American over sixteen years of age shall be put to death; and only the aged men, the women, and the children shall be respected . . ."

Point Eight: "THE APACHES of Arizona, as well as the INDIANS (RED SKINS) of the Territory, shall be given every guarantee; and their lands which have been taken from them shall be returned to them to the end that they may assist us in the cause which we defend."

Point Ten: "The movement having gathered force, and once having possessed ourselves of the States above alluded to, we shall proclaim them an INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC, later requesting (if it be thought expedient) annexation to MEXICO . . ."

Point 11: "When we shall have obtained independence for the negroes . . . we shall aid them in obtaining six States of the American Union, which States border upon those already mentioned, and they may form from these six States a Republic that they may, therefore, be independent."

Point 12: ". . . bearing in mind that this is a war without quarter; nor shall any leader enroll in his ranks any stranger, unless said stranger belong to the Latin, the negro, or the Japanese race."

With the exception of half a dozen Japanese, who apparently served as ordnance experts, participants in the Plan de San Diego were exclusively Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. Although points eight and 11 had been included in the manifesto to win the support of African-Americans and American Indians, both communities refused to participate.

Organized into armed bands of between 25 and 100 men with bases located in northern Mexico, the Liberating Army for Races and Peoples launched 27 raids into the United States. The guerrillas murdered 33 Americans, wounded 24 others, destroyed thousands of dollars worth of property, and "ethnically cleansed" south Texas of thousands of American families, but they failed to achieve any of the objectives stated in their manifesto. By June 1916, 16 months after the date for the general insurrection, the Plan de San Diego had been defeated by the military response of the Texas Rangers and the U.S. Army.

In the continental United States prior to 1930, everyone who today would be officially designated as "Hispanic" was legally classified as "white." Virtually all were of Mexican origin, although a sizable community in New Mexico steadfastly maintained, and still do, that they are of Spanish origin. Even the segregationist state of Texas, with its Jim Crow laws against African-Americans, legally classified both Mexican immigrants and Mexican-Americans as "white."

However, in the aftermath of the failed race war attempted under the Plan de San Diego and amid fear that many among the nearly 700,000 Mexicans who had entered the United States between 1910 and 1930 might possibly be fifth columnists for continuing Mexican irredentist claims to the Southwest, the federal government decided to ascertain the number of Mexicans living in the United States. To do that, the 1930 census counted "Mexicans" separately from "whites" and defined them as everyone who was born or whose parents were born in Mexico and "who is not definitely white." Revised statistics for the 1910 and 1920 censuses were presented to correspond with this new classification.

The official designation of "Mexican" as a nonwhite group along with "Negro," "Indian," "Chinese," "Japanese," and "Filipino" was *opposed* by Mexican-Americans, including the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), formed in 1929. They successfully lobbied the federal government to reclassify all Mexicans, immigrants and native-born, as "white." They did not lobby for the abolition of segregation.

Between 1940 and 1976, Mexicans remained officially classified as "white" in conformity to the expressed wishes of that community. However, after the introduction of affirmative action programs with their policy of discrimination against "whites," Mexican-Americans reversed themselves. They now successfully lobbied the federal government, in 1976 and 1977, to be classified as a nonwhite "ethnic" minority for purposes of eligibility for all affirmative action programs.

In 1976, the American GI Forum, the Latin American Manufacturing Association, LULAC, the National Congress of Hispanic American Citizens, the National Council of La Raza, and SER—organizations representing primarily individuals whose ancestry was Mexican, but including those with origins in Cu-

ba, Puerto Rico, and other Spanish-speaking countries as well—successfully lobbied for passage of Public Law 94-311. This legislation, signed into law on June 16, 1976, created an umbrella term entitled "Americans of Spanish origin or descent" for all those who can "trace their origin or descent from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central and South America, and other Spanish-speaking countries."

This definition had two fundamental flaws. First, it equated "state" with "ethnicity." Mexico is the state. Therefore, its inhabitants are ethnic "Mexicans." According to this logic, the population of Belgium is composed of ethnic "Belgians," not Flemings and Walloons; the population of Switzerland is composed of ethnic "Swiss," not French, Germans, and Italians; and the population of pre-1990 Yugoslavia was composed of ethnic "Yugoslavs," not Albanians, Croats, Macedonians, Serbians, and Slovenians.

The second flaw was assuming that a common European language as the language of government meant a common identity. Eighteen Spanish-speaking countries and Puerto Rico, with antagonistic, sometimes violent "national" rivalries—Mexico and Guatemala, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Honduras, Honduras and Nicaragua, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, Panama and Colombia, Colombia and Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador, Ecuador and Peru, Peru and Chile, Chile and Bolivia, Bolivia and Paraguay, Paraguay and Argentina, and Argentina and Chile—were declared by Congress to constitute a common "national" identity. By this logic, a common identity must be shared by India and the Philippines and by Canada and Haiti, since both sets of countries have a common European language as a language of government—English for the former and French for the latter.

Public Law 94-311 further stated: "a large number of Americans of Spanish origin or descent suffer from racial, social, economic, and political discrimination and are denied the basic opportunities they desire as American citizens." This law thus mandated federal agencies to "collect, and publish regularly, statistics which indicate the social, health, and economic condition of Americans of Spanish origin or descent." In addition, the Census Bureau was required to provide both Spanish-language census questionnaires and Spanish-speaking

enumerators, and to "implement an affirmative action program . . . for the employment of personnel of Spanish origin or descent." The implementation of affirmative action at the Census Bureau initiated a process that quickly made "Americans of Spanish origin or descent" legally eligible for other types of affirmative action programs.

The terminology adopted in Public Law 94-311 was revised and finalized in 1977. On May 12, the Office of Management and Budget issued Directive No. 15, entitled "Race and Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting." This directive replaced the phrase "Americans of Spanish origin or descent" with the term "Hispanic," and expanded the definition to read "A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race." The original 1976 definition was potentially limited by the words "origin or descent from . . . Spanish-speaking countries." By employing the phrase, "or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race," the revised 1977 definition became more encompassing and further inflated the number of "Hispanics." Without exception, anyone living in or having emigrated from Spain, Puerto Rico, the 18 Spanish-speaking countries in the Western Hemisphere, or Equatorial Guinea in West Africa, for that matter, was now officially classified a "Hispanic." However, since the revised definition emphasized "Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race," it was also possible to include under "Hispanic" individuals from the Philippines, Guam, the Northern Marianas, the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia, as well as from Jamaica, Trinidad, and the Dutch West Indies.

With Directive No. 15, the process begun the previous year was complete and the domestic purpose for the "Hispanic" identity was realized. The federal government had officially recognized a "Hispanic nation" within the borders of the United States, had adopted a legal definition which inflates the numerical size of this "nation" to the maximum degree possible, and had declared members of this "nation" to be eligible for affirmative action programs.

The opportunism involved in advancing the "Hispanic" identity is staggering. When being "white" conferred legal benefits, Hispanics, to use the current

terminology, successfully lobbied to be classified as "white" and allied themselves politically with European-Americans against African-Americans. When being "nonwhite" conferred legal benefits, Hispanics successfully lobbied to be classified as a nonwhite "ethnic" group for purposes of affirmative action and politically allied themselves with African-Americans against European-Americans. In both instances, the losers in this political game of shifting legal status have been African-Americans.

Bigotry, however, is inseparable from the concept of "Hispanic." Advanced by its supporters as recognition of "ethnic" diversity, the term "Hispanic" is, in fact, a complete denial and suppression of diversity—ethnic, racial, cultural, and linguistic—as the official definition adopted by the federal government shows.

First, non-Spanish surnames are classified as "Hispanic." The Basques are the most adversely affected by this discrimination. While most Basques inhabit northern Spain, their culture, language, and origin are distinct from the rest of the country, which largely explains why Spanish authorities have persecuted them throughout much of the 20th century. Although a small European nation, the Basques played a large role in Spain's colonization of the Western Hemisphere. Their surnames are common in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Central and South America. Typical Basque surnames which Washington now classifies as "Hispanic" include: Aguirre, Arteaga, Echeverria, Garate, Iturbide, Uribe, Vizcaino, and Zavala. This is the equivalent of the federal government classifying Irish surnames as English, Dutch surnames as German, Polish surnames as Russian, Korean surnames as Japanese, or Tibetan surnames as Chinese.

Second, non-Spanish ethnic groups are classified as "Hispanic." Victims of this discrimination include Arabs, Basques, Catalans, Chinese, English, Germans, Irish, Italians, Japanese, and Welsh, among others, who are classified as "Hispanic" if they live in or have immigrated to the United States from any Spanish-speaking country. In population size, Argentina is the fourth largest Spanish-speaking country in the world. Many Argentines, however, are not Spanish. Italians constitute a plurality of the population. Yet the United States officially classifies Argentina and its entire multiethnic population as "Hispanic."

Third, indigenous Indian nations are

classified as "Hispanic." This policy realizes, however unintentionally, a stated goal of former Guatemalan dictator and mass murderer General Oscar Mejia Victores: "We must get rid of the words 'indigenous' and 'Indian.'" Among the indigenous peoples living in Spanish-speaking countries who, under the "Hispanic" definition, officially became "unpeople"—reminiscent of the treatment accorded small nations that fell out of favor with the Communist Party in the old Soviet Union—are the Mixtec of Mexico; the Maya of Mexico and Guatemala; the Pipil of El Salvador; the Miskito, Sumo, and Rama of Honduras and Nicaragua; the Guaymi and Kuna of Panama; the Quechua and Aymara of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia; the Guarani of Paraguay; and the Mapuche of Chile.

Fourth, English-speaking African-Caribbeans, primarily of Jamaican origin, are classified as "Hispanic." Most are descended from British West Indians who immigrated to Central America to work on the Panama Canal and the banana plantations. A small percentage can trace their origin to African slaves brought in by the British to work in the timber industry. There are settlements of English-speaking African-Caribbeans all along the Caribbean coast of Central America, including Bluefields in Nicaragua, Puerto Limon in Costa Rica, and Colon in Panama.

Since the United States refuses to apply the methodology it employed in creating the "Hispanic" identity to any other countries, the denial of the existence of these non-Hispanic populations of Latin America is deliberate policy. By consigning non-Hispanics to the status of an "unpeople," Washington legitimized "Hispanic" power in the 18 Spanish-speaking countries in the Western Hemisphere. This effectively allows "Hispanic" regimes to continue persecuting non-Hispanics without fear of condemnation from the United States.

Two decades have elapsed since the "Hispanic" identity gained official recognition in Washington. But as the AZTLAN movement (with its own version of the Plan de San Diego), M.E.Ch.A., the "Brown Berets," the demagoguery of participants at both the January 1995 California "Latino Leadership Summit Conference Response to Prop 187" and the October 1996 "Latino March on Washington, D.C.," and the organized voter fraud involving illegal aliens in the November 1996 election demonstrate,

the “Hispanic” identity is more than mere political opportunism and intellectual fraud. It is an ideology of hate in quest of political domination.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Polonophobia, Cont.

by Paul Gottfried

Polonophobia,” my essay in the January issue of *Chronicles*, engendered moving and informed responses for which I am most grateful. Professors Ewa Thompson and Alex Kurczaba and Dr. Wojciech Wierzewski have all praised me generously in letters to the editor [Eds. note: See the Polemics and Exchanges section of the April issue], but, according to Managing Editor Theodore Pappas, their praise may be equaled in intensity by the hate calls he has received from readers who refuse to submit letters. One heartening development is that my essay can now be further discussed in Poland. Two widely respected Polish publications, *Respublica* and *Arcana* (the latter edited by the distinguished Polish historian Andrzej Nowak, who is a close friend of professors Thompson and Kurczaba), have both printed translations.

Allow me to clarify what I was trying to say and what I did not mean to say in my essay. I was certainly not maintaining that Poland has no history of anti-Semitism. Alas, it does, but not to the same extent as its Russian and Ukrainian

neighbors. Moreover, the interwar Polish republic did not make all possible efforts to assimilate its large and, for the most part, culturally alien Jewish minority. In the 1930’s, after the death of its gallant and magnanimous president Józef Piłsudski, the Polish government imposed educational and social disabilities on the upwardly mobile segments of its Jewish population.

This policy was plainly stupid, as assimilated Polish Jewish intellectuals have pointed out to me. For it struck precisely at those Jews, like my late father-in-law and my learned correspondent Professor Stanley Stein, who readily identified themselves with the Polish nation. The Polonized Jewish middle class had most in common with its Polish Catholic counterpart. Its members, not the Polish Orthodox Jews who were light years away from the Poles culturally, read Adam Mickiewicz and other patriotic poets and were coming to view themselves as Poles in the interwar years. Despite his Jewish antecedents, the late Leopold Tyrmand, the first editor of this magazine, was an outspoken Polonophile, and one critical reason for this was that he was steeped in Polish culture. If the Poles had played their cards right and had not been crushed by the Germans and Russians, they might have had many more Jews with the same orientation.

Even so, some of the worst or ugliest things that have befallen the Poles, from being devastated by Hitler’s and Stalin’s armies to being savaged in the American and Canadian press, were not or are not their fault. They occurred either from being in the wrong place geographically or from having incurred the disfavor of powerful malicious enemies. Indeed, the Polonophobia noted by me and my respondents has neither a functional nor rational basis. Dumping on Southern whites and their historical symbols makes good sense from the standpoint of the managerial-therapeutic state. Given the South’s history of regionalism and rebellion against the central government, supporters of the present American regime have every reason to play up the “burden” of Southern history. It also makes sense to play off blacks against whites, particularly Southern whites, inasmuch as blacks are reliable backers of an expanding and socially intrusive state. Such a strategy continues what Radical Republicans did after the Civil War.

One can even concede some strategic value in having the World Jewish

Congress and its political spokesman, Al D’Amato, go after the Swiss as Nazi sympathizers. Accusing the Swiss of pro-Nazi sentiments for holding on to the bank accounts of Jews who perished under the Nazis may be defensible strategically for those looking for money. The Swiss are loaded, and though they spent World War II armed to the teeth against a German invasion, they do speak a German dialect, and many of them look Teutonic. Though the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* and its letter writers have protested this shakedown, liberal Swiss clergy and Swiss politicians capable of “growth” are now calling for a “reconsideration of Swiss history.” They want something similar to the “historical revision” that was undertaken by the Germans under Allied pressure after World War II. In the end, the Swiss federal government agreed to set up a “fund” that would go to the families of holocaust victims, though not exclusively to those with unredeemed Swiss bank accounts.

But Poland is neither Switzerland nor the American South. It is hard to see what advantage, other than venting hate, can be gained by the recent anti-Polish broadsides. Equally noteworthy, the American Jews who express or compose these invectives have usually no direct relation to Poland. Their families left generations ago, when Poland was an occupied country, and their Jewish ancestors typically came from the Pale of Settlement, which had a heavily Jewish composition and was run by a Russian administration. All of these generalizations certainly would apply to that vocal American Jewish Polonophobe Alan Dershowitz, whose family migrated from the Pale of Settlement to Brooklyn in the early 20th century. Still other American Jews are descended from those who came from Galicia, a region of southern Poland ruled by a benevolent Austrian emperor, Franz Josef, when their ancestors arrived in the United States in search of financial opportunities. In the end, Jews did not come to the United States because Poles or a Polish state oppressed them, save for a negligible number that arrived in the 1930’s. Nor was it Poles but Ukrainians and rampaging Cossacks whom Eastern European Jews associate with pogroms.

I mention these circumstances to explain my own surprise that American Jewish organizations, journalists, and moral spokespersons harbor such intense dislike for the Poles. Such a dislike would

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