The Good Neighbor Comes Home:
The State, Mexicans and Mexican Americans, and Regional Consciousness
in the US Southwest during World War II

By

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Abstract

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“The Good Neighbor Comes Home: The State, Mexicans and Mexican Americans, and Regional Consciousness during World War II” is a study of how US foreign policy and World War II reshaped the relationship between local, state, and federal agencies and institutions and the Mexican and Mexican American population in the US Southwest. This study relies on archival research and materials from California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Washington, DC, to argue that this change in the relationship between the federal government and the Mexican and Mexican American population led to the emergence of a regional consciousness defined by the problems communities in California, New Mexico, and Texas shared in common across the US Southwest.

The federal government first became interested in the well-being of the Mexican and Mexican American population in the US Southwest because of its desire to maintain friendly relations with Latin America during the war emergency. The Good Neighbor Policy was the US foreign policy of non-intervention that promoted a sense of inter-Americanism based on a common American and democratic heritage in the western hemisphere. Both the Good Neighbor Policy and World War II provoked a collective response from local Mexican American leaders and sympathetic allies in the US Southwest: these figures turned inter-American and democratic wartime rhetoric to good account by insisting the federal government include a domestic program in its national diplomacy and security agendas to meet the population’s long-neglected needs. The federal government responded by creating the Spanish Speaking Minority Project within the domestic division of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, the federal agency tasked with promoting the Good Neighbor Policy. An informal network of Mexican American leaders, federal bureaucrats, professionals, university administrators, and social scientists worked to bring federal funds into the US Southwest by defining a set of region-
wide issues shared by the Mexican and Mexican American population, which contributed to the emergence of a regional consciousness, or an awareness of the problems held in common among Mexican and Mexican American communities in the US Southwest. “The Good Neighbor Comes Home” illustrates how the federal bureaucratic interest in the population emerged, how this interest both departed and continued from the federal government’s earlier interaction with the population, and how non-federal actors in California, New Mexico, and Texas relied upon and reinforced the population’s regional consciousness as they sought to improve Mexican and Mexican American conditions in the US Southwest.
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There were a lot of things I didn't know about grad school when I first began the PhD program at Berkeley in 2009. In fact, I didn't even know what a PhD was until one of my professors at Sonoma State University told me I should consider graduate study. I was majoring in Political Science, but I couldn’t stay away from the History courses. I had taken several classes with Steve Estes, who gave me my first experience with original research, and who saw in me a potential I couldn’t have seen on my own. I am so grateful for Steve. He is a patient and thoughtful teacher who helped me discover my passion for history, taught me that the past is relevant to the present, and who believed in me unconditionally. Steve’s enthusiasm for teaching and mentoring students is unparalleled. Without Steve, my PhD would never have come to be.

The first faculty member I met at Berkeley was Mark Brilliant. I was teaching high school history in Santa Rosa and was preparing to apply to the program. I reached out to Mark and he agreed to meet with me. I called in a sub to cover my classes so I could drive to Berkeley and meet with Mark to talk about my research interests. From that moment forward, Mark supported my growth as a historian in some of the most important ways. Because of Mark, I learned to carefully read historiography, pose questions that helped me to bring many arguments together to reveal something bigger, and to talk about history in a clear and precise way. Mark also checked in on me often, long after he finished prepping me for my qualifying exams, and has never failed to make me feel supported, even in my roughest moments. Lastly, Mark has let me take care of his puppy, Clio, when he and the family were out of town. Clio has been there with me as I graded papers, read my latest set of primaries, and as I wrote chapters, making me smile and sharing cuddles with me at just the right moments. She has certainly made her namesake proud on more than one occasion.

It took me awhile to figure out who my dissertation adviser would be. Again, I knew little about grad school, and I was learning these things as I went along. I took Kerwin Klein’s methodology course at the end of my second year, and his course included some of the most challenging readings I’d ever seen. But Kerwin’s class was also the first time I thought about what history was: who gets to write it? how do we write it? and how do people read it? Kerwin was also the most patient teacher. I had more questions than I did answers, and he took the time to help me get closer to what I wanted and needed to know. After taking his class, there was no question in my mind about choosing Kerwin as my adviser. I can give you a fairly long list of all the different choices I should have made in grad school, but Kerwin is not one of them. As I began my research, he taught me to let the sources speak to me and not place any undue burdens on my historical actors, to think about my research within the big picture, and that my writing can always improve—even when it’s at its best (and much to my chagrin). Kerwin also shaped my pedagogical development, helping me craft lessons and syllabi and talking with me at length
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The History Department at Berkeley has provided me with a range of support these past seven years. I wrote my first original research papers with Robin Einhorn and Waldo Martin. Robin taught me that the sources always have something to say, even if it’s not what you thought, while Waldo taught me that there is never a final draft. The department staff has helped me to keep my sanity. Marianne Bartholomew-Couts has worked tirelessly to make grad student public spaces feel more like home, and both Marianne and Kira Blaisdell-Sloan have personally helped to ease my own anxieties on at least one occasion. Mabel Lee is my (and everyone else’s) favorite person in the department. Mabel cares a great deal about grad students, and it shows in all that she does for us. I’ve enjoyed my many talks with Mabel, mostly because I make her laugh and I can count on her to brighten my day. A good chunk of my funding came from teaching, which gave me the opportunity to think about how to teach history, and not just study it. Anyone who has taught knows that there is simply no way to adequately compensate teachers for the work they do, but there is also no way to put a price on the relationships I’ve developed with Cal students and the countless ways I’ve been pushed to be a better teacher and historian. I thank the department for this opportunity.

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I went to several archives in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas to gather the materials I needed to write my dissertation. The archivists and staff at each location were helpful and welcoming. I went across the bay to Stanford University, flew down to the University of California at Los Angeles, went to the University of Arizona, Arizona State University, the Arizona State Library, and the University of New Mexico, and took several trips to the Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas in Austin. Late in my research I discovered an important source base at the Lilly Library at Indiana University at Bloomington. I could not make the trip, but the staff there went above and beyond to help me get the materials I was interested in, and which proved important to advancing my dissertation’s argument. My dear friend and fellow grad student Maggie Elmore generously offered to photograph the key source base for my dissertation. She took hundreds of pictures of the OI AA Records for me at the National Archives and Records Administration in Maryland. I continue to pay her back for this whenever I can.

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My younger brother, Keith Spencer, knows how to bring me back to our best childhood memories, and looks for any way to keep me happy and laughing. This is my favorite thing about him. My mom is an incredible person. She is brave, strong, smart, determined, and kind. As a single woman, she left Mexico when she realized there were greater opportunities for her in the United States, and once she set up a life here, she did everything in her power to support her family on her own. From her example I learned to stand up for what is right, to do what makes me happy, and to put forth my best effort in everything I do. I've enjoyed learning ever since I was a young girl, and my mom encouraged me to keep doing well in school and to pursue an education beyond high school. I love my mom for many reasons, but especially for letting me be the person I wanted to be. This dissertation, and the work it represents, is dedicated to her.
INTRODUCTION

“The Good Neighbor Comes Home: The State, Mexicans and Mexican Americans, and Regional Consciousness in the US Southwest during World War II,” centers on a moment of change in the relationship between the federal government and the Mexican and Mexican American population in the US Southwest—California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Colorado—and the Upper Midwest. Franklin Delano Roosevelt began the Good Neighbor Policy in 1933 as a policy of non-intervention in Latin America that promoted a common American and democratic heritage in the western hemisphere. Both the Good Neighbor Policy and World War II provided Mexican American leaders and allies with an opportunity to push the federal government to include a domestic program for the Mexican and Mexican American population in its national diplomacy and security agendas.

The federal government developed a domestic program that provided a bureaucratic basis for bringing Mexican-descent communities across the US Southwest together into a single, regional interest group, characterized by a common set of problems. The Office of the

1 This study centers on three southwestern states: California, New Mexico, and Texas. These states administered the three largest projects in the domestic program developed by the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. This was true in terms of funding, but is also apparent in the archival sources: though this study relied on several archival collections spread across the US Southwest, the materials found in Texas, California, and New Mexico repositories alone were rich enough to construct the story presented in this study.

2 I use a few terms when referring to the historical actors in this study who were of Spanish and Mexican descent—people we, in the 21st century, would readily identify as Mexican or Mexican American (a Mexican citizen and an American citizen of Mexican descent, respectively). The historical actors themselves employed a range of terms at this time, such as: Mexican, Mexican American, Spanish-speaking, American of Mexican (or Spanish or Latin) extraction/descent/origin, Latin, Latin American, and Spanish American. They often used these terms interchangeably, even as they meant to make distinctions between groups. Some historical actors, for instance, used terms like alien and Mexican national to identify Mexican-born individuals while also using—in the same document—Mexican to refer to US-born individuals of Mexican descent. Though my historical actors may have imperfectly used referents, I have chosen to exercise as much caution as possible in this study. Part of the challenge, however, has been determining which groups they were referring to, and selecting terms that signify, as accurately as possible, the origin of birth, naturalization, and ancestry of the groups they wrote and spoke about. I will use the following terms since they reflect, in my mind, the best way to capture these traits: Mexican, Mexican American, and Mexican-descent. Mexican will refer to someone born in Mexico or holding Mexican citizenship. I use it alone or to modify "immigrant" and "national." Mexican American refers to someone of Mexican parentage, and either born in the US or naturalized. I use the term Mexican-descent to describe both Mexicans and Mexican Americans; “Mexican-descent population” and “Mexicans and Mexican Americans,” in other words, are synonymous groups in this study. There are only a few instances in which I used Mexican-descent when it was less than clear in the primary sources whether historical actors meant Mexicans or Mexican Americans (and not necessarily both). In these cases, rather than select one over the other, I opted to use Mexican-descent. The New Mexico chapter differs a bit from the other chapters in the term I use to describe the central figures in that story. The self-identification of the Spanish- and Mexican-descent population in New Mexico has a long, rich, and complex history defined by Spanish colonization, ancestry, and language. As a result, common terms used in New Mexico to describe the Spanish- and Mexican-descent population there included: Spanish American, American of Spanish extraction/descent, and Hispano. For simplicity of reading, I have chosen to use the term Hispano—rather than Mexican, Mexican American, and Mexican-descent—in the New Mexico chapter. For more on New Mexican self-identification, see: Joseph V. Metzgar, “The Ethnic Sensitivity of Spanish New Mexicans: A Survey and Analysis,” New Mexico
Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA), the federal wartime agency responsible for implementing the Good Neighbor Policy, responded to local calls for federal action by creating the Spanish Speaking Minority Project within the OCIAA's Division of Inter-American Activities in the United States (DIAAUS). As a federal program, the Spanish Speaking Minority Project gave local Mexican and Mexican American communities throughout the US Southwest national visibility as a regional interest group. In states like California, New Mexico, and Texas, local leaders seized upon the war and the Good Neighbor Policy to recast community and state level problems as regional ones. What developed as a result was an informal network of federal bureaucrats, professionals, university administrators and faculty, and academics in communities across the US Southwest that contributed to and augmented the Mexican-descent population's visibility as an interest group with problems it defined as regional in scope, rather than as problems unique to a particular community or state.

The efforts of local, state, and federal actors to create and implement the Spanish Speaking Minority Project led to an unexpected outcome: the emergence of a regional consciousness, or an awareness of the problems held in common among Mexican and Mexican American communities in the US Southwest. This consciousness is historically significant since

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3 I have chosen to use "consciousness" and not "identity" to describe the collective awareness of Mexican American leaders, government officials, bureaucrats, and sympathetic allies of the Mexican-descent population in the US Southwest at this historical moment. As scholars have noted elsewhere, the term "identity" has held several meanings and has assumed many analytical uses in academic scholarship. Rather than give the term "identity" one more meaning, I have decided to use "consciousness" in this study, which more accurately reflects what happened at this time anyway. Moreover, my historical actors would not have understood the term "identity," in fact, academics were only beginning to adopt and employ the term in the 1940s into the 1950s. The term would not come into widespread use, both among academic and popular audiences, until the 1960s, and by then, its meaning—or meanings—would not have applied to my historical actors anyhow. Rather, I use "consciousness" to help illustrate for contemporary readers what I saw happening across the numerous archival collections I used in this study: my historical actors became aware of common problems across Mexican and Mexican American communities in the US Southwest, and when they described this commonality to each other and in public, they reified this self-awareness into something
the population’s identification as a group at this time was not a foregone conclusion. Mexican and Mexican American self-identification tended to vary by community and state, for instance, and the federal government’s existing methods for bureaucratically identifying Mexicans and Mexican Americans did little to settle any question about how to label the population.\footnote{US Census and military classification forms, for example, have historically sparked debate over whether or not to classify people of Mexican descent as “white” or “non-white.” Moreover, both Mexican American leaders and federal agencies would not deliberately attempt to label the population as a group with political interests until the late 1960s. “The Good Neighbor Comes Home” demonstrates how the federal bureaucratic interest in the Mexican-descent population emerged, how this interest both continued and departed from earlier federal efforts, and how a Mexican American and European American network of professionals, university administrators and faculty, and academics in California, New Mexico, and Texas advocated on behalf of Mexicans and Mexican Americans by defining the population as a regional interest group with needs that required federal attention.\footnote{To trace the emergence of a regional consciousness of the Mexican and Mexican American population, this study brought together published primary sources, government documents, and sources from several archival collections, housed in universities across the US Southwest and in Washington, DC. Significantly, searching through multiple archival collections, rather than relying on one or two, made it possible to see the correspondence record between local actors and federal officials, and thus track the ways in which the historical actors in this study made similar arguments about the problems and needs of Mexican-descent communities. “The Good Neighbor Comes Home” tells the story of how US foreign policy and the wartime agenda led local, state, and federal actors to view Mexican and Mexican American communities in Southern California, New Mexico, and Texas, as comprising a regional interest group united by a shared set of problems.} To trace the emergence of a regional consciousness of the Mexican and Mexican American population, this study brought together published primary sources, government documents, and sources from several archival collections, housed in universities across the US Southwest and in Washington, DC. Significantly, searching through multiple archival collections, rather than relying on one or two, made it possible to see the correspondence record between local actors and federal officials, and thus track the ways in which the historical actors in this study made similar arguments about the problems and needs of Mexican-descent communities. “The Good Neighbor Comes Home” tells the story of how US foreign policy and the wartime agenda led local, state, and federal actors to view Mexican and Mexican American communities in Southern California, New Mexico, and Texas, as comprising a regional interest group united by a shared set of problems.

\footnote{The essays in Many Wests demonstrate the multitude of ways in which people living in the American West identified with the region(s), David M. Wrobel and Michael C. Steiner, eds., Many Wests: Place, Culture, and Regional Identity (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1997).}

\footnote{Throughout this study, I use the term European American as a referent for people commonly referred to as white. My historical actors did not use the term European American, but in many cases simply used American when referring to US citizens of European descent (i.e., not of Mexican or Spanish descent), or discussed the European American population in such a way that indicated its status as the dominant group in its relationship with the Mexican-descent population, and thus not needing identification. European American identification in the sources, in other words, held a place of privilege and was a given for the reader (both then and today). In Texas, folks regularly used the term white and, most noticeably, the term Anglo to distinguish between Anglos and Mexicans (and Mexican Americans, though they tended to collapse these two groups into Mexican). As such, in the Texas chapter I use the term Anglo rather than European American as I do elsewhere in this study. (Anglo was sometimes used in other states, too, but it was most pronounced in Texas).}
Brief Overview of Historiography

“The Good Neighbor Comes Home” contributes to the growing scholarship on Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the pre-Chicano period. Mario T. García’s *Mexican Americans* was the first major work to focus on Mexican American leaders—who he collectively terms the Mexican American Generation—in the three decades leading to the more historically visible Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s. García argued that members of the Mexican American Generation embraced a civics-based citizenship identity and participated in the first significant Mexican American civil rights movement centered on a liberal integrationist agenda. This generation’s politics were shaped by its shared historical experiences of World War I and II, the Great Depression, and the Cold War. Most importantly, García contended that the Mexican American Generation laid the foundation for the more radical and race-conscious agenda advanced by Chicano and Chicana activists in the 1960s and 1970s.

Since the appearance of *Mexican Americans* in 1989, several scholars have begun to unpack the broad contours of the generational model that tend to obscure important differences in self-identification, class, time period, and geography, for instance, among Mexican and Mexican American communities. George J. Sánchez’s seminal work, *Becoming Mexican American*, for instance, has provided scholars with a comprehensive and detailed study of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Los Angeles in the early 20th century. David G. Gutiérrez’s *Walls and Mirrors* has provided us with an important study about the ways in which immigration shaped Mexican American self-identification in Texas and California from the 1920s to the 1950s. Cynthia Orozco’s *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed* recasts how we understand Mexican American civil rights activism, especially in comparison to Chicano activism, by examining the origins and historical context in which the League of United Latin American Citizens, a Mexican American civil rights organization, was created in Texas. Labor historian Zaragosa Vargas’ *Labor Rights are Civil Rights* provides a comprehensive overview of

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Introduction

Mexican and Mexican American labor activism across the US Southwest from the Depression era to the immediate postwar period. Vargas contends that labor issues provided a central context by which Mexicans and Mexican Americans could effectively mobilize for the first time, and thus planted the seeds for Chicano civil rights activism. Recent studies have centered on the role of key Mexican American leaders, such as Carlos K. Blanton’s much-needed biography of the intellectual and civil rights activist George I. Sánchez. These works add texture and depth to what we know about the pre-Chicano period by focusing on how local contexts, immigration, political activism, and labor concerns shaped Mexican and Mexican American experiences in communities across the US Southwest.

“The Good Neighbor Comes Home” adds to the existing pre-Chicano period literature by considering how US foreign policy and World War II changed the federal government’s relationship with Mexican and Mexican American communities in three southwestern states: California, New Mexico, and Texas. Studies of Mexican and Mexican Americans during the World War II years tend to examine the time period through four, often overlapping, frameworks: through a general survey of the Mexican and Mexican American experience during the war years; localized community studies; US foreign policy; and more recently, through a transnational lens. Several edited volumes include studies that offer an excellent introduction to the World War II years. These volumes cover a range of topics, including identity, gender, civil rights, military service, mental health wellness, labor, religion, and memory; extend to regions outside of the US Southwest, such as Florida and the Midwest; and consider the experiences of other ethnic groups, like Filipinos, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans, alongside those of Mexicans and Mexican Americans.

Some of the most important works on the World War II period focus on two regions, Southern California and Texas. Mauricio Mazón, Edward J. Escobar, Richard Griswold del Castillo, Eduardo Obregón Pagán, Kevin Allen Leonard, Luis Alvarez, Catherine Ramírez, and

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Elizabeth R. Escobedo have collectively provided us with a rich history of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in wartime Los Angeles—specifically two key events, the Sleepy Lagoon murder and the so-called Zoot Suit riots—through the perspectives of race, gender, criminality, international relations, and youth culture. Emilio Zamora and Thomas A. Guglielmo have written important studies that examine the ways in which the war and the Good Neighbor Policy shaped Mexican and Mexican American self-identification and civil rights activism in Texas. The works of Zamora and Guglielmo also suggest the importance of using a transnational framework in our analyses to reveal how Mexican government officials and Mexican American leaders in Texas leveraged US foreign policy to ensure improved conditions for Mexicans and Mexican Americans working and living in the US.

Other studies have also touched upon the impact of the Good Neighbor Policy on Mexican and Mexican American experiences during World War II. In 1948, Carey McWilliams

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12 Three other articles are also important for the transnational lens they apply to domestic events in the early 20th century United States. When read alongside Guglielmo’s article, Richard Griswold del Castillo’s article on the Los Angeles Zoot Suit riots provides us with a more complicated picture of how and why the Mexican government chose to intervene in disturbances taking place across the border. In Texas, government officials chose to press for state antidiscrimination legislation by imposing a Bracero ban (the Bracero program brought Mexican guest laborers into the US), while in Southern California, officials decided to remain out of the Zoot Suit riots since doing so might have affected the economic agreements Mexico had with the US. Benjamin H. Johnson uses a transnational lens to show how Mexican postrevolutionary racial ideology influenced Mexican American leaders in early 20th century Texas. In “Good Neighbors and White Mexicans,” Mark Overmyer-Velásquez examines the 1936 racial reclassification of Mexicans and Mexican Americans, from “white” to “colored,” in city vital records in El Paso, Texas, as part of a broader bi-national history of US and Mexican racial ideology, nation-building, and foreign relations. Richard Griswold del Castillo, "The Los Angeles Zoot Suit Riots Revisited", Benjamin H. Johnson, "The Cosmic Race in Texas: Racial Fusion, White Supremacy, and Civil Rights Politics," The Journal of American History (September 2011), 404-419; and Mark Overmyer-Velásquez, "Good Neighbors and White Mexicans: Constructing Race and Nation on the Mexico-US Border," Journal of American Ethnic History Vol. 33, No. 1 (Fall 2013), 5-34.

13 Works that focus solely on the Good Neighbor Policy do not consider its relevance and domestic application in the US Southwest as this study does. American Foreign Relations historians, for instance, have written about the Good Neighbor Policy as foreign policy, but have not considered how it was leveraged for domestic purposes by local
wrote a sweeping history of Mexicans and Mexican Americans that also served as a contemporary critique of their impoverished conditions. McWilliams’ *North From Mexico*, though treated as a primary source in this study, offers a fairly accurate snapshot of the OCIAA, the DIAA-US, and the Spanish Speaking Minority Project in a brief chapter.44 Gerald Nash’s *The American West Transformed* includes a chapter on “Spanish-Speaking Americans in Wartime,” which provides a good deal of coverage on Los Angeles, references the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC)—the federal agency tasked with enforcing Executive Order 8802, which prohibited discrimination in wartime industry employment—and also gives readers a brief sketch of the OCIAA and its work in the US Southwest.45 Clete Daniel’s book

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44 Carey McWilliams’ *North From Mexico* was the first book—ever—to consider the historical and contemporary experiences of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the US. Indeed, when Chicana/o and Mexican American historical study first emerged in the late 1960s, McWilliams’ comprehensive work was required reading because its scope and critical observations provided an important starting point for further research. Many, if not all, of the studies mentioned in this paragraph, in fact, heavily cite McWilliams’ *North From Mexico*. Carey McWilliams, *North From Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States*, New Edition, Updated by Matt S. Meier (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1990). For an overview of the writing, publication, and impact of *North From Mexico*, especially as a seminal work in Mexican American history, see: Carlos M. Larraíde and Richard Griswold del Castillo, “North From Mexico: Carey McWilliams’ Tragedy,” *Southern California Quarterly*, Vol. 80, No. 2 (Summer 1998), 231-245.

45 Gerald D. Nash, *The American West Transformed: The Impact of the Second World War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985). Two other works by Gerald Nash are also worth noting. The first work is Nash’s concise history of the Great Depression and World War II, which includes a brief discussion of Mexicans and
examines the struggle to bring the FEPC’s attention to the US Southwest. Though EO 8802 certainly protected Mexicans and Mexican Americans, the federal government was more concerned with African American experiences; the African American population had a longer history of civil rights activism, was better organized, and thus had a relatively easier time commanding federal attention than did the Mexican and Mexican American population. Gigi Peterson’s study of labor activists on both sides of the US-Mexico border—Mexican Americans and Mexicans—considers the ways in which they used the Good Neighbor Policy and the Popular Front’s anti-fascist, pro-democratic agenda to pursue labor issues. In this sense, Peterson’s “Grassroots Good Neighbors” also provides an important transnational analysis of Mexican and Mexican American activism during the World War II years. Neil Foley’s *Quest for Equality* offers a concise study of the missed opportunity for Mexican American and African American collaborative activism in the World War II and postwar period, which he considers in three contexts: through the Good Neighbor Policy, the FEPC, and *Brown v. Board of Education.*

“The Good Neighbor Comes Home” also contributes to studies of the Chicano period by providing a pre-history of 1960s and 1970s civil rights activism and politics. Historians Ignacio García and Ernesto Chávez, and Sociologist G. Cristina Mora, for instance, examine Mexican-descent and Latino group self-identification as a development of ethnic and panethnic solidarity for leveraging national visibility and political power in the Chicano period. Ignacio García’s work considers the emergence of *chicanismo,* the “activist philosophy” that rejected the liberal agenda and experiences of Mario García’s Mexican American Generation. Ignacio García contends that *chicanismo’s* militant ethos created unity and allowed Chicano activists to intellectually

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transcend regional differences.\textsuperscript{9} Ernesto Chávez’s study of Los Angeles demonstrates that the Chicano movement’s shared nationalist and anti-American language belied the diversity of the Mexican and Mexican American community in its goals and strategies. Despite embracing a Chicano “protonationalism,” groups and submovements advanced agendas that were at considerable odds with one another. As a result, the movement failed to achieve the type of national success its protonationalist rhetoric sought to engender across communities.\textsuperscript{20} G. Cristina Mora’s recent study shows how Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Cuban American political leaders, media executives, the US Census Bureau, and the federal government’s Cabinet Committee on Opportunities for Spanish Speaking People collaborated between the 1960s and 1980s to create and successfully institutionalize and popularize the category “Hispanic” as a panethnic identity. Importantly, Latino activists, media executives, and federal bureaucrats strategically sought to keep the label broadly defined to suit their specific needs and agendas. In contrast to the work of García and Chávez, the federal government was a key player in the development of Latino panethnic identity in Mora’s study.\textsuperscript{21} Together, these studies push scholars to consider how, for what purposes, and under what circumstances Mexican and Mexican American group self-identification developed and evolved.

Finally, “The Good Neighbor Comes Home” engages literature on the state in the 20th century United States. Specifically, it adds to how we understand what the state is: who acted on its behalf, how the state interacted with the American public and for what reasons, and how state bureaucratic practices affected the lives of people living in the US. Margot Canaday’s \textit{Straight State}, for instance, considers the role of the state—immigration, military, and welfare agencies and institutions at the federal level—in constructing a bureaucratically driven homosexual identity and set of attributes that was tied to citizenship.\textsuperscript{22} Cybelle Fox’s \textit{Three Worlds of Relief} examines how race, politics, and the labor market (three worlds) affected the ability of Mexicans, African Americans, and European immigrants to access the welfare state during the early 20th century.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{20} Ernesto Chávez, \textit{“Mi Raza Primero!” (My People First!): Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles, 1966-1978} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
\bibitem{22} Margot Canaday, \textit{The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). For another important work on notions of citizenship during World War II, see James Sparrow’s work, which considers how the state was able to expand its powers and influence during the war, and how it gained political legitimacy despite the US’s tradition of decentralized government. Sparrow argues that the federal government raised expectations of American citizenship by equating the civilian population with the martial population as embodied in the American GI in World War II—that is, the state claimed that civilian contributions were just as important as soldiers’ contributions to the war, a move that helped legitimize the “warfare state.” Stressing civilians’ obligation to contribute to the war, however, also led to a mutually constitutive relationship in which civilians in turn began to make demands of the state. The warfare state, in other words, led to a change in how both citizens and the state understood their relationship that, most importantly, depended on recognizing and accepting an expanded role of the state in American society. James T. Sparrow, \textit{Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
\end{thebibliography}
century. Specifically, region, US racial ideology and hierarchy, political power, and labor determined how these marginalized groups would or would not receive relief. "The Good Neighbor Comes Home" adds to the works of Canaday and Fox by demonstrating the critical role of the state in cultivating an awareness of a politically marginalized population into a regional interest group.

"The Good Neighbor Comes Home" also broadens how we define the state by including academic institutions as key actors in the federal bureaucracy. Canaday defines the state as the federal government, and includes high-ranking officials and bureaucrats at all levels and from a wide range of agencies as important actors in the state. Fox does not explicitly define the state, but her study certainly suggests how we might understand it. Significantly, social workers, in addition to local, state, and federal governments, had a profound impact on the American welfare system’s regular operation, and wielded considerable power over the well being of historically marginalized and vulnerable groups. Similar to the work of Canaday and Fox, this study assumes an inclusive definition of the state: government officials and bureaucrats at the local, state, and federal levels are key actors in this project. Significantly, institutions that administered OCIAA funds are also included in this definition. Universities were among the key institutions administering DIAAUS funds, and thus were central actors of the state that helped develop an awareness of Mexican and Mexican American communities that transcended local and state borders. This was possible since academics at universities, unlike bureaucrats and officials in municipal or state government offices and agencies, frequently worked together across state lines to advance research in their fields of study.

"The Good Neighbor Comes Home" builds upon existing studies of Mexicans and Mexican Americans, World War II, and the Good Neighbor Policy by tracing the origins of an emergent regional consciousness of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the US Southwest that preceded the emergence of the better-known Chicano consciousness and self-identification of the 1960s. Mexican American and European American bureaucrats, professionals, university administrators and faculty, and academics characterized the Mexican and Mexican American population as a regional interest group with shared traits and needs, and used wartime inter-American rhetoric and geopolitics to urge the federal government to take steps toward improving social and economic conditions among communities in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, and the Upper Midwest. The OCIAA’s Division of Inter-American Activities in the United States (DIAAUS) created the Spanish Speaking Minority Project.


24 Canaday describes her definition and approach to the state as “horizontal” compared to how other scholars have studied the state—a “vertical” orientation, for instance, includes local and state governments and agencies in addition to federal ones. Canaday, 4-7.

25 Because “the state” serves analytical purposes and does not reflect my historical actors’ practical use of the term, I have opted to use precise terms, such as local, state, and federal government, for instance, or the University of Texas or the School of Inter-American Affairs, in this study.
which provided federal funds and, most importantly, national visibility to a politically marginalized group. This regional consciousness is significant since it provided a vehicle for political activism for a historically neglected population.

Where previous studies of Mexicans and Mexican Americans have considered the World War II years by focusing on Southern California and Texas, or through an edited volume of case studies spread throughout the US Southwest, this project considers the population’s experiences through a federal wartime agency, and how the war and US foreign policy changed the way the federal government viewed, interacted with, and acted on behalf of communities of Mexican descent. Scholars have noted the work of the DIAAUS and its Spanish Speaking Minority Project, but they have not examined its origins or thoroughly considered the nature and impact of the division and the project on local and state conditions. In fact, many studies demonstrate an incomplete understanding of the DIAAUS and the Spanish Speaking Minority Project. There is a good explanation for this. An important reason why this story has not been told already is that the primary source bases necessary to construct a coherent history of the Spanish Speaking Minority Project are spread wide across the country. Researching and writing this history, which is regional and bureaucratic in scope and structure, has meant gathering sources from collections in Washington, DC, Southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas—just to name a few locations. “The Good Neighbor Comes Home” relies on several archival collections to demonstrate how World War II and US foreign policy helped to transform local Mexican and Mexican American communities across the US Southwest into a unified regional interest group with shared traits, problems, and needs.

**Overview of Chapters**

Chapter one begins in Washington, DC, with the DIAAUS, the development of the Spanish Speaking Minority Project, and the creation of a bureaucratic definition of the Mexican and Mexican American population. Chapters two through four follow the implementation of the Spanish Speaking Minority Project in Texas, Southern California, and New Mexico. In these state chapters, we learn in greater detail how local, state, and federal actors interacted with one another as they attempted to implement projects that best met the needs of the local Mexican-descent community. We also see how in the process of doing so, these figures helped to reinforce the DIAAUS’s bureaucratic definition of the population, thus reifying the collective awareness and national visibility of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the US Southwest.

The first chapter, “Bringing the Good Neighbor Home,” traces the shift in the federal government’s relationship with the Mexican and Mexican American population in the US Southwest. It centers on the origins of the Spanish Speaking Minority Project in the DIAAUS. Mexican American leaders and sympathetic allies contacted the OCIAA and other federal officials and proposed that the government create a region-wide program to address the
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Numerous problems afflicting the Mexican-descent population in the US Southwest. In establishing the Spanish Speaking Minority Project's objectives, devising solutions, and justifying the necessity of the project to the war and the Good Neighbor Policy, the DIAAUS created a bureaucratic definition of Mexicans and Mexican Americans premised on a set of problems they shared in common. Chapter one traces, then, both the non-bureaucratic and bureaucratic origins of the collective awareness of the Mexican-descent population as a regional interest group.

Chapter two, "Reluctant Neighbors," brings us from Washington, DC to the US Southwest. The chapter is set in Texas and demonstrates how the DIAAUS's objectives for the Spanish Speaking Minority Project contrasted with local leaders' objectives for the project and their expectations about the role of the federal government in addressing Mexican and Mexican American problems. Federal objectives and local leaders' expectations conflicted in three ways. Local Mexican American leaders and sympathetic allies, for instance, wanted to implement research-based programs alongside remedial-based programs—the latter being the DIAAUS's preference—in an effort to establish solutions that would continue beyond the war. A second difference was in local leaders' desire to create a regional program that more thoroughly integrated the agencies, institutions, and organizations across the US Southwest already invested in the Mexican-descent population. The DIAAUS did not oppose regional collaboration, but it did resist playing a central role in orchestrating a program—beyond what it was already doing—that might disrupt traditional federal-state relations. A final conflict lay in the way the federal government undermined an antidiscrimination legislation campaign led by Mexican American leaders, Mexican government officials, and sympathetic allies when it supported a Texas version of the Good Neighbor Policy. In Texas, local leaders expected that the federal government would support their efforts to make long-term changes, but instead found that there was a limit to what the federal government was willing to do on behalf of the Mexican-descent population.

The third chapter, "The Responsive Neighbor," turns to Southern California, and considers the ways in which sympathetic allies used a local event to argue for federal intervention in the state. In response to a supposed Mexican American youth crime wave, embodied by the well known Sleepy Lagoon murder trial, the Los Angeles County Grand Jury held hearings to investigate the causes of juvenile delinquency. During the grand jury hearings, local, state, and federal actors seized upon the sense of urgency created by the perceived crime wave to bring federal attention to California, but also to frame juvenile delinquency as part of a broader set of historically constructed problems that extended beyond Southern California to the entire US Southwest. Federal officials readily intervened in local matters out of concern about the impact the situation in Los Angeles would have on US-Latin American relations. Officials from the DIAAUS and the Office of War Information worked with local leaders to devise strategies and solutions, including the creation of an inter-American center in Los Angeles and increasing
Mexican American representation in leadership positions. The California chapter is also important since it recasts our historical understanding of a much-discussed episode in Mexican and Mexican American history: the concern about Mexican American juvenile delinquency in wartime Los Angeles and the grand jury hearings ought to be interpreted as part of an earlier and broader effort to bring federal attention to bear on the numerous problems afflicting the Mexican and Mexican American population in the US Southwest.

Chapter four, “The Model Good Neighbor,” ends our story in New Mexico, and demonstrates how local leaders brought DIAAUS funds into the state by emphasizing New Mexico’s pre-modern economy and society as the source of Hispano (a term preferred by many in the Spanish- and Mexican-descent population) impoverished conditions. Significantly, highlighting the state’s traditional economy and society reflected local actors’ desire to minimize racial discrimination in New Mexico. Portraying the Hispano population as residing outside of American progress and leading traditional, agrarian lives allowed local leaders to make structural and historical arguments for why the state and its residents were poor, and, more importantly, why the federal government needed to provide New Mexico with funds. One argument, for instance, echoed a familiar line of reasoning about the federal government’s obligation to help New Mexico develop a modern economy and society: when New Mexico became a US territory following the end of the US war with Mexico in 1848, the federal government ignored its responsibility to help its “stepchild” develop modern methods of living on equal footing with the rest of US society, and thus, local leaders reasoned, the federal government was obligated to intervene and assist Hispanos in New Mexico. A second argument was that because New Mexico’s agrarian economy and demographic mix of Hispanos, Native Americans, and European Americans mirrored those found in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, the state was an important model and critical site for successfully implementing Good Neighbor policies. Framing New Mexico’s problems as created by structural and historical forces, rather than as a result of racial discrimination as local actors in Texas and California did, reinforced the emerging awareness among Hispano, Mexican, and Mexican American communities in the US Southwest of the problems they held in common.
CHAPTER ONE

Bringing the Good Neighbor Home:
The Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs
and the Spanish Speaking Minority Project in the Wartime Emergency

The Good Neighbor arrived in the US Southwest, Carey McWilliams observed, nearly a century after the US war with Mexico ended in 1848. In signing the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico ceded much of its northern territory, creating what is today known as the US Southwest, and which included tens of thousands of Mexican nationals who, according to the terms of the treaty, were to became US citizens by their own initiative or by default if they chose to remain in the territory after a year’s time had passed. Either way, the treaty marked the beginning, McWilliams asserted, of the US’s responsibility and obligation to recognize and protect the rights of Mexican-descent people living in the US Southwest. McWilliams, a liberal attorney, writer, and fierce advocate for minority populations in the 20th century United States, described President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s 1933 inaugural address, in which he publicly “pledged the United States to the policy of the Good Neighbor,” as a catalytic moment. According to McWilliams, there was a correlation between “Anglo-Hispano relations” in the US Southwest and US-Mexico relations: the former could improve if a “clarification of relations” could be reached between the two nations. “After a hundred years,” McWilliams stated, “this clarification of relations has finally been achieved—in broad outline, in first principles,” with FDR’s Good Neighbor Policy.1

The Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA) was the federal agency tasked with clarifying these relations at home and abroad. Writing in 1948, McWilliams recognized the historical relevance and impact of the OCIAA on the diverse Mexican-descent population that spread across several states—California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas. While he was critical of some of the OCIAA’s domestic work among the Mexican and Mexican American population, McWilliams described its Spanish Speaking Minority Project “as a landmark in Anglo-Hispano relations in the Southwest” since “it constituted recognition, however belated, that the United States had not fulfilled its obligations under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.” The OCIAA’s domestic focus represented a shift, he stated, in how the federal government and local European American residents thought about the Mexican-descent population and its conditions.2

The population was now viewed as a regional group that held traits and problems in common, rather than as a group that embodied a problem to society. The “hardy perennial ‘the

2 Ibid., 246-247.
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McWilliams contended, "began to give way to a discussion of "The Spanish-Speaking People of the Southwest," which then gave way, he continued, to "thoughtful residents of the borderlands" discussing "not 'the Mexican Problem,' but the Anglo-American problem." Communities at the local and state levels also began to understand that the population and its conditions extended to the entire region. "The particularistic view," McWilliams stated, "in which the camera-eye was focussed [sic] on some specific Mexican shacktown, began to give way to the generic view, in which the camera swept the whole panorama of the Southwest." Lastly, the federal government's interest was a recent "discovery" made by European Americans. Intellectuals in the previous decades had made cultural and indigenous "discoveries" of the US Southwest that, in the minds of European Americans, kept the region and its people in the past. With the federal government's recent activities, McWilliams stated, "the focus of the Anglo-Americans has finally come to center in the contemporary scene." This shift, from viewing the US Southwest as a relic of the past to a place in the present, meant that European Americans had "finally begun to study the actual social structure of the widely varying Mexican-American communities to be found between Brownsville [Texas] and Los Angeles [California]."3 After a hundred years, improved US-Latin American relations in the mid-twentieth century finally brought the Mexican-descent population in the US Southwest into its proper perspective, bringing to the foreground the population's demographic variation and the nature and complexity of its "problems" against a vast geographic backdrop.

The following chapter traces the shift in the federal government's relationship with the Mexican-descent population. The chapter argues that this shift reflects the emergence of an awareness of the population and its shared traits and problems that enabled federal bureaucrats, professionals, university administrators and faculty, and academics to make a regional claim for the Mexican and Mexican American population unlike any time before. This chapter illustrates how the regional consciousness of the population was a synergistic creation driven by both a federal bureaucratic agenda on the one hand, and local and state concerns about the population on the other. The Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA) was created in 1940 to promote US-Latin American relations in the western hemisphere. Shortly thereafter, the OCIAA created the Division of Inter-American Activities in the United States (DIAAUS) to develop a domestic program for the Good Neighbor Policy. By this time, local individuals in southwestern states were already writing letters to the OCIAA in which they related the Good Neighbor Policy to problems afflicting the Mexican and Mexican American population, and they proposed the creation of a federally supported and region-wide program to address them. This collective response from public servants, politicians, professionals, and academics—both Mexican American and European American—at the local and state levels illustrates the non-bureaucratic origins of the population's regional consciousness, as well as how it prompted its bureaucratic origins: the DIAAUS responded to these letters by creating the Spanish Speaking

3 Ibid., 247-248, 252, 254-256.
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Minority Project. In developing the Spanish Speaking Minority Project, the DIAAUS identified and characterized the population as sharing a set of social and economic problems that warranted federal funds and support. This chapter considers how World War II and US-Latin American relations shaped the bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic origins and development of the Mexican-descent population’s national visibility as a regional interest group.

The Good Neighbor Policy was the US foreign policy of non-intervention in Latin American countries. The policy centered on strengthening economic ties and stressing democratic institutions and attributes held in common to promote solidarity in the western hemisphere. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s administration began to develop the Good Neighbor Policy during the interwar period as dictators rose to power in Europe. The administration had two concerns. The first was the increasing development of financial and commercial ties between Latin American nations and European powers, which led the federal government to pursue a policy that would fortify these same ties within the Americas. The second was the administration’s expressed concern about the potential for fascist ideology to spread in the region, especially in countries with large German populations, such as Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. To counter the threat of Axis propaganda in Latin America, the federal government adopted cultural diplomacy to promote a sense of inter-American fraternity among nations in the region. The goal was to obtain Latin American loyalty to the US by securing economic ties and cultivating a common American heritage through the cultural and intellectual exchange of people, ideas, scholarship, literature, and the arts in the hemisphere. This would serve to showcase democracy in the West as the antidote to fascism in the East.

By 1936, FDR’s administration began to heavily endorse the Good Neighbor Policy and its development in the western hemisphere. During this election year, FDR gave a speech in Chautauqua, New York, in which he described the Good Neighbor Policy as a model foreign policy for achieving world peace. Careful to strike a balance between empathizing with US-support for isolationism (“I hate war,” he stated at one point in the speech) and endorsing a foreign policy in which the US took some sort of action, FDR insisted that liberal international trade aimed at mutual economic profit, like the numerous trade agreements the US held with Latin American countries, could prevent a future war; it would not stop war, but it could minimize the temptation to enter a conflict for profit as had been the case with World War I. Liberalizing trade, in other words, made peace a viable option. The Good Neighbor Policy, by

4 Lester Langley, America and the Americas: The United States in the Western Hemisphere (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 108-115, 142-144. For more on the federal government’s concern about fascism in Latin America, see: Max Paul Friedman, Nazis & Good Neighbors: The United States Campaign Against the Germans of Latin America in World War II (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
FDR’s estimation, demonstrated that a foreign policy of non-intervention did not mean isolationism, as many desired, but amicable cooperation to prevent another global conflict.

Months after the Chautauqua speech, FDR proposed holding an Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Peace in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The purpose of the conference, the President stated, would be to work through and ratify existing “peace instruments,” as well as to devise new ones to “advance the cause of world peace.” The conventions ratified at the December 1936 conference covered issues relating to neutrality, armaments, international law, trade, and intellectual cooperation. This last area, intellectual cooperation, was addressed in five separate conventions that encouraged nations to engage in cultural diplomacy, which entailed robust cultural and intellectual exchange as a way to showcase each nation’s achievements in published works and the arts, as well as to facilitate collaboration between nations to change public perceptions about the US and Latin America. One of these, the Convention for the Promotion of Inter-American Cultural Relations, included a call for each nation to create a governmental agency to administer the type of cultural relations envisioned at the conference.6

In response to this convention, the US State Department established the Division of Cultural Relations (DCR) in 1938. The DCR was tasked with overseeing cultural diplomacy, for the first time in US foreign relations, as the means by which to combat fascist ideology and propaganda. This responsibility, however, was limited in terms of what was considered an acceptable scope to grant the DCR in carrying out a distinctly US cultural program. “Intellectual cooperation,” one government official stated, “mean[es] the interchange and the free play of ideas,” and was the appropriate means by which to counter Axis power cultural diplomacy—propaganda—in Latin America while simultaneously upholding US liberal democracy ideals. Intellectual communities, like universities and private institutions, needed to remain independent sites of inquiry and research, and represented a tradition that was unique to US democracy, in which “the primary responsibility rests upon the individual citizen and the government is merely the agency of its citizens.”7 Rather, the DCR’s responsibility was to serve as a clearing house of cultural and intellectual information within the federal government, to facilitate cultural exchange among philanthropies, private organizations, and academic institutions long-engaged in Latin American studies. This modeled the voluntarist approach to cultural diplomacy endorsed by internationalists, who promoted private, non-governmental, intellectual exchange.


among nations to learn about the values, history, and cultures of other countries while also fostering a shared sense of global community, with the goal of preventing another world war. Moreover, the DCR was "not a propaganda agency," Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles insisted, like those found in other countries. According to Welles, there was "no reason to undertake any form of propaganda with our friends and neighbors in the Western Hemisphere." The extent of the DCR's engagement with cultural diplomacy was to act as a facilitator of information between existing organizations, rather than to produce the knowledge itself, in order to engender intellectual and cultural relations. In other words, the federal government did not dare advance an ideology or interpretation of US ideas, values, and institutions, since this would mean promoting a political idea or belief in the same ways fascists were in Europe.

In time, however, the federal government changed its position in regard to its cultural diplomacy goals when it created the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA). Where the DCR operated as facilitator of cultural exchange rather than as direct participant, the OCIAA took a more pro-active approach. Conceived by Nelson A. Rockefeller, the OCIAA was created by executive order in August 1940, originally as the "Office for Coordination of Commercial and Cultural Relations between the American Republics" (a year later its name changed to the OCIAA through another executive order). Rockefeller headed the agency as Coordinator. The OCIAA differed from the State Department's DCR in a few ways. An important difference was that it focused on a single region, Latin America. Another was that it advanced the US's commercial, financial, and economic interests in the hemisphere in addition to concerning itself with cultural diplomacy. The OCIAA, in contrast to the DCR, also had substantial congressional appropriations. This meant that, unlike in previous years, the federal government became an important source of funds for Latin American cultural programs in the US. Lastly, the OCIAA pursued a more active role than the DCR by emphasizing the importance of "interpreting" US ideas, values, and institutions to Latin America. By this time, both FDR and Rockefeller, as well as several others (though there were some who were dubious), viewed cultural diplomacy as critical to the wartime emergency, necessary to defeat "intellectual imperialism" on the cultural and ideological war front. By 1940, the federal government

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9 Monica Rankin's study of Mexican wartime propaganda production examines the impact of international ideologies on post-revolutionary Mexican nationalism. She pays special attention to the influence of US wartime propaganda through the work of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs in Mexico at this time. Rankin states that the OCIAA developed a 'propaganda blueprint' from the agency's inception, and accelerated its propaganda campaign as the war continued. Rankin, 58, 60, 63-65, 75-78. Darlene Sadlier's work provides an excellent overview of the creation of the OCIAA's cultural diplomacy program at home and abroad. Darlene J. Sadlier, Americans All: Good Neighbor Cultural Diplomacy in World War II (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012).
10 By 1945, the OCIAA's name would change a third, and last, time to the Office of Inter-American Affairs. Donald Rowland, History of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1947), 4-8, 147, 151, 162.
government, through the OCIAA, was more actively engaged in cultural diplomacy in ways the DCR sought to avoid just two years earlier.\footnote{The OCIAA's initial annual budget was $3.5 million compared to the DCR's $75,000. By 1943, the OCIAA budget increased to $60 million. Rankin, 79; and Ninkovich, 354-41.}

The OCIAA's organizational structure underwent several changes in the six years of its existence, and at one point, the agency nearly folded.\footnote{The OCIAA was eventually terminated by executive order in 1946. Rowland, 276.} In the period before the attack on Pearl Harbor—before US-entrance into the war—the OCIAA included anywhere from four to five sections (sometimes called "divisions" or "units," and later called "departments") that covered three major areas of the Good Neighbor Policy agenda: cultural relations and education; commercial, financial, and economic matters; and activities related to information and communications (though these often overlapped and rarely remained exclusively within a single section). As the war escalated in late 1941, the OCIAA began describing its functions and purpose in the war effort as supporting "economic warfare" and "psychological warfare." Matters dealing with cultural diplomacy fell under the latter category.\footnote{Ibid., 150-152.}

During the first half of 1942, after US-entrance into the war, the OCIAA nearly collapsed. It lost some of its economic and financial operations, and it also came close to losing its information program to the newly created Office of War Information. The OCIAA remained in tact, though, and continued its work in the same three areas as in its pre-war stage: cultural relations and education; commercial, financial, and economic matters; and information and communications. Now operating under the wartime emergency, these three areas were managed under three departments (what were previously referred to as "sections," "divisions," or "units"), and an Assistant Coordinator headed each. By 1944, the OCIAA expanded to include six departments, serving these same three areas in a multitude of ways. Within each of these departments were several subdivisions and subsections tasked with carrying out the Good Neighbor Policy agenda.\footnote{Ibid., 153-154, 159-160.}

The Division of Inter-American Activities in the United States (DIAAUS) was established in March 1942 under one of five subdivisions located within the Information Department (one of three departments in the OCIAA at this time).\footnote{The DIAAUS was placed under two different (in name) departments from its creation in 1942 until October 1943, when it obtained department status (and was called the Department of Inter-American Activities in the United States, retaining its original initials). A year later, its name changed from the DIAAUS to the Department of Special Services. Ibid., 106-107, 154, 156.} The creation of the DIAAUS was heartily supported by Rockefeller. Public opinion polls taken in April 1941, the Coordinator stated, indicated the US population's desire to learn more about Latin America and inter-American cooperation. The DIAAUS's primary function was to work closely with existing private organizations, interest groups, and other governmental agencies and assist them in developing "educational programs" for use within the US. The goal was to facilitate the
“reciprocal nature of inter-American cooperation”—in other words, the DIAAUS was to assist these domestic groups in "interpreting] the other American nations to the United States."16

In its first year, the DIAAUS managed three subsections in this endeavor: the Civics Organizations Section provided US-based groups with information about Latin America and inter-American cooperation; the Inter-American Centers Section handled hospitality for Latin American visitors to the US, in addition to overseeing the use of DIAAUS funds at Pan-American centers throughout the US; and the Lectures and Materials Service Section gathered, organized, and dispersed literature to the other two DIAAUS sections. By early 1943, the DIAAUS reorganized and renamed its sections, and added one more. The Inter-American Centers Section remained, as did Civic Organizations—but was now called Major Key Groups—while the Lectures and Material Service became the Speakers Service Bureau Section. The Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Minorities Section became the fourth addition and responsibility of the DIAAUS.17

The Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Minorities Section ("Portuguese" would eventually be dropped from the title) was a low priority from the start. The DIAAUS was interested in the “Spanish and Portuguese Speaking” population living in the US at the time of its creation in early 1942, but when it included in its budget estimate for the 1943 fiscal year the use of funds for a “Spanish-Speaking minority project,” the Bureau of the Budget (the predecessor to the Office of Management and Budget) rejected this portion of its proposal. Without congressional funds to support the Spanish Speaking Minority Project, the DIAAUS had to delay adding the Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Minorities Section as its fourth section for several months. The section, its project, and most importantly, its funds, were finally secured by the fall of 1942. As the DIAAUS continued to reorganize its bureaucratic structure during the war, projects centered on the Mexican-descent population moved as well. Sometime in 1943, the Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Minorities Section was eliminated, and projects dealing with the "problems of the Spanish-speaking people in the Southwest" were placed under a Special Projects Section within the DIAAUS. This section appeared to cover a motley mix of "special projects," such as issues dealing with labor relations and traveling exhibitions. By October 1944,

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when the DIAAUS changed its name to the Department of US Activities and Special Services, a separate Spanish Speaking Peoples Section was again included under its operations.\(^{18}\)

Within the federal government’s greater agenda for US-Latin American relations, the DIAAUS represented the Good Neighbor Policy’s domestic program, and the Spanish Speaking Minority Project was a minor line item within it. Despite the marginal place of the Mexican-descent population in the Good Neighbor bureaucracy, the inclusion of the population in the federal government’s agenda represents a turning point in the historical relationship between the two. This shift was prompted and encouraged by letters and proposals local Mexican American leaders and sympathetic allies in the US Southwest sent to the OCIAA.

The first stirrings of local and state concerns about the Mexican and Mexican American population and how its problems related to the Good Neighbor Policy began as early as 1941. Mexican American Texas attorney Alonso S. Perales wrote to Nelson Rockefeller in early 1941 about incidents of discrimination in San Antonio against not only the Mexican-descent population, but also Latin American visitors from Honduras and Argentina. He insisted that a popular education of the “people of Hispanic extraction” was necessary, but also suggested that an “Anti-Race-Hatred Law” might be in order. Perales told the Coordinator that whatever the appropriate solution, “YOU OUGHT TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT RIGHT [sic] NOW, MR. ROCKEFELLER.”\(^{19}\) In December 1941, George I. Sánchez, President General of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), a Mexican American civil rights organization, led a delegation to Washington, DC, to meet with several federal officials, including Rockefeller and Vice President Henry Wallace. Following this meeting, Sánchez, at the suggestion of federal officials, submitted a proposal for OCIAA funds to support a national research commission that would study Mexican and Mexican American conditions in the greater US Southwest. In early 1942, Sánchez wrote a follow up letter to Rockefeller to pressure him to act as swiftly as possible on the problems of discrimination in the region.\(^{20}\) In May 1942, C.J.

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\(^{18}\) Correspondence in several folders relating to the DIAAUS in the OIAA Records indicate that the DIAAUS changed its name to the Department of US Activities and Special Services as early as December 1943, and others suggest that the Spanish Speaking Peoples Section existed as early as January 1944. To trace the name change and existence of the Spanish Speaking Peoples Section, see a sampling of the correspondence in the following folders: Aid to Spanish Speaking Minorities in Texas, B-IA-1561, and Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Minorities, Jan-Mar 1943, both in Box 57 of the OIAA Records. "Subject: Functions of the Division of Inter-American Activities in the United States,” nd, Folder: Inter-American Activities in the United States, Box 435, OIAA Records. Rowland, 106-107, 112.

\(^{19}\) Capitalization emphasis in original. Alonso S. Perales to Nelson A. Rockefeller, 25 March 1941, Folder 17, Box 1, Series 2: Correspondence, Alonso S. Perales Papers, Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries.

\(^{20}\) George I. Sánchez to Nelson A. Rockefeller, 7 February 1942; George I. Sánchez to Nelson A. Rockefeller, 31 December 1941, Proposal [included with Sánchez to Rockefeller letter, dated 31 December 1941], “Latin American Research and Policies Commission”, Folder 9, Box 31, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin.
Carreon, a Mexican American state legislator from Arizona, also wrote to Rockefeller concerning the Mexican-descent population in the US Southwest, and included “A Plan to Promote Americanism and Inter-American Solidarity” with his correspondence. In his plan, Carreon recommended that the powers and responsibilities of the OCIAA be broadened—or that “a new Federal agency or department [be] created”—to collaborate with all relevant federal agencies concerned with US-Latin American relations, as well as with state and local leaders, organizations, and agencies, to improve conditions in the US Southwest. This federal entity could collect information on conditions “which tend to humiliate citizens of Latin-American origin,” limit the success of the Good Neighbor Policy, and “interfere with the building of Americanism.”

As Chief of California’s Division of Immigration and Housing, Carey McWilliams wrote a proposal in October 1941 that he shared far and wide, in the state, across the US Southwest, and elsewhere in the United States. McWilliams wrote, for instance, to the editors of liberal newspapers for whom he frequently contributed articles, such as PM, The Nation, and New Republic, seeking endorsement of the proposal. He contacted social scientists whose research included the Mexican-descent population, such as anthropologist Ralph L. Beals at the University of California at Los Angeles, and the economist Paul S. Taylor at the University of California, Berkeley. He also corresponded with other leaders similarly invested in the population, including Joaquín Ortega at the University of New Mexico, Ernesto Galarza at the Pan American Union, and C.J. Carreon, the state legislator from Arizona. These individuals, and many others, gave overwhelming support for McWilliams’ proposal. More importantly, these figures suggested that his proposal extend beyond the state of California to the entire southwestern region (more on this in the California chapter). The collective response to McWilliams’ proposal clearly illustrates the widespread support for a regional plan, but also demonstrates the informal makings of an intellectual infrastructure that helped create an awareness of the population as holding problems in common. In supporting McWilliams’ proposal, in other words, these figures contributed to the emergence of the Mexican and Mexican American population as a regional interest group, and thus helped to provide a vehicle for political activism and exerting influence on its behalf.22

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21 Letter and proposal, C.J. Carreon to Nelson A. Rockefeller, 5 May 1942, Folder 57, Box 92, Dennis Chávez Papers, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico. Josefina Fierro de Bright, General Secretary of the Left-leaning Spanish Speaking People’s Congress in Los Angeles, wrote a letter concerning the Mexican-descent population in Southern California to Vice President Henry Wallace in July 1942, which was then forwarded to the DIAAU.S. The letter was likely written in response to the increasing tensions between local law enforcement and the Mexican and Mexican American population in Los Angeles. Walter H.C. Laves to Josefina [Fierro] de Bright, 11 July 1942, Folder: Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Minorities, Jan-Mar 1943, Box 57, OIAA Records.

22 Letter and Proposal, Carey McWilliams to Nelson Rockefeller, 15 October 1941; Carey McWilliams to Tom O’Connor, 16 October 1941; Carey McWilliams to Freda Kirchwey, 16 October 1941; Carey McWilliams to Bruce Bliven, 16 October 1941; Ralph L. Beals to Carey McWilliams, 27 October 1941; Paul S. Taylor to Carey McWilliams, 23 October 1941; Ernesto Galarza to Carey McWilliams, 11 December 1941; Joaquin Ortega to Carey
These letters and proposals to the OCIAA and other federal officials and agencies offer a sampling of how local and state leaders used the Good Neighbor Policy alongside wartime rhetoric and objectives to present long-standing discrimination practices and impoverished conditions in the southwestern states as national and international problems. These letters also reflect how local and state actors shifted from a “particularistic view,” as McWilliams described it, to a “generic view” of the Mexican-descent population in the US Southwest. That is, rather than view Mexican and Mexican American communities as isolated from and holding nothing in common with one another, local and state figures began to view these communities as constituting a regional interest group with shared traits and problems. As Mexican American leaders and sympathetic allies wrote letters seeking governmental action in the US Southwest, the DIAAUS worked in early 1942 to develop a program for its Spanish Speaking Minority Project.

In developing the Spanish Speaking Minority Project, the DIAAUS created a bureaucratically driven definition of the Mexican and Mexican American population premised on a common set of problems local communities shared across the US Southwest. Moreover, the DIAAUS described these problems as stemming from historical and structural conditions that rendered the population unable to aid in its own social and economic uplift. For the sake of US-Latin American relations and the war against fascism, the DIAAUS contended, the federal government needed to act immediately.

Some of what the DIAAUS knew about the Mexican-descent population in the US Southwest was informed by several federal wartime studies completed at the moment the US entered the war: the first was commissioned in December 1941, and three other reports were completed in the early months of 1942. As one historian has noted, academic and governmental studies had been produced in the several decades prior to World War II, and he cites scholarship, with the exception of one, that focused primarily on labor conditions. Emilio Zamora notes some of the following academic and governmental studies produced in the pre-war period: Victor S. Clark, *Mexican Labor in the United States*, US Bureau of Labor Bulletin no. 78 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1908); Selden C. Menefee and Orin C. Cassmore, *The Pecan Shellers of San Antonio: The Problem of Underpaid and Unemployed Mexican Labor*, US Work Projects Administration, Social Research Section, Division of Research (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1940); Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States: A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1930); Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States: Imperial Valley*, University of California Publications in Economics, vol. 6, no. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1928), and several of Taylor’s later works on Mexican migratory labor. These studies, with the exception of Gamio’s, focused primarily on economic conditions, rather than on questions related to social discrimination and inequality, as the later federal reports would do. Emilio Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas: Mexican Workers and Job Politics during WWII* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 73-75, 263 n22 and n23.
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1942 wartime reports sought to confirm these earlier findings, but with a focused eye on how these economic conditions might affect the successful implementation of the Good Neighbor Policy at home and abroad; specifically, they supplemented the earlier reports by emphasizing cultural isolation and social discrimination as the causes of economic inequality. They also insisted that Americanization programs were critical to preventing civil unrest and Nazi infiltration among Mexicans and Mexican Americans.\(^\text{24}\)

At the OCIAA's direction, labor economist David J. Saposs completed one of the 1942 wartime reports since it appeared that no other federal agency was dedicated to investigating "the entire problem" among the Mexican and Mexican American population.\(^\text{25}\) Saposs' report directly shaped the way the DIAAUS determined the objectives and structure for the division's Spanish Speaking Minority Project, as well as how the federal government tended to view the population as a whole. Saposs' report was based on a month-long survey trip he made of the US Southwest in early 1942. The purpose of the trip was to collect information on the "problems of the Resident Latin Americans and groups interested in bettering them," especially any programs and organizations already performing the type of "remedial action" work the DIAAUS was interested in supporting.\(^\text{26}\)

From February to March, Saposs made short trips to specific cities and towns in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Colorado, and Illinois, where he met with local Mexican American leaders and other individuals working in major institutions, universities, and local and state agencies. In Saposs' travel notes, he observed that in all six states, the Mexican-descent population lacked a substantial leadership from its own (the LULAC chapters in Texas and New Mexico did not seem to impress him much, nor did state legislator C.J. Carreon, the gentleman he met with while in Arizona), and that any programs already sponsored by local, state, and federal agencies, institutions, and other organizations suffered from lack of funds. In some communities, especially in Southern California, Arizona, and Texas, leaders opined that the Mexican-descent population was in dire need of some sort of region-wide project or organization supported by the "prestige and necessary weight" of the federal government.\(^\text{27}\)

\(^{24}\) The four federal reports were (as cited by Zamora): one commissioned by the State Department under US Consul General William Blocker in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, in December 1941; Paul Horgan's "United States Latins in the Southwest, A Domestic Wartime Responsibility with Foreign Overtones," completed in January 1942; Vincenzo Petrullo's "Report on the Spanish-Speaking Peoples in the Southwest," completed in April 1942; and David J. Saposs' "Report on Rapid Survey of Resident Latin American Problems and Recommended Program," also completed in April. Zamora, 73-75, 263 n22 and n23.

\(^{25}\) Untitled document ["In the fall of 1941..."], nd; "Draft of memorandum to be attached to Annual Report relating to Spanish-speaking Minority Project," 15 December 1942; Folder: Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, 1941-1942 [folder 2 of 4]. Box 13, Walter Laves mss., Manuscripts Department, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.


\(^{27}\) The following are memora between David J. Saposs and John M. Clark regarding Saposs' trip to the US Southwest: Memoranda, David J. Saposs to John M. Clark, [Austin, Texas] 23 February 1942; [Austin, Texas] 24 February 1942; [San Antonio, Texas] 5 March 1942; [Albuquerque and Las Vegas, New Mexico] 7 March 1942;
Throughout the US Southwest, Saposs found Mexican-descent populations living with a range of problems that contributed to their “submerged and destitute” existence: low paying work; little vocational training; discrimination in employment, public accommodations, and schools; mass illiteracy; lax enforcement of school attendance; delinquency among youth and adults; poor health and malnutrition; substandard living conditions in urban and rural areas; and low civic engagement. Saposs claimed that the Mexican-descent population also had a “psychologic” problem—that is, it lacked any sense of “Americanism” and did “not understand our way of life, our institutions, our system of government,” making it “easy prey of subversive propaganda and un-American teachings.” Saposs asserted that since the Mexican-descent population did not have a “large or influential group in this country [that] is interested in them, the responsibility devolves upon the government” to initiate the “[e]xtraordinary task of rehabilitation,” for its own good but especially for the greater war effort. Saposs insisted that “the disadvantages and disabilities of the Resident Latin Americans” in the US presented the enemy with an opportunity to undermine Good Neighbor diplomacy abroad, and that making appreciable improvements to the population’s current conditions was a viable and appropriate countermeasure to enemy infiltration.\footnote{David J. Saposs, “Report on Rapid Survey of Resident Latin American Problems and Recommended Program,” 3 April 1942, Folder: Administration Meetings (General), File: “Resident Latin American Problems and Recommended Program,” 3 April 1942 in 1460, General Records, 1941-1945, 1-7 Entry 127, Series Department of Press and Publications, OIAA Records.}

Saposs also asserted that improving Mexican and Mexican American economic and social conditions would secure and increase the overall labor supply in the industrial and agricultural sectors. He recommended that the federal government further explore issues related specifically to migratory workers—such as the padrone system, housing, schools, wages and hours worked—and subsistence farmers, whose primitive agricultural methods and living practices necessitated their “rehabilitation.” Most importantly, Saposs recommended the OCIAA provide financial support, on a matching aid basis, to remedial action programs in communities that already received financial and logistical support—as in staff and building space, for instance—from local and state agencies, organizations, and institutions. These programs should center on social welfare and quality of life, Americanization and naturalization, and educational efforts that aimed to change the way the Mexican-descent population and European Americans viewed one another.\footnote{Ibid.} Saposs’ recommendation for remedial action programs preserved existing solutions that promoted immediate, rather than long-term, responses to persistent problems. In the Texas chapter, we will see how the DIAAUS’s preference for remedial programs was a source of tension between local and federal actors.

\begin{itemize}
  \item 29 Ibid.
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The correspondence and reports that circulated within and out of the DIAAUS at this time echoed the language and key points cited in the Saposs report, and illustrates the central role it played in shaping how the federal government developed a bureaucratic definition of the Mexican and Mexican American population. To the DIAAUS the root of Mexican and Mexican American problems lay in the population's inability to assimilate. Mexicans and Mexican Americans were unable to assimilate and integrate because external causes like discrimination, inadequate education, destitute living conditions, and cultural isolation prevented them from doing so, and not because of some racial or biological deficiency. Moreover, until European Americans began to view Mexican-descent people as American, integration would remain a challenge that undermined the US's larger objectives in marshaling support for the war and promoting US-Latin American relations.

An academic study published in 1940 also seems to have shaped the way the DIAAUS and other federal bureaucrats understood and characterized the Mexican and Mexican American population. In 1939, George I. Sánchez conducted a year of research on New Mexico Hispanics (as the Mexican- and Spanish-descent population preferred to be called in that state) and adult education in Taos County for the University of New Mexico. The result was the publication of Forgotten People: A Study of New Mexicans in 1940. Sánchez had extensive training in the field of education: he received his bachelor's degree from the University of New Mexico (in his native state), his master's degree from the University of Texas (UT), and his doctorate from the University of California at Berkeley. His graduate student research challenged hereditary IQ testing as a legitimate measure of intelligence, arguing that environment—living conditions and educational opportunity, for instance—rather than heredity, determined low test performance among Mexican-descent children. By the time Sánchez traveled to Washington, DC, with the LULAC delegation in 1941, he held a dual faculty appointment in the Department of Educational Psychology and the Department of History and Philosophy of Education at UT.

In Forgotten People, Sánchez described New Mexicans (the term he used in place of Spanish-American, Mexican, and Spanish-speaking) as stepchildren to the United States following the end of the US war with Mexico, and called on the federal government to take responsibility for helping the Hispano population progress from a traditional people to a modern people. Throughout Forgotten People, Sánchez used the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo as a referent for the federal government and its actions—rarely, for instance, did he explicitly identify

32 The following attest to the influence of the Saposs report on the DIAAUS: Report, Information Service Department, Division of Inter-American Activities in the United States Minority Program, nd; Memorandum, Walter H.C. Laves to Arthur Jones, 8 September 1942; Memorandum, Joseph E. Weckler to Walter T. Prendergast, 28 January 1943; "Subject: Rehabilitation work among Spanish-speaking people in the United States"; Memorandum, Victor Borella to John Lockwood, 6 December 1943; Folder: Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Minorities, Jan-Mar 1943, Box 57, OIAA Records. Untitled document ["In the fall of 1941..."], Laves mss.
the “United States” as the culprit, but it is clear this was what he meant. Since the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, Sánchez argued, Hispanics had lived in “geographic” and “cultural isolation,” remaining “untouched by the changes that were occurring in Western civilization.” A traditional society steeped in 16th century Spanish language, customs, economy, and technology, “[n]ew methods, new ideas, new horizons were incomprehensible because they were shockingly out of keeping with his [the Hispano’s] experience of long standing...It was folly to expect that, by the magic stroke of a pen upon a treaty, that the New Mexican should become an American citizen overnight.” The federal government did not bother, as it should have, to consider how it might bring the Hispano population into American society. “In the march of imperialism,” Sánchez stated, “a people were forgotten, cast aside as the by-product of territorial aggrandizement.” Sánchez repeatedly described the Hispano population as “isolated,” and thus retaining 16th and 17th century culture and modes of living. “The New Mexican,” Sánchez explained, “often carries on inferior and obsolete practices and beliefs because he has been permitted, and forced to remain in isolation” that resulted “in a traditional way of life that is below current standards” in health, education, culture, and economy. New Mexico’s traditional cultural ways, combined with geographic isolation, exacerbated what might have been “normal problems” of incorporating a new population into the US, and “aggravate[d] the deficiencies of an undeveloped economy and of a frontier social structure.” Given this historical background, and considering the federal government’s neglect, “it is not surprising that he [the New Mexican] is maladjusted to the current norms of American life.”

Sánchez likened the federal government’s relationship with the Hispano population to that of a parent and child. The Treaty, for instance, marked an “adoption,” and the lack of progress made by Hispanics stemmed from “a neglectful parent” who should have “been more considerate of her children—stepchildren that the nation adopted through treaty.” Following this adoption, Hispanics were left on their own, with outmoded ways of thinking and living, to incorporate into the “American fold.” Sánchez plainly stated,

> the generally inferior status held by the native New Mexican today is, in large measure, a result of the failure of the United States to recognize the special character of the social responsibility it assumed when it brought these people forcibly into the American society. Granting them technical citizenship did not discharge that responsibility. The legal right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” is an empty privilege when the bare essentials of Americanism and of social welfare are wanting.

Sánchez further equated Hispanics with “other subject peoples,” such as Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Filipinos, brought under the responsibility of the federal government through US imperialism. Unlike these groups, however, Hispanics had not “merited special

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*Sánchez, Forgotten People: A Study of New Mexicans (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1940), vii, 4-8, 10-13, 27-28, 34-38, 89.*
consideration” from the federal government. It should not matter, Sánchez claimed, that Hispanics resided on the same continent as the US at the time of annexation since they were essentially “foreigner[s] whose background reflected a long-outmoded Western civilization that had undergone many generations of special adaptation to the region.” Sánchez asserted that the federal government ought to implement “[a] comprehensive program of economic reconstruction and rehabilitation,” which its work with Native Americans and other subject peoples provided “precedent for the assumption of such a responsibility by the national government.” Once the federal government did so, the Hispano would “no longer be a problem child, a culturally unassimilated subject, but a respected and self-respecting American,” and the population would “cease to exist as forgotten people.”

Sánchez’s characterization of the Hispano population in Forgotten People as a type of backward and subordinate population in relation to the modern “American” population is certainly unsettling to the contemporary reader. The study’s historical significance, however, lay in his clear intent to hold the federal government responsible for promoting the general welfare of all its citizens. Additionally, Sánchez’s repeated reference to the population’s isolation, especially its “cultural isolation,” from American society reflects his training as a social scientist. Like many of his academic peers in the social sciences, Sánchez’s emphasis on culture and environment as creating the Hispano population’s “traditional” ways of life represented an attempt to refute the racial and biological arguments made about the Mexican-descent population that placed blame on the population for its impoverished conditions, thus relieving the federal government of any responsibility. Rather, the US federal government created the environmental conditions in 1848—in keeping the Mexican-descent population in cultural isolation—that were responsible for the population’s impoverished conditions a hundred years later. Forgotten People, then, illustrates a historical shift in how social scientists understood race and studied minority populations, as well as a historical shift to holding the federal government responsible for social reform among these groups.

It is possible that Sánchez’s study, or perhaps synopses of it, made the rounds to federal agencies working on the Mexican-descent population, thus informing the way the DIAAUS and other federal bureaucrats viewed and defined the population. Sánchez, for instance, sent Rockefeller a copy of Forgotten People just a couple of months after he submitted his December

33 Ibid., 24-26, 35-36, 38-40, 90, 98.
34 Mark Hendrickson’s study of modern capitalism and its impact on labor in the early 20th century includes an important chapter on social scientists’ efforts to refute racial and biological explanations for the problems arising from African American and Mexican-descent populations by offering structural explanations, such as economic and social conditions. The studies completed by social scientists, such as Paul S. Taylor, Robert Redfield, Manuel Gamio, Ernesto Galarza, and Emory Bogardus, represented an effort to undo prevailing assumptions about Mexican and Mexican American workers, and are indicative of a larger effort to transform the way the public viewed race and the US labor force. Mark Hendrickson, American Labor and Economic Citizenship: New Capitalism from World War I to the Great Depression (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
1941 proposal to the Coordinator.\textsuperscript{35} It is plausible, in other words, that Sánchez’s 1940 study informed Sapos’ 1942 report. Proposals the DIAAUS wrote for New Mexico, California, and Texas, for instance, included language and ideas that mirrored the language and ideas in *Forgotten People*. These proposals described the population as “isolated from the rest of the [Anglo] community,” which led to it having “little conception of our way of life, our institutions, or our system of government.”\textsuperscript{36} One memo asserted that “[m]any of these Spanish speaking people are citizens of the United States, and as such are entitled to every assistance we can give”—echoing a sentiment similar to that expressed in *Forgotten People*.\textsuperscript{37}

Nearly a hundred years after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, a global war driven by ideological rhetoric finally pushed the federal government into action, and provided it with the justification it needed to develop a program for the Mexican-descent population. Indeed, demonstrating that the Spanish Speaking Minority Project was critical to the war effort and the success of the Good Neighbor Policy was important to its existence. The DIAAUS asserted, for instance, that supporting the assimilation and integration of Mexicans and Mexican Americans into the “American way of life” served the larger ideological and practical goals of wartime mobilization—it would keep them loyal to the US, and it would help to create a workforce for the war industry. Helping Mexicans and Mexican Americans become “American” (through assimilation as well as through naturalization) would help combat European American discrimination against them, and would thereby facilitate their inclusion (integration) and access to the same economic and social opportunities as the dominant population.\textsuperscript{38} Toward this end, the DIAAUS favored remedial action programs that provided immediate and corrective change in social and economic conditions within Mexican-descent communities. These included a diverse spread of activities that served a range of purposes, from recreational projects to curb juvenile delinquency, to health services and training to improve quality of life, child care to support employment, vocational and agricultural training, and hiring bilingual field workers to help Mexican nationals with naturalization services, as well as to develop local leadership and community networks.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{35} Nelson A. Rockefeller to George I. Sánchez, 10 February 1942, Folder 9, Box 31, Sánchez Papers.
\textsuperscript{36} Project Authorization, “Short Title: Aid to the Spanish-Speaking People of Southern California,” nd, Folder: Aid to the Spanish-Speaking People of Southern California, AIA-1744, Box 57; Renewal of Project Authorization, “Short Title: Aid to the Spanish-Speaking People of New Mexico (Extended),” nd, Folder: Aid to the Spanish-Speaking People of New Mexico, AIA-1718, Box 57; Project Authorization, “Short Title: Aid to Spanish-speaking Minorities in Texas,” nd, Folder: Aid to Spanish Speaking Minorities in Texas, BIA-1561, Box 57; OIAA Records.
\textsuperscript{37} Memorandum, Walter H.C. Laves to Arthur Jones, 8 September 1942, Folder: Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Minorities, Jan-Mar 1943, Box 57, OIAA Records.
\textsuperscript{38} Zamora similarly observes the OCIAA’s rationale for federal work in the Mexican-descent population. My observation here is more focused on how the DIAAUS articulated this rationale within the federal government. Zamora, 73-78.
\textsuperscript{39} The following indicate the types of programs the DIAAUS supported: Proposed Project Authorization, “Title: Assistance to Education Program in Barelas Community Center,” nd, Folder: Barelas Community Center, New Mexico, AIA6-4265, Box 57; Project Authorization, “Short Title: Aid to the Spanish-Speaking People of Southeastern Michigan,” nd, Folder: Aid to the Spanish Speaking People of Southeastern Michigan, AIA-1743.
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The federal government’s project of “social rehabilitation” of the Mexican and Mexican American population, however, represented a continuation of earlier social reforms. One contemporary described the general increased interest in the Mexican-descent population at this time, from both the OCIAA and other similarly inclined folks, as a shift from “social work” to “social action.” Though a substantive change was certainly taking place, this observation suggests a greater and more progressive shift than really existed. Many of the remedial action programs supported by the DIAAUS mirrored efforts from the Progressive Era and later: civic and social education, naturalization assistance, self-help and improvement, and social work—not unlike those endorsed during the earlier Americanization movement and implemented largely by private and voluntary organizations, such as settlement houses, social agencies, and fraternal and patriotic groups. Beginning with the First World War, the federal government began to increase its involvement and responsibility for developing American nationalism, pride, and loyalty, among the nation’s immigrants. In the late-1910s, advocates continued to push for federal oversight of Americanization programs, and insisted on its importance to the broader goals of internationalism. There was nothing inherently new, in other words, about proposing remedial action programs at this time. These remedial action programs were an extension of familiar programs from an earlier period. And, with perhaps the exception of developing community leadership, these programs met temporary needs rather than offering long-term solutions for the historical and structural problems deeply embedded within these communities.

To put a finer point, then, on what was observed at the time as a shift from “social work” to “social action”: historically speaking, the DIAAUS’s Spanish Speaking Minority Project was important not because of the types of programs it supported; rather, it was important because the project represented an unprecedented federal interest in the Mexican and Mexican American population as a whole. The federal government’s survey of the population, for instance, extended beyond its labor and economic issues and tied them to social problems that required federal action. The Spanish Speaking Minority Project, then, was a new venture for the federal government.

The DIAAUS, however, faced obstacles in securing funds for its unprecedented project: federal officials outside of the OCIAA opposed spending funds on the Mexican-descent population. In the same month that Saposs submitted his report, the DIAAUS secured just over $100,000 in OCIAA funds to begin the Spanish Speaking Minority Project, but ceased its work when the Office of War Information (OWI) was established by executive order in June 1942. The Bureau of the Budget had decided that the OWI, and not the DIAAUS, should work with the

Box 57; Project Authorization, “Short Title: Aid to the Spanish-Speaking People of Colorado,” nd, Renewal of Project Authorization, “Short Title: Aid to the Spanish-speaking people of Colorado,” nd, Folder: Aid to the Spanish-Speaking People of Colorado, B-AI-1617, Box 6; OIAA Records.

McWilliams, North From Mexico, 248.

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Mexican-descent population in the US by running an informational campaign, presumably one that would attempt to “[sell] the war to Spanish-Americans,” but also one that would inform European Americans of the numerous contributions Mexicans and Mexican Americans made to the war effort.\(^4\)

The OWI’s Bureau of Intelligence, however, insisted that a program of action, and not just an informational campaign, was necessary to address the numerous problems found in the Mexican and Mexican American population. In August 1942, the OWI issued a report, “Spanish-Americans in the Southwest and the War Effort,” or Report Number 24, which relied on data and research obtained from several federal agencies, such as the OCIAA, the War Manpower Commission, and the Departments of Agriculture, Justice, Interior, and Commerce, in addition to the expertise and publications of academics in the US Southwest, including George I. Sánchez, Emory S. Bogardus, and Paul S. Taylor. In Report Number 24, the OWI asserted that “[t]he attitude of Spanish- and Mexican-Americans toward the war is not one of open antagonism but lack of enthusiasm,” which stemmed from the discrimination they faced economically, politically, and socially. The diversity of the Mexican-descent population in the US Southwest—shaped by language, national place of birth, immigration status, location, and urban versus rural residency—affected the type of discrimination the population faced and required careful attention. Report Number 24 also described Mexicans and Mexican Americans as lacking leadership and coherent social organization, an observation aimed at emphasizing their inability to defend themselves as well as their vulnerability to subversive elements. The OWI warned in its report that the

institutionalized discrimination against several million Latin-Americans in the American Southwest is a constant irritant in hemispheric relations, a mockery of the Good Neighbor policy, an open invitation to Axis propagandists to depict us as hypocrites to South and Central America and, above all, a serious waste of potential manpower.

\(^4\) As for federal efforts to run an informational campaign: *Spanish Speaking Americans in the War: The Southwest* was a 1943 pictorial booklet published by the OCIAA in collaboration with the OWI that sought to show, as the title suggests, Mexican and Mexican American participation and contributions to the war effort. With bilingual captions and vignettes, the booklet sought to capture Mexicans and Mexican Americans as essential to US success in the war against fascism. The booklet photographs covered a range of wartime activities Mexican American men and women engaged in, including armed forces training, work in war plants, and civilian volunteering. Braceros—Mexican guest laborers sent to work in US agriculture and railroads during WWII—were also represented in the booklet. Charles Olson, *Spanish Speaking Americans in the War: The Southwest* (Washington, DC: Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, 1943). Wallace K. Harrison to Elmer Davis, 15 September 1942, Folder: Aid to the Spanish-Speaking People of Southern California, A-1A-1744, Box 57, OIAA Records, “Spanish-Americans in the Southwest and the War Effort,” Report No. 24, 18 August 1942, Special Services Division, Bureau of Intelligence, Office of War Information, Special Collections, UW-Milwaukee Libraries, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI. “Memorandum on Mr. Laves’ trip to Los Angeles, California and appearance before the Los Angeles County Grand Jury Hearing,” nd, Folder: Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, 1941-1942 [folder 3 of 4], Box 13, Laves mss. Rowland, 106; and Zamora, 264 n31.
The report concluded with recommendations taken, nearly verbatim, from Saposs’ April 1942 report—such as promoting specific projects managed by local organizations and state-level institutions—and all but demanded that the OCIAA receive its $100,000 budget to move forward with its Spanish Speaking Minority Project. The OWI simply stated: “To think that any informational campaign [and no program of action] can solve the Spanish-Mexican-American situation is quixotic.”

With reports in circulation, such as Saposs’ and the OWI Report Number 24, stressing the need for direct government action in Mexican-descent communities, DIAAUS Director Walter H.C. Laves pressed for the reinstatement of federal funding to enable OCIAA oversight of locally led remedial action projects. The recent Sleepy Lagoon murder and indictment of several Mexican American youth in Los Angeles, Laves warned, indicated how “the seriousness of the problem has greatly increased.”

In August 1942, twenty-two-year-old José Díaz was fatally attacked on his way home from a neighbor’s birthday party at Williams Ranch in rural Los Angeles County. Díaz was found severely beaten and stabbed in the stomach and, after some time, was eventually taken to the hospital where he died shortly thereafter. The Los Angeles Police Department arrested hundreds as part of its “investigation,” resulting in the indictment of 22 young Mexican American men from 38th Street, a neighborhood close to where Díaz’s body was found at Williams Ranch (and close to the “Sleepy Lagoon” reservoir the trial is named after). The Sleepy Lagoon trial, especially the police dragnet roundup of Mexican American youth, and the media’s negative portrayal of the defendants, by Laves’ estimation, demonstrated the need for federal government support of the Mexican and Mexican American population at this critical moment.

By September 1942, the DIAAUS Spanish Speaking Minority Project was once again funded, and Laves set to work on moving forward with local projects. He resumed correspondence with individuals at the University of Texas at Austin and the University of New Mexico, for instance, whose local project proposals had already caught the attention of the DIAAUS. By late November, Laves and Saposs recommended immediate support of projects already developed or currently under development in northern New Mexico, Texas, and in the city of Chicago, and requested funding for DIAAUS staff that included a chief; a field representative for Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado, collectively; a second field

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44 Memorandum, Walter H.C. Laves to Arthur Jones, 8 September 1942, Folder: Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Minorities, Jan-Mar 1943, Box 57, OIAA Records.
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representative for the Los Angeles area; and an administrative assistant whose work would rest primarily in Washington, DC. 48 By early 1943, Victor Borella replaced Walter Laves as the DIAAUS Director, and the Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Minorities Section was established and under operation in the DIAAUS. 49

Even before the OCIAA created the Division of Inter-American Activities in the United States (DIAAUS) to promote the Good Neighbor Policy within the US’s borders, local and state leaders throughout the US Southwest began contacting the OCIAA about including Mexicans and Mexican Americans in a domestic version of its broader foreign policy agenda. Mexican American leaders, like George I. Sánchez, and sympathetic allies, like Carey McWilliams, sought federal support for projects aimed at improving conditions among the population, and especially sought projects that would reach Mexican and Mexican American communities across the entire southwestern region. These local and state leaders insisted that the federal government had an obligation to ensure the well being of the population as necessary for the war and the Good Neighbor Policy. The DIAAUS began developing the Spanish Speaking Minority Project in early 1942, and similar to local and state leaders, the division used the wartime emergency and US-Latin American relations to justify the need for a federal project. Local and state leaders’ collective response to the OCIAA on the one hand, and the DIAAUS’s move to create a Spanish Speaking Minority Project on the other, reflect the emergence of a collective awareness of Mexican and Mexican American communities in the US Southwest as a unified regional interest group. The population’s regional consciousness gave it national visibility and, more importantly, a political means for Mexican American leaders and sympathetic allies to advocate on its behalf.

48 Memorandum, Walter H.C. Laves and David J. Saposs to The Advisory Committee: Mr. Lockwood, Mr. Jamieson, Mr. John Clark, Mr. Gerald Smith, Mr. Holland, “Subject: Resident Latin American Project,” 25 November 1942, Folder: Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Minorities, Jan-Mar 1943, Box 57, OIAA Records.

49 Rowland, 107; and Sadlier, 192.
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Reluctant Neighbors:
The Limitations of Federal Support
for Mexicans and Mexican Americans in World War II Texas

In the fall of 1941, George I. Sánchez wrote to Dennis Chávez, the US Senator from New Mexico, about the Mexican-descent population and the Good Neighbor Policy. It would be a few months before the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA) began developing its Spanish Speaking Minority Project in the Division of Inter-American Activities in the United States (DIAAUS). Sánchez was the President General of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), a Mexican American civil rights organization, and was writing to Chávez on behalf of the organization. LULAC members, Sánchez explained, thought the Good Neighbor Policy ought to extend to the “some five million citizens of Latin American ancestry” living within the US. The population, he asserted, “represented both an opportunity and an obligation to the nation.” He described the Mexican-descent population, for instance, as the “vanguard of Pan Americanism” in the US in promoting relations in the hemisphere. Sánchez also noted, however, the pervasive social and economic problems that afflicted the population, and insisted that this should have made Mexicans and Mexican Americans a priority in the federal government’s foreign policy agenda.¹

LULAC wanted to send a small delegation to Washington, DC, and Sánchez wanted the US Senator’s help in gaining an audience with federal officials. “We would be deeply grateful to you,” the LULAC president wrote, “if you would take over the sponsorship of that visit, guiding us in our plans and arranging a suitable schedule of conferences and interviews.” Sánchez stressed the importance of the trip producing “worthwhile results,” especially since LULAC would only be able to fund part of it, and the delegation would have to fund the rest at its own expense. The delegation could not afford a “wild-goose chase,” and if Chávez did not think such a trip would bear fruit, he wanted to know before moving forward. Sánchez also welcomed any advice about how to solicit assistance from other members of Congress.²

In December 1941, a LULAC delegation that included Sánchez, Manuel C. González, and Alonso S. Perales met with several federal officials in Washington, DC. González and Perales were native Texans and attorneys who had been central to the founding of LULAC in 1929.³ Nelson Rockefeller, head of the OCIAA, and US Vice President Henry Wallace, were

¹ George I. Sánchez to Dennis Chávez, 17 October 1941, Folder 11, Box 22, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin.
² George I. Sánchez to Dennis Chávez, 17 October 1941, Sánchez Papers. If Chávez responded to Sánchez’s October letter, I have yet to find it.
³ Cynthia E. Orozco, No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 104-107, 111-114. Few monographs exist that provide a
among those who met with the delegation. Federal officials encouraged Sánchez to submit a plan of action on behalf of LULAC to Rockefeller with the goal of obtaining federal funding and support. In the letter Sánchez included with his proposal, he described the nearly 3 million Mexicans and Mexican Americans living in the US Southwest as “an orphan people,” largely ignored by its parent, the federal government. Echoing his recently published work on New Mexico, Forgotten People, Sánchez explained that after years of neglect, this population lay outside of American society, living in a “veritable concentration camp.” Mexicans and Mexican Americans across the US Southwest, he lamented, had “no paid spokesman or pledged sponsors,” and as an isolated and forgotten population, they needed a national organization—if not the federal government—to advocate on its behalf, one that was dedicated to sponsoring the acculturation of this Latin American sector of our population. A well-founded commission would lift this minority group from their status as an orphan people and would open the way to the study and solution of their deficiencies and resources, their needs and their possibilities. Such a commission would become...the agent and spokesman for a hitherto non-vocal and forgotten people.

“Here, indeed,” Sánchez claimed, “[in the US Southwest] is the frontier of inter-American relations and the proving ground for the hemispheric order of tomorrow.” Sanchez’s letter to Rockefeller indicates for us some of the ideas and expectations Mexican American leaders held about the federal government’s responsibility to the Mexican-descent population.

This chapter centers on Texas to consider how the DIAAUS’s goals for the Spanish Speaking Minority Project contrasted with local leaders’ expectations and objectives for the project and the role of the federal government in improving Mexican and Mexican American conditions in the US Southwest. The chapter reveals three sources of tension between the federal government and local leaders in Texas in implementing the Spanish Speaking Minority Project. The first source of tension centered on how DIAAUS funds were used. The DIAAUS

thorough history of LULAC, but Orozco’s important work can be read alongside the following two books to gain a sense of the organization and its historiography: Benjamin Márquez, LULAC: The Evolution of a Mexican American Political Organization (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), and Craig A. Kaplowitz, LULAC, Mexican Americans, and National Policy (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005).

4 Emilio Zamora, Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas: Mexican Workers and Job Politics during World War II (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 120-123. Though the sources available thus far do not indicate with certainty that C.J. Carreon, the Mexican American state legislator from Arizona who submitted a plan to Nelson Rockefeller, was part of the LULAC delegation, it is possible that he may have joined these men in their trip to Washington, DC. In a letter to Carey McWilliams, Carreon mentioned that he had been made an honorary member of the Arizona LULAC chapter so that the Washington delegation could include a representative from the state. C.J. Carreon to Carey McWilliams, 25 November 1941, Folder: Remedial Measures, Box 31, Carey McWilliams Papers (Collection 1243), Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

5 See the DIAAUS and New Mexico chapters (chapters 1 and 4) for more on Forgotten People.

6 George I. Sánchez to Nelson A. Rockefeller, 31 December 1941, Folder 9, Box 31, Sánchez Papers.
insisted that the University of Texas Committee on Inter-American Relations spend DIAAUS funds on remedial rather than research projects. From the outset, local Mexican American leaders and sympathetic allies attempted to implement research-based programs, alongside remedial-based programs, as a solution to the problems Mexican-descent communities shared across the US Southwest. The DIAAUS, however, repeatedly explained that all of its projects must prioritize remedial activities over research ones. Moreover, projects must demonstrate a contribution to the war effort and/or promote the Good Neighbor Policy. The DIAAUS likely insisted on remedial projects since research budgets tended to be cost-prohibitive. Congress also constantly reminded the DIAAUS that its projects needed to produce tangible and immediate results directly related to the war. The second source of tension stemmed from the DIAAUS’s desire to confine projects to the state level. Local leaders sought, for instance, to create a regional program that more thoroughly integrated the numerous and disparate agencies, institutions, and organizations—including research-based ones—across the US Southwest, and that could, thus, more adequately address problems afflicting the Mexican-descent population. Significantly, this call to create a region-wide program demonstrates an effort to develop an intellectual infrastructure for devising long-term solutions, and was based on an awareness of problems Mexican and Mexican American communities held in common across the US Southwest. The third source of tension we find is in the way the federal government’s support for a Texas version of the Good Neighbor Policy contradicted its repeated insistence on preserving traditional federal-state relations. Though the Texas Good Neighbor Commission was a state agency created to investigate discrimination in the state—an unprecedented event in Texas—it also impeded an antidiscrimination legislation campaign led by Mexican American leaders, Mexican government officials, and sympathetic allies. The DIAAUS’s contribution, along with other federal officials, to the creation of the Texas Good Neighbor Commission shows that the line dividing federal-state relations was not as rigid as federal officials contended. More importantly, this blurring of relations did not always work in favor of the Mexican-descent population.

George I. Sánchez’s LULAC proposal illustrates local Mexican American leaders’ desire to create a national body tasked with researching problems in the Mexican-descent population. Sánchez proposed creating the Latin American Research and Policies Commission, which would serve as a clearinghouse of studies on Mexican and Mexican American people living in the US, especially for agencies overseeing remedial action programs. The Commission would consist of a national body and state committees. Sánchez already had the national body’s membership figured out. In addition to including federal officials responsible for wartime issues, it included scholars and administrators from major institutions and organizations: Paul S. Taylor from the University of California at Berkeley, Carey McWilliams of the State of California Department of Industrial Relations, Ernesto Galarza from the Pan American Union, James F.
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Zimmerman of the University of New Mexico, Carlos E. Castañeda from the University of Texas at Austin, Ben Cherrington at the University of Denver, and Grady Gammage from Arizona State Teachers College. LULAC’s president was also included as a member of the national body. Though Sánchez was the current LULAC president, he offered to serve as the director of the Commission at the national level. Each member of the national body would oversee the regular business of the Commission in addition to serving as chair of state committees in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Texas, and the Upper Midwest (the “Chicago-Detroit region where the presence of large numbers of ‘Mexicans’ raises serious problems”). At the state level, these committees would serve as advisory boards in collaboration with local leaders and organizations, such as chambers of commerce, civic and professional groups, and other public agencies, as well as Mexican consulates.7 The Commission’s apparatus illustrates local leaders’ vision for a research body that integrated resources from national to state to local levels in an effort to create an organization that could effectively address the Mexican-descent population’s problems in the US Southwest (and the Upper Midwest).

LULAC, as the organization sponsoring the proposal, held a prominent role in the development and function of the Commission. In addition to the LULAC president serving on the national body, Sánchez stipulated that the president select the national body membership itself, with approval from the OCIAA and Office of Production Management. At the state level, in the example he provided for what the New Mexico state committee would look like, Sánchez included a place for the Regional Governor of the New Mexico LULAC. To disseminate information to the Mexican and Mexican American population, Sánchez recommended that the Commission use LULAC’s news organ, LULAC News.8

Through research, publications, and conferences, the Commission would investigate and report on existing conditions created by “social maladjustments,” such as segregation, employment inequality, inadequate education, health, and vocational services, the distribution of governmental funds and services, and disenfranchisement. Other studies would center on broader problems, including migratory labor, Spanish and Mexican land grants, bilingualism, immigration and labor, and citizenship and naturalization. The Commission could call upon specialists—in labor, language, education, and bilingualism, for instance—to provide research-based recommendations for action programs to the federal government.9

The Commission’s proposal is important since it highlights at least two expectations held by local leaders. The first expectation was that the federal government was obligated to support a national body, like the Commission, both financially and structurally. The proposal, for instance, was written for the expressed purpose of obtaining federal funding, and it stipulated federal cooperation in its operation. The second expectation was that a federally sponsored

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7 Proposal [included with Sánchez to Rockefeller letter, dated 31 December 1941], “Latin American Research and Policies Commission,” Folder 9, Box 31, Sánchez Papers.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
program would be regional in scope, spanning across all states that included a substantial Mexican-descent population. In bringing state committees together under a national commission, the proposal sought to frame the scope of Mexican-descent problems as regional ones rather than problems that stopped at the state line. Local Mexican American leadership would also hold a visible position in such a program at every level. The proposal sought, in other words, a national program that integrated local, state, and federal agencies, organizations, and institutions into a central body that could more effectively use the scattered resources available at each level to develop meaningful solutions to problems that spread across the US Southwest.

A third expectation was that a region-wide and federally sponsored program would also be research-oriented. This expectation, however, might best be attributed to Sánchez, rather than Mexican American leaders generally, and his long-held ideas about the most appropriate way to help the population. While Sánchez acknowledged the need for remedial programs, the proposal also emphasized research as critical to devising these programs. Sánchez did not, for instance, propose that the Commission assume sole responsibility for developing remedial programs; rather, he proposed it assume a central role in bringing social scientists and other non-academic entities similarly engaged in long-term studies of the Mexican-descent population together to support ongoing research toward improving conditions within it.

The OCIAA did not create a commission like the one Sánchez proposed, but instead began developing the Spanish Speaking Minority Project in early 1942. Sánchez wrote to Rockefeller in February 1942 when he failed to respond to Sánchez’s December letter. Within days Sánchez was informed that David J. Saposs was scheduled to visit Austin later in the month to conduct a rapid survey of the US Southwest, and to speak with him about the matter further.¹⁰

It was clear from the beginning that the DIAAUS envisioned a Texas project that differed from what local leaders imagined. Saposs’ Austin visit illustrates the DIAAUS’s desire to support remedial action programs over research projects. It also reveals the DIAAUS’s preference for Anglo leadership in the Texas project.¹¹ During his visit to Austin, Saposs met with Sánchez and others to discuss creating a Texas organization devoted to Mexican and Mexican American issues. Saposs appears to have convinced Sánchez to change his mind about certain aspects of LULAC’s December proposal. According to Saposs, Sánchez “agreed with our ideas of having Anglo-Americans in important positions, etc….He stands ready to cooperate, and recognizes the inadvisability of tying in Lulacs, its paper or its officers, except as cooperators.” Sánchez agreed with Saposs that remedial projects were preferable to “educational work” during the war emergency, but impressed upon Saposs that "as a long-run program that phase [educational work] must not be overlooked."¹²

¹⁰George I. Sánchez to Nelson A. Rockefeller, 7 February 1942; John M. Clark to George I. Sánchez, 11 February 1942; Folder 9, Box 31, Sánchez Papers.
¹¹Anglo was the term Texans used when referring to whites, or Americans of European descent.
¹²Memorandum, David J. Saposs to John M. Clark, 23 February 1942, and 5 March 1942, Folder: Rehabilitation, Saposs, David J., Box 458, General Records, Central Files, Administration, Reports, Personnel, Records of the
Saposs also met with Robert L. Sutherland of the Hogg Foundation at the University of Texas (UT), and W.E. Gettys and Rex B. Hopper of the UT Sociology Department. These men discussed the contours of a Texas organization, and agreed that it should be more than an academic body, and should include, for instance, professional and business organizations. The Texas men told Saposs that the organization should include both Mexican Americans and Anglos, and that it should be led by someone who was of “Anglo-American stock, but [also] bilingual.” Saposs concluded that “Sanchez would be included in the sponsoring group,” and the resulting organization could provide funds to LULAC to assist it in “its work of assimilation, etc.”

The Texas organization that eventually materialized did not adhere to the criteria discussed during Saposs’ meetings. Shortly after Saposs submitted his report in April 1942, the DIAAUS contacted Robert Sutherland at the Hogg Foundation about submitting a proposal for a Texas program administered by the university. Soon after, Sutherland sent in his proposal. After some setbacks securing federal funding for the DIAAUS, and some negotiations over the Texas project’s final budget amount, Sutherland’s proposal was officially approved in January 1943. Despite Saposs’ discussion with Sutherland nearly a year before regarding remedial action over research, Sutherland wrote a proposal that included a role for social science research in addition to supporting activities that facilitated collaboration between UT and civic and service organizations aimed at improving social and material conditions for the Mexican-descent population in the state. And while Saposs—and perhaps even Sutherland, if Saposs’ meeting memos are any indication—may have been dubious about giving Mexican Americans too prominent a role in the Texas program, Sutherland’s proposal envisioned an “inter-group cooperation in which there will not be ‘planning for’ the minorities, but ‘planning with’ the minorities.” This objective bore itself out in the composition of the executive committee of what became the UT Committee on Inter-American Relations in Texas, and especially in a preliminary advisory conference held in April 1943. Sanchez, for instance, was selected as the part-time director of the UT Committee’s executive committee, which also included Carlos E. Castañeda, a historian of Latin America in UT’s history department. Sutherland served as chairman of the executive committee.

Office of Inter-American Affairs, Record Group 229, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD (hereinafter referred to as OIAA Records).

1 Memorandum, David J. Saposs to John M. Clark, 24 February 1942, Folder: Rehabilitation, Saposs, David J., Box 458, OIAA Records.
2 Walter H.C. Laves to Dr. Robert L. Sutherland, 29 May 1942; Walter H.C. Laves to Dr. Robert T. Sutherland, 25 November 1942; Project Authorization, Short Title: Aid to Spanish-speaking Minorities in Texas, nd; Folder: Aid to Spanish Speaking Minorities in Texas, B-IA-1561, Box 57, OIAA Records. Report of Activities, 1943-1945: Inter-American Relations in Texas at the University of Texas, nd, Folder 2, Box 54, Sánchez Papers.
3 “A Proposal Made to the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs,” nd, Folder 6, Box 80, Carlos E. Castañeda Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin.
4 Minutes, Spanish-Speaking Minority Problems Project, 5 February 1943, Folder 6, Box 80; Memorandum, Robert L. Sutherland to Hulon Black, et al., 8 December 1942; Homer P. Rainey to Carlos E. Castañeda, 23
As the UT Committee began its work in 1943, the DIAAUS reminded its members that the federal funds were for remedial action programs and not research. “[W]e feel that action programs,” DIAAUS Director Victor Borella told Sánchez, “in various committees will contribute more to the immediate war effort than research projects.” The DIAAUS insisted the UT Committee “keep away from research projects except where it is absolutely necessary to round out the program.” The Bureau of the Budget and Congress apparently kept a tight grip on DIAAUS funds. “As the war continues,” one federal bureaucrat told Sánchez, “the Bureau of Budget is insisting more and more that every cent spent must be a direct contribution to the war effort.” Another told Sutherland that Congress expressed the same sentiment, and that both houses “particularly oppose the use of funds for information-gathering purposes.”

These warnings notwithstanding, the UT Committee managed to obtain DIAAUS funding for one research project: a study of education among Mexican-descent children in Texas received close to $2,500—more than half the total amount spent on nine grants-in-aid the UT Committee approved for local projects between 1943 and 1945. In May 1943, the UT Committee approved setting aside $2,500 to supplement funds the General Education Board (GEB) tentatively approved for a $10,000 study Sánchez submitted to the latter. The study was directed by Wilson Little, Assistant Superintendent with the El Paso Public Schools, and yielded a publication, *Spanish-Speaking Children in Texas*, in June 1944. Several thousand copies were printed and circulated among schools, colleges, libraries, newspaper editors, and welfare agencies.

*Spanish-Speaking Children in Texas* gives us a sense of how local leaders sought to use research for long-term solutions. The exploratory study provided basic data on the number and distribution of Mexican and Mexican American students in the state, age-grade distribution (the number of students in each grade by chronological age), school attendance, and segregation, and made recommendations that required cooperation and collaboration among the State

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December 1942; Folder 5, Box 80, Castañeda Papers. Report of Activities, 1943-1945, Sánchez Papers. Sánchez also worked for the Office of Civilian Defense for close to a year, from the fall of 1942 to the summer of 1943, and then for the OCIAA’s Division of Science and Education from the fall of 1943 to the early months of 1944—at this time he was hospitalized for a serious case of tuberculosis. Carlos Kevin Blanton, *George I. Sánchez: The Long Fight for Mexican American Integration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 95-103.

7 Victor Borella to George I. Sánchez, 20 March 1943; John Roy to George I. Sánchez, 8 April 1943; Joseph W. Hughes to Robert L. Sutherland, 5 July 1943; Folder: Aid to Spanish Speaking Minorities in Texas, B-IA-1561, Box 57, OIAA Records.

8 Joseph W. Hughes, the DIAAUS Administrative Officer, contacted Robert Sutherland about the proposed use of funds, reminding him to limit the UT Committee’s projects to those of action and not research. Hughes also seemed to be under the impression that the UT Committee ought to create a research agency—the $10,000 proposal to the GEB seems to support that notion—which clearly would not meet DIAAUS grant stipulations. Sutherland assured Hughes that the project met the action program criteria since it aimed to eliminate school segregation. Moreover, he claimed that Borella supported the project. Joseph W. Hughes to Robert L. Sutherland, 22 May 1943; Joseph W. Hughes to Robert L. Sutherland, 5 July 1943; Memorandum, John Roy to Victor Borella, Subject: Summary of the University of Texas Project and Related Correspondence, 7 September 1943; Folder: Aid to Spanish Speaking Minorities in Texas, B-IA-1561, Box 57, OIAA Records. Report of Activities, 1943-1945, Sánchez Papers. Blanton, 91-92, 95-100.
Department of Education, teacher-training institutions, local education agency administrators and teachers, and the general Texan public. The study’s findings presented a grim snapshot of the education Mexican and Mexican American children received in Texas, and offered local and state authorities precise and practical first steps to improving current conditions.19

In September 1943, the UT Committee received the GEB’s portion of the funds for the education study, and in January 1944, after the research phase was completed, the UT Committee requested the remaining $2,500 from the DIAAUS. At this time, Borella claimed he misunderstood how the money was to be used. According to Borella, Sánchez had told him that the requested DIAAUS funds were only meant to “bait” other foundations into supporting the project. Moreover, Borella stated that Sánchez assured him the research results would be used toward an action program. In the end, and in what appears to be a diplomatic gesture, Borella authorized the funds, describing the situation as a misunderstanding and expressing full confidence in the utility of the study.20

Sánchez had long been interested in research-oriented solutions to the problems afflicting the Mexican-descent population. The December 1941 LULAC proposal, for instance, was not the first or last time he sought to create a broad-based body for researching Mexican and Mexican American problems. As a young doctoral student at the University of California at Berkeley in the 1930s, for instance, Sánchez devised a plan to create an agency within the federal Department of Education to coordinate and disseminate research on Mexican American bilingual education, a topic intimately tied to his dissertation. Building upon this plan, he sought support to create a national research center at the University of New Mexico from the GEB (which had funded his graduate study at both UT and Berkeley, as well as his previous work with the New Mexico State Department of Education). The GEB passed on the proposal. Sánchez pitched his proposal to the University of California, but apparently to no avail. After the war, he again attempted to acquire GEB funds to support a regional center focused on Mexican

19 Wilson Little, *Spanish-Speaking Children in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1944), 8-12. The study also offered a set of data that more clearly identified where Mexican and Mexican American children enrolled and attended school in the state. The census data from the State Department of Education, for instance, included only white and colored designations for counting students, and did not make record of students’ language. To get this information, the study’s researchers went through the census data and tallied the number of students with Spanish surnames, which was the most efficient way for researchers to obtain the information they wanted with the existing data. For more on Mexican and Mexican American education, see: Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *Let All of Them Take Heed*: Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981 (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1987); Gilbert G. Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 1990); Rubén Donato, *The Other Struggle for Equal Schools: Mexican Americans during the Civil Rights Era* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997); Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001); Carlos Kevin Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas, 1836-1981* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004); and Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *Chicana/o Struggles for Education: Activism in the Community* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2013).

American education in the five southwestern US states. This time, he won GEB seed money to support the Southwest Council on the Education of Spanish-Speaking People, an organization he created and which comprised of experts concerned with educational discrimination. Meeting five times throughout the US Southwest over a period of six years, the Southwest Council was only minimally funded by the GEB, which preferred to lend support to established institutions. Sánchez accommodated the GEB by developing the Study of the Spanish-Speaking People project in 1947, administered by UT. This project, however, was ultimately confined to the state of Texas and not the greater US Southwest.

Taken together, Sánchez’s history of pushing for research-based projects, the LULAC proposal’s emphasis on a national research body, and the UT Committee’s Spanish-speaking Children in Texas study, reveal local leaders’ desire for methods that would interrogate some of the more deeply embedded sources of pervasive problems in the population. Research could generate data that could help develop efficient remedial programs, but it could also generate new questions for further research that could lead to long-lasting systemic changes. For local leaders, this was important since it meant devising solutions that would extend well beyond the war. This did not align well, however, with the DIAAUS’s short-term objectives.

The federal government’s preference for remedial action programs may have very well reflected limitations in funding beyond the DIAAUS’s control. The federal funds that were eventually granted to the state, for instance, compared to the scope of the project envisioned in the LULAC proposal suggest how DIAAUS funding may have been restricted. The Latin American Research and Policies Commission Sánchez proposed, for example, called for a $71,000 budget for a year and a half to support staff, personnel, research, travel, and basic operations within the national body. The major project that came to be administered by UT, to contrast, received $17,000 for one year. We should also remember that the DIAAUS had difficulty keeping its funding from the beginning unless it could demonstrate tangible results and a direct connection to the war effort.

Ultimately, the UT Committee did comply with DIAAUS guidelines and used federal funds to support several remedial action programs. The committee organized an advisory conference of local leaders and interested agencies, of “both Spanish and English-speaking backgrounds,” to discuss problems in Texas, and to strategize and devise plans for either developing new programs or supporting those already in operation. In April 1943, nearly thirty local, state, and federal leaders, educators, and academics attended a two-day advisory conference to discuss the most pressing issues in their communities. These included attorneys Alonso S. Perales, Manuel C. González, and Judge J.T. Canales; Myrtle Tanner of the State

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21 Blanton, 21-24, 28, 31-33, 39-41, 47, 114-117.
22 Proposal, Sánchez Papers.
23 Project Authorization, Short Title: Aid to Spanish-speaking Minorities in Texas, nd; and Proposed Project Authorization [renewal], Short Title: Aid to Spanish-speaking Minorities in Texas, nd; Folder: Aid to Spanish Speaking Minorities in Texas, B-IA-1561, Box 57, OIAA Records.
Department of Education; Mexican Consul Luis Duplán; DIAAUS field representative Thomas Sutherland (not to be confused with Robert Sutherland of the Hogg Foundation); and Robert E. Smith from the Office of Civilian Defense. One out-of-state attendee, Joaquín Ortega, a Professor of Spanish at the University of New Mexico, oversaw the DIAAUS project administered by that institution.24

The advisory conference held sessions covering three issues: public education, economic conditions and practices, and social and civil rights. During the education session, attendees expressed concern about segregation and its impact on pedagogy and race perception, and school attendance. The economic session focused its discussion on employment discrimination in the defense industry. Regardless of having attended the same defense training school and performing at equal levels, Mexican American defense workers did not advance at the same rate as their Anglo counterparts. The attendees contended, “such discriminations occur[ed] solely because a man’s name happens to be Juan Garcia instead of John Smith.” In the last session of the advisory conference, attendees cited civil rights problems, such as exclusion from jury duty and home ownership, as well as social relations between Anglos and the Mexican-descent population, as central concerns.25

Between 1943 and 1945, the UT Committee supported a range of projects that fit well within DIAAUS directives: they were dependent on local organizations and resources, were not research-based but action-oriented, and could be legitimately characterized and justified as promoting the Good Neighbor Policy in the US Southwest. Radio programs were developed and broadcast in Spanish for Mexican-descent audiences, and included information pertaining to civilian-based war activities as well as Selective Service requirements. Other programs, presented in English, sought to educate Anglos about Latin American politics, commerce, and culture, as a means to changing perceptions held about Latin America. The UT Committee supported the Girl Scouts Association in its search for Mexican and Mexican American leadership in Austin as a means to include more girls of Mexican-descent in its troops. Several summer programs were created and supplemented with DIAAUS funds in Austin, Corpus Christi, Lockhart, and Lytle communities. In these programs, both children and adults participated in recreational activities, including arts and crafts, woodwork, metal craft, clay modeling, and sewing. Two community centers based in Austin operated with the help of DIAAUS funds, also serving as sites for recreational activities. One early project, proposed by Sánchez, was a summer teacher training conference workshop, sponsored by the Southwest Texas State Teachers College at San Marcos and the San Marcos Public Schools. The San Marcos project supported the pedagogical

24 Agenda for the Second Meeting of the Executive Committee Inter-American Project, 20 January [1943]; George I. Sánchez to Sir, 1 April 1943; Summary, First Advisory Conference on Inter-American Relations in Texas, at the University of Texas, April 26-27, 1943; Folder 6, Box 80, Castañeda Papers. Report of Activities, 1943-1945, Sánchez Papers.
25 Summary, First Advisory Conference, Castañeda Papers.
development of teachers of Spanish speaking students. Both DIAAUS and Division of Science and Education funds—OCIAA money, that is—went to this project.26

Another difference in objectives between the federal government and local leaders was in creating a more integrated body of local, state, and federal agencies and institutions that crossed state lines, and thus represented a truly regional program. The desire for a region-wide program stemmed from the emerging awareness of the multitude of problems Mexican-descent communities held in common across the US Southwest, and demonstrates local leaders' efforts to develop an academic-based infrastructure for devising adequate solutions to the population's problems. As early as January 1943, for instance, when the UT Committee first formed, it pondered the scope and activities of the Texas-based project that paralleled a concern expressed in the LULAC proposal: would the Texas project include communities found elsewhere in the US Southwest? Should the project include individuals from other southwestern states? The UT Committee also considered whether it should “engage in projects which are intimately related to the war effort”—that is, only related to the war effort. Sutherland chose to ignore the stipulations tied to the funding since the UT Committee appears to have seriously considered these questions for about two weeks. It decided, for instance, that though the UT Committee’s work would center largely on Texas, it should include the US Southwest in its project agenda. The UT Committee also agreed that meeting war needs should serve as but one criterion in its activities, stating that “[a]lthough projects will be undertaken which bear the promise of having immediate results...they will be so chosen and conducted as to be related to a long-time program of improvement.”27 Sánchez was not alone, in other words, in holding region-wide concerns about the population, and especially those that extended beyond the wartime emergency.

The executive committee reviewed the DIAAUS contract and found that it clearly stated the funds were to be used for the state of Texas only. UT President Homer P. Rainey, however, wrote Coordinator Nelson Rockefeller himself about the possibility of bypassing this stipulation. Rockefeller politely told Rainey that the money was to be spent only on Texas communities and activities. He acknowledged that while Mexican and Mexican American problems existed throughout the US Southwest, the DIAAUS, as the center of a “national over-all coordination of programs relating to Spanish speaking people in the United States,” felt it was best to approve grants to several organizations with institutional authority throughout the region. Rather than place responsibility for the US Southwest with UT, in other words, DIAAUS funds could be spent to greater effect if several institutions approximating UT’s caliber tended to the needs of their respective communities. Rockefeller encouraged region-wide coordination among these

26 Report of Activities, 1943-1945, Sánchez Papers. Joseph Hughes to Robert L. Sutherland, 22 May 1943; Memorandum, John Roy to Victor Borella, Subject: Summary of the University of Texas Project and Related Correspondence, 7 September 1943; Folder: Aid to Spanish Speaking Minorities in Texas, B-IA-1561, Box 57, OIAA Records.

27 Agenda for the Second Meeting, 20 January [1943]; Robert L. Sutherland to Carlos E. Castañeda, et al., 1 February 1943; and Minutes: Spanish-Speaking Minority Problems Project, 8 February 1943; Folder 6, Box 80, Castañeda Papers.
institutions and organizations—as soon as they were up and running—through conferences. UT, the Coordinator noted, was expected to lead by example in this endeavor. It seems Rockefeller supported a more integrated and collaborative relationship among local and state organizations, institutions, and agencies in the US Southwest, but remained firm in his position that the DIAAUS would not fund UT as the center for orchestrating such a project.

As for Sánchez, he did not give up on obtaining federal support in creating a regional body that facilitated coordination across states in the US Southwest. Even as the DIAAUS expressed concern, for instance, that the UT Committee might be using its funds for activities beyond state borders, Sánchez continued to press DIAAUS Director Victor Borella for a federally supported interstate advisory council. Upon his return from a trip to New Mexico, Sánchez expressed great enthusiasm at the idea of working with faculty at the University of New Mexico, and pushed Borella about creating a regional council. Borella responded that until the DIAAUS was organized throughout the US Southwest, considering such a council would have to wait. Similar to Rockefeller’s response to UT President Rainey, Borella’s response to Sánchez indicates support for regional collaboration among state institutions and organizations, but stopped short of approving DIAAUS funds for projects that extended beyond the state.

The DIAAUS also insisted that it have a limited role in state projects once they were under way. Preserving federalism—the separate power and authority between federal and state (and local) governments—in other words, was important. The DIAAUS, for instance, preferred to remain out of the “operational phases” of local work, and as long as the UT Committee adhered to the provisions attached to the grant money, the DIAAUS was happy to serve as a supplemental agency to it. Even when Sánchez invited a more visible federal presence, the DIAAUS held steadfast to its position on retaining separate spheres of state-federal authority, or with maintaining as little federal intervention as possible, anyway. Sánchez had explained to Borella, for instance, that administering a grant for a state with several million people and with so little help from the OCIAA was not only challenging, but ineffective. Sánchez proposed, it seems, to divide the state into sections and for the DIAAUS to assign a field associate within each one. Borella sidestepped the issue by citing his concern about congressional funds to support such an endeavor. To cultivate a “close cooperative kinship,” however, between the DIAAUS and the UT Committee, the division assigned a field representative to the state to

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29 Victor Borella to George I. Sánchez, 28 April 1943; Memorandum, Charles C. Arensberg to Lawrence H. Levy, Subject: Grant-in-Aid No. OEer [?]–55 with the University of Texas, 29 April 1943; Memorandum, Charles C. Arensberg to Lawrence H. Levy, Subject: Grant-in-Aid No. OEMera [?]–55 with the University of Texas, 4 May 1943; Memorandum, John Roy to Victor Borella, Subject: Summary of the University of Texas Project and Related Correspondence, 7 September 1943; Folder: Aid to Spanish Speaking Minorities in Texas, B-IA-1561, Box 57, OIAA Records.

30 Memorandum, John Roy to Victor Borella, Subject: Summary of the University of Texas Project and Related Correspondence, 7 September 1943; Folder: Aid to Spanish Speaking Minorities in Texas, B-IA-1561, Box 57, OIAA Records.
work as a liaison between local, state, and federal organizations and agencies located in Texas.\footnote{Thomas Sutherland (not to be confused with Robert Sutherland of the Hogg Foundation) was appointed as the DIAAUS Texas field representative. Victor Borella to Robert L. Sutherland, 13 January 1943; Victor Borella to George I. Sánchez, 20 March 1943; Victor Borella to George I. Sánchez, 28 April 1943; Folder: Aid to Spanish Speaking Minorities in Texas, B-IA-1561, Box 57, OIAA Records.}

The field representative position seemed to provide the happy medium the DIAAUS desired between maintaining state and federal authority on the one hand, and ensuring only minimal federal presence in local and state matters, on the other.

Borella was especially clear on preserving federalism when pressed about civil rights. When Sánchez asked, for instance, about who would take on the “critical and controversial issues of civil rights, etc.,” the DIAAUS Assistant Director, Joseph Weckler, wrote to Sánchez on Borella’s behalf, stating that

\[\text{[We]c, as a Federal agency, would be at a great disadvantage if we entered into local controversies of this nature. Since the doctrine of states’ rights is so strong in our country, it is felt that only state or local agencies can safely and constructively take a firm stand on such matters. We had hoped, therefore, that you people who are planning and operating the state program would be able to handle such matters.}\]

Despite Weckler’s response, Sánchez continued to share at least a few letters with the DIAAUS from Texas residents complaining about recent social and racial discrimination, with the apparent hope that the federal government might take action beyond funding remedial programs.\footnote{Weckler paraphrased Sánchez’s concerns as “critical and controversial issues of civil rights, etc.” Victor Borella to Robert L. Sutherland, 13 January 1943; Victor Borella to George I. Sánchez, 20 March 1943; Victor Borella to George I. Sánchez, 28 April 1943; Joseph Weckler to George I. Sánchez, 25 June 1943; Folder: Aid to Spanish Speaking Minorities in Texas, B-IA-1561, Box 57, OIAA Records.} The DIAAUS, however, was not willing to take a proactive stance, especially on an issue like civil rights, since it would have upset southern and southwestern Anglo politicians, both in the state and at the federal level.\footnote{Memorandum, John Roy to Victor Borella, Subject: Summary of the University of Texas Project and Related Correspondence, 7 September 1943, Folder: Aid to Spanish Speaking Minorities in Texas, B-IA-1561, Box 57, OIAA Records.}

\[\text{Ira Katznelson’s } \textit{Fear Itself}, \text{ for instance, shows us just how much political leverage southern members of Congress commanded over New Deal legislation in the mid-20th century, and thus gives us a sense of why the federal government was concerned about keeping southern politicians content. Katznelson recasts how we understand the New Deal by situating it in both domestic and international contexts, and employing a long view of Democratic Party rule—through the FDR and Truman administrations—to consider the contradictions in implementing the New Deal. Katznelson argues that the New Deal embodied a new ideal of liberal democracy and an expanded role of the federal government that held the potential to challenge emerging dictatorships abroad and racial hierarchies and practices at home. In order for the New Deal to enjoy any type of legislative success, however, members of Congress had to develop and lobby for policies that met southern Democrats’ approval—New Deal legislation, in other words, could not disrupt the South’s hierarchical racial order, or the “region’s single nonnegotiable value.” Southern members of Congress created what Katznelson calls a “southern cage”: southern Democrats essentially established policymaking parameters that protected the South’s racial order. The southern cohort of the Democratic Party wielded substantial congressional power at this time for a few reasons: its numbers remained well within the}\]
The Texas Good Neighbor Commission (GNC), however, presents an example of how the line dividing federal-state relations was easily and readily blurred. The GNC was a state agency that received start up funds and other support from the DIAAUS, and was created in August 1943 to investigate complaints of discrimination throughout Texas—precisely the type of “controversial” issue Weckler told Sánchez ought to be handled by local and state leaders. In supporting the state’s creation of the GNC, however, the DIAAUS and other federal officials also supported the state’s effort to undermine Mexican American leaders’ attempts to advance a critical item on their civil rights agenda—antidiscrimination legislation. Thus, it is perhaps more accurate to say that the federal government was not willing to intercede on sensitive and politically volatile issues, such as civil rights, in a way that might upset state government officials; or, put more bluntly, it was not willing to intercede on state matters on the side of the Mexican-descent population. Either way, the GNC and the antidiscrimination legislation campaign reveal the contradiction in what the DIAAUS told Mexican American leaders about the importance of remaining outside of state issues, and the actions of the DIAAUS and other federal agencies in supporting the state’s attempt to weaken the campaign for antidiscrimination legislation.

It is important to take a moment to underscore the importance of antidiscrimination legislation to Mexican American leaders, especially in Texas. Leaders pressed for legislation because of the far-reaching implications it had for much of the inequality the Mexican-descent population faced in the state. This may seem like a fairly obvious and straightforward objective, but it actually requires some elaboration to help illustrate what Mexican American leaders understood to be at stake with the passage of meaningful antidiscrimination legislation. For some leaders, such a law was critical to the legal strategies they devised in the cases they brought to Texas courts since it would give attorneys the opportunity to build strong arguments for eliminating the rampant, but legally permitted, discrimination Mexicans and Mexican Americans faced in the state. Discriminatory practices against Mexican-descent people, for instance, were not the type of flagrant legal violations of their constitutional rights in the way discriminatory practices were for African Americans. Though Mexicans and Mexican Americans could legally

\[40\% \text{ range in both houses, providing it with a sufficient presence to block legislation; it included many senior members, which translated into access to important committees and positions; and it held disproportionate representation of the region, both in terms of numbers and race (the number of House members, for instance, was based on a black and white population, but an all-white electorate). As a result, southern members of Congress were confident early on that the South’s racial order would remain in tact. By World War II, however, southerners became increasingly concerned about an emerging racial agenda. Executive Order 8802’s prohibition of employment discrimination in wartime industries, for instance, and the creation of the Fair Employment Practices Committee to enforce it, alarmed southern Democrats, both in terms of what it meant for the South’s racial priorities, but also because of the federal government’s explicit role in potentially dismantling the region’s racial order. To keep the federal government out of civil rights issues, southerners insisted these were the purview of the state, and thus invoked a states’ rights argument. From Katznelson, we see how during the heyday of liberal democracy and expanded government in the mid-20th century, non-southern politicians in the federal government were limited in the types of liberal policies they could pursue and support because they had to contend with and navigate the southern cage in the legislative process. Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013).\]
claim *white*, rather than *colored* or *Negro*, as a race, they were often discriminated against as a non-white race as a matter of custom.\(^{35}\) In other words, there were no laws on the books that specifically targeted the Mexican-descent population, as was the case with African Americans and anti-black statutes. In terms of civil rights litigation, this meant that Mexican American leaders had a different burden of proof to meet in arguing court cases: without local and state legislation to prove an explicit and legal act of discrimination—*de jure* discrimination—against the population, as was possible in the African American legal strategy, Mexican American leaders needed to marshal other types of evidence to demonstrate a pattern of the *de facto* discrimination in the population’s lived experiences.\(^{36}\) Many leaders desired antidiscrimination legislation, then, to assist attorneys in building a strong case by giving them legislation as a basis for developing an argument.\(^{37}\)

Mexican American leaders in Texas first pursued antidiscrimination legislation in early 1941. At that time, Manuel González and Alonso Perales successfully lobbied to introduce a bill in the state legislature that provided equal protection in public accommodations for Mexicans and Mexican Americans. State house representative Fagan Dickson, from San Antonio, introduced House Bill 909, or the “Racial Equality Bill,” in April 1941. The bill sought to protect persons of the “Caucasian race” from discrimination in public places, with the penalties of such a


\(^{36}\) Ramos, 27–29. Lisa Ramos has an excellent chapter on Sánchez’s attempts to collaborate with African American leaders and advocates through the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. See Ramos, “Not Similar Enough: Mexican American and African American Civil Rights Struggles in the 1940s” in *The Struggle in Black and Brown*.

\(^{37}\) Guglielmo, 1225.
violation including a lawsuit and fine of up to $100. The bill was clear in stating that it did not seek to undo existing laws segregating African Americans from Anglos, but rather sought to obtain rights for people of Mexican-descent by insisting on the protection of their “Caucasian rights.” Both Mexican American leaders and Mexican government officials lobbied to secure the bill’s passage, seeking federal endorsement of the bill from the State Department and the President, as well as from congressmen throughout the state. Ultimately, the Racial Equality Bill never left the house. With no electoral power on the ground or support from the state or federal governments, an antidiscrimination bill was not pursued again until early 1943, once the war was well under way and both Mexico and the US had entered the global conflict.\footnote{Ibid., 1213-1214, 1219-1222.}

House Bill 68 and Senate Bill 203 were introduced in April 1943, and were identical to the 1941 bill in asserting Caucasian rights, imposing penalties for its violation, and in preserving anti-black statutes. Both Mexican government officials and Mexican American leaders, again, rigorously campaigned for the passage of antidiscrimination legislation. The Mexican embassy in Washington, DC, for instance, contacted US government officials concerning the legislation; and both Perales and González testified before a state senate committee regarding the rampant discrimination against both Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Texas and the critical need for legislation to put an end to it.\footnote{Ibid., 1221-1222.}

George I. Sánchez and Carlos Castañeda, as members of the newly formed and DIAAUS-funded UT Committee, chose to campaign for antidiscrimination legislation as private individuals rather than use the committee to this end. Given their experience with the DIAAUS, both men understood the importance of confining the UT Committee’s activities to the DIAAUS’s strict guidelines; antidiscrimination legislation was clearly a state issue, and the UT Committee’s public support of it would have likely caused some protest since the committee was funded by a federal agency. Though Perales knew as much—Victor Borella had already admitted to him that the DIAAUS would not endorse such legislation “lest it [the federal government] might be accused of meddling in State affairs”—he still recommended to Sánchez and Castañeda that the UT Committee publicly support the antidiscrimination legislation. The UT Committee, he suggested, could endorse the bill as a university entity rather than as an agent of the federal government, with the hopes, it seems, of minimizing the federal government’s direct endorsement of the bill while also discretely adding the authority of the Coordinator’s Office through a DIAAUS-funded university committee. “The Office of the Coordinator,” Perales stated, “need not even be mentioned.” Perales urged Castañeda to garner any kind of support possible from the UT Committee. “If the Bill goes thru [sic],” Perales told his friend, “it will be a feather in your Committee’s cap...Here is a chance for the Committee to do something really constructive and farreaching [sic], and which will not cost your Committee a cent. Get busy,
please."

Castañeda told Perales, however, that he did not think Sánchez would support legislation as the best strategy for combating discrimination in public places, and that while he did not agree with this position, he also did not think the UT Committee would publicly endorse the antidiscrimination bill. Echoing Borella’s remark to Perales, Castañeda stated this “would be immediately interpreted as meddling in politics, whether it is or not.” Perales eventually spoke with Sánchez and agreed to support both of his friends and the decision to not pursue official UT Committee endorsement of the bill.

While Sánchez and Castañeda chose to exercise caution in using the UT Committee to endorse antidiscrimination legislation, DIAAUS field representative Thomas Sutherland appears to have been responsible for stalling the house version of the bill. According to Perales, Sutherland did so out of “fear that it will not pass, and then the effect on our relations with our brethren to the South [Mexico] will be disastrous.” Sutherland, he continued, “wants the Bill to ‘die’ now rather than have it considered, discussed and ‘killed’—the implication being that letting the bill passively “die” rather than being actively “killed” would do less harm to US-Mexico relations. For a moment, Sánchez and Castañeda seemed to think they could seize upon Sutherland’s federal interference and use it as leverage to ensure the bill’s passage by casting doubt on the state’s ability to handle its own problems. “You know how sensitive the legislature is,” Castañeda stated, “and the governor also, to any interference of Washington in state matters.” If Perales could secure proof of Sutherland’s duplicity, then the legislature, Castañeda seemed to think, could be coaxed into supporting the bill. “It seems to me,” Castañeda told Perales, “that this would cause the passage of the bill like greased lightening.”

In the end, the 1943 antidiscrimination bill did not pass (nor did later attempts fare any better). That April, the Texas legislature instead chose to pass House Concurrent Resolution 105, entitled “Caucasian Race—Equal Privileges.” Resolution 105 was not antidiscrimination legislation.

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40 Alonso S. Perales to Carlos E. Castañeda, 9 March 1943; Folder 1, Box 34, Castañeda Papers.
41 Sánchez actually did support antidiscrimination legislation. Several sources suggest that Sánchez and González, for instance, viewed antidiscrimination legislation as critical to devising legal strategies in the courtroom. Sánchez corresponded with González in the fall of 1942 regarding a real estate test case the former wanted to pursue with the help of the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Sánchez included in one letter notes from a “very good friend...in Washington who is a lawyer” which provided, it seems, legal advice to help develop the Texas case. Sánchez's friend described the precedent set by the "Civil Rights Cases" of "about 1885," which held that the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment applied to state action, and not private, or individual, action. The only way to extend the equal protection clause to private action, Sánchez's friend continued, was if that action violated state statute. George I. Sánchez to Manuel C. González, 15 September 1942; George I. Sánchez to Manuel C. González, 2 October 1942; and "Proposed Test Case on Landholding by Citizens of the ‘Mexican Race’—A Danger," nd; Folder 10, Box 17, Sánchez Papers. See also: Ramos, “Not Similar Enough: Mexican American and African American Civil Rights Struggles in the 1940s” in The Struggle in Black and Brown, and paragraph above regarding Mexican American leaders and antidiscrimination legislation.
42 Carlos E. Castañeda to Alonso S. Perales, 11 March 1943; Alonso S. Perales to Carlos E. Castañeda, 19 March 1943; Carlos E. Castañeda to Alonso S. Perales, 23 March 1943; Folder 1, Box 34, Castañeda Papers.
43 Alonso S. Perales to Carlos E. Castañeda, 19 March 1943; Carlos E. Castañeda to Alonso S. Perales, 23 March 1943; Folder 1, Box 34, Castañeda Papers.
legislation. Rather, it was merely a statement condemning discriminatory practices against the Caucasian race as a violation of the Good Neighbor Policy.\textsuperscript{44} In passing the resolution, the Texas state legislature sought to avoid passing antidiscrimination legislation: without sanctions, and more importantly, without the enforcement of law, Mexicans and Mexican Americans were still subject to \textit{de facto} discrimination despite their legally defined status as white. Resolution 105 reinforced an existing status that had little meaning, both legally and in fact. The resolution, in other words, did nothing of consequence to end discrimination. Mexican Americans, Mexican consuls, and the Mexican government recognized that the resolution was an empty gesture to combat discrimination in the state. In June, the Mexican government responded by refusing to allow Braceros—guest laborers contracted from Mexico to work in US agriculture, and in some cases, the railroad industry—into the state and insisting on the passage of legislation protecting Mexican-descent people in Texas.\textsuperscript{45}

State officials responded to Mexico’s Bracero ban by creating the Texas Good Neighbor Commission (GNC). When the Mexican government imposed the ban in June 1943, Governor Coke Stevenson responded swiftly. In that same month, Stevenson proclaimed the federal Good Neighbor Policy to be the “public policy of Texas as laid down in House Concurrent Resolution No. 105,” and insisted on strict observance of both the policy and resolution. In late July, he engaged in a heavily publicized exchange of correspondence with Mexican Foreign Minister Ezequiel Padilla to convince the latter that the state was doing everything in its power to minimize discrimination. Stevenson was responding to what many considered to be a threat to Texas’ agricultural economy. Texas growers who relied upon migratory labor, for instance, reacted to the Bracero ban by calling upon congressional leaders in Washington and Texas, State Department officials in the US and Mexico, as well as Mexican Foreign Minister Padilla, in an effort to lift it. The Farm Bureau in Texas, it seems, called upon a state judge “to get Texas off [Mexico’s] blacklist,” who contacted the US Consul General to Juarez City William P. Blocker, who in turn contacted DIAAUS field representative Thomas Sutherland. Blocker and Sutherland, along with “a personal representative of the Ambassador of Mexico,” convinced Stevenson to make an official gesture in response to the Bracero ban and the charges of discrimination against the state by the Mexican government, the result of which was the creation of the GNC in August 1943.\textsuperscript{46}

The GNC consisted of six members and was tasked with investigating and responding to complaints of discrimination against Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the state.\textsuperscript{47} It was initially supported by the DIAAUS: a month after it was created, the UT Committee’s executive

\textsuperscript{44} Guglielmo, 1222-1223.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 1223-1224.
\textsuperscript{47} Guglielmo, 1224.
secretary, Pauline Kibbe, was on loan on a part-time basis to the GNC, and by December, her work as GNC Executive Secretary became full-time and was paid for with DIAAUS funds the commission obtained—$4,500—with its own proposal to the division to support her salary and travel expenses for a little over a year.48

From its inception, the GNC held steadfast to educational and localized programs of attack. Cultural exchange, through Spanish courses, guest speakers, the circulation of literature, conferences, and travel to Mexico, were some of the educational methods the GNC promoted to change Anglo perceptions and, by extension, treatment of Mexicans and Mexican Americans. The GNC also sought to eliminate school segregation and encourage school attendance, but left much of this to local communities. Any reports and complaints of discrimination sent to the GNC were passed on to local Good Neighbor Councils, and if one did not exist in said community, the GNC encouraged local officials and leaders to create one. These local councils typically covered issues relating to health and sanitation, housing conditions, recreational facilities, scholarships, promoting civic participation and education, and eliminating discrimination. Moreover, the GNC Handbook warned that when dealing with issues of discrimination, councils “should move with extreme caution. Quiet investigation should be judiciously carried out; impartial decisions reached; then careful attention given to devising solutions.” The GNC advised “quiet investigation” as a means to eliminating the problem at the source, rather than pursuing “temporary solutions [that] increase the likelihood of re-occurrences to torment the community and council.” Several years after its creation, the GNC plainly stated that an educational program was the “only practical way” to end inequality and discrimination.49

The creation of the GNC, as a state agency charged with investigating discrimination complaints, was an unprecedented move in the history of race relations in Texas. Its creation, however, also reflected the state’s effort to stymie the campaign for antidiscrimination legislation. The GNC stood behind its educational program, for instance, by reasoning that advocating for antidiscrimination legislation would do little unless public opinion toward Mexicans and Mexican Americans changed. GNC Executive Secretary Kibbe stated as much to the federal officials she met with in Mexico City in 1944, where the matter was raised during her meetings with Mexican dignitaries. Years later, Kibbe recalled that

I was always opposed to...a law specifically entitling Mexicans and persons of Mexican descent to service in restaurants, theaters, barbershops, etc. Most incidents of discrimination...took place in little towns...where law enforcement officers, generally speaking, are apt to be among the most ignorant, narrow-minded and prejudiced people in the community. The enforcement of such a law would be up to them, and the only

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outcome I could see was either that the law would be ignored completely, or that Mexicans in those isolated areas would be even more persecuted than before.

As Kibbe saw it, people needed to change their minds before being able to change their actions, and the GNC’s educational approach was the appropriate means to meeting the former goal. Neville G. Penrose, who served as the GNC chairman in later years, similarly doubted that legislation protecting Mexicans and Mexican Americans would effectively end discrimination.

R.W. Fairchild, the GNC legal consultant, echoed Kibbe’s remarks about changing public opinion, and added his concern that “agitaton for legislation designed to protect Latin Americans as a class from discrimination will do far more harm than good.” Fairchild seemed to be concerned that such legislation would facilitate “passage of a similar law protecting the ‘Negro race,’” as well as his concern about how to reconcile the protection of Latin Americans of African descent, who may visit the state, with the existing anti-black statutes in Texas. Passing antidiscrimination legislation for the Mexican-descent population, in other words, was a slippery slope to passing similar legislation for African Americans. GNC leaders insisted, then, that legislation was not a viable solution to the rampant discrimination in Texas; rather, changing Anglos’ perceptions of the population through an educational campaign was the more effective option. The Texas state legislature seemed to agree with GNC officials; though sympathetic legislators continued to introduce antidiscrimination legislation in 1944 and 1945, and into the 1950s, these bills failed.

In choosing to promote an educational program to end discrimination in Texas, the GNC sought to make antidiscrimination legislation an irrelevant solution to the problem. The state government, in other words, sought to take legislation off the list of potential solutions by creating a state agency that supposedly rendered such legislation unnecessary. The GNC and its educational program certainly marked a significant moment in the history of Texas race relations, but the program’s more devastating legacy is the role it played in stymying the antidiscrimination legislation campaign. Moreover, the GNC should be seen as a federal response to a state issue. The GNC, as historian Thomas Guglielmo has pointed out, was created as an alternative to antidiscrimination legislation that federal officials described as “radical.” US Consul General Blocker, US Ambassador to Mexico George Messersmith, and several others in the State Department agreed with the move to create the GNC rather than continue to contend with antidiscrimination legislation. Federal officials not only supported the GNC’s educational program, but it was a US Consul and a DIAAUS field representative who persuaded the Texas governor to create the commission. The federal government’s tacit support of the GNC, in other

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50 Kingrea included in her thesis transcriptions of letters she received from various individuals, including Kibbe and Penrose. Kingrea, 38-39, 88-89, 134-135, 139-140.
52 Guglielmo, 1228-1230.
53 Ibid., 1227.
words, was a move that flew in the face of what officials told Mexican American leaders about the federal government’s inability to interject on the population’s behalf in state politics.

In Texas we find three central tensions in how the DIAAUS envisioned implementing the Spanish Speaking Minority Project and what local leaders expected from a federal program. George I. Sánchez’s LULAC proposal and the UT Committee illustrate two of these tensions. The first tension is apparent in local leaders’ attempts to use federal funds to support research-based projects that could yield solutions aimed at long-term results. The second is found in leaders’ efforts to create a regional program that more thoroughly integrated local, state, and federal agencies and institutions to maximize resources for use across the US Southwest. The DIAAUS, however, insisted that federal funds be used to implement local remedial programs that could produce tangible and immediate results within each state. The third tension is evident in the federal government’s support for a state agency that undermined local leaders’ efforts to pass antidiscrimination legislation. Federal support of the Texas GNC and its educational approach to ending discrimination was not a benign gesture in improving social relations among Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and Anglos in Texas; rather, it was a harmful gesture that seriously impeded Mexican American leaders’ ability to secure antidiscrimination legislation that was important to successfully undoing the de facto discrimination that ran rampant in the state. Sending funds to support the GNC, as well as the role federal bureaucrats played in advising state actors, hardly worked to preserve the rigid line the federal government claimed existed between it and state governments.
CHAPTER THREE


While Carey McWilliams praised the federal government for finally turning its gaze during the wartime emergency to the Mexican-descent population, he remained less than impressed with the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA) and its efforts to assist Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the US Southwest. For starters, the OCIAA’s Division of Inter-American Activities in the United States (DIAAUS) did not begin developing the Spanish Speaking Minority Project until local leaders wrote to the federal government and pressed for action. Once the Spanish Speaking Minority Project was created, the DIAAUS used its “[l]imited funds...in trifling ballyhoo campaigns of one kind or another,” such as “fiestas,” cocktail parties, cultural exhibits, and “an endless series of ‘goodwill’ proclamations and radio programs stressing the necessity of Latin-American support in the war effort.” McWilliams felt, in other words, that the Spanish Speaking Minority Project did more for cultural diplomacy abroad than it did to help the Mexican and Mexican American population at home with its social and economic problems. In fact, he thought “it [the OCIAA] wanted to frustrate any real efforts on the part of Spanish-speaking people to improve their lot.” OCIAA representatives, McWilliams stated, “seemed to be actually afraid of Mexican-Americans, for they insisted on working with the least representative elements in the various Spanish-speaking communities.” Ever the perceptive and thoughtful social critic, McWilliams recognized the shortcomings and, ultimately, the ineffectiveness of the DIAAUS in improving conditions in the Mexican-descent population across the region and beyond the war. By centering on California, however, we gain a better sense of just how the DIAAUS sought to promote cultural understanding, friendly relations, and goodwill at home and abroad. While McWilliams’ critique of the DIAAUS’s investment in cultural diplomacy was in many ways well founded, his criticism glosses over the work the DIAAUS sought to accomplish with local and state leaders in 1942 and 1943.

This chapter traces the efforts of local authorities, sympathetic allies, Mexican American leaders, and the DIAAUS to bring federal attention to the Mexican-descent population in

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1 In *North From Mexico*, McWilliams referred to the creation of the “Spanish-Speaking People’s Division” in April 1942, but there was no such division—only the Division of Inter-American Activities in the United States (DIAAUS) existed. At this time, the DIAAUS had plans to implement the Spanish Speaking Minority Project. By 1943, however, there was a Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Minorities Section within the DIAAUS. See the DIAAUS chapter (chapter 1) for more on the creation of the DIAAUS and the Spanish Speaking Minority Project. Carey McWilliams, *North From Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States*, New Edition, Updated by Matt S. Meier (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1990), 245-248.
Southern California. The chapter also considers some of the ways the federal government attempted to shape and support solutions to local problems. McWilliams’ dissatisfaction with the OCIAA is partly understood when we consider his early efforts to capture the agency’s attention. In 1941, McWilliams sent a proposal to Coordinator Nelson Rockefeller, head of the OCIAA, which called for federal leadership in addressing the problems of the Mexican and Mexican American population in California. McWilliams’ proposal is important to our story for two reasons. The first reason is that it highlights the emergent awareness of the Mexican-descent population and the problems it held in common. McWilliams shared the proposal with numerous figures, including local, state, and federal government officials, social scientists, and Mexican American leaders, in an effort to obtain widespread support. These figures happily endorsed McWilliams’ proposal, and even suggested that it extend to the entire US Southwest. McWilliams’ 1941 proposal is also important because it was a precursor to arguments he and others would make in the fall of 1942 about the social and economic conditions of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Southern California. As the DIAAUS worked to develop and secure funds for the Spanish Speaking Minority Project in the spring and summer of 1942, McWilliams continued to write to the federal government and press for its assistance in devising a comprehensive program for the Mexican-descent population. Hostility between Mexican American youth and local law enforcement, however, would provide McWilliams and others with an opportunity to apply even greater pressure: tensions reached a boiling point in Southern California during the summer of 1942 with the Sleepy Lagoon murder, and prompted the Los Angeles County Grand Jury to hold hearings on the broader issue of juvenile delinquency. McWilliams and others testified that the wide-ranging problems afflicting the Mexican-descent population in California stemmed from long-standing social and economic discrimination—echoing much of what McWilliams wrote in 1941—and they prevailed upon the federal government to intervene. Testifying about the juvenile delinquency problem in Los Angeles, in other words, was but a means to demonstrating a broader set of historically constructed problems that were actually regional in scope. By this time, the federal government did not need much persuading since it was deeply concerned about how Mexican American juvenile delinquency in Southern California might affect US-Latin American relations. High-ranking federal officials readily worked with local leaders and government officials to devise strategies and solutions, including a DIAAUS-funded Los Angeles project and efforts to place Mexican Americans in leadership positions.

This chapter also recasts how we understand the historical significance of the 1942 Los Angeles County Grand Jury hearings. Rather than narrowly interpret the murder trial and the grand jury hearings as provoking an immediate response to a local crisis, the murder trial and the grand jury hearings should be interpreted as the continuation of earlier efforts to bring the OCIAA’s attention to bear on a set of problems afflicting the Mexican and Mexican American population in the US Southwest. In our DIAAUS story, the Los Angeles County Grand Jury
hearings and the events surrounding it are significant because they contributed to the population’s national visibility as a regional interest group.

As George I. Sánchez wrote US Senator Dennis Chávez about sending a LULAC delegation to Washington, DC in the fall of 1941, Carey McWilliams set to work preparing and marshaling support for a proposal aimed at improving conditions in California. McWilliams was the Chief of the Division of Immigration and Housing (DIH) in the Department of Industrial Relations for the state of California. He was also an attorney, originally from Steamboat Springs, Colorado, who moved to Los Angeles in 1922. McWilliams studied at both the Southern Branch of the University of California (what would become the University of California at Los Angeles) and the University of Southern California, where he graduated from law school in 1927. McWilliams began working in a law firm shortly thereafter, while also maintaining a steady flow of literary publications; he aspired to be a writer, and was close with many prominent literary figures of the day.¹

By the early 1930s, however, McWilliams had grown dissatisfied working for the primarily corporate and wealthy clients at his law firm, and he turned both his writing and his law interests to social and political issues. In particular, McWilliams was profoundly affected by the labor cases he began accepting at this time, which led him to work with labor organizations and unions, and exposed him to the injustices laborers faced under the law. This was also his first meaningful experience with the Mexican-descent population. McWilliams spent much of the decade researching and writing prolifically about migrant worker conditions in California agribusiness, which ultimately led to the publication of *Factories in the Field* in 1939. *Factories* was a scathing condemnation of farm growers and industrial agriculture in California, and presented a decidedly Left-leaning and stark history of agribusiness’ emergence and impact on California’s economy—it described the state’s agricultural development and large scale production, early land monopolization, the introduction of irrigation, and farm grower’s reliance on a pool of vulnerable and racially marginalized migratory laborers. While many applauded McWilliams’ work, others were none too impressed and responded just as strongly to *Factories*; unsurprisingly, for instance, the Association of Farmers in California described McWilliams as “Agricultural Pest No. 1, worse than pear blight or boll weevil.”²

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² Richardson, ix, 59-60, 64, 77, 83-84, 87; Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Santa Barbara: Peregrine Publisher’s Inc., 1971).
Factories did indeed reveal the more radical turn McWilliams had taken that decade, and therefore the nuisance he had become. Most audacious was that McWilliams published Factories just months after he became a state official; he had been appointed Chief of the DIH in January 1939. The newly elected Governor Culbert Olson had heavily stressed farm and labor issues in his campaign, and sought to revitalize the DIH and its broad powers in monitoring labor conditions. Olson chose McWilliams for his experience with and knowledge of migratory labor issues (though perhaps Olson had not anticipated the publication of Factories).

As Chief of the DIH, McWilliams sent a proposal to Nelson Rockefeller at the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA) to request funds for a statewide advisory committee that would study problems afflicting the Mexican-descent population. McWilliams cited the state’s history of exploitation of the population, especially those engaged in migratory labor, as the source of the problem. Despite a large Mexican and Mexican American population in the US, McWilliams explained, both citizens and non-citizens tended to not feel any affinity for the US, and what was perceived as a “divided loyalty” to the US and Mexico was actually the product of several social and economic factors. Continual and easy migration between the US and Mexico, for instance, meant the population had strong familial and economic ties in both countries. Additionally, the state’s economic tug-and-pull—the demand for migratory labor in one moment followed by “periods of so-called ‘repatriation’ movements during times of depression”—created conditions in which the population understandably doubted its inclusion as members of US society. The American tendency to view Mexicans and Mexican Americans as having a “divided loyalty,” in other words, suggested they made a willful decision to maintain ties with Mexico and refused to assimilate, and thus obscured the historical, social, and structural reasons why both Mexicans and Mexican Americans remained outside of mainstream society.

McWilliams explained that the Mexican-descent population "has never been thoroughly, or even partially, assimilated." Unlike Japanese and Japanese Americans in California, Mexicans and Mexican Americans were not upwardly mobile in any way, in terms of income or property ownership, “despite the fact that the Mexican population is more or less indigenous to California.” This type of economic and social assimilation, in other words, should have happened for a population with such close ties to the state, but the Mexican-descent community, McWilliams argued, was “a permanently disadvantaged, underprivileged social group” due to years of discrimination in employment, education, and public services. This treatment and status created “hostility” between the Mexican-descent population and public and private institutions and agencies.

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4 Richardson, 93-96, 98-99.
5 Letter and Proposal, Carey McWilliams to Nelson Rockefeller, 15 October 1941, Folder: Latin American Relations Proposal, 1941, Box 27, Carey McWilliams Papers (Collection 1243), Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.
6 Ibid.
Since neither local nor state officials would act to rectify the problems, McWilliams called for the federal government to take the lead. The federal government could support a statewide advisory committee that studied and reported on a range of issues, including: economic and social conditions in the state; pending proposals for the Mexican labor contract program (the Bracero program), repatriation legislation, naturalization, cultivating knowledge of Mexican culture in order to better understand the "resident Mexican population"; and matters related to health, housing, recreation, and education. McWilliams suggested a committee of twenty-some members with experience in these types of issues, such as, public officials and workers, academics, attorneys, newspaper publishers, teachers, organized labor, and "a number of outstanding Spanish Californians." He also offered up the DIH as a headquarters for his proposed advisory committee. Most important to his plan, though, was federal funding and sponsorship of the advisory committee: "local indifference, prejudice and misunderstanding" meant that the federal government needed to intervene and press local and state figures to change their attitudes toward Mexicans and Mexican Americans for the sake of the Good Neighbor Policy and the war.\(^7\)

McWilliams’ 1941 proposal was heavily publicized in California newspapers, and prompted numerous responses from within and outside of the state.\(^8\) He also shared his proposal with several other individuals in an effort to solicit support for it. In the federal government, McWilliams contacted US Attorney General Francis Biddle, Marshall Dimock of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Will Alexander of the Office of Production Management, and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who served as the Assistant Director of the Office of Civilian Defense.\(^9\) All endorsed the plan. In terms of out of state publicity, McWilliams wrote to liberal newspapers, such as *PM, The Nation, and New Republic.*\(^10\)

McWilliams also shared his proposal with social scientists whose research centered on either the Mexican-descent population in the US or indigenous populations in Mexico in relation

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\(^7\) Ibid.


\(^9\) Carey McWilliams to Francis Biddle, 16 October 1941; Carey McWilliams to Marshall Dimock, 16 October 1941; Will Alexander to Carey McWilliams, 5 December 1941; Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt to Carey McWilliams, 19 November 1941; Folder: Latin American Relations Proposal, 1941, Box 27, McWilliams Papers.

\(^10\) Carey McWilliams to Tom O’Connor, 16 October 1941; Carey McWilliams to Freda Kirchwey, 16 October 1941; Carey McWilliams to Bruce Bliven, 16 October 1941; Folder: Latin American Relations Proposal, 1941, Box 27, McWilliams Papers.
to land, labor, social systems, and acculturation. As sympathetic allies, social scientists’ enthusiasm and support for McWilliams’ plan demonstrates a desire to create an intellectual infrastructure for researching Mexican and Mexican American problems in the US that could play a major role in developing adequate solutions. Norman Humphrey, for instance, was a doctoral student in sociology at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, as well as an instructor of sociology and anthropology at Wayne State University. Humphrey’s broad research interest was race relations and minority problems—his most notable work would be on the 1943 Detroit race riot, and he would become the research director for Detroit’s Fair Employment Practices Committee—but his doctoral dissertation was on the Mexican immigrant population in Detroit. He wrote several articles on the topic in the 1940s. Ralph L. Beals, a professor in the newly established Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), had studied northern New Mexico’s indigenous population as a doctoral student. After receiving his PhD, Beals spent several years studying indigenous populations in Mexico, and was central in establishing modern Mexican ethnography. Most notably, Beals would rely on this research to later draw parallels between the Mexican-descent population in the US and the indigenous populations in Mexico and their experiences with assimilation processes in testimony he gave in the California school segregation case, *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946). Economist Paul S. Taylor at the University of California, Berkeley, had already spent over a decade studying Mexican immigration and labor in California, as well as in Colorado, Texas, Indiana, Illinois, and Pennsylvania, the result of which was a 13-monograph series, *Mexican Labor in the United States*. George M. McBride, chair of the Geography Department at UCLA, researched land reform in Mexico and Chile and its impact on political, economic, and

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11 George M. McBride to Carey McWilliams, 9 January 1942; Carey McWilliams to Norman Humphrey, 3 February 1942; Joaquin Ortega to Carey McWilliams, 21 December 1941; Ralph L. Beals to Carey McWilliams, 27 October 1941; Paul S. Taylor to Carey McWilliams, 23 October 1941; Folder: Latin American Relations Proposal, 1941, Box 27, McWilliams Papers.
social conditions in each nation. That these figures expressed support for McWilliams’ proposal is important because it shows that social scientists were among the several sympathetic allies who sought to seize upon the war emergency and the Good Neighbor Policy to study and improve conditions for the Mexican-descent population.

Other figures not only supported McWilliams’ proposal but also expressed a desire to see such a program extend beyond California to the other southwestern states. Ernesto Galarza, for instance, at the Pan American Union based in Washington, DC, considered it “small scale.” He assured McWilliams that he did not mean to minimize the proposal’s purpose, but simply that he felt a national or federal apparatus would have more “practical results.” C.J. Carreon, a Mexican American state legislator in Arizona, was also in favor of McWilliams’ plan, but told Rockefeller in a letter of support for the proposal that he “believed he [McWilliams] has been rather mild” in describing Mexican and Mexican American conditions. Carreon told the Coordinator that the federal government must step in to oversee a national program, and that he had his own proposal, “which is more far-reaching than his [McWilliams’], but not in conflict.” Vincent Garoffolo, of the Foundation for the Advancement of Spanish-Speaking People in Colorado, wrote to Rockefeller that the OCIAA ought “to consider McWilliams’ proposal as applicable to the entire Southwest region,” and that “[a]n exceptional opportunity is presented in the Southwest to realize fundamental inter-American solidarity of interest.” Lewis Hanke, a Latin Americanist and Chief of the Hispanic Division of the Library of Congress, similarly supported the proposal but thought individuals from Texas and New Mexico, for instance, should be included in the state advisory committee for “national” representation. George M. McBride, the UCLA Geography Professor, also recommended a region-wide committee that could generate greater activity, as well as potentially compel the federal government into action. Another UCLA professor, Ralph Beals, encouraged McWilliams to consider the populations outside the US Southwest, in Indiana, Minnesota, and Michigan, and even offered a suggestion for pursuing private funding for his proposal should Rockefeller decide to pass on it. Given his

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16 Ernesto Galarza to Carey McWilliams, 11 December 1941, Folder: Latin American Relations Proposal, 1941, Box 27, McWilliams Papers.
17 C.J. Carreon to Nelson Rockefeller, 3 January 1942, Folder: Latin American Relations Proposal, 1941, Box 27, McWilliams Papers.
19 Luther H. Evans to Carey McWilliams, 21 November 1941, Folder: Latin American Relations Proposal, 1941, Box 27, McWilliams Papers.
20 George M. McBride to Carey McWilliams, 9 January 1942, Folder: Latin American Relations Proposal, 1941, Box 27, McWilliams Papers.
21 Ralph L. Beals to Carey McWilliams, 27 October 1941, Folder: Latin American Relations Proposal, 1941, Box 27, McWilliams Papers.
research on Mexican labor in California and elsewhere in the US, Paul Taylor was happy to endorse McWilliams' plan with a letter to Rockefeller, and was eager to share resources with both men, especially if it might help to expand the proposal beyond state borders. On this note, Taylor recommended that Rockefeller contact George I. Sanchez at the University of Texas should the OCIAA decide to act upon and broaden McWilliams’ plan.22

That McWilliams contacted people outside of California, or whose influence and work reached national and federal audiences, indicates that he actually was thinking about the Mexican and Mexican American population on a grander scale. As a state government official, it makes sense that McWilliams would restrict his proposal to California’s population, but his insistence on federal funding and support alongside his efforts to garner widespread support for the plan clearly reveal a broader vision. McWilliams' proposal, in fact, anticipated the argument he would make in a couple years' time in *Brothers Under the Skin*. Published after the US's entrance into the war, McWilliams argued that World War II had implications beyond the global ideological conflict that reverberated back into the home front. After detailing the nature of problems experienced by each sizeable minority group in the US, McWilliams called for federal intervention in minority group problems as a whole that centered on a single common denominator: racial and ethnic discrimination. In addition to endorsing a "national policy" of antidiscrimination and federal enforcement of existing legislation, McWilliams proposed that the federal government create an "independent department concerned directly with minority problems"—not a division, in other words, housed in the OCIAA, or an agency in the Department of Interior, but a separate entity that could research these matters in addition to having investigative powers to issue subpoenas, reports, and call public hearings.23 In this sense, McWilliams' 1941 proposal to Rockefeller was a microcosm of a larger vision he would share in *Brothers Under the Skin*, but for all minority groups.

Most importantly, the collective response to McWilliams' plan to cover the entire southwestern region and to enlist federal support demonstrates the emergence of a regional consciousness of the US Southwest defined by a set of commonly held problems, as well as the type of political leverage these figures hoped to gain from it. When Carreon sent McWilliams a copy of the letter he wrote to Rockefeller, for instance, he expressed his eagerness to continue correspondence, "for as you [McWilliams] have so well expressed it we are both working for the same ends, and for two people who had never met before it was certainly gratifying to me to be able to observe that our opinions on the subject are so much alike."24 In his letter, Galarza similarly, if somewhat obliquely, expressed gratification at knowing others shared his thoughts

22 Paul S. Taylor to Carey McWilliams, 23 October 1941; Paul S. Taylor to Nelson Rockefeller, 23 October 1941; Folder: Latin American Relations Proposal, 1941, Box 27, McWilliams Papers.
24 C.J. Carreon to Carey McWilliams, 9 January 1942, Folder: Latin American Relations Proposal, 1941, Box 27, McWilliams Papers.
on the matter when Galarza wrote he had recently begun to think “more in terms of federal action or possibly a national committee which might envisage exactly the purposes outlined in your memorandum for all of the southwestern states.”\(^{25}\) Though Mexican American leaders and sympathetic allies independently devised proposals and solutions, taken together these proposals presented localized problems as regional ones that required federal intervention. Knowing that the Mexican-descent population in another state faced similar issues, and that advocates in those communities sought some of the same solutions, undoubtedly affirmed and encouraged leaders that their proposals had merit and were worth pursuing.

At about this time, the DIAAUS was working on establishing, and then securing funds for, the Spanish Speaking Minority Project; recall that David Saposs completed his rapid survey in February and March 1942, and though the OCIAA approved funds for the project in April, the Bureau of the Budget’s decision to pull its funding in June put the DIAAUS’s work on hold.\(^{26}\) In the meantime, McWilliams continued to contact Rockefeller throughout the early spring and into the summer. Following a discussion with Saposs and Kenneth Holland, the Director of the Science and Education Division of the OCIAA, McWilliams submitted a “simplified” version of the 1941 proposal, which placed his plan directly under the DIH rather than create a statewide advisory committee. He also included a budget with this proposal: a little over $40,000 to support a year’s worth of salaries, travel costs, and office expenses. This March 1942 proposal did not deviate much from his earlier proposal, except to place more emphasis on “aliens” and immigrants (which makes sense since these specific groups fell under the DIH’s purview), and to note that rural “aliens” were a more vulnerable group than their urban counterparts.\(^{27}\) He also wrote the Coordinator at this time to bring his attention to related problems in Chicago, for instance, and to endorse Carreon’s efforts in Arizona.\(^{28}\) Rockefeller and others diligently and patiently acknowledged and thanked McWilliams for his flood of letters, and assured him that the OCIAA was working on a program for the population in the entire southwestern region.\(^{29}\) The OCIAA would soon give its focused attention to the state due to a developing and increasing concern over juvenile delinquency in Southern California.

\(^{25}\) Ernesto Galarza to Carey McWilliams, 11 December 1941, McWilliams Papers.


\(^{27}\) Carey McWilliams to Nelson Rockefeller, 30 March 1942, Folder: Latin American Relations Proposal, 1941, Box 27, McWilliams Papers.

\(^{28}\) Carey McWilliams to Nelson Rockefeller, 13 April 1942, and 18 April 1942; Folder: Latin American Relations Proposal, 1941, Box 27, McWilliams Papers.

\(^{29}\) Nelson Rockefeller to Carey McWilliams, 19 January 1942; 23 April 1942; 25 April 1942; 21 August 1942; and Walter H.C. Laves to Carey McWilliams, 1 May 1942; Folder: Latin American Relations Proposal, 1941, Box 27, McWilliams Papers.
McWilliams would continue to press for the same key ideas driving his 1941 proposal, but this time within the context of increased tensions between the Mexican-descent population and local law enforcement.

By summer 1942, a flurry of incidents between the Mexican-descent community and law enforcement snowballed to make juvenile delinquency the most visible problem in the Los Angeles area. Several domestic disturbances, gang fights, and a murder within the Mexican-descent community contributed to a general concern about juvenile delinquency. Four Mexican American youth, for instance, had reportedly assaulted and disarmed an auxiliary police officer. Another incident involved police officers and some young boys playing dice in front of their home, and which quickly escalated to a foot pursuit into another home, where a small riot eventually broke out as neighbors and more police officers arrived on the scene. Moreover, local newspapers ran stories on these incidents throughout the summer, contributing to the increasing concern over Mexican American juvenile delinquency.30 The Sleepy Lagoon murder would prompt the 1942 Los Angeles County Grand Jury to hold two hearings, one in August and another in October, as a general response to a perceived Mexican American youth crime wave. At this time, federal, state, and local actors would make arguments about the problems of the Mexican and Mexican American population that extended beyond juvenile delinquency. Specifically, these figures argued that the population’s shared set of problems—including juvenile delinquency—stemmed from historical and structural causes, and called upon the federal government to act since leaving these problems unattended would hurt the war effort and US-Latin American relations. In particular, the October grand jury hearing reflects the continuity between McWilliams’ 1941 proposal and the collective testimony presented in the fall of 1942: both events sought to establish the historical and structural sources of the population’s problems, and demanded the federal government take immediate action.

One of McWilliams’ numerous letters to Rockefeller was sent in early August, in the midst of escalating tensions. He used these outbreaks to further articulate the connection he saw between local relations, the war, and US foreign policy. In recent months, McWilliams explained, violence among Mexican American youth was on the rise in Los Angeles. This included, he pointed out, two murders. In his earlier proposal, McWilliams briefly discussed Mexican American youth when he noted the need for recreational facilities in East Los Angeles, for instance, to offset the high rate of juvenile delinquency in the area. With the US now a belligerent nation following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, however, McWilliams used recent tensions to link juvenile delinquency to the war. McWilliams reminded the Coordinator that the deplorable conditions he outlined in his 1941 proposal directly contributed to Mexican

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American youth violence, but he also added that the pro-fascist Mexican nationalist group, La Union Nacional Sinarquista (the National Union of Sinarquistas), aggravated the problem. On this point, McWilliams hemmed and hawed between sticking to his 1941 observation that a lack of proper recreational outlets was the cause of the problem, and what he was now identifying as an ideological source of the situation: “While I would...minimize the element of direct and conscious political motivation involved, nevertheless I am also convinced that if this matter [juvenile delinquency] were probed to its depth the facts would indicate at least the background of subversive Sinarquists promptings.” The youth, McWilliams stated, likely were not aware of such fascist influence, “but that it is a factor is, I believe, incontrovertible.”

McWilliams was also concerned about how local officials were going to handle the juvenile delinquency problem. Actually, he flat out doubted local government’s ability to properly approach the social, economic, and educational problems afflicting the community. “There is no reason whatever,” McWilliams stated, “to believe that the local authorities are competent to get to the roots of the situation.” Local officials had announced, he continued, that they intended to apply “a more severe police policy—in other words, repression,” rather than consider broader structural and societal sources of the recent outbreaks, as McWilliams preferred and advised.32

McWilliams had good reason to worry. At the moment he sent his letter to Rockefeller, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) was conducting a wholesale roundup of Mexican American youth in its “investigation” into the death of twenty-two-year-old José Díaz (one of the murders mentioned in his letter). In the early hours of August 2, Díaz was leaving a neighbor’s birthday party at Williams Ranch when he was fatally attacked. Díaz died a few hours later at the hospital from severe head trauma he suffered during the assault (he also sustained a severe beating and stab wounds to his torso). Within a couple of months, 22 young men from 38th Street, a neighborhood close to Williams Ranch, would be placed on trial for Díaz’s murder in The People v. Zammora et al. By January 1943, seventeen of the defendants would be found guilty on charges that included first-degree murder, second-degree murder, assault with a deadly weapon

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31 Carey McWilliams to Nelson Rockefeller, 6 August 1942, Folder: Latin American Relations Proposal, 1941, Box 27, McWilliams Papers. Historians Frank P. Barajas, Eduardo Obregón Pagán, and Zaragosa Vargas each discuss how the Mexican and Mexican American radical Left (that is, the Communist-sympathizing Left) in Los Angeles frequently used anti-fascist rhetoric such as this—identifying Sinarquistas as Fifth Column agents infiltrating the Mexican-descent population in the US Southwest—despite there being no compelling evidence to suggest that the Sinarquistas had an impact on the population in the ways these figures tended to describe. Barajas states, and I agree, that they did so as a way to demonstrate patriotism and dodge accusations of Communist affiliation—something that the wartime emergency, the Good Neighbor Policy, and the Popular Front movement (the broad coalition of communists, socialists and democrats united against fascism) afforded them unlike any other time. Frank P. Barajas, “The Defense Committees of Sleepy Lagoon: A Convergent Struggle against Fascism, 1942-1944” Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies 31:1 (Spring 2006): 33-62; Zaragosa Vargas, Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); and Eduardo Obregón Pagán, Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

32 Letter and Proposal, Carey McWilliams to Nelson Rockefeller, 15 October 1941, Carey McWilliams to Nelson Rockefeller, 6 August 1942; McWilliams Papers.
with the intent to commit murder, and assault. The convictions in the Sleepy Lagoon trial, so named after a reservoir located in Williams Ranch, were appealed and the state eventually decided to drop all charges against the young men in October 1944.\textsuperscript{33}

The Sleepy Lagoon trial and the so-called Zoot Suit riots that erupted a year later in 1943 came to embody the juvenile delinquency problem in Los Angeles, and have become the primary lenses through which we understand the Mexican and Mexican American experience in wartime Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{34} As one historian has argued, Sleepy Lagoon and the riots occurred within a larger shift in the relationship between the Mexican-descent community and law enforcement in the area. The LAPD linked the city’s Mexican-descent population to criminality—that is, it linked notions of race to criminality—beginning in the late 1930s when it implemented a professionalism model that was becoming common practice in urban police departments across the nation. Following the lead of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the standard-bearer in professional law enforcement, local police departments adopted a “war on crime” agenda. This meant that in contrast to previous decades, police departments shifted from a reactive mode of operation to a proactive one; as “crime fighters,” police departments sought to prevent crime rather than respond to it. The Sleepy Lagoon trial and the riots that followed a year later were manifestations of these changes.\textsuperscript{35}

The LAPD used the emerging and highly visible zoot suit culture to fabricate and publicize a “zoot-suiters crime wave” that, in fact, did not exist.\textsuperscript{36} Though Mexican American youth certainly engaged in symbolic rebellion when they donned some variation of the zoot suit style and behavior, only a small percentage—pachucos—actually engaged in illegal behavior and activities. Still, most authorities viewed any expression of the culture as a direct challenge to the status quo. The LAPD created a zoot suit hysteria, or anti-Mexican American youth hysteria, through both the local press and in public statements; it proclaimed a crime wave based on law enforcement and civic agency studies that failed to critically assess the cause and nature of Mexican American juvenile delinquency. The local press, though responsible for sensationalizing

\textsuperscript{33} Pagán, 1-2, 54-68, 71-80, 89, 94-95, 204-208, 223-224.
\textsuperscript{35} Escobar, 2, 5, 13-16, 157-162.
a Mexican American youth crime wave, received much of its information from police sources, as well as from the department’s public pronouncements regarding the topic.\textsuperscript{37}

In response to what appeared to be a crime wave, the 1942 Los Angeles County Grand Jury held two hearings on the causes of Mexican American juvenile delinquency. During the first hearing in August—when Los Angeles law enforcement was also conducting dragnet arrests in response to Diaz’s murder—local law enforcement gave testimony regarding their views on the underlying causes of juvenile delinquency.\textsuperscript{38} During this hearing, law enforcement officials provided testimony that served their crime fighting agenda: they described a Mexican American youth crime wave based on questionable statistics, did not bother to consider the role police conduct played in the recent outbreaks, and recommended repressive measures as a solution to an already volatile situation. Officials from the Sheriff’s Department and the LAPD each described differing causes of juvenile delinquency that collectively shifted blame away from local law enforcement, and placed it with either the Mexican-descent community itself or deficiencies in the existing juvenile justice system. The recommendations they made relied upon law enforcement being proactive crime fighters, and entailed repressive measures that violated civil liberties.\textsuperscript{39}

Most infamously, Captain Edward Duran Ayres of the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department made a biological argument to explain Mexican American criminality. Though Ayres recognized, with little empathy, much of the discrimination the Mexican-descent population endured, as well as the consequences of this for juvenile delinquency, he asserted that, “to get a true perspective of this condition, we must look for a basic cause that is even more fundamental than the factors already mentioned.” The basic cause, according to Ayres, was biological. Mexican American youth were lazy and violent, he asserted, because of their indigenous ancestry (Aztec sacrifices attested to this proclivity to violence), and were predisposed to fighting in gangs and wielding weapons (unlike European Americans who fought one-on-one

\textsuperscript{37} Escobar, 166-167, 172, 177-180, 184-185; and chapter 9, “Facts and Origins of the Zoot-Suit Hysteria,” in its entirety is an excellent analysis of the LAPD’s Annual Reports, which include data on crimes reported beginning in 1941. Also: This was not the first time in California’s history that community members, local authorities, the press, and law enforcement contributed to, rather than pacified, hostilities between the dominant European American population and a non-white group. Howard A. DeWitt has studied a series of anti-Filipino riots that took place during the Great Depression in and around Watsonville, California. Community organizations, politicians, the local press, and law enforcement helped to create an anti-Filipino hysteria by sensationalizing prevailing concerns and common stereotypes about Filipinos. These included, for instance, that Filipinos posed a threat to social relations, and were prone to violence. Howard A. DeWitt, “The Watsonville Anti-Filipino Riot of 1930: A Case Study of the Great Depression and Ethnic Conflict in California,” Southern California Quarterly Vol. 61, No. 3 (Fall 1979), 291-302.

\textsuperscript{38} Escobar, 207-210. C.B. Horrall to Ernest W. Oliver, 13 August 1942, Folder: Ayres, Duran Ed., Box 26, McWilliams Papers.

\textsuperscript{39} Inspector E.W. Lester, of the LAPD’s Juvenile Division, also made recommendations. These included: punishing Mexican American youth for simple gang affiliation (no criminal activity required), placing youth on lists that flagged them as suspect, and gathering intelligence on Mexican American youth from law enforcement agencies, schools, and the juvenile courts to compile into a central data file for distribution across agencies. Escobar, 210-214.
and with their fists). Mexican American youth were driven by blood lust, Ayres contended, and he compared them to wild cats that needed to be caged.40

Harry Henderson and Harry Braverman, two members of the grand jury, initiated the second grand jury hearing that was held in October. Henderson and Braverman created the Special Committee on the Problems of Mexican Youth (eventually referred to as the Special Mexican Relations Committee) to counter law enforcement testimony by bringing attention to the social and economic reasons for Mexican American juvenile delinquency. The Special Committee invited a range of figures who, “without previous collaboration,” arrived at and presented observations and recommendations that, in fact, held much in common. These figures included McWilliams on behalf of the Division of Immigration and Housing (DIH), DIAAUS Director Walter Laves for the OCIAA, UCLA Professor of Anthropology Harry Hoijer, War Manpower Commission field representative for minority groups Guy T. Nunn, Congress of Industrial Organizations representative Oscar R. Fuss, Mexican Consul for Los Angeles Manuel Aguilar, and El Monte High School faculty member Vernon Patterson.41 In particular, the testimonies of McWilliams, Nunn, and Hoijer demonstrate how local, state, and federal actors leveraged the perceived Mexican American youth crime wave, the war, and US-Latin American relations to call attention to a broader and more pervasive set of problems, thus echoing McWilliams’ 1941 proposal.42

41 Escobar, 215; and McWilliams, The Education of Carey McWilliams, 110. Report of Special Committee on Problems of Mexican Youth of the 1942 Grand Jury of Los Angeles County, 22 December 1942, Folder: Los Angeles (County) Grand Jury 1942, Box 27, McWilliams Papers.
42 The October grand jury testimony has been thoroughly documented by historians. The analyses of three historians—Edward Escobar, Luis Alvarez, and Kevin Allen Leonard—merit brief consideration here to help illustrate how the testimonies of McWilliams, Nunn, and Hoijer must be understood as a continuation of sympathetic allies’ earlier efforts to advocate on behalf of Mexicans and Mexican Americans. More importantly, it is important for reinforcing the argument presented in this chapter that the October grand jury hearing ought to be interpreted as part of a larger story about the emergence of a regional consciousness of the Mexican-descent population. Escobar, Alvarez, Leonard all note—as do I—that the testimonies of McWilliams, Nunn, and Hoijer in the October grand jury hearings refuted Ayres’ biological explanation for Mexican American juvenile delinquency, identified social and economic conditions as the source of the problem, and generally agree that juvenile delinquency was a pressing matter for these historical actors. Escobar adds to this consensus by pointing out that despite the differences between the August testimonies and the October testimonies, both law enforcement and the liberal advocates essentially agreed that the Mexican American zoot suiters constituted a problem—no one questioned, for instance, whether an actual Mexican American youth crime wave existed, but rather outright accepted that one did. As Escobar states, “the zoot suit was synonymous with delinquency.” Alvarez similarly notes the racialization and criminalization of Mexican American and African American youth in California and New York in the war period, and how juvenile delinquency was equated with a “race problem.” Leonard examines the October grand jury hearings as one example for understanding how historical actors debated race in wartime Los Angeles. This chapter builds upon these analyses by arguing that the Los Angeles County Grand Jury hearings, held in October 1942, must be examined through a long view of the war and US foreign policy, and that the testimonies of McWilliams, Nunn, and Hoijer reflected concerns about the Mexican and Mexican American population that extended beyond juvenile delinquency. The October grand jury hearings represent, in others, but one effort to bring federal attention to the
McWilliams’ testimony relied upon social science and social work research to challenge Ayres’ biological argument. Following current anthropological and sociological research, McWilliams asserted that culture, rather than biology, best explained Mexican American youth behavior. He referenced anthropologist Ruth Benedict and explained that he knew “of no scientific warrant for the doctrine that there is any biological predisposition on the part of any race toward certain types of behavior.” Moreover, cultural practices in themselves did not create juvenile delinquency, but “cultural conflict” did. The experiences of second-generation children of immigrants in the home and their experience within the dominant American culture, McWilliams contended, “produce[d] certain patterns of behavior.” According to social worker Florence Cassidy of the Council of Social Agencies in Detroit, McWilliams continued, second-generation youth responded poorly when these cultural differences were put into relief. In Los Angeles, factors such as skin color compounded the cultural conflict and the second-generation problem among the Mexican-descent population. Sociologist Robert E. Park, McWilliams noted, remarked that “races of high visibility are the natural and inevitable objects of race prejudice.” Parents’ immigrant status, conflicting cultural practices, and this “visibility” in difference, McWilliams asserted, meant that Mexican American youth were in an especially ripe condition for rebelling against their parents and society at large.43

Most of McWilliams’ testimony, however, centered on the social and economic conditions that more broadly kept the entire Mexican-descent population living in impoverished conditions. In this regard, his testimony echoed much of what he wrote in his 1941 OCIAA proposal. “Mexican shack-towns,” for instance, that were established during the First World War, still existed and remained much as they did decades before. As the Chief of the DIH, McWilliams was able to cite inspectors’ reports detailing the deplorable living conditions in “Mexican settlements” throughout the state—no indoor plumbing, close quarters for large families, leaky roofs, non-existent basic maintenance, unsanitary garbage disposal, and rodent and pest problems. “Mexican settlements in California,” McWilliams stated, “generally represent an unofficial type of segregation,” which limited employment possibilities, created little opportunity for “cultural adjustment,” and led to discrimination. McWilliams also insisted that a substantial number of Mexican nationals in the US were interested in becoming citizens, and that there were “definite, assignable reasons which account for [their] apparent lack of interest” in naturalization: they could not afford naturalization fees on their meager income, were illiterate in both Spanish and English, and naturalization classes were inaccessible to them.44

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44 “Testimony of Carey McWilliams,” 8 October 1942, McWilliams Papers.
As in 1941, McWilliams again called for the federal government to compel local and state government action. Though the grand jury hearings were nominally about Mexican American juvenile delinquency, McWilliams used this one problem to present a picture of several other related problems in the Mexican-descent community to a broader audience. “To regard this local problem as essentially and solely a police problem,” McWilliams concluded, “is to miss altogether the real nature of the problem...[and] until we begin to tackle the fundamental issues themselves, we can expect only a partial solution of the problem.” The federal government ought to collaborate, McWilliams continued, with state and local agencies in conducting a countywide survey of conditions in the Mexican-descent community. The data collected from the survey, McWilliams advised, could be used to develop community-based projects aimed at “cultural adjustment.” On housing conditions, McWilliams pointed out that there was little law enforcement could do on this matter, and that community-based support and action could be effective, “if the local communities can be induced to make a contribution.” McWilliams also recommended removing the restrictions placed on public housing against non-citizens, “so that more of these families might be eligible for occupancy in United States Authority projects.” For the grand jury’s consideration, McWilliams included a copy of his 1941 OCIAA proposal for a “federal project in furtherance of the Good Neighbor Policy.”

Guy Nunn’s testimony challenged Ayres’ biological argument by also emphasizing structural and historical forces as contributing to not only juvenile delinquency, but to the population’s generally impoverished conditions. Nunn’s working class background likely explains his general interest in and strong compassion for workers and the conditions under which they toiled. After graduating in 1936 from Occidental College in Los Angeles, Nunn studied at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar for two years, and later spent some time in Paris. Once back in the US, Nunn worked as a field examiner for the National Labor Relations Board and then as a labor economist for the Federal Reserve System. Nunn was the field representative for the Minority Groups Service within the War Manpower Commission when he gave his testimony to the Los Angeles County Grand Jury.

Nunn argued that juvenile delinquency was not a problem that stemmed from the population’s race or national origin, but was a problem that stemmed from the historical development of poverty among Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Moreover, both employers and government agencies contributed to this development by exploiting and neglecting the population. He spent most of his testimony describing the “economic and social status of the California Mexican” to make the case for a long-overdue, “carefully coordinated and broad...based program of rehabilitation.” Though he touched upon education, vocational training, housing, and naturalization, Nunn emphasized the nature of employment discrimination against the Mexican-descent population and how it affected these problem areas. In this case, Nunn

45 Ibid.
described how racial discrimination and economic inequality were structurally linked. “Caste discrimination” and “color discrimination,” he argued, worked together to keep Mexicans and Mexican Americans in poverty. The “entire national minority,” he explained, “is confined to unskilled or semi-skilled employment, characterized by a high degree of seasonality,” creating a caste status that prevented any type of upward mobility. The usual means by which someone could become a skilled laborer, through actual experience or training, Nunn continued, had “been in large measure denied to California Mexicans.” Because they were denied the opportunity to gain practical experience or training in skilled work, Mexicans and Mexican Americans were disproportionately affected by employment practices, such as “last-hired-first-fired,” that were “always operative against untrained workers.” Police action alone was not sufficient for addressing a problem that was really just one of several interconnected social and economic problems beyond the purview of local law enforcement.47

Nunn saw the war as an unprecedented opportunity to finally rectify “problems inherent in the structure of southwestern society and its economy.” Various figures, groups, and agencies, Nunn stated, had previously sought to improve labor conditions, but did so “against a background of limited overall employment opportunities.” The war, however, created an “insatiable” demand that could lay “the basic foundation for the economic rehabilitation of Mexicans and other minorities within our borders.” In an effort to appeal to the grand jury’s democratic sensibilities, Nunn insisted that

It remains for the community and community agencies to wake up to the fact that the war has set in motion a gigantic leveling force in our society. War demands that the crusts of our social caste structure be broken through, not only in employment but on all other levels of civilian life. This war is teaching us lessons in interracial democracy which a hundred years of wistful pedagogy have not brought home to us. We are faced by the alternatives of taking these lessons to heart or of losing the war.48

With a war against fascism abroad, it was important to promote and secure democracy at home for a population that was incorporated as citizens of the US nearly a hundred years before, but was relegated to a second-class status shaped and reinforced by caste and color discrimination. Nunn called upon authorities to improve Mexican and Mexican American conditions or else lose the war against fascism.

Nunn fired off a list of recommendations that covered a range of problem areas, and which required action at all levels of government. National defense training courses, for instance, needed to be held in “Mexican districts,” such as Belvedere and Watts. Nunn suggested revising existing federal statutes that required prior approval from the Secretary of War or Navy for non-

48 Ibid.
citizen applicants seeking employment under restricted war contracts. Schools needed a serious overhaul as well. School segregation, Nunn boldly stated, needed to end immediately. Students needed to be allowed to speak Spanish, and schools needed to reprimand teachers who “impress[ed] a feeling of inferiority on Mexican students.” Schools could also contribute to Mexican and Mexican American economic development by providing guidance in vocational training. The Youth Correction Authority, Nunn continued, should implement a compulsory vocational education program as an alternative to sending juvenile delinquents to reform school, jail, or placing them on probation. Nunn also insisted that a state law prohibiting housing discrimination was necessary, and that the Los Angeles City and County Housing Authorities should work to increase the number of Mexican-descent people in their projects. To encourage naturalization, Nunn called upon the Immigration and Naturalization Service to provide assistance in the Los Angeles area and help minimize the lengthy process. Agricultural work, Nunn observed, was and would continue to be a mainstay in Mexican and Mexican American employment, and he supported the creation of a Federal Labor Authority charged with administering the pending importation of Mexican nationals (the Bracero program) to the US. “Of more immediate importance than any of the steps previously mentioned,” however, was for the OCIAA to establish an "administrative apparatus especially geared to serve the needs of Spanish-speaking people within the United States."49

As an anthropologist, Harry Hoijer's testimony strengthened the collective argument against Ayres' biological one, but offered less in terms of a point-by-point list of recommendations. Hoijer had been trained as an anthropologist and linguist at the University of Chicago, and worked there for a period of time before he joined the UCLA Department of Anthropology and Sociology in 1940. At the time he gave his grand jury testimony, Hoijer was serving as department chair.50 He warned the grand jury of the danger of mistaking cultural and social influences on behavior for biological ones.

Hoijer refuted Ayres' biological argument by making clear what physical and cultural anthropologists knew about race: while “anatomical differences” existed among people, “all differences in intelligence, character, personality, mentality, or in any other non-physical aspect are the result of differences in civilization, education, and training.” History, social systems, and structures, for instance, shaped behavior—not biology. Ascribing and reinforcing negative stereotypes of racially-defined groups based on this type of faulty reasoning was dangerous, but especially so in the case of Los Angeles' Mexican American youth, since local authorities

49 Ibid. In his testimony, Nunn explicitly cited a proposal McWilliams had written recommending the creation of a Federal Labor Authority in anticipation of importing Mexican labor. "Proposal in Re: Farm Labor Authority, Prepared by Carey McWilliams, Chief, Division of Immigration and Housing, State of California," 11 June 11 1942, Folder 10, Box 37, Catholic Charities USA, Collection 76, The American Catholic Research Center and University Archives, Catholic University of America, Washington, DC.
“proposed to make this belief a basis for action.” Hoijer specifically challenged Ayres’ remarks about Aztec human sacrifice, stating that the practice was a “cultural fact” rather than a biological one. Moreover, not all Mexicans and Mexican Americans descended from the Aztecs, but were an ancestral mix of Caucasian and indigenous peoples.51

Mexican American gang activity and violence, Hoijer explained, was a type of phenomenon common among isolated and oppressed minority groups across cultures. Sociologists and anthropologists had found, for instance, that in the populations of African Americans, indigenous peoples in the Americas, and “aborigines of the Malay States,” it was not uncommon for some in these groups to engage in “cult activities.” Ranging from the benign to the violent, Hoijer stated that this behavior was a response to persistent discrimination and isolation in societies with a clear majority group in power over a minority group or groups. Excessive police force and punishment, Hoijer continued, were not appropriate responses or effective deterrents to this behavior, as law enforcement contended, and would only worsen the situation. Besides, in Hoijer’s estimation, most of the criminal activities Mexican American youth engaged in were minor offenses, and were not the malicious types of crimes conjured up in the imagination by Ayres’ blood lust characterization. Mexican American youth were not criminally inclined by nature, Hoijer insisted, but were “individuals driven to excesses of misbehavior by circumstances beyond their control.”52 Though Hoijer did not call upon the government to act, his testimony served the important purpose of making the social science argument that historical and structural factors played a central role in society, especially in the quality of life and overall well being of marginalized groups, such as the Mexican-descent population.

The Special Mexican Relations Committee responsible for the October grand jury hearing relied on these testimonies to send a set of letters to the federal government in November: to the OCIAA, the Office of War Information (OWI), and the War Department. The Special Committee chair, Harry Henderson, tailored each letter to fit the function and responsibility of each agency and department. Henderson told Rockefeller, for instance, that juvenile delinquency was “merely one of the symptoms of more basic social and economic ills” among the Mexican-descent population, and that OCIAA action taken on behalf of this group would resonate deeply with the US’s neighbors in the hemisphere, especially important during the wartime emergency. Henderson proposed the DIAAUS establish a regional office in Los Angeles to serve in an advisory role to existing agencies. Federal visibility by way of a regional office, Henderson assured the Coordinator, would lend authority and grant legitimacy to any local programs focused on Mexican and Mexican American issues. The OWI, Henderson told Director Elmer Davis, ought to pursue an information campaign that specifically targeted the Mexican-descent population to promote US-Latin American relations generally, encourage

51 “The Problem of Crime Among the Mexican Youth of Los Angeles, by Harry Hoijer,” nd, Folder: Los Angeles (County) Grand Jury 1942, Box 27, McWilliams Papers.
52 Ibid.
participation in civilian-based activities, distribute war materials publicizing Mexican and Mexican American civilian and military service, and explain the recent reciprocity agreement between Mexico and the US enforcing the draft of Mexican nationals into the US military. Henderson asked the Secretary of War, Henry Stimson, to amend the current federal policy that required war industry employers with restricted war contracts to obtain federal approval before hiring noncitizens. This “special employment handicap” prevented Mexicans from obtaining gainful employment in “an area [Southern California] dominated by restricted war contracts.” Henderson respectfully observed the “discrepancy in our policy” that Mexican nationals in the US were now subjected to the draft but were not as readily welcomed in war industry employment. “In this situation,” Henderson warned, “lie the seeds of possible misunderstanding and resentment among Mexicans living in the United States.”

The testimony of McWilliams, Nunn, and Hoijer at the October 1942 grand jury hearing represents a continuation of the ideas McWilliams expressed in his 1941 proposal. The sensationalized hysteria over Mexican American juvenile delinquency in Los Angeles prompted the August and October grand jury hearings, but the October testimony emphasized the range of problems—not just juvenile delinquency—afflicting the Mexican-descent community, attributed the sources of these problems to broader underlying historical and structural causes, and placed responsibility for handling these issues with local and state authorities, but especially with the federal government. When McWilliams and Nunn for instance, cited poor housing conditions, pervasive segregation in schools, public spaces, and employment, deplorable migratory labor conditions, low earnings, and inadequate educational opportunities as the sources of juvenile

53 On January 22, 1943, two months after these letters were sent, the US and Mexico entered a reciprocity agreement whereby Mexican nationals living in the US could be drafted into the US military, and likewise, US citizens living in Mexico could be drafted into the Mexican military. Prior to this, Mexican nationals living in the US had two options available to them regarding the draft. The Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 stated that foreign-born residents in the US who declared their intention to naturalize were subject to the draft. A non-citizen could file Selective Service Form 302, which subjected the applicant to military service while also securing US residence and naturalization once he completed military service; or a non-citizen could file Form 301, which exempted the applicant from military service but placed him on non-resident status. Mexican embassy and consulate offices regularly advised its citizens to file Form 301. The reciprocity negotiations and agreement, then, marked a change in how the Mexican government would advise its citizens on the draft. Emilio Zamora, “Mexican Nationals in the US Military: Diplomacy and Battlefield Sacrifice” in Beyond the Latino World War II Hero: The Social and Political Legacy of a Generation, eds. Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez and Emilio Zamora (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 95-97. For more on Mexican and Mexican American experiences during World War II, see also: Raul Morin, Among the Valiant: Mexican-Americans in WWII and Korea (Alhambra, CA: Borden Publishing Company, 1966); Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, ed., Mexican Americans & World War II (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005); Richard Griswold del Castillo, ed., World War II and Mexican American Civil Rights (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008); Neil Foley, Quest for Equality: The Failed Promise of Black-Brown Solidarity (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez and B.V. Olguin, eds., Latina/os and World War II: Mobility, Agency, and Ideology (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014); and Anthony Quiroz, ed., Leaders of the Mexican American Generation: Biographical Essays (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2015).

54 Harry F. Henderson to Nelson Rockefeller, 12 November 1942; Harry F. Henderson to Elmer Davis, 12 November 1942; Harry F. Henderson to Henry Stimson, 12 November 1942; Folder: Los Angeles (County) Grand Jury 1942, Box 27, McWilliams Papers.
delinquency, they were also making arguments that these conditions were created by structural and historical inequalities that required government action. The October hearing, then, was actually less about juvenile delinquency and more about outlining problems and devising a solution to deep-rooted sources of Mexican-descent discrimination and inequality. In this way, the fall 1942 hearing was a continuation of MeWilliams’ 1941 proposal. The global war against fascism, taken together with the common American heritage narrative driving the Good Neighbor Policy, comprised a democratic rubric that allowed sympathetic allies to focus federal attention on Mexican and Mexican American problems in the US Southwest.

The DIAAUS and other federal wartime agencies were more than willing to heed the call issued in the October grand jury hearing and respond to the situation in Los Angeles. DIAAUS Director Walter Laves, for instance, was well aware of the escalating tensions between the Mexican-descent population and law enforcement. Recall that in his efforts to reinstate federal funds, Laves cited Los Angeles as a case in point for why the Spanish Speaking Minority Project was so badly needed. When the DIAAUS received an invitation from the Los Angeles County Grand Jury, then, to attend the October hearing, Laves was more than happy to oblige. In fact, representatives from the DIAAUS and the Office of War Information (OWI) met with individuals, organizations, and agencies in both Los Angeles and Washington to persuade and assist them in taking action on behalf of the Mexican and Mexican American population. Though these federal officials exercised caution to not overstep the boundaries of authority between the federal government and local and state governments, their actions nonetheless shaped local and state activities following the October hearing. Unlike in Texas, however, the federal government’s interaction with local and state leaders in Los Angeles had a more positive outcome for the Mexican-descent population, namely in the DIAAUS’s efforts to create better representation of Mexican Americans in leadership positions.

The OCIAA’s concern about exercising caution in Los Angeles is exemplified in Laves’ participation in the October hearing as an “observer.” Though Laves wanted to attend the hearing as more than just an observer, the higher-ups in the OCIAA would not have any of it. The deliberation over the testimony he was to publicly read illustrates the federal government’s prudence in the matter. Laves had originally submitted an 1800-word testimony for OCIAA approval that was based on studies and information discussed during the DIAAUS’s weekly meetings. This was ultimately reduced to 400 words, and still failed to muster OCIAA approval. Officials were concerned that the OCIAA’s presence would be interpreted as intruding in local matters, and it was important, one figure insisted, to make clear in the statement that the OCIAA was there in response to an invitation extended by the Grand Jury. One day before the hearing, Laves received a telegram with the approved statement along with instructions to restrict his role in Los Angeles to observer, to make no statements other than what had been
authorized, and to grant no newspaper interviews. When Laves protested that attending the hearing only as an observer did not fulfill the commitment he had made to the grand jury, the OCIAA agreed to let Laves read portions of his original testimony during a private and brief session just before the public testimonies were read.55

Outside of the grand jury hearing, however, Laves was more than just an observer. Prior to leaving for Los Angeles, Laves met with several officials from federal agencies, including the OWI, the War Manpower Commission, and the Civil Liberties Division of the Department of Justice, to discuss the Los Angeles situation. These inter-agency meetings related the problems of the Mexican-descent population to the specific tasks assigned to these agencies. During his three-day stay in Southern California, Laves spoke with several figures, including members of the grand jury, local officials, and other interested parties about the Mexican and Mexican American population. He heard the testimonies of McWilliams, Nunn, and Hoijer, of course, but he also spent time with them and others, before and after the hearing, to talk over and strategize ideas for potential solutions.56

Local figures sought to impress upon Laves the need for the federal government’s presence and authority in resolving not only the current problem with juvenile delinquency, but in seizing upon the wartime emergency and the Good Neighbor Policy to devise strategies that might encompass the range of issues afflicting the Mexican-descent population. Harry Braverman, for instance, wasted no time telling Laves about the importance of his presence as an OCIAA representative at the grand jury hearing when he picked Laves and his associate up from the airport on Wednesday evening, the day before the hearing. Thursday afternoon following the hearing, Braverman, Harry Henderson, and another grand jury member informally met with Laves, where the DIAAUS Director suggested that someone from UCLA should “take the initiative for planning a general program for social rehabilitation.” Later that evening at Braverman’s home, Laves discussed the matter further with UCLA professor Harry Hoijer.57 As we will see ahead, this meeting influenced Hoijer’s decision to submit a proposal to the OCIAA.

On Friday, Laves met with Josefina Fierro de Bright and John Bright.58 Fierro de Bright and Bright were a married couple who advocated on behalf of Mexicans and Mexican


57 “Memorandum on Mr. Laves’ trip to Los Angeles,” nd, Laves mss.

58 Ibid.
Americans. Fierro de Bright was working with the Citizens’ Committee for the Defense of Mexican-American Youth that was created to support the Sleepy Lagoon defendants. She had previously worked with the National Congress of Spanish Speaking People, an organization of largely Popular Front folks—a coalition of communists, socialists, and democrats united in opposition to fascism—that advocated labor rights for both citizens and non-citizens. Bright was a Hollywood screenwriter, a founder of the Writers Guild of America, and a member of the Council of Pan American Democracies.\(^59\) The couple “urged a strong and extensive social rehabilitation program in order to strengthen the war effort and to build resistance against various subversive influences.” The next evening, Laves met with Fierro de Bright and Bright once again to “discuss in some more detail the conditions of the Mexican-Americans and some possible remedies.”\(^60\) In November, Fierro de Bright and Bright would send a prospectus to the OCIAA that made many of the same observations and demands that emerged from the October grand jury hearing—both the testimonies and the letters the Special Mexican Relations Committee sent to federal agencies—that was very likely shaped by this meeting with Laves.\(^61\)

After meeting with Fierro de Bright and Bright, Laves spent Friday evening in Manuel Ruiz’s home to meet with members of Cultura Pan Americana, a Southern California organization led by a cadre of middle class Mexican American leaders that promoted cultural exchange within the hemisphere through bicultural conferences and other gatherings. Manuel Ruiz was a 35-year-old attorney born in Los Angeles to Mexican immigrants from Mazatlán. He attended the University of Southern California and graduated from its law school in 1930, at which time he also passed the state bar exam. In addition to local issues, Ruiz had a strong interest in Latin American relations. He studied law in Mexico, for instance, and was admitted to the bar in Chihuahua in 1932. Within the US, Ruiz was engaged in several organizations aimed at improving cultural relations, such as Cultura Pan Americana.\(^62\) Ruiz was also a member

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\(^60\) “Memorandum on Mr. Laves’ trip to Los Angeles,” nd, Laves mss.

\(^61\) Indeed, the prospectus drafted by Fierro de Bright and Bright and the Special Committee’s letters were written within days of each other and shared many of the same ideas, suggesting they were perhaps crafted in collaboration following the Laves meetings. “Prospectus for the Office of Inter-American Affairs on the Mexican-Americans of Southwestern United States, submitted by John Bright, Josephina [sic] Fierro de Bright,” 10 November 1942, Folder 11, Box 4, Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee Records (Collection 107), Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library.

\(^62\) Pagán, 14-15, 32, 34. Biographical statement, 31 May 1966, Folder 1, Box 1, Manuel Ruiz Papers, M0295, Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, California.
of the Coordinating Council for Latin American Youth (CCLAY) that was created in July 1941 by local officials to address juvenile delinquency.\(^{63}\)

Laves and the members of Cultura Pan Americana discussed the possibility of OCIAA support in “developing either an inter-American center or for beginning a social rehabilitation program for the Mexican minority.” These leaders expressed concern about Fifth Column influences on Mexican American youth, and “[n]ecessarily attention was also given to the conditions under which the Mexican minority live.” Laves encouraged Ruiz to talk with Braverman and Henderson about the grand jury taking the lead in developing an inter-American center “as one step in meeting the difficult conditions in Los Angeles County.”\(^{64}\)

Laves met with Guy Nunn and Carey McWilliams on the third day of this trip. The men met in McWilliams’ office, where Nunn and McWilliams “underlined the seriousness of the gang warfare which was attributable primarily to the condition under which the Mexicans live and secondly, to active subversive influences.” The Saturday morning meeting ran into lunch, after which Nunn drove Laves to different Mexican-descent communities, including Hick’s Camp in El Monte County.\(^{65}\) Nunn no doubt wanted Laves to see, first-hand, the living conditions of the 134 families at Hick’s Camp described during the grand jury hearing: poor housing structures and insufficient living space, little privacy, low school attendance among children, poor overall health, high infant mortality, inadequate plumbing and garbage disposal, no heat, no refrigeration, and outhouses located in close proximity to water sources.\(^{66}\)

Laves concluded that Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Los Angeles faced several problems that extended beyond juvenile delinquency. The population was the “least preferred class in employment, housing, professions,” lacked any training that would allow its members to work in the war industry, and it wielded no substantial political power. He observed that there was “a dearth of reliable and strong Mexican organizations with which to deal.” Only the Cultura Pan Americana, the Congress, and the CCLAY seemed to have any kind of impact, yet even “these seem to be somewhat inter-related and no one of them appears to be very strong.” Though Laves acknowledged that the federal government should not take the lead on any local program beyond providing financial support, he did state that “[t]he wartime cooperation of the Americas would seem to provide a new and fortunate element for bring[ing] about pressure for progress on

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\(^{63}\) Escobar, 203-207. Several people from the Mexican-descent population’s middle class throughout Southern California served on the CCLAY. These included medical professionals, businessmen, and attorneys, many of whom were educated in Southern California, as well as folks who worked with patriotic and civic organizations, social clubs, community centers, coordinating councils, and chambers of commerce. For a sense of the men and women who worked with the CCLAY, see official ballots for 1943 and 1944 in Folder 16 of Box 3 in Manuel Ruiz’s papers. CCLAY statement with biographical information, nd, Folder 16, Box 3, Ruiz Papers.

\(^{64}\) “Memorandum on Mr. Laves’ trip to Los Angeles,” nd, Laves mss.

\(^{65}\) Ibid.

\(^{66}\) “A Tabulation of Facts on Conditions Existent in Hick’s Mexican Camp,” nd, Folder: Los Angeles (County) Grand Jury 1942, Box 27, McWilliams Papers.
a longstanding social problem of Los Angeles County.” Resolving the situation in Southern California, in other words, was imperative to the war effort and US-Latin American relations.\textsuperscript{67}

Alan Cranston, the Chief of the Foreign Language Division of the Office of War Information (OWI), went to Los Angeles to persuade the local press to change its portrayal of the Mexican-descent population.\textsuperscript{68} Cranston, like Laves, was influential in shaping local action. Cranston met with Mayor Fletcher Bowron, who set up his meetings with managing editors and publishers in the major news organs of the Los Angeles press. During this meeting, Cranston impressed upon the mayor the danger the city’s situation posed for the war. “I made him understand,” Cranston wrote in a report to the OWI Director Elmer Davis, “that Axis propaganda was giving Los Angeles a black eye the world over by exploitation of the local Mexican situation.” Bowron, Cranston noted, became especially “sympathetic” once the stakes were made clear to him. The mayor then asked Cranston to develop and present a “program for local action on all fronts of the Mexican problem,” to which Cranston agreed.\textsuperscript{69}

Cranston met with at least two dozen Angelenos to “[get] to the roots of the local problem.” These included local law enforcement officials, the State Attorney, District Attorney, members of the Los Angeles County Grand Jury Braverman and Henderson, federal officials, Catholic leaders, labor leaders, McWilliams, Nunn, and “leading Latin-Americans of Los Angeles,” including Manuel Ruiz. Cranston wrote a program and presented it to a select group from the numerous individuals he met with, who made few revisions to it before approving it for presentation to Mayor Bowron. In fact, Cranston created a delegation to present the program to not only the mayor, but also to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, and he kept his presence in the presentation to a minimum. “I merely stated,” he wrote Davis, “that it was not within my province, as a Federal officer, to comment in detail upon this local program, but that I would say that this program would be bad news for Hitler and the Axis and good news for the United States and the United Nations.”\textsuperscript{70}

The program was presented in the form of a petition, and included several recommendations. The petition first observed that juvenile delinquency was a minor problem compared to the many problems afflicting the Mexican-descent population, both young and old. These included the closing of recreational centers, a lack of defense training facilities in communities with large Mexican and Mexican American populations, too few Spanish speaking officials and personnel, discrimination, poor housing conditions, and a lack of recognition of the

\textsuperscript{67} “Memorandum on Mr. Laves’ trip to Los Angeles,” nd, Laves mss.

\textsuperscript{68} In less than a year, the so-called Zoot Suit riots would garner attention in newspapers in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, prompting state and federal officials in the US to, again, investigate the source of tensions in Los Angeles. For more on the US and Mexican governments’ responses to the riots, see: Richard Griswold del Castillo, “The Los Angeles’ Zoot Suit Riots’ Revisited: Mexican and Latin American Perspectives,” Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos Vol 16, No. 2 (Summer 2000): 367-391.

\textsuperscript{69} Report and Petition, Alan Cranston to Elmer Davis, Subject: Activities in Los Angeles, 28 November 1942, Folder: OCIAA, 1941-1942 [folder 3 of 4], Box 13, Laves mss.

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
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Natalie Mendoza

population’s contributions to the war effort. These “all combine[d] with the work of the enemy to create a situation that may become very dangerous if remedies are not immediately sought and put into effect.” The petition recommended that both the city and the county each create two coordinating committees—one for the general welfare of the Mexican-descent population and the other to focus on defense projects—that would periodically meet, respectively, to further maximize the work they completed separately. These coordinating committees, the petition stressed, should include “a preponderance of Americans of Mexican extraction.” Moreover, the mayor and the County Board of Supervisors would individually and together, when applicable, consider a range of issues, such as those already mentioned and other related matters. The petition also made recommendations, more than familiar to us, for federal agencies and committees, such as the War Manpower Commission, the Fair Employment Practices Committee, the OWI, and the OCIAA, to act locally.\(^71\)

The County Board of Supervisors responded quickly, and voted to create a committee to consider the possibility of implementing the program presented in the petition. Cranston, Ruiz, and Monsignor Thomas J. O’Dwyer, the delegation leader, selected the members of the proposed County Board of Supervisors committee, and “took particular pains to see that a preponderance of the members were of Mexican extraction.”\(^72\) The County Board of Supervisors committee that was created as a result of the petition Cranston wrote was the Citizens’ Committee for Latin American Youth (not to be confused with the CCLAY). Monsignor O’Dwyer was originally nominated to chair the Citizens’ Committee, but he declined, stating “that he felt the chairman of this Committee should be of Latin American extraction,” upon which he recommend Ruiz for the position.\(^73\) The efforts of both Laves and Cranston following the October grand jury hearing demonstrate the federal government’s willingness to intervene in Los Angeles for the sake of pacifying a politically volatile situation. Both the Fierro de Bright and Bright prospectus and the creation of the Citizens’ Committee suggest the federal government’s influence among local leaders.

UCLA Anthropology Professor Harry Hoijer and Psychology Professor Franklin Fearing wrote a proposal following the October grand jury hearing that also suggests the federal government’s influence in local matters. Hoijer, apparently encouraged by his meeting with Laves, developed a research proposal with Fearing that they planned to submit for university approval. Hoijer shared it with Laves, who wrote University of California President Robert G. Sproul to express his support for the proposal as well as his hope that the university would approve it. It seems, however, that perhaps Laves did not make clear to Hoijer in his informal meeting with him that the proposal would need to emphasize remedial action programs over a

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71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 Minutes, Citizens’ Committee for Latin American Youth, 2 December 1942, Folder 6, Box 4, Ruiz Papers. Many of the CCLAY’s membership also worked on the Citizens’ Committee for Latin American Youth. Mailing List, Citizens’ Committee for Latin American Youth, 3 December 1942, Folder 16, Box 3, Ruiz Papers.
research project. In his letter to Sproul, for instance, Laves stated that while he supported the proposal's overall program, he advised that, "the time element determined by the present war should not be overlooked." As such, "it would be desirable to distinguish between the immediate and more long range phases" of the proposal. With what we know about the DIAAUS's budget troubles and its position on supporting research projects as related to keeping federal wartime emergency funds, we can say with some degree of certainty that Laves was pushing a remedial action program over a research one.

Hoijer and Fearing's research proposal also indicates the desire of UCLA's leading social scientists to use the situation in Los Angeles to further advance research on acculturation that could provide important data for devising long-term solutions to Mexican and Mexican American problems. Hoijer and Fearing's proposal was sent to University of Chicago anthropologist Robert Redfield and the newly created Joint Committee on Latin American Studies, for what we might presume to be a peer-review of a proposed research project. This proposal called for a two-year research program, budgeted at $25,000, that relied upon a collaboration of the university's social scientists, and which sought to provide information to local organizations in charge of implementing remedial action programs. Entitled, "Acculturation and Conflict in the Mexican American Community in Los Angeles," the proposal included familiar wartime and Good Neighbor rhetoric to justify its plan, and stated that UCLA social scientists, "recognizing an outstanding opportunity for research serving war needs...prepared a research program designed to provide quickly the data needed for the development of action programs." Such data included demographic information about the "Mexican" community, as well as "those phases of its social organization, attitudes, beliefs, and specific relations with the American community which are of immediate utility." UCLA's research program, the proposal asserted, was critical to the study of acculturation: "The close linkage existing at the University of California between anthropologists, psychologists, and sociologists ensure a major contribution to the acculturation problem while helping to resolve a crisis in Mexican-American relations." The proposal emphasized that UCLA would oversee the research program, and that local

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74 Walter H.C. Laves to Robert G. Sproul, 4 November 1942, Folder: Aid to Spanish-Speaking People of Southern California, A-IA-1744, Box 57, OIAA Records. The proposal Laves referenced in his letter to Sproul was not found in the DIAAUS records used in the present study. In piecing together available sources, however, we know with a high degree of certainty what was included in the Hoijer-Fearing proposal. Fearing, for instance, shared a "University Plan" with Carey McWilliams that was a version of a proposal shared with Anthropologist Robert Redfield and the Joint Committee on Latin American Studies (more on this latter proposal just ahead in the chapter) in 1942: both plans entailed an extensive research project, were budgeted at $25,000, and stressed the need for something like a settlement house or a community center to administer the types of remedial action programs the DIAAUS favored. Handwritten note, Franklin Fearing to Carey McWilliams, nd; "A Proposal for the Improvement of Relations Between the English and Spanish Speaking Residents in Southern California. A Program of Research and Action" nd; Folder: Latin American Relations Proposal, 1941, Box 27, McWilliams Papers.

75 For more on the Joint Committee on Latin American Studies, and the emergence and development of Latin American studies in the US more generally, see: Helen Delpar, Looking South: The Evolution of Latin Americanist Scholarship in the United States, 1850-1975 (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2008), 117-118.
organizations would be responsible for creating and implementing action programs funded by federal agencies, like the OCIAA. Some local action programs, such as educational centers and health centers, would also be of value to UCLA's research agenda. Hoijer and Fearing's proposal was eventually approved by UCLA administration, and while it seems that the DIAAUS gave informal support, the division never officially approved the UCLA proposal.

Though the DIAAUS did not approve the UCLA research-oriented proposal, it did eventually move forward with its suggestion for a central body to administer DIAAUS-funded programs: the DIAAUS approved $30,000 to support the newly established Southern California Council of Inter-American Affairs in June 1943. As an inter-American center, the Southern California Council was tasked with overseeing both a US-Latin American cultural diplomacy program and a domestic program to administer remedial action projects for the area's Mexican-descent population. Unlike other projects that received DIAAUS money on a matching funds basis, the Los Angeles inter-American center operated solely on federal financial support—it was created, in other words, just for the purpose of administering DIAAUS projects and funds.

In moving forward with its Los Angeles project, the DIAAUS was concerned about community involvement and representation. Specifically, the DIAAUS was vocal about the importance of including universities and Mexican Americans in the Southern California Council of Inter-American Affairs leadership. While the DIAAUS did not support UCLA's research proposal, for instance, it did want the university to be involved in the activities sponsored by the new inter-American center. In fact, it insisted that the Southern California Council include academics from universities—such as UCLA, the University of Southern California, and Occidental College—on its Board of Directors. When, for instance, the Southern California Council failed to include a UCLA representative on the Board, Raymond T. Rich, the Director of Inter-American Centers in the DIAAUS, lightly chastised it for doing so. Rich referenced

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76 The proposal cited here was first sent to Ralph Beals before being forwarded to Robert Redfield. "Project: Mexican-American Community Project in Los Angeles," nd, Folder 6, Box 18, Robert Redfield Papers, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

77 With the scant sources available, we can reasonably deduce that the "University Plan"/Hoijer-Fearing proposal (see footnote 74 above) was developed in collaboration with the DIAAUS, but was ultimately rejected. In January 1943, DIAAUS Assistant Director Joseph Weckler was scheduled to meet with Hoijer, Fearing, and the two men responsible for the October grand jury hearing, Harry Henderson and Harry Braverman. The purpose of the meeting was to "assist laying [the] groundwork [for a] local program [for the] rehabilitation [of] Mexicans." While the sources do not tell us the details of this meeting, another document suggests for us what these men discussed. In his note to Carey McWilliams regarding the "University Plan" (again, see footnote 74 above), Fearing mentioned what he thought was an odd turn of events in its development: "It is interesting to note that this plan has been officially rejected by the Coordinator's Office, although it was worked out in consultation with a member of the staff of that office." Handwritten note, Franklin Fearing to Carey McWilliams, nd; "A Proposal for the Improvement of Relations Between the English and Spanish Speaking Residents in Southern California. A Program of Research and Action" nd; Folder: Latin American Relations Proposal, 1941, Box 27, McWilliams Papers.

78 Project Authorization, Short Title: Assistance to Southern California Council of Inter-American Affairs, Inc., International Relations Section, nd; Memorandum, Raymond T. Rich to Nelson Rockefeller, 21 May 1943; Raymond T. Rich to Churchill Murray, 26 May 1943; Raymond T. Rich to Churchill Murray, 1 June 1943; Folder: Southern California Council of Inter-American Affairs, Box 51, OIAA Records.
recent correspondence with University of California President Sproul when he wrote, “the UCLA representative] omission is embarrassing from the viewpoint of my relationships and hence the Office relationships with President Sproul.” As a remedy, Rich recommended that “UCLA be strongly represented on the Advisory Council,” and that either Hoijer or Fearing be placed on the Minorities Committee.\textsuperscript{79}

The DIAAUS also insisted on Mexican American visibility in the Southern California Council’s leadership. This priority seemed to stem from a meeting Nelson Rockefeller had with Mexican American leaders just a couple of weeks before the Southern California Council opened its doors. In mid-May 1943, the Citizens’ Committee for Latin American Youth sent a letter to the OCIAA expressing its dissatisfaction with “the lack of Latin-American representation on the [Southern California Council’s] proposed board of directors.”\textsuperscript{80} Later that month, Ruiz and Eduardo Quevedo, a Mexican American originally from New Mexico and central figure in both the Citizens’ Committee and the CCLAY, met with Rockefeller, where they agreed upon how the Mexican-descent community and the federal government could work together: by placing “persons of Latin-American extraction, and leaders of the Mexican community” in leadership positions with the Southern California Council, such as in its Board of Directors.\textsuperscript{81}

The federal government seems to have been sincere about this stipulation. Both DIAAUS Director Victor Borella and Rich, for instance, reminded leaders about including Mexican Americans in the letters they wrote to the Southern California Council. “It is imperative,” Rich wrote to one individual, “as I am sure you understand, to do everything possible to have all the most responsible and important factions in Southern California feel that they are truly represented in the Advisory Council and also on the Minorities Committee itself.” Borella expressed similar sentiments to the council’s president, adding his confidence that the president had “this in mind, but in view of communications which have reached us, I feel that you would want me to include reference to this point.”\textsuperscript{82} Both the DIAAUS and Mexican American leaders, then, agreed that Mexican American visibility in federally funded projects was important for improving race relations and conditions in the Mexican-descent population in Los Angeles.

\textsuperscript{79} Nelson A. Rockefeller to Robert G. Sproul, 11 May 1943; Memorandum, Raymond T. Rich to Nelson A. Rockefeller, 21 May 1943; Raymond T. Rich to Robert G. Sproul, 22 May 1943; Raymond T. Rich to Churchill Murray, 1 June 1943; Folder: Southern California Council of Inter-American Affairs, Box 51, OIAA Records.

\textsuperscript{80} Minutes, Citizens’ Committee for Latin American Youth, 17 May 1943, Folder 6, Box 4, Ruiz Papers.

\textsuperscript{81} Manuel Ruiz to Nelson Rockefeller, 29 May 1943, Folder 5, Box 1, Ruiz Papers. Victor Borella to Churchill Murray, 3 June 1943, Folder: Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Minorities, Jan-Mar 1943, Box 57, OIAA Records. Quevedo, unlike much of the CCLAY membership, was not formally educated, and had spent much of his youth and early adult life as a working class laborer. He moved to Los Angeles in 1927, and in the coming years became actively involved in politics, campaigning for FDR, Upton Sinclair, Culbert Olson, Edward Roybal, and John F. Kennedy. For more on Eduardo Quevedo, see: Resumé, Eduardo Quevedo, nd, Folder 1, Box 1, and Eduardo Quevedo, A Biographical Presentation, 8 March 1964; Folder 3, Box 1, Eduardo Quevedo Papers, Ms349, Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, California.

\textsuperscript{82} Raymond T. Rich to Churchill Murray, 1 June 1943; Victor Borella to William S. Rosecrans, 3 June 1943; Folder: Southern California Council of Inter-American Affairs, Box 51, OIAA Records.
Many in the Mexican American leadership, however, seemed dubious about getting adequate representation in projects centered on Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Quevedo shared his observation with the CCLAY, for instance, that existing agencies that worked with the Mexican-descent community seemed to “resent the introduction of leadership of the Latin-American colony into the problem.” These groups could not admit their ineffectiveness, Quevedo stated, and though they meant well, it was important for “[p]eople of Latin-American extraction who understand their people’s problems” to work “in direct co-operation with any group which is interested in the problems of Latin-American Youth.” During a CCLAY meeting, attendees discussed Quevedo and Ruiz’s May conference with Rockefeller and a follow-up letter Ruiz had written to the Coordinator, where they ultimately decided that the OCIAA had perhaps not taken the conference all too seriously.83

Despite the DIAAUS’s insistence upon broad community representation in the Los Angeles project, Mexican American leaders faced resistance from the Southern California Council. As late as November 1943, the Southern California Council still had not elected any Mexican Americans to its Board of Directors. Only after several meetings with the DIAAUS California field representative, the Southern California Council leadership, and leaders from several Mexican American organizations, did this change. These meetings shifted perceptions on both sides. The Mexican American leadership, according to California field representative Maurice Hazan, came to view the Southern California Council as an ally and “not one which was set up to supersede Mexican leaders or to dictate to the Mexican American colony,” while the Southern California Council leadership eventually “swung around to the viewpoint that Mexican membership of the Board of Directors and throughout the Council in addition to the Mexican Advisory Committee would be most desirable.” Hazan was certain that the Southern California Council leadership would work “on the Board of Directors to overcome opposition” to the election of Mexican American board members. The following month, Ruiz and two other CCLAY members—of Mexican descent—were elected to the Board of Directors.84 The Local Mexican Affairs Coordinating Committee (LMACC), referred to above by Hazan as the “Mexican Advisory Committee,” was established in December, the same month in which Ruiz and his CCLAY colleagues were finally placed on the Board of Directors. The LMACC acted in an advisory capacity to the DIAAUS-funded Southern California Council, and was comprised of many CCLAY members, including Ruiz and Quevedo.85

83 Minutes, Coordinating Council of Latin American Youth, 18 January 1943; Minutes, Coordinating Council of Latin American Youth, 21 June 1943; Folder 8, Box 3, Ruiz Papers.
84 Memorandum, Jane Pijoan to Raymond Rich, 3 November 1943, Folder: Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Minorities, Jan-Mar 1943; Box 57; OIAA Records. Minutes of Meeting of Board Directors, Southern California Council of Inter-American Affairs, 1 December 1943; Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, Southern California Council of Inter-American Affairs, 19 January 1944; Maurice Hazan to Manuel Ruiz, 21 February 1944; Folder 7, Box 5, Ruiz Papers.
85 Maurice Hazan, the second California field representative discussed in more detail below, was the LMACC secretary. Blank Letterhead, Comite Coordinador Local de Asuntos Mexicanos/Local Mexican Affairs Coordinating
The prospects for Mexican American representation within the DIAAUS itself fared better than the leadership’s experience with the Southern California Council, though even here it experienced a minor hiccup. The DIAAUS sought Mexican American leadership in its search for a California field representative (a position ultimately held by Maurice Hazan—mentioned above) for the Spanish Speaking Minority Project, but this person needed to be of the right type. In his December 1942 recruitment letter to Ruiz, DIAAUS Director Victor Borella explained that the division was looking for a field representative who was “not involved in factional and group differences which, as you will well appreciate, would impair his usefulness.” Though Ruiz was more than interested in a federal position with the DIAAUS, he did not become the California field representative.

Instead, the position went to Ignacio L. López in January 1943. López was the owner of the Spanish-language newspaper, El Espectador, based out of Pomona in Los Angeles County. He was born in 1908 in Jalisco, Mexico, and came to the US as an infant with his parents. After living in El Paso, Texas for a decade, López’s family moved to Pomona, where, as the son of a Protestant minister, López had the uncommon experience of attending high school. After graduating in 1927, he attended Chaffey Junior College, and then Pomona College where he graduated in 1931. Shortly thereafter, López established El Espectador. López also served as the newspaper’s editor, and in the late 1930s, he used his publication, especially the editorial section, as a platform to forcefully comment on discrimination (he would do so until the last days of the newspaper in 1961). López worked briefly as the Spanish liaison to the Office of War Information from 1941 to 1942, and beginning as early as January 1943, he began his work with the DIAAUS. He was also a member of the CCLAY.

López worked as the California field representative, however, for only a handful of months that spring. It is unclear why López’s tenure was so brief, though it is certainly apparent that López and Borella did not see eye-to-eye on some matters. In March 1943, for instance, it appears that López wanted the DIAAUS to support a bill, which did not follow the division’s mandate of sticking to remedial projects and staying out of local and state politics. The director Committee, Advisory Committee to the Southern California Council of Inter-American Affairs, nd; Minutes of Meeting of Board Directors, Southern California Council of Inter-American Affairs, 1 December 1943; Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, Southern California Council of Inter-American Affairs, 19 January 1944; Maurice Hazan to Manuel Ruiz, 21 February 1944; Folder 7, Box 5, Ruiz Papers. 
86 Victor Borella to Manuel Ruiz, 24 December 1942, Folder 2, Box 1, Ruiz Papers.
87 It is unclear why Ruiz did not become the DIAAUS California field representative—there are no letters in the Ruiz Papers indicating why—but in the December 31 letter cited here he expressed much enthusiasm at the suggestion. Victor Borella to Manuel Ruiz, 24 December 1942, Folder 2, Box 1, Ruiz Papers.
89 CCLAY statement with biographical information, nd, Official Ballot, 18 July 1943, Folder 16, Box 3, Ruiz Papers.
admonished the field representative in a telegram “to not engage any official activity regarding this bill or any other legislation. Please confine activities to our project in Spanish Speaking Minorities.” By May, López resigned from his position over another disagreement—the DIAAUS appeared to have hired someone to supervise López in the Los Angeles office, and it seems that he did not want to work in a subordinate position. In a letter to López, Borella expressed his disappointment with his resignation as well as López’s general “attitude...in this whole matter.” Borella also resented the implication that the DIAAUS did not care about the Mexican-descent population as López did. The director further disagreed with López’s claim that he was a “yes-man,” pointing out that “in the short time you have been there you have been given quite free rein and two or three times your judgment was not sound.” Though Borella expressed his appreciation for López’s work, he stated that “I honestly feel the objective for which this Office is striving is more important than any one man's prestige.”

López appears to have discussed his resignation with Ruiz, because the latter wrote to Borella regarding the situation. Ruiz told the DIAAUS Director that the “the Latin-American minority” was insistent that “one of themselves” must serve in the leadership position. “In other local programs where Latin-Americans have acted as more background or served as mere props,” he continued, “history shows consistent failure and collapse.” López, Ruiz stated, had the “confidence of the minority here,” and his “[r]emoval...from [an] executive capacity [would] arrest [the] government program here.” Borella replied to Ruiz that there must have been a misunderstanding; López resigned, and had not been fired. Ruiz was likely motivated to write Borella by a general concern about Mexican American visibility in leadership positions; it was at this time, for instance, that the Citizens’ Committee, as mentioned above, wrote the OCIAA about the lack of Mexican American representation on the Southern California Council’s Board of Directors.

Though López was a member of the middle class, in occupation, education, and income bracket, he was too radical for the DIAAUS. Borella’s response to the idea of supporting legislation, for instance, suggests this, as does Borella’s claim that López’s “judgment was not sound” on a few occasions. Indeed, López was actively engaged in demanding equality and challenging discrimination in Southern California, and especially so at this time. During the spring that López worked for the DIAAUS, for instance, he railed against the Ontario City Council for refusing to submit a federal housing subsidy proposal—a municipal government level request for newly available federal funds to be used for replacing poor housing units with new structures—because it would disproportionately benefit the Mexican-descent population than it would the European American population. And following his resignation from the DIAAUS,


With López’s resignation, Maurice Hazan became the second DIAAUS California field representative. Hazan, it seems, was more amenable to complying with DIAAUS guidelines than López. Also important for the DIAAUS, Hazan was of Mexican descent. Hazan was born in Chihuahua, Mexico, and was of French and Mexican parentage. He was brought to the US in 1914, when he was about a year old, and he spent his childhood in Long Beach, California. Hazan worked for a radio station in Mexico in the late 1930s, and then had a short stint as an announcer for a radio station in Long Beach, before he began his work with the OCIAA in 1942. His first OCIAA position, actually, entailed managing the news copy for a San Francisco radio station for just one year before becoming the DIAAUS California field representative. Hazan remained the field representative for the duration of the war, and in this capacity, came to work with the LMACC and the CCLAY.

Despite the DIAAUS’s good intentions, securing Mexican American leadership in the Southern California Council and the DIAAUS was easier said than done. Though the federal government sought Mexican American representation in the project it funded, local figures were less inclined to include Mexican Americans in leadership positions. Even in searching for a Mexican American to fill one of its own positions, the DIAAUS did not easily find a candidate it deemed suitable for the job.

In Southern California, state and federal officials, social scientists, and Mexican American leaders seized upon the sense of urgency created by juvenile delinquency to bring federal attention to the broader set of problems afflicting the Mexican and Mexican American population. Carey McWilliams’ 1941 proposal, with its call for federal action on behalf of the


94 Victor Borella to Churchill Murray, 3 June 1943, Folder: Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Minorities, Jan-Mar 1943, Box 57, OIAA Records.


96 Maurice Hazan to Manuel Ruiz, 21 February 1944, Folder 7, Box 5; Official Ballot, 27 October 1944, Folder 16, Box 3; Ruiz Papers.
population, was a precursor to sympathetic allies’ more concerted effort during the 1942 October Los Angeles County Grand Jury hearing to do the same. The difference in 1942 was that sympathetic allies had added leverage: the sensationalized Mexican American youth crime wave, embodied in the Sleepy Lagoon murder trial and grand jury hearings, gave sympathetic allies national and international platforms from which to demand federal assistance in local and state matters. In this sense, we can interpret the 1942 Los Angeles County Grand Jury hearings as part of the larger story about how local authorities, sympathetic allies, Mexican American leaders, and the DIAAUS sought national visibility for the Mexican and Mexican American population as a regional interest group. When sympathetic allies described the population’s juvenile delinquency problem as historically constructed and regional in scope, they were reinforcing and contributing to the creation of a regional consciousness defined by a shared set of problems. Federal officials were more than willing to act on behalf of the Mexican-descent population in Los Angeles because of its concern about the impact the Sleepy Lagoon murder trial might have on US-Latin American relations. Walter Laves from the DIAAUS and Alan Cranston of the Office of War Information, for instance, met with local leaders to devise solutions. The DIAAUS eventually funded an inter-American center in Los Angeles that was administered by the Southern California Council of Inter-American Affairs, and which was responsible for both US-Latin American relations and domestic relations. DIAAUS officials also sought community representation, especially from universities and local Mexican American leadership, in the DIAAUS and the Southern California Council. Even with federal endorsement, however, Mexican American visibility in key positions proved challenging.
CHAPTER FOUR

The Model Good Neighbor: The Federal Obligation to New Mexico’s Forgotten People in World War II

In April 1947, Robert K. Carr, the executive secretary of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights, wrote to Joaquín Ortega, Professor of Languages and Director of the School of Inter-American Affairs at the University of New Mexico. The President’s Committee on Civil Rights was in the middle of hearing testimony on civil rights issues in the US, and in October the Committee would present its findings and recommendations to President Harry S. Truman in its report, To Secure These Rights. Carr wrote to Ortega because he had been told that the professor was someone “who has been much interested in the civil rights of the Mexican-Americans.” Ortega had overseen programs through the university that were funded by the domestic division of the Office of the Coordination of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA), the Division of Inter-American Activities in the United States (DIAAUS). Ortega complied with Carr’s request for information on his work and submitted a report on the “Spanish-Speaking minority” in New Mexico to the President’s Committee.

Ortega’s report emphasized New Mexico’s exceptionalism in the US Southwest. In New Mexico, Ortega explained, the Spanish speaking population broke down into two groups: Spanish Americans and Mexican Americans. Spanish Americans, or Hispanos, as this segment was often referred to, could typically trace their family genealogy back several centuries to the first Spanish families that lived in the region, and they tended to live in the upper and middle Rio Grande Valley. The Mexican American population, Ortega continued, which constituted around two percent of the total population, included those either recently immigrated or who were second generation US-born, and could be found “scattered in a broad band from the winter

2 A copy of Robert K. Carr’s April 29 letter to Joaquin Ortega is included in the report Ortega submitted to Carr on May 25, 1947. “The Spanish-Speaking Minority in New Mexico, Report submitted by the School of Inter-American Affairs, University of New Mexico at the request of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights,” May 1947, Provost Faculty Files Collection, UNMA 159, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico. Robert Carr had written others about the Mexican-descent population, including Carlos E. Castañeda in Texas. Robert K. Carr to Carlos E. Castañeda, 29 April 1947, Folder 45, Box 4, Series 7: Committee of 100 and League of Loyal Citizens, Alonso S. Perales Papers, Special Collections, University of Houston Libraries.
3 See the introduction to this study for more on Hispanic self-identification.
garden area of southwestern Texas to southern California”—along the US-Mexico border, in other words.4

Discrimination, Ortega stated, was a rarity in New Mexico. What discrimination did occur, however, was driven by two factors. The first factor was geography. European American migrants from neighboring states lived in areas that traced the state’s border, for instance, and held anti-Mexican views that native New Mexicans did not share. These included areas surrounding the upper and middle Rio Grande Valley: industrial locations in the western and eastern parts of the state; in the east generally where the Spanish speaking population was relatively small; and among the large Mexican immigrant population that lived in the south central region of New Mexico. Where there existed a large Hispano population, as found in the middle and upper Rio Grande Valley, discrimination was “less noticeable.”5

The second factor driving discrimination, Ortega continued, was based on class and not race, as many observers claimed. Class status, changes in the economy, and New Mexico’s Spanish culture on the one hand, and the “Southern standards” of racial superiority recent migrants to the state brought with them on the other, affected the Hispano population in two ways. Because the majority of Hispanics, Ortega explained, were rural land-owning subsistence farmers, they faced two choices in an increasingly urban state and economy: Hispanics could remain old-fashioned farmers; or they could enter the urban economy. Subsistence farming, however, was no longer a sufficient means of living in the state, nor did it provide Hispanics with the skills necessary to be competitive in New Mexico’s newer industries. Both options, then, put Hispanics at a disadvantage. Taken together, Ortega contended, cultural and class differences made Hispanics “doubly visible,” and led to the tendency among outsiders to assume that “racial” discrimination exists, whereas in reality there is mainly ‘class’ discrimination.” Moreover, the individual successes of Hispanics, according to Ortega, in business, politics and public office, and professional occupations, supported his claim that no institutional or group-based race discrimination existed in New Mexico. The university’s community programs, then, were not based on the type of discrimination Carr presumed in his letter. “We firmly believe,” Ortega stated, “that ‘issues create more issues’ and that raising issues without very valid reasons—and there are not such very valid reasons in New Mexico—would make the situation worse rather than better.”6 According to Ortega, whatever discrimination did exist in New Mexico was based on economic changes that affected class standing, and had little to do with race.

Ortega had expressed this view earlier. In a July 1943 conference, for instance, DIAAUS staff and local representatives met in Washington, DC, to discuss the Spanish Speaking Minority Project and how the division intended to carry out its plan in the US Southwest.

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4 According to Ortega, there were 250,000 Spanish speaking people in New Mexico, and Mexican Americans—as he defined them—comprised 5,000 of that total. “The Spanish-Speaking Minority in New Mexico, Report submitted to the President’s Committee on Civil Rights,” Provost Faculty Files Collection.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
Ortega oversaw the DIAAUS funds for the Barelas Community Center project in Albuquerque, and attended the conference to share his thoughts on New Mexico. Maurice Hazan attended as the DIAAUS field representative for California, and Pauline Kibbe, though not a DIAAUS field representative, attended to report her findings on Texas. While Hazan and Kibbe each, in varying degrees, identified discriminatory attitudes and practices as the central problems afflicting the Los Angeles area and the state of Texas, respectively, Ortega denied that discrimination existed in New Mexico. He claimed “the social situation of this [New Mexico] group is much better than that of Latin Americans in other states,” and that the “Spanish-speaking citizens in New Mexico” enjoyed civil rights, such as civic duty and franchise, in local and state politics. “The Spanish Americans of New Mexico,” Ortega stated, “suffer little if any social discrimination as a group.”

Contrary to Ortega’s claim, Hispanics did in fact complain about discrimination. Ortega, however, was not completely off the mark. In many ways, for instance, Hispanic complaints were more about identification and perception than they were about acts of discrimination. While Hispanics were certainly outraged at being denied access to public spaces, many were equally upset about being denied an American identity. Hispanics also understood the discrimination they experienced as a phenomenon imposed upon the population by migrants entering New Mexico from surrounding states, much as Ortega noted in his report to the President's Committee on Civil Rights. Ortega's contention, however, that “class” rather than “race” issues were the source of the Hispanic population’s problems is important to our story not because he claimed that racial discrimination was non-existent, but because it underscores a broader view about the state's economic and social development, what this meant for the Hispanic population’s conditions, and how this shaped the way New Mexicans and others sought to bring federal funds into New Mexico during the war. Put another way, Ortega's contention about discrimination begs the question: If racial discrimination was not the source of Hispanic problems in New Mexico, as was the case in Texas and California, then what was? On what grounds did New Mexicans attempt to obtain DIAAUS and other federal funds that were used to improve Hispanic conditions?

In this chapter, we find that rather than cite racial discrimination as a central source of problems Hispanics faced in New Mexico, Ortega and others portrayed the population as lying outside of American progress, and left to a traditional lifestyle that prevented it from entering the modern American economy. This chapter argues that local, state, and federal actors emphasized New Mexico’s pre-modern economy and society as the source of Hispano impoverishment, which allowed them to make structural and historical arguments about why the federal

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government ought to intervene in the state’s development. These figures sought funds from the DIAAUS and other federal agencies to continue programs funded by the New Deal, such as those found in Taos County and in the Barelas community in Albuquerque, that would help New Mexico transition from a rural economy to an urban one. World War II and the focus on US-Latin American relations provided New Mexicans and others with national and international stages from which to further elaborate upon the pre-modern economy argument: local leaders and officials argued that New Mexico’s agrarian economy and society, and its mixed population of Hispanics, Native Americans, and European Americans, resembled many Latin American communities, and thus offered an important demonstration site for implementing the Good Neighbor Policy in the western hemisphere. In emphasizing the state’s pre-modern economy as the source of Hispano problems, these figures contributed to the emergence of a regional consciousness premised on a set of problems—racial discrimination notwithstanding—that stemmed from structural and historical forces, and thus reinforced Hispano, Mexican, and Mexican American national visibility as a regional interest group.

Hispano complaints about discrimination suggest for us why New Mexicans tended to minimize racial discrimination as a significant issue in the state, and are important to our story since they highlight how New Mexican appeals for federal funds differed from those that came from Texas and California. Dennis Chávez, the US Senator from New Mexico, received numerous letters from Hispanics that illustrate some of the types of discrimination and prejudice they faced, and their responses to these incidents reveal some of the ideas they held about their self-identification. Many Hispanics, for instance, did not identify as being of Mexican descent; rather, they thought of themselves as Americans of Spanish descent. When they were discriminated against because they were viewed as Mexican, this misidentification bothered them just as much as the act of discrimination itself. Put another way: In New Mexico, discrimination based on misidentification did not constitute a racial discrimination problem the way it did in Texas and California. These letters also show that Hispanics and others viewed discrimination as an uncommon practice in New Mexico, and as a practice that came across state lines from elsewhere in the US Southwest.

Military service and the wartime agenda, as might be expected, shaped Hispano self-identification, imbuing it with a strong sense of Americanism. 8 Servicemen, however,

8 US Senator Dennis Chávez provides us with one way of understanding how Hispanics embraced “Americanism” as a way of being an American. In June 1942, Chávez spoke at the dedication ceremony for the Barelas Community Center’s newly constructed building during the League of United Latin American Citizens convention in Albuquerque. Chávez focused on “racial intolerance” in the state. This racial intolerance manifested in race prejudice and discrimination (perception and treatment, respectively), and was contrary to what Chávez referred to as “Americanism.” Chávez defined Americanism according to what he described as the Jeffersonian principle of “Equal rights to all...special privileges to none,” as embodied in the US Constitution. Americanism, simply put, meant ensuring equal rights to all US citizens regardless of race, social standing, political party preference, and religious
encountered discrimination despite enlisting in the US armed forces and embracing an American identity. In the summer of 1942, on at least two occasions, several young airmen from the Roswell Army Flying School attempted to go swimming at the Roswell Municipal Pool but were denied entrance; they were told that the facility did not allow “Mexicans.” In both instances, complainants described the experiences as humiliating and demoralizing to the soldiers who arrived at the facility to spend an afternoon swimming, “[N]ot even our soldiers’ uniforms,” one man explained in exasperation, “convinced that person that we are Americans.” In letters and in newspaper articles, many evoked the recent capture of New Mexican soldiers in the Philippines—and many of whom were of Spanish descent—to admonish the people of Roswell for the pool incident. “How do you suppose the boys on Bataan and Corregidor,” one letter to the editor asked, “would feel if they knew that the very thing they have fought for is being defeated here in their own home state—democracy and equality of man!” Others noted that while Roswell might have been an isolated event, and, in fact, an abnormal occurrence in the US and New Mexico, it was important to nip the problem in the bud: “Only a few are guilty,” one article noted, “But rot spreads, if not checked.” An airman, of Polish descent, who witnessed pool staff refuse admittance to a fellow airman of Spanish descent, wrote an anonymous letter to the Roswell Record, in which he decried the incident as a “disgrace and a black eye at Uncle Sam, to say nothing of the good neighbor policy [sic].” He likened the pool incident to Nazi racism, stating that it represented “a hive of racial intolerance,” reminiscent of “my father’s Poland after Hitler ‘Germanized’ it. It is no less, as long as above conditions exist.” The airman’s scathing remarks were not published in the newspaper.9

believe. For Chávez, then, racial intolerance that led to the denial of rights represented a gross inequality, and was therefore un-American. Though Chávez evoked race by using the phrase “racial intolerance,” the broader goal in his speech was to bring attention to inequality—inequality brought about by racial prejudice and discrimination, certainly, but the central issue for Chávez was how these practices ran counter to the principle of equality driving Americanism. Chávez’s political opponents criticized him for emphasizing “race,” but as might be expected, they missed altogether the ways in which he subtly linked racial tolerance to the principle of equality and rights found in the “precious, primitive documents of the Republic.” Chávez asserted, for instance, that raising standards of living to “a level of equality,” ensuring equal education across the state, and securing “a wage sufficient to raise [a] family in harmony with American living standards” did not seem like such outlandish requests in a society driven by Americanism. These issues were also based in meeting living standards that all New Mexicans stood to benefit from, and were not a matter of granting special or undue entitlements to Hispanos (on this point he seems to have differed from other New Mexican leaders who argued that the federal government, for instance, had an obligation to help the Hispano population). Moreover, Chávez seemed to envision a single “American race,” comprised of a diverse group of people of varying backgrounds who “believed in the ideals and traditions of America” delineated in the founding documents. True Americans, in other words, embraced and sought to uphold the principles outlined in the Constitution, especially equality for all citizens, regardless of background. For Chávez, at the heart of racial intolerance, or the American race question as he also called it, was inequality. Dennis Chávez to C.W. Morgan, 3 July 1942, Folder 1, Box 93; “Address by the Honorable Dennis Chávez, USS, at the Dedication Ceremonies at the Barelas Community Center, Albuquerque, Sunday Afternoon, June 14 [1942],” Folder 40, Box 71; Dennis Chávez Papers, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico.

9 Jake Lucero, “The Good Neighbor Policy or Charity Begins at Home” [photocopy of newsclipping, publication title unknown], nd; Letter to Editor, “Says Airmen Barred: Reader Declares Santa Feans Excluded at Roswell,” The Tribune [photocopy of newsclipping], nd; “Raymond Wheeler to Mr. Ortiz y Pino, nd; Joseph Rendon Sanchez
Other instances of discrimination occurred in places of business. One man wrote to New Mexico Governor John E. Miles, on behalf of “American citizens of the Spanish American race,” about a cantina located in Carlsbad that refused to serve him because he was “Mexican[,] as these fellows call us all.” This gentleman prefaced his letter with some biographical information that presumably established his American identity: he was a tax-paying, war bond-buying citizen, with eight US-born children, and one of whom was his son who was “dead or alive somewhere in the Philippine Islands.” Another man, who was not of Spanish or Mexican descent, wrote Chávez about discrimination he observed in dining establishments. Management, for instance, often refused service to Hispanics, he explained, by instructing the wait staff to ignore these tables. After some time, these would-be patrons eventually left the establishment. “Now this practice seems very unamerican [sic] to me,” he wrote, and “happen[ed] to soldiers and there [sic] lady friends, while they were in uniform.”

The experience of young men at military induction centers puts Hispano self-identification and sense of American identity into even greater relief. Inductees’ experiences reveal less about discrimination, but instead reveal a disregard for the distinct ways Hispanics self-identified. The induction centers in Texas presented a problem, and especially the one at Fort Bliss, located just across the southeastern New Mexico-Texas border in El Paso. Several complaints were sent to Chávez and New Mexico state legislator, Phillip M. Ludi, regarding the classification of Hispanics as “Mexican” on military records. One man caught wind of the matter, and in his letter to Chávez he explained that his son had been at Bataan, and that “[h]e was there, sir, as an American, not as a Spaniard [or] Mexican.” In response, Chávez wrote the War Department and asked that the situation be investigated. “These men are American citizens,” he added, and “are not of Mexican ancestry or citizenship, and [they] greatly resent being classified as other than that which they are.” One woman wrote to Chávez on behalf of her husband and her cousin. When her husband tried to correct the clerk, for instance, that he was an American of Spanish descent and not a Mexican national, he was simply ignored. The misclassification was very demoralizing for her husband, the woman explained, who “was going as an American soldier to fight for his country” to only “have some one turn around and classify [him] as Mexican” at a US military induction center. Phillip Ludi, a member of the New Mexico House of Representatives, also wrote Chávez about similar complaints he had received about Fort Bliss and other induction centers in Texas. A letter was, again, sent to the War Department, in which Chávez plainly stated that “New Mexicans of Spanish extraction are American citizens.”

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10 Angel Hernandez to New Mexico Governor John E. Miles, 28 August 1942; Joseph E. Rench to Dennis Chávez, 9 January 1943; Folder 1, Box 93, Chávez Papers.
Hispanos were “not being over-sensitive,” Chávez continued, and “[s]o long as they are American citizens by either birth or naturalization they cannot be classified as ‘Mexicans.’”

It is worth considering the military’s classification process for a moment since it further clarifies why Hispanos objected to being identified as “Mexican.” The problem in classifying these men seemed to stem from two identity categories listed on military forms—one for race and the other for citizenship. Mexican, for instance, was included in the race category. White and colored, race labels based on phenotype (observable, physical traits), were also listed in the race category, alongside labels that indicated origin of birth more than they did race as defined by phenotype. These labels included, for instance, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Hawaiian, Filipino, and Japanese. The citizenship category was where these men could indicate their status as a non-citizen, or as a US citizen by birth or naturalization. These two categories reflect the bureaucratic tendency to conflate race with nationality while also reinforcing the US’s prevailing black-white racial ideology, thus revealing the source of tension in these complaints. First, the Army classification rules made distinctions in citizenship based on a racial hierarchy. The existence of two identity categories, rather than a single citizenship category, indicates as much. Citizenship, in other words, was not colorblind, and identifying race alongside citizenship was important. Second, and somewhat paradoxically, race was conflated with nationality under the race category. Here, Mexican was placed alongside white and colored. Many understood Mexican as indicating Mexican origin of birth or citizenship, and still others considered Spanish- and Mexican-descent folks to be part of the white race, as discussed in the Texas chapter. The racial and hierarchical organization of citizenship on the military classification forms understandably posed a range of problems for people of Mexican descent, and especially those born in the US. Linking race to citizenship, in other words, stripped Mexican Americans of an American identity and the legal rights and protections afforded under it. As a type of

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11 Henry R. Lafoya to Dennis Chávez, 20 November 1942; Tillie M. Rivera to Dennis Chávez, 8 December 1942; Dennis Chávez to Tillie M. Rivera, 19 December 1942; Dennis Chávez to General George C. Marshall, 2 January 1943; Phillip M. Ludi to Dennis Chávez, 27 February 1944; Jose E. Espinosa to Phillip M. Ludi, 1 March 1944; Dennis Chávez to Major General J.A. Ulio, 1 March 1944; Folder 1, Box 93, Chávez Papers.

12 The description of military forms can be found in Joe Roy Lujan’s dissertation on Dennis Chávez. Joe Roy Lujan, “Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt era, 1933-1945” (PhD dissertation, University of New Mexico, 1987), 489-490.


14 Natalia Molina’s recent work, How Race is Made in America, is an important read for considering the role of immigration and citizenship on Mexican and Mexican American identity in the 20th century United States. Molina argues that 1924 to 1965 represents a critical moment for understanding why Mexican Americans remain outside the parameters that define American identity, keeping them, instead, in a state of illegality. Molina characterizes this forty-year period as an “immigration regime,” in which key pieces of immigration law shaped concepts of race and citizenship as they applied to Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Immigration laws and practices during this period, Molina contends, are critical to understanding Mexican race formation since they provided the structures and
bureaucratic group identification, the military classification forms are significant since they show that the federal government knew little about Hispano self-identification, and they indicate, more broadly, an important way in which full citizenship status was denied to the Mexican American population in the US Southwest.

Hispanos were also upset about discrimination in the state because they claimed it was not an indigenous development, but was a problem that transplants from other southwestern states brought with them. The reports Chávez received about discriminatory views and practices in New Mexico, for instance, came primarily from areas surrounding the Rio Grande Valley, close to the state border as Ortega noted in his 1947 report to the President's Committee. European Americans who came to New Mexico from other states, in other words, brought prejudiced attitudes with them that undoubtedly shaped their interactions with Hispanos. Erna Fergusson, a New Mexican writing in the 1950s, described the impact of Texans living in southern and eastern New Mexico. Though she admitted that the movement of Texans into New Mexico was good for commerce and the local economy, Fergusson stated that most Texans who entered the state brought deep prejudices with them. These were so egregious, Fergusson wrote, that the term *tejanos* was applied “to all prejudiced newcomers.” Moreover, southern and eastern New Mexico, or “Little Texas,” was distinctly “Southern” in its way of thinking. The Ku Klux Klan emerged in Little Texas in the 1920s, Fergusson noted, when newcomers brought their “crude fundamentalist cults of the Southern frontier,” along with “the South's phobia against the Negro and the *tejano*’s hatred of Mexicans.” Fergusson lamented that, “as Texans come in, and where they dominate, bad feeling grows and discrimination is practiced,” thus “lessening accompanying meanings tied to the development of these concepts. Molina employs a relational approach to understand race formation as it affected Mexicans and Mexican Americans—that is, she considers race formation as experienced by the Mexican-descent population in relation to other groups within the US racial hierarchy experiencing their own racialization process, and not as an isolated phenomenon only to be *compared* with these groups. Molina states that racialization processes can and should be understood as producing “racial scripts.” The utility in doing so, Molina contends, is in being able to view the distinct racialization experiences of African Americans, Mexicans, and Chinese immigrants, for instance, as having in common the development of a “script” that transcends the obvious differences among these groups. All groups, Molina states, have cultural representations attributed to them, shaped and reinforced by institutional structures and practices—all groups, that is, are subjected to a racialization process that produces a “racial script.” Racial scripts were and are “read” from constantly, informing us how to think about a group, thus shaping the way race formation takes place. The key here is not how these racial scripts differ in degree, but what they share in kind—they are a result of the racialization process, they build upon one another, and are transferred to other groups, contemporaneously and across time. Molina explains, for instance, than an African American racial script on birthright citizenship in 1857 differed from a racial script on birthright citizenship developed for Chinese immigrants in 1898, meaning the creation of a racial script on birthright citizenship for Mexicans in 1930s was going to be anything but clear. In this way, then, the multitude of race projects that exist within US history can be studied not only in relation to each other (rather than in comparison), but also across time and geography. Natalia Molina, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkely: University of California Press, 2014). David Gutiérrez’s foundational work, *Walls and Mirrors*, is also essential reading on the interplay of immigration, citizenship, and identity among the Mexican and Mexican American population. David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkely: University of California Press, 1995).
New Mexico’s extraordinary opportunity to make of its diverse heritages a richly patterned and truly democratic community.”

Other New Mexicans agreed with Ortega and Fergusson. In a letter to the Secretary of the Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce concerning discrimination in local businesses, Chávez wrote, “[p]ersonally...I abhor the qualification of nationality by the use of hyphens, but in New Mexico it seems that this procedure has been forced upon the native element by immigrants to the State.”\(^{15}\) One woman wrote to Chávez to praise his handling of an incident in which a few young men interested in an Army clerical position were turned away because they were of Spanish descent. In the letter she admonished the sergeant in charge at the recruiting office, stating, “I think that the guilty party should be punished. That Sargent [sic] should be removed from his position, he has shown that he is unamerican [sic]. I presume he is from Texas.”\(^{16}\) According to these native New Mexicans, discrimination against Hispanos was not homebred; rather, it was a problem that migrated into the state.

Hispanos’ experience with discrimination in the state provides us with a sense of their self-identification, but more importantly, it reveals the tendency among New Mexicans to minimize racial discord in the state. New Mexicans claimed that discrimination was not a problem indigenous to the state. Rather, newcomers brought their prejudices and discriminatory ways with them to New Mexico and created problems where none had previously existed. The important point here, in other words, is not to determine whether or not racial discrimination took place in New Mexico; rather, the point is that New Mexicans were inclined to de-emphasize racial discrimination as a prominent concern—even if it was clear that this was the issue—among the Hispano population, preferring to describe it as an anomaly brought on by outsiders and not native New Mexicans. This is significant since it helps clarify why New Mexicans and others advanced an argument about the state’s economy and society rather than make claims about racial discrimination and unequal treatment as we have seen in Texas and California.

Even before the war, New Mexicans and federal officials viewed the state’s pre-modern economy as the central problem contributing to Hispano impoverishment, and attempted to improve conditions in the state, especially in rural areas with dense Hispano populations, by relying on local, state, and federal funds. Federal funds came primarily from New Deal programs, but once the war broke out, these figures turned to the OCIAA and other federal agencies that could be compelled to assist New Mexico’s rural populations. The Taos County Project


\(^{16}\) Dennis Chávez to Victor L. Minter, 21 January 1943, Folder 1, Box 93, Chávez Papers.

\(^{17}\) Letter and enclosure, Amelia Valdez to Dennis Chávez, 27 June 1942 [newsclipping: Letter to Editor, “Charges Officer with Discrimination”]; Dennis Chávez to Miss Amelia Valdez, 3 July 1942; Folder 1, Box 93, Chávez Papers.
Chapter Four

Natalie Mendoza

illustrates local leaders’ early concerns about economic and social conditions in rural areas, and how in their efforts to obtain external funding, leaders argued that the Hispano population was a historically neglected group that warranted special consideration. Once the war began, local and federal figures began describing New Mexico as a state that was imperative to the success of the war and the Good Neighbor Policy. The Barelas Community Center, for instance, demonstrates how Joaquin Ortega portrayed New Mexico’s economic and social disadvantages as opportunities for advancing the Good Neighbor Policy. When local leaders emphasized New Mexico’s pre-modern economy and society as the source of Hispano impoverishment, they also reinforced the generally agreed upon claim that racial discrimination was virtually non-existent in the state.

The Taos County Project on adult education demonstrates New Mexicans’ early efforts to obtain funding from private and public resources to improve Hispano conditions in the state. Taos project leaders insisted that Hispanics were a historically neglected group that needed outside support. In June 1935, the New Mexico Department of Education sponsored a state conference on adult education at the University of New Mexico (UNM). From this conference, the State Committee on Adult Education was created to study adult illiteracy and make recommendations for statewide action. One recommendation the State Committee made was to develop a program in a single county “for the purpose of demonstrating the value of coordination and discovering appropriate techniques” in adult education. Taos County was selected as the site for the adult education project because it was “a typical, isolated Spanish county,” representative of its neighboring counties in the northern, mountainous part of the state. The county’s illiteracy rate was also among the highest in the state: 15.5% compared to the state’s average at 16.7% (already three times the national rate). The county was also selected because it had an educational center, the Harwood Foundation, located in the village of Taos that could support the adult education experiment.18

The Taos County Adult Education Project was a collaborative undertaking, and relied on the support of several state agencies, such as the Department of Education, the Health Bureau, the Department of Vocational Education, and the State Planning Board, as well as village and county schools, and private agencies. UNM also provided substantial support: the Harwood Foundation belonged to the university, and the UNM Extension Division provided services to the project as well. In January 1936, the Works Progress Administration approved six-months’ worth of funds to begin the Taos County Project. The project, however, was developed as a 5-year plan, and required a little over $25,000 per year.19 With little economic growth in the

18 “The Taos County Adult Education Project of the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque,” 1 April 1936; “Report of Adult Education Activities in Taos County, New Mexico, January 1, 1936 to December 31, 1936,” nd; and J.T. Reid to James F. Zimmerman [enclosure: “The Taos County Adult Education Program”], 17 February 1936; Folder: Harwood Foundation Adult Education Program, 1936, 1937, 1940, Box 5, James F. Zimmerman Papers, Center for Southwest Research, University Libraries, University of New Mexico.
19 Ibid.
county, minimal support from New Deal agencies, and not much help from the state, Taos County Project leaders sought financial support from outside of New Mexico.

Taos County Project leaders identified the Hispano population as a marginalized group with a problem worthy of funding. From 1936 to 1938, J.T. Reid, a specialist in adult education, and James F. Zimmerman, UNM’s president, tried unsuccessfully to obtain funding from the Carnegie Corporation for continuing the program at Harwood. The problem seemed to be that the American Association for Adult Education was not willing to recommend the proposal to the Carnegie Corporation since it focused on a Spanish speaking population—that is, it focused on “a special problem and not one directly applicable to adult education problems generally in American life.” The Association applauded Reid’s work, but it did not feel it could support the Taos County Project. Reid disagreed with the Association’s decision, and while he conceded that the population did indeed represent a “special problem,” he retorted, “but what group does not?” African Americans, Native Americans, farmers, and youth, he continued, were groups with their own unique problems, and “for whom special programs have been instituted already.” These groups were “all parts of our complex social and economic picture,” Reid stated, and “[s]o are the Spanish-speaking people of the Southwest.” More than African Americans and Native Americans, this population needed advocates since it was “far too needy to be articulate in [its] own behalf.”

After a third rejection in 1938, Reid decided to pursue Carnegie funds for a $4,000 grant to conduct a study of the Taos County Project that might be useful for obtaining the large grants the project needed. This time, Reid was successful. UNM President Zimmerman used the $4,000 to support George I. Sánchez as he conducted a year’s worth of research on New Mexico Hispanics and adult education in Taos County in 1939. The result was the publication of Sánchez’s *Forgotten People: A Study of New Mexicans* in 1940. Sánchez’s undergraduate and graduate training in the field of education made him well-qualified for the job, as did his experience as the director of the Division of Information and Statistics in the New Mexico State Department of Education from 1931 to 1935. Moreover, Sánchez had worked in rural schools in Bernalillo County (just south of Taos County) from 1923 to 1930, first as a classroom teacher and then as a principal.

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21 Morse A. Cartwright to J.T. Reid, 2 February 1938; J.T. Reid to Morse A. Cartwright, 12 February 1938; Robert M. Lester to James F. Zimmerman, 9 March 1938; J.T. Reid to Morse A. Cartwright, 12 November 1938; Morse A. Cartwright to J.T. Reid, 7 December 1938; Morse A. Cartwright to James F. Zimmerman, 12 December 1938; Folder: Harwood Foundation Adult Education Program, 1936, 1937, 1940, Box 5, Zimmerman Papers.
23 Ibid., 19-21, 31-37, 43-44.
Forgotten People provided the Carnegie Corporation with the research data called for in the grant proposal, but it also provided a historical and structural context for that data. As discussed in chapter one, Forgotten People likely shaped the way federal bureaucrats defined the Mexican-descent population. In New Mexico, however, it is clear that Forgotten People influenced the argument that the state’s traditional economy and social practices were the source of Hispanics’ impoverished conditions. Recall that Sánchez described the Hispano population as pre-modern, and thus unable to incorporate itself into modern American society. Moreover, the federal government was to blame for the population’s condition. According to Sánchez, the Hispano population had lived as the US’s stepchildren since the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. Unlike other subject groups affected by 19th century US imperialism, such as Native Americans, Filipinos, and Puerto Ricans, the federal government had ignored Hispanics. As a result, New Mexicans remained a traditional people—“isolated” and “forgotten” in the US Southwest—and lacking modern ways of living. Taos County exemplified this problem. Most important to Sánchez’s study was his contention that the federal government needed to not only take responsibility for its neglect of Hispanics, but it also needed to take action on their behalf.24 Sánchez’s study seemed to break the Taos County Project’s unlucky funding streak. Following the submission of Sánchez’s findings in early 1940, the Carnegie Corporation approved a proposal Zimmerman, Reid, and Sánchez had written to support the project for three years.25

UNM sought federal funding from the OCIAA to continue the Taos County Project beginning in mid-1942, months before the Carnegie funds were set to expire in September. With the war under way, UNM President Zimmerman emphasized the project’s relevance to both the war and the Good Neighbor Policy in his letters to the OCIAA. Joaquín Ortega first wrote to Kenneth Holland, director of the Division of Science and Education in the OCIAA, about funding the Taos County Project in June 1942, just as the DIAAUS was experiencing budgetary problems. Holland explained the recent developments to Ortega, and in August, Zimmerman wrote to Nelson Rockefeller to follow up on obtaining funds for the project. The university president explained to the Coordinator “how very important the Taos County program ha[d] been and is in our southwestern life and in the field of inter-American relations.” The Taos project, Zimmerman continued, was part of a set of programs UNM had been sponsoring for several years, including the one at the Barelas Community Center in Albuquerque, a project the DIAAUS was already supporting. These programs were interconnected and important not just to the community, but to US-Latin American relations. When Zimmerman later learned that the DIAAUS had secured its funds, he contacted Rockefeller, again, for more information.

25 George I. Sánchez to Gentlemen | University of New Mexico, American Association for Adult Education, Carnegie Corporation, 5 January 1940; Morse A. Cartwright to James F. Zimmerman, 23 March 1940; Folder: Harwood Foundation Adult Education Program, 1936, 1937, 1940, Box 5, Zimmerman Papers.
reminding the Coordinator that the Taos County Project was “so vitally related to the entire field of inter-American affairs.” Once funds were officially secured in the fall, the DIAAUS moved forward in November 1942 with seeking federal approval for proposals it had to table, including a $20,000 request for the Taos project. 26

In the end, however, it does not appear that the Taos County Project received any substantial DIAAUS funding. The Carnegie funds had expired in September 1942, and to keep the Taos County Project afloat until DIAAUS funds were approved and sent, UNM provided some funding to continue the project's work through the end of January 1943. By this time, Walter Laves, with whom Zimmerman had been corresponding about the proposal, was no longer director of the DIAAUS. The new DIAAUS leadership—Director Victor Borella and Assistant Director Joseph Weckler—asked Zimmerman for a statement regarding the Taos County Project, as well as an overview of the project's current status. 27 Zimmerman wrote Weckler with the information the DIAAUS had requested and made sure to emphasize the project's relevance to the war and US-Latin American relations. He explained that the Taos County Project was created as “a workable plan of rehabilitation in Spanish-speaking areas, adaptable throughout the Southwest generally,” and that its agenda included activities related to the war effort. The project, however, was in danger of being eliminated unless it could obtain funds to continue. Zimmerman asked that the DIAAUS provide $10,000 to support the Taos County Project for the remainder of the fiscal year, which ended July 1. 28 Despite Zimmerman's efforts, the Taos County Project did not receive DIAAUS funding.

Other figures similarly attempted to direct federal dollars to New Mexico in an effort to revitalize projects begun with New Deal programs, especially now that the war and the Good Neighbor Policy provided them with some leverage for stimulating the federal government's interest in the state. These figures argued that New Mexico's resources, both human and physical, were critical to the war and US-Latin American relations. A memo Alfred M. Hurt, Assistant Director of the Food Supply Division in the OCIAA, sent Nelson Rockefeller regarding the Farm Security Administration (FSA), a New Deal agency, in late July 1942 illustrates this effort. Though the memo presented a proposal for a regional program, the examples it included drew upon earlier documents centered on New Mexico. 29

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27 James F. Zimmerman to Joseph Weckler, 18 February 1943, Folder: Harwood Foundation, Box 5, Zimmerman Papers.

28 Ibid.

29 The two documents on New Mexico were: a memo prepared for Allan G. Harper; and a plan, “Harnessing the Southwest for War Production,” written by J.N. Spencer and Bernard Frank. Memorandum, Andrew R. Cordova
The FSA contacted the OCIAA’s Food Supply Division because it was encountering difficulties sustaining its work among rural people living in the US Southwest, and was about to face even more with pending reductions in congressional appropriations. The memo that Hurt sent on behalf of the FSA to Rockefeller pointed out that while the federal government stood ready to support food production and distribution in Latin American countries, it was failing to do so with the Mexican-descent population in the US Southwest. Existing agencies, such as the FSA, but also the Soil Conservation Service, Indian Service, Grazing Service, Forest Service, and Reclamation Service, had the facilities and resources to support rural development, but were lacking the funds to begin work. The Food Supply Division memo added that the federal government should encourage the development of “minor industries” based on “the attributes of Spanish-American and Indian cultures and community organization”—that is, based on skill sets these populations already possessed. Lens grinding, manufacturing rope and camouflage nets, and hand weaving, were among some of the war-related industries that the federal government could help support in these southwestern communities.\(^{30}\)

As a solution, the memo proposed that the federal government create a Southwestern Minorities Authority that oversaw an “integrated program” of existing local, state, and federal agencies. The Southwestern Minorities Authority would also have the power to disburse much-needed funds to these agencies. The Food Supply Division memo framed the problem in the rural US Southwest and its solution as region-wide in scope, but the development of minor industries in lens grinding and rope manufacturing, for instance, were suggestions pulled from two documents prepared specifically for the state of New Mexico.\(^{31}\) The Taos County Project and the Southwestern Minorities Authority proposal show the long-standing concern of New Mexicans and others about the economic and social development in the state’s rural areas, as well as how these figures seized upon the wartime emergency and Good Neighbor Policy to bring federal funds into New Mexico.

The Barelas Community Center proposal illustrates two ways in which local leaders emphasized New Mexico’s pre-modern economy and society during the war to bring DIAAUS funds into the state.\(^{32}\) The first way was to offer up the Barelas center as a model project in US-Latin American relations, and the second way was by insisting on New Mexico’s special role in

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\(^{30}\) Alfred M. Hurt to Dennis Chávez, 30 July 1942 [enclosure: “Copy of Memorandum Brought to the Attention of Nelson Rockefeller,” nd], Folder 4, Box 90, Chávez Papers.

\(^{31}\) Ibid.

\(^{32}\) The Barelas Community Center received $14,600 from the DIAAUS on May 26, 1942 to support the project there for one year. It later received a $1200 grant to support a recreational program for eight months from 1943 to 1944. "Quarterly Progress Report of the Barelas Community Center and Social Service Training Program, June 1, 1942 to September 1, 1942, Submitted to the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs by the University of New Mexico," September 1942, Folder: New Mexico Barelas Community Center 1942, Box 5, Zimmerman Papers. Proposed Project Authorization, Title: Assistance to Education Program in Barelas Community Center, n.d., Folder: Barelas Community Center, New Mexico, AIA6-4265, Box 57, OIAA Records.
the US Southwest and the western hemisphere in advancing the Good Neighbor Policy.\textsuperscript{33} Barelas was a village adjacent to the city of Albuquerque. The Barelas Community Center was first established as a recreation facility in 1934 with assistance from the National Youth Administration (NYA), and five years later, the Albuquerque council of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) assumed sponsorship of the center. The Albuquerque council constructed a new building for the center through local and federal collaboration: the Works Progress Administration provided funds; LULAC and local residents raised $17,500; the city offered land for the new building; and the NYA provided labor.\textsuperscript{34} It is very likely that Joaquín Ortega, as the director of the School of Inter-American Affairs, wrote the Barelas proposal submitted in April 1942.

Joaquín Ortega was not a New Mexican Hispano, but he was a Spanish American. He was born in Spain and obtained his undergraduate degrees from the Cordoba Institute and the School of Commerce in Madrid and Málaga. He came to the US in 1915 and studied Economics at the University of Michigan and then went on to study at the University of Wisconsin, where he received his Master’s degree in 1917. Ortega conducted research in both the US and his native Spain while also teaching in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Wisconsin. In 1930 he became chair of the department. In 1936, he naturalized as a US citizen.\textsuperscript{35} Ortega came to New Mexico in 1941 to direct the newly established School of Inter-American Affairs at UNM (he also obtained a faculty position as a Professor of Spanish).\textsuperscript{36}

The Barelas proposal described the community center as already doing important local work in a rural area that exemplified the federal government’s hemispheric policy. The Barelas Community Center, the proposal claimed, was “the most creditable work of cooperation and civic responsibility done in recent times by a Spanish-speaking group of this region.” Earlier in the year, LULAC and the School of Inter-American Affairs had begun a joint program aimed at selecting and training young Spanish speaking men and women in leadership and social service to the community. With federal funds, this social service training program, as well as the numerous activities provided by the community center—nutrition, craft, and citizenship courses, a weekly newspaper, and pre-natal and post-natal clinics—could be expanded to improve conditions in the Barelas community, thus “provid[ing] a well-rounded community service

\textsuperscript{33} By the end of the war, J. Manuel Espinosa, whose family lineage could be traced to the first Spanish families in both Colorado and New Mexico, would echo Ortega’s contention that New Mexico held a special place in the US Southwest and the hemisphere. J. Manuel Espinosa, “New Mexico as a Historical Laboratory of the Good Neighbor Policy: With Special Reference to the Hispanic-American Cultural Contribution,” \textit{The Americas}, Vol. 2, No. 2 (October 1945): 211-219.

\textsuperscript{34} Cynthia Orozco, “Regionalism, Politics, and Gender in Southwest History: The League of United Latin American Citizens’ Expansion into New Mexico from Texas, 1929-1945” \textit{The Western Historical Quarterly} Vol. 29, No. 4 (Winter 1998), 462, 473-475.

\textsuperscript{35} “Ortega, Joaquin,” News Service, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, 4 March 1944; “Joaquin Ortega Dies in Spain,” [photocopy of newsclipping, publication unknown], 25 August 1955; “In Memoriam,” [photocopy of newsclipping, publication unknown], nd; Provost Faculty Files Collection.

\textsuperscript{36} James F. Zimmerman to Joaquin Ortega, 3 June 1941, Provost Faculty Files Collection.
program that might stand as a demonstration project.” Similar centers and programs could be developed elsewhere in New Mexico, in other southwestern states, and in Latin America. The School of Inter-American Affairs and LULAC, the proposal stated, wanted the Barelas Community Center to “become a kind of Hull House for the Spanish-speaking section of our national population, and for the peoples of the Latin republics of America.”

To emphasize the “strategic importance” of the Barelas Community Center to the Good Neighbor Policy, the proposal related Barelas’ demographics and economy to other southwestern communities, but especially to Latin American communities. Eighty-five percent of the Barelas population was Spanish speaking, with “the remainder being English-speaking Americans and Indians.” And though a substantial number of the Spanish speaking population included Mexican immigrants, the population was primarily “native-born American citizens, traditionally a pastoral and agricultural people now forced into a rapid transition to urban life and a wage economy.” There were numerous communities, the proposal noted, in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America “with closely similar situations and problems.” New Mexico, according to the proposal, was a “Little Latin America”: the populations were similar, “the cultural levels...about the same, and the stage in transition for rural to urban life conditions [was] likewise comparable.” The New Mexican Spanish speaking population descended “for the most part, from the original Spanish and Mexican colonists,” and the “Indians of New Mexico” were “racially and culturally akin to the Indians of Mexico and other Latin American countries.”

New Mexico’s pre-modern economy and society, in other words, were a boon to the war effort and the goals of the Good Neighbor Policy.

In a speech Ortega wrote for the School for the Rio Grande Valley in April 1942, he similarly described New Mexico as important to the Good Neighbor Policy, while also hinting, albeit somewhat hesitantly, at discrimination in the state. The School for the Rio Grande Valley was jointly sponsored by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the US Department of Agriculture and UNM’s School of Inter-American Affairs. The five-day event brought together figures from state and federal agencies to discuss problems in education, employment, and health among “the Rio Grande People”—Hispanos, Native Americans, and European Americans. Upwards of 175 people listened to experts speak on these issues as they related to the war and the Good Neighbor Policy. Among the experts presenting were J.T. Reid, George I. Sánchez, Carey McWilliams, and Allan G. Harper, the Executive Officer of the Interdepartmental Rio Grande Board of the US Department of Agriculture and the Department of Interior.

37 “A Project for the Rehabilitation of Spanish-Speaking People Based on the Barelas Community Center of Albuquerque, New Mexico,” April 1942, Box 5, Folder: New Mexico Barelas Community Center, Zimmerman Papers.

38 Ibid.

39 “An Over-All Picture of the Extra-Curricular Activities in Inter-American Affairs of the University of New Mexico, submitted by the School of Inter-American Affairs, University of New Mexico,” October 1942; and Program, “School for the Rio Grande Valley on The War and Cultural Relations in the Rio Grande Valley,” April 27 to May 1, 1942, Folder: Departments—Inter-American Affairs 1942-1947, Box 3, Zimmerman Papers. Carey McWilliams,
Similar to the Barelas proposal, Ortega’s speech elevated New Mexico’s role in forging US-Latin American relations. Ortega stated, for instance, that within the US Southwest, the state “should lead in offering norms for the solution of difficult problems of adjustment” held in common by the Mexican-descent population in the region, through programs aimed at improving health, nutrition, housing, education, and economic conditions. New Mexico was where “the most cohesive Hispanic population in the United States” lived and held a considerable amount of political power. It was also where “one encounters fewer antagonistic attitudes—far from perfect as the situation is—than in other states.” Within the hemisphere, Ortega continued, New Mexico was “destined to be the bridge between the two Americas.” The Native American, Hispano, and European American cultures in the state, though “developing in parallel lines,” were nonetheless “united in interest and allegiances.” Thus, “there was no place in this hemisphere better equipped than New Mexico to become a synthesis of the Americas.” New Mexico offered, in other words, an existing model of successful relations between Spanish speaking, English speaking, and indigenous peoples.

Though Ortega stated that “Anglo, Hispano, and Indian” alike lived as “impoverished citizens,” he did express some concern about prejudice among these groups. Ortega seemed to be responding, for instance, to biological arguments made against supporting remedial programs when he stated, “[w]e are morally bound to give a full opportunity to them [impoverished citizens] before we begin to talk of so-called ‘inferiority.’” “There was not an iota of evidence,” Ortega continued, “as to the absolute inferiority of any human group.” In an effort to appeal to his audience’s patriotic sensibilities, Ortega declared his certainty “that the boys of New Mexico” at Bataan were “not carrying on their puny racial feuds” having “face[d] the great truth, Death.” Ortega warned his audience to “be humble before certain biological facts upon which we have no control, and refrain from being so idiotic as to make of them a title of honor”—to avoid assigning labels of inferiority and superiority, in other words, to biological traits that had little meaning beyond physical appearance.

While Ortega’s remarks suggest that prejudice and discrimination against the Hispano population were clearly issues in the state, he also attempted to minimize them. He admitted, for instance, that the most common discrimination practiced in the state was against the Hispano population by the European American population. He also stated, however, that he knew of cases in which Hispanos discriminated against European Americans, as well as “of cases of discrimination among Anglos and among Hispanos themselves.” Ortega later acknowledged the numerous “disagreeable incidents and misunderstandings in the past between Anglos and


Ortega was unable to deliver the speech due to illness. Instead, UNM President James F. Zimmerman read the address on his behalf. Joaquín Ortega, New Mexico’s Opportunity: A Message to My Fellow New Mexicans (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1942), inside cover note. 1, 4-6, 8.

Ibid., 2-3, 15-16.
Hispanos,” but did not recount them in his address, stating only that he “want[ed] to forget them.” Instead, Ortega preferred a more dispassionate approach to these problems; he was “not interested in over-dramatizing, in gloating over human weaknesses,” for instance, and was “only interested in ascertaining facts with the warm detachment [original emphasis] of ethics and intellect.” Ortega’s seemingly indecisive stance on discrimination in New Mexico suggests that he was well aware of discrimination in the state, but clearly did not want to call too much attention to it.

Instead, Ortega brought attention to historical and structural causes of Hispano conditions that were based on an argument familiar to his contemporaries interested in the Mexican-descent population in the US Southwest: the pre-modern economy and society argument George I. Sánchez made in Forgotten People. Ortega emphasized the state’s “change from a use economy to an income economy [original emphasis],” and its “deadly” impact on Native Americans and Hispanos. The “discriminatory competitive system” that accompanied this shift placed Hispanics at a disadvantage, and the “inexorable march of progress [made] it necessary for the Hispano to accept the new life or perish.” Ortega did not blame Hispanics, however, for lacking the modern skills and aptitude to succeed in the new and unfamiliar economy. “For the truth is that America,” Ortega asserted, “has partially failed—to put it mildly—as a colonizing power in New Mexico, and we have to begin thinking one hundred years after the [American] occupation [beginning in 1848] how best to solve some of the most elementary problems of acculturation.” Hispanics should be given their due credit, he continued, for “adapt[ing] themselves fairly well to the changed situation, in spite of the inequities and obstacles placed in their way to a full American partnership.”

Other New Mexicans also made the conscious decision to minimize racial discrimination as a central source of Hispano problems. A university committee created in 1943, as a result of a second DIAAUS grant the School of Inter-American Affairs received, illustrates this point. Ortega was a member of the Committee on Inter-American Activities in New Mexico that included university faculty from several fields—such as anthropology, history, modern languages and literature, economics, education, and sociology—whose work centered on the US Southwest and Latin America. The committee was tasked with developing a plan for a statewide program that sought cooperation with outside agencies and officials from throughout New

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42 Ibid., 12-13, 14.
43 Ibid., 17-19.
44 UNM received $10,000 to support the Committee on Inter-American Activities in New Mexico for one year of work beginning the summer of 1943. The university would later receive $4,900 to support training in community organization and planning for a period of eight months from 1944 to 1945. In total, then, between the funds the Barelas Community Center received (noted earlier) and the two proposals described here, the DIAAUS approved a total of $30,700 for the state of New Mexico between 1942 and 1945. Project Authorization, Short Title: Aid to the Spanish-Speaking People of New Mexico, nd; and Renewal of Project Authorization, Short Title: Aid to the Spanish-Speaking People of New Mexico (Extended), nd; Folder: Aid to the Spanish-Speaking People of New Mexico, A-IA-1718, Box 57, OIAA Records.
The Committee on Inter-American Affairs in New Mexico decided early on, for instance, that it was important to de-emphasize civil rights issues in the state. This is best captured in the committee’s own words:

“[T]he matter of “civil rights” and other aspects emphasizing the problem of discrimination will be deliberately left out of publicity in New Mexico for the reason that dwelling on them will do more harm than good. Spanish-speaking New Mexicans participate fairly well in the social and political life of the state, are proud of this fact, and do not like to be treated as “submerged.” And many Anglos who are kindly disposed towards them do not like either to be placed on the defensive. Here in New Mexico we must contrive special ways to meet the situation.” [original quotation marks]

Emphasizing New Mexico’s pre-modern economy and society, as well as the state’s favorable geopolitical position in promoting the Good Neighbor Policy, meant that Ortega and others were able to insist that the federal government provide support to the Hispano population without discussing the discrimination issue that most Hispanos already described as the exception rather than the rule.

The tendency in New Mexico to de-emphasize racial discrimination, or to describe it as a problem that migrated into the state rather than one that developed within its borders, highlights important differences between New Mexico and the two other states included in this study, Texas and California. The first difference is that Spanish lineage was central to Hispano self-identification, and thus discrimination in New Mexico carried a different meaning for Hispanos than it did for their counterparts in Texas and California. When Hispanos were denied service in public spaces because they were identified as “Mexican,” these experiences registered as an assault on Hispano self-identification as much as they did on civil rights. The second difference is that local leaders deliberately avoided any discussion of racial discrimination in their efforts to bring federal funds into the state. The New Mexican proclivity to minimize racial discrimination certainly explains this. More importantly, though, local leaders left racial discrimination out of their appeals for federal funds because they instead argued that New Mexico’s traditional economy and society created Hispano impoverishment. Local leaders had described rural New Mexico and its Hispano population as pre-modern since before the war, and when the US entered the conflict, they continued to use this characterization to insist that the state was important to the war emergency and US-Latin American relations. In emphasizing the state’s pre-modern economy and society, New Mexicans contributed to the emergence of the Mexican-

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45 “Quarterly Progress Report of the Project ‘Inter-American Activities in New Mexico,’ July 1 to September 15, 1943,” 15 September 1943, Box 4, Folder: Department of School of Inter-American Affairs, 1943-1944, Zimmerman Papers.
46 Ibid.
descent population's regional consciousness: the argument was premised on historical and structural factors that contributed to a set of problems Hispanics, Mexicans, and Mexican Americans shared in common across the US Southwest.
CONCLUSION

The Good Neighbor Policy and World War II were two global events that triggered an important moment of change in the history of the US federal government’s relationship with the Mexican and Mexican American population in the US Southwest. As a foreign policy of non-intervention, the Good Neighbor Policy sought to improve the US’s image and relations with nations in the western hemisphere by encouraging “mutual understanding and cooperation,” rather than imposing policies that advanced US interests at the expense of Latin American interests, as had happened under previous administrations. The Good Neighbor Policy pursued improved relations through both economic and cultural diplomacy, the latter of which was a new endeavor in US foreign relations. Cultural diplomacy aimed to change perceptions within the US and Latin American nations by promoting the idea of a common American and democratic heritage in the western hemisphere. The war in Europe was already underway when the federal government created the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA) in 1940 as the federal agency responsible for implementing the Good Neighbor Policy in Latin America.

As early as 1941, Mexican Americans and European Americans in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas began writing letters to federal officials insisting that the Good Neighbor come home to the Mexican and Mexican American population in the US Southwest. How could the US hope to improve relations in Latin America, they reasoned, if the US had failed to support the basic well being of its resident Latin Americans? When the US became a belligerent nation in late 1941, local figures used the wartime emergency to bolster their arguments about the need for a domestic version of the Good Neighbor Policy, warning that, in the global fight against fascism, the US was obligated, as a leading democratic nation, to take responsibility for the long-neglected and impoverished Mexican-descent population living within its own borders.

In response to local demands for a domestic Good Neighbor Policy, the OCIAA created the Spanish Speaking Minority Project in its Division of Inter-American Activities in the United States (DIAAUS) in early 1942. The Spanish Speaking Minority Project led to the synergistic creation of an awareness of the population as a regional interest group: both federal and non-federal actors identified Mexican and Mexican American communities in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas as facing the same set of problems, and thus cultivated and reinforced the population’s national visibility as a regional interest group. The emergence of a Mexican and Mexican American regional consciousness, or an awareness of the problems the population held in common in the US Southwest, is significant because identifying the Mexican-descent population as an interest group in this early period was easier said than done: self-identification varied by community and state, for instance, and local and federal governments demonstrated repeatedly both a disregard and grossly inadequate understanding of how
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Mexican and Mexican American communities chose to self-identify. Only by the late 1960s, for instance, would both Mexican American leaders and federal agencies make a calculated effort to define the population as a unified group with political interests.

The OCIAA’s Spanish Speaking Minority Project represents an important change in the historical relationship between the federal government and the Mexican and Mexican American population. Prior to World War II, the Mexican-descent population was viewed as embodying “the Mexican Problem,” which encapsulated a range of traits and behaviors many European Americans believed accurately characterized Mexican and Mexican American people: the population was generally viewed as biologically inferior, disease-ridden and dirty, criminally-inclined, unwilling to assimilate, to learn English, to naturalize, and to engage in civic society. The widespread prejudice against and perception of the Mexican-descent population as a burden to society is most clear in Mexican Repatriation. When the Great Depression hit and public and private sources of relief were scarce commodities, Mexicans and Mexican Americans were viewed as a drain on society, and were not only denied government services and funds, but both citizens and non-citizens were repatriated and deported to Mexico. Federal, state, municipal, and private agencies contributed to the forcible repatriation and deportation of an estimated 400,000 to 1 million Mexicans and Mexican Americans between 1929 and 1939.¹ When the OCIAA created the Spanish Speaking Minority Project in 1942, then, and defined the Mexican and Mexican American population as facing a set of problems—rather than embodying a problem—that demanded a federal response, it marked an unprecedented move in how the federal government viewed and interacted with the population.

“The Good Neighbor Comes Home” is a story about how US foreign policy and World War II shaped what historical actors in Southern California, New Mexico, and Texas thought about the federal government’s responsibility to the Mexican and Mexican American population.

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It is also a story about how local, state, and federal actors came to view separate Mexican-descent communities in these states as comprising a single population with similar needs and concerns. In Texas, for instance, local leaders expected the federal government to support, rather than undermine, their efforts to make tangible improvements in the Mexican and Mexican American population in both the state and across the US Southwest. George I. Sánchez and his colleagues at the University of Texas at Austin sought DIAAUS funds to support research that could provide critical information about the Mexican-descent population: this information could be used for developing remedial programs, as the DIAAUS preferred, but could also be used to develop long-term solutions that could last beyond the war. The DIAAUS, however, insisted that remedial programs, and not research projects, were the most efficient way to address both the population's most pressing needs while also promoting the war effort and US-Latin American relations. Creating a federally supported, region-wide program that integrated the agencies, organizations, and institutions already in place in various communities was also important to local leaders. Though the DIAAUS supported regional collaboration, it did not want the federal government to take the lead in organizing a region-wide program as desired by local leaders. In this regard, the DIAAUS was careful to preserve the line dividing federal and state authority. When the political stakes were higher, however, and Mexican American leaders in Texas sought to leverage the Good Neighbor Policy and the war to secure passage of antidiscrimination legislation, the DIAAUS and other federal officials readily blurred the line between federal and state relations by supporting the state in its efforts to avoid passing such legislation.

Sympathetic allies in California insisted that the federal government intervene on behalf of the state’s Mexican-descent population since local and state authorities had long-failed to respond to the population’s needs. Carey McWilliams, Chief of the state’s Division of Immigration and Housing, first wrote to the head of the OCIAA, Nelson Rockefeller, in the fall of 1941 about funding a statewide program for the Mexican and Mexican American population. McWilliams’ proposal garnered widespread publicity and support: politicians, bureaucrats, social scientists, and other academics in California and elsewhere in the US Southwest supported his call for federal intervention, and added that McWilliams’ program should extend to the entire southwestern region. Months later, after the US entered the war, the increasing concern over Mexican American juvenile delinquency in Los Angeles led to grand jury hearings that gave local leaders national and international platforms for demanding federal action. During the 1942 Los Angeles County Grand Jury hearings, sympathetic allies described juvenile delinquency as one of several problems afflicting Mexicans and Mexican Americans that stemmed from historical and structural prejudice and discrimination. Collectively, the grand jury testimonies repeated McWilliams’ 1941 call for federal intervention. By this time, the federal government was already concerned about juvenile delinquency in Southern California, and federal officials were quick to offer support to local leaders in defusing the situation there. One
solution was to create an inter-American center to administer DIAAUS projects, and another was to increase Mexican American representation in leadership positions.

New Mexicans similarly insisted that the federal government had a responsibility to intervene on behalf of the Hispano population in the state, but unlike what happened in Texas and California, local leaders and others denied that racial discrimination contributed to Hispanics’ impoverished conditions. Rather, Joaquín Ortega and others at the University of New Mexico cited the state’s pre-modern economy and society as the source of Hispano conditions. Local leaders argued that the federal government had an obligation to help bring New Mexico’s traditional economy and society into the 20th century because it had failed to do so a hundred years before when the end of the US war with Mexico brought Hispanics, Mexicans, and Mexican Americans under US responsibility. Local leaders and federal officials added wartime and foreign policy rhetoric to this argument by drawing parallels between New Mexico and Latin American countries: the state’s agrarian economy, society, and mix of Hispano, Native American, and European American inhabitants, these figures pointed out, was similar to many rural communities in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America. New Mexico, leaders reasoned, was an important site for implementing Good Neighbor policies, and thus the federal government ought to direct much of its resources and attention to the state.

Local actors in Texas, California, and New Mexico called upon the federal government to take action in their respective states for two reasons. The first reason was that municipal and state agencies were not adequately meeting the needs of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in each state; and the second reason was that Mexican American leaders and sympathetic allies viewed local problems as regional problems that required federal support. Though each community varied from one another to some degree, the commonalities among them were too great to ignore: municipal and state authorities either could not or would not address common concerns about housing, employment, education, health, and discrimination. The obvious solution was to recast local problems as regional ones, and to demand that the federal government intervene since municipal and state agencies were not doing enough to improve local conditions. The Good Neighbor Policy and World War II created a context in which local leaders and sympathetic allies were able to argue, with relative ease and popular acceptance, that the federal government had an obligation to assist Mexican and Mexican American communities across the US Southwest.

It would be another twenty-five years before the federal government viewed the Mexican-descent population as an interest group with pressing needs and concerns that demanded federal attention as it did during the war. Shortly after World War II ended, the OCIAA was terminated, and the DIAAUS’s Spanish Speaking Minority Project changed hands to a private organization, the Institute of Ethnic Affairs. Created in 1945, the Institute was interested in
solving “problems of group tension and conflict both at home and abroad.” The Institute’s president was John Collier, an advocate for Native American populations and the former Commissioner of Indian Affairs in the US Department of the Interior. Within the Institute, the OCIAA project became the Division of Spanish Speaking People in the United States, and was placed under the direction of Joan W. Pijoan. Pijoan was more than familiar with the OCIAA’s Spanish Speaking Minority Project because she had worked as an assistant to the project in Washington, DC.

The Institute of Ethnic Affairs sought to continue the work the OCIAA started with the wartime emergency. The Institute framed its goals and methods in much the same way the OCIAA had: learning more about the Mexican and Mexican American population and its problems was critical to promoting democracy and US-Latin American relations, and collaboration between private and public agencies across local, state, and regional levels was the best way to “put to work a democratic answer to the ‘minority’ question.” The Institute described the OCIAA’s Spanish Speaking Minority Project as the “first and only presently existent, national effort to assist Spanish speaking Americans toward assuming their role as participating citizens.” The Institute also echoed George I. Sánchez’s Forgotten People when it stated that, “[n]ot even in the days following the annexation of the southwestern territory was an attempt made to educate the new citizens on matters of American history and how Democracy works in this country. This work is long overdue.”

The Institute differed from the OCIAA, however, in that it viewed the Mexican and Mexican American population as one of many minority groups in the US that required national attention because of the problems all minority groups held in common: issues in health, housing, education, employment, and discrimination. Improving conditions among the Mexican and Mexican American population and other minority groups was important for national unity and security, but also for providing a beacon of democracy to the “millions of...underprivileged citizens” in the rest of the world. In the postwar period, then, the Mexican-descent population in  

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2 The OCIAA was terminated by executive order in May 1946. Many of the OCIAA’s operations were transferred to the State Department. The Spanish Speaking Minority Project was transferred to the Institute of Ethnic Affairs in January 1946. Donald Rowland, *History of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1947), 276. “A Proposal Concerning The Spanish Speaking People in the United States, Submitted by the Institute of Ethnic Affairs,” nd, Folder: Remedial Measures for Minority Problems, Box 31, Carey McWilliams Papers (Collection 1243), Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

3 Pijoan’s work in the OCIAA’s Spanish Speaking Minorities Project is noted in several sources in the OIAA Records. For example, see letters in: Folder: Spanish and Portuguese Speaking Minorities, Jan-Mar 1943, Box 57, General Records, Central Files, Inter-American Activities in the United States, Records of the Office of Inter-American Affairs, Record Group 229, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

4 “A Proposal Concerning The Spanish Speaking People in the United States,” McWilliams Papers.
the US Southwest became one of many groups that collectively brought national and worldwide attention to the country’s failed promise of democracy to its own citizens.\(^5\)

Following the war, the federal government instead became increasingly concerned with the general problem of civil rights among all US minority groups. In the fall of 1946, President Harry S. Truman created the President’s Committee on Civil Rights in response to demands the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, an African American civil rights organization, made for presidential action concerning recent acts of violence against African Americans. When the US Department of Justice created the President’s Committee, however, it broadened its scope to include civil rights issues across minority groups more generally.\(^6\) The President’s Committee published its findings in *To Secure These Rights* in October 1947, which described with some precision the problems of each major minority group in the US, but ultimately concluded that these issues collectively constituted both national and international problems, and that the federal government had a responsibility to safeguard the civil rights of all Americans.\(^7\)

By the late 1960s, the federal government once again viewed the Mexican American population as an interest group, this time with considerable political leverage. The Mexican American population in the US Southwest had risen from 3 million during the war years to 5 million by the late 1960s, and was the second largest minority group in the nation. In 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson created the Interagency Committee on Mexican American Affairs to study the population’s problems. Created by an executive order in June 1967, the Interagency Committee’s primary purpose was to ensure that the Mexican American population was accessing and receiving federal services—most notably those included in Johnson’s War on Poverty agenda. The Interagency Committee differed from the war-driven Spanish Speaking Minority Project in that it included members of the President’s Cabinet (in other words, the heads of the major executive agencies): the Secretaries of Agriculture; Commerce; Labor, Health, and Welfare; Housing and Urban Development; and Treasury. It also differed in its leadership. Johnson appointed Mexican American Vicente T. Ximenes as the Interagency Committee’s first chairman. Ximenes was a New Mexican war veteran, educator, and public servant, who had recently been appointed the new Commissioner of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Much as DIAAUS bureaucrats, Mexican American leaders, and

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\(^5\) Ibid. A preliminary search of the online finding aid of John Collier’s papers, housed at Yale University, indicates that the Institute’s Division of Spanish Speaking People in the United States was eliminated in 1947 due to lack of funding. Online Finding Aid for John Collier Papers (MS 146), Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, accessed 11 June 2016, http://drs.library.yale.edu/HLTransformer/HL.TransServlet?ystyle=yul.ead2002.xhtml.xsl&pid=mssa:ms.0146&clear-stylesheets=cache-yes.


sympathetic allies had done during the war, the Interagency Committee described the Mexican American population as long-neglected, and suffering from problems in health, housing, education, employment, and civil rights. Significantly, the committee insisted that the federal government had an obligation to take action in ensuring the population had access to the same opportunities as other American citizens.8

Local Mexican American leaders, however, did not accept the Interagency Committee with open arms. Both liberal Mexican Americans and radical Chicano activists recognized that the Interagency Committee was created merely as an empty gesture to superficially address their complaints about the administration’s focus on the African American population, and to appease liberals’ requests for a White House conference, for instance, and Chicano activists’ demands regarding land grant claims. It was also clear to leaders that the committee’s creation was a political strategy: Johnson was concerned about the Mexican American vote in the upcoming election.9

By 1969, the Interagency Committee faced additional criticism from Puerto Ricans and, later, Cuban Americans. Puerto Ricans complained that the Interagency Committee was too focused on the US Southwest, and that the committee ignored its concerns altogether. Both Puerto Ricans and the East Coast members of Congress who represented them demanded that the federal government either broaden the Interagency Committee’s scope or create a separate committee for Puerto Ricans. In late 1969, under Richard Nixon’s administration, Congress passed legislation to renew the committee for an additional five years, at which time its name changed to the Cabinet Committee on Opportunities for Spanish Speaking People, and its scope was broadened to include Puerto Ricans and Cuban Americans.10

The Cabinet Committee on Opportunities for Spanish Speaking People was a largely ineffective federal body. Under Johnson and Nixon, the committee primarily served an oversight function: it was tasked with ensuring that existing federal agencies and programs met the needs of the Mexican American population, but it lacked the power to compel federal agencies into action. Its most important contribution was the reports it created about conditions in the Mexican American population, which provided data on a national scale. One scholar has recently argued, however, that the Cabinet Committee is historically significant for the role it played in institutionalizing and popularizing the broadly defined term “Hispanic,” in an effort to capture

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10 Ibid., 31-41.
Conclusion

Natalie Mendoza

Puerto Rican, Cuban American, and Mexican American constituencies as a single, panethnic political interest group.\textsuperscript{11}

Both the Cabinet Committee and the OCIAA’s Spanish Speaking Minority Project are important because they highlight certain continuities in the relationship between the federal government and the Mexican-descent population in the US. Local leaders and activists, for instance, continued to insist on the federal government’s responsibility to ensuring the well being of the Mexican and Mexican American population. The federal government, again, responded to external pressure and created a federal body to mollify local concerns. Most importantly, both the Cabinet Committee and the Spanish Speaking Minority Project demonstrate the central role the federal government played in making the Mexican and Mexican American population a nationally visible and politically relevant interest group. Both federal projects, however, also illustrate that characterizing the Mexican-descent population as a distinct political interest group has and continues to be a challenging and evolving process.\textsuperscript{12} “The Good Neighbor Comes Home” contributes to our understanding of this process—of how, for what purposes, and under what circumstances Mexican and Mexican American group self-identification developed—by locating the origins of a Mexican and Mexican American regional consciousness during the World War II and Good Neighbor periods, thus marking a dramatic shift from earlier characterizations of the population as constituting “the Mexican Problem,” and which predates the more historically visible efforts at ethnic and panethnic solidarity and identification in later decades.

\textsuperscript{11} G. Cristina Mora argues that by the 1970s and 1980s, the Cabinet Committee on Opportunities for Spanish Speaking People, the US Census Bureau, media executives, and activists worked together in developing and promoting the use of “Hispanic” as a panethnic term to describe Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, and Mexican Americans. Ibid., 24-28, 36-38.

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