

in a basic principle of just war theory: a state's right to recover its own former territory, albeit after a supposed lapse of thousands of years. Of course, Oviedo was wrong at every stage of his argument. There never was a King Hesperus. He never ruled Spain. The Hesperides never existed. They did not correspond to the New World or any part of it. Even if the rest of the argument had rested on truth, it would not mean that God approved of anything that had happened. Nor was there any reason to suppose that Spain's power would last forever—as indeed it did not, although so far, most of the western hemisphere has remained in a Hispanic tradition in terms of its predominant language and religion. And Oviedo's prophecy might yet come true, in a sense, if the area of predominantly Hispanic culture expands to include the United States. In the continental Americas, that would leave only Brazil, the Guyanas, Belize, and Canada outside the reconstituted realm of Hesperus.

FOR MOST OF THE twentieth century, rehispanicization proceeded too slowly to make such a future imaginable, even though, from the 1890s until the 1960s, immigration restrictions in the United States worked broadly to Hispanics' advantage. The regulations and the prejudices of officials favored new arrivals from Europe—still the place of origin of three-quarters of immigrants into the United States as late as 1960. Asians and Africans were almost totally debarred. But temporary work, with the possibility of extending its privileges, was accessible to Latin Americans, and at times relatively openly so—albeit, as we have seen, at the cost of much hardship—to Mexicans. Cultural swing and game-changing legislation in the 1960s opened a new era.

It was the era of belief in multicultural solutions to the problems of plural societies. Rainbows filled skies. The White Australia policy dissolved. The civil rights movement transformed the United States. An almost unnoticed side effect was the modification of national quotas for immigrants in 1965, and the introduction of a system that, according to President Lyndon Johnson, “rewards each man on the basis of his merit.”⁴ The sponsors of the new law were Democrats Emanuel

Celler of New York and Philip Hart of Michigan, backed by Ted Kennedy. They intended only to obliterate the scandal of racial quotas, not to change the demographic profile of the country. The outcome, however, was to reverse the proportions of immigrants from Europe and the rest of the world. By 2000, Europeans accounted for only 15 percent of immigrants. The numbers, once negligible, arriving from Asia and—in the long term—Africa soared. Would-be migrants from within the Americas faced at first serious competition from visa seekers in those previously underrepresented areas; but in the longer term the new regime sluiced a brain drain for well-qualified candidates from countries that had previously supplied few migrants.

The results benefited those coming from everywhere except Mexico. The United States admitted nearly a million of them in the course of the 1960s—more than there had been in the country at the start of the decade. And decade by decade the arriving numbers increased. Overall, from 1971 until the end of the century, immigrant status was granted to 7.3 million arrivals from Asia, a little over 5 million from Mexico, and nearly 6 million from the rest of the Americas including the Caribbean but not counting Puerto Rico, whose people were US citizens. Immigrants accounted for nearly 60 percent of Hispanics in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, but the proportions diminished as their children and grandchildren multiplied. US-born Hispanics accounted for 55 percent of the total in 1990, 57 percent in 2000, over 60 percent in 2012.⁵

The effect was to shift the balance of the US population in favor of Hispanics and, among Hispanics, away from the previous absolute preponderance of Mexicans. Mexican numbers, however, received an unrecorded boost, perhaps doubling the totals, from the relatively large cohorts of undocumented workers who crossed the border. An increase in the number of undocumented migrants was an unforeseen consequence of the new legislation, since workers with poor qualifications were now condemned to a low place on the waiting list for visas.

In the shadow of the civil rights movement, Hispanic self-perception and self-presentation also began to change in the 1960s. The first activist was a disturbingly quixotic figure in the tradition

of American prophets. Reies López Tijerina was an outsider by self-exclusion. His career of elective conflict with the social mainstream began when he started a religious community of his own in Arizona, with a barely intelligible doctrine that mixed elements of evangelicalism and Islam. The revulsion and persecution he drew from his Anglo neighbors and the representatives of law and order aggravated his already acute sense of injustice. During long years in the late fifties and early sixties as a fugitive from suspiciously unconvinced charges, including an alleged attempt to spring his brother from jail, he launched a campaign to draw attention to the long-ago illegal seizure of Hispanics' land in New Mexico and Colorado in the aftermath of the Mexican War. He had alighted on a cause with two advantages: a sound basis in historical fact, and a large number of interested parties among the descendants of dispossessed landowners. In 1962 he launched a movement, popularly known as *La Alianza*, and a radio station. The protests, marches, cavalcades, and demonstrations he organized over the next few years provoked the authorities but attracted attention from other campaigners for minority rights. His attempt to make a citizens' arrest on a New Mexico district attorney who had banned one of his demonstrations ended with López Tijerina's imprisonment, the status of a martyr, and the embrace of Dr. Martin Luther King. Prison seems to have induced a spell of paranoia, and the level of his activism was much diminished on his release, but his case electrified Hispanic sympathies and helped inspire other, generally more effective movements.⁶

More impactful in Texas, perhaps, was the campaign waged by Democratic Party managers to mobilize Hispanic voters with a *J'Viva Kennedy!* campaign in the presidential election of 1960. Kennedy carried the state by the fingernail margin of 46,000 votes. The power of Hispanic voters suddenly became apparent. Crystal City, Texas, the self-proclaimed "spinach capital of the world," with a population of fewer than 10,000 people, became the focus for an unprecedented form of Mexican-American activism. People of Mexican origin or ancestry formed a big majority in the town, but Anglo gerrymandering had previously kept them out of municipal office. In 1963 a group

of them organized the vote and swept the board. The winners were radicals with trade-union links, and conservative opponents turned them out at the following elections, but Hispanics were never again excluded from the council or the electorate. The Crystal City experience inspired wider activism, and the town remained a tinderbox for Mexican-American politics.⁷

By then, the Vietnam War had begun to get nasty—vicious, unstoppable, corrupted with atrocities—alienating many young people in every constituency in the United States. It seemed tyrannous to serve a state committed to a war that was simultaneously stupid, unjust, and illegal. For Hispanic opponents of the war, the Democratic Party became an unworthy object of trust. Some Mexican-American activists, meanwhile, adopted the name "Chicanos" as a badge of identity that implied dissent, somewhat in the spirit of civil rights leaders, who would rather be "blacks" than known by some euphemism or morally neutral term.

César Chávez was the Chicanos' unlikely hero. He was born in 1927 on the smallholding his grandfather farmed in Yuma, Arizona. From early childhood he accumulated instances of injustice at Anglo hands. Swindled out of their farm and modest grocery store, his family espoused poverty as migrant farmworkers in California. "Maybe," Chávez later mused, "that is where the rebellion started."⁸ At school, Anglo teachers and classmates victimized César for speaking Spanish. He was a third-generation US citizen but sat in segregated seating at the movies. Restaurants turned his family away. In the navy, anti-bohunk prejudice confined him to menial tasks. In 1952, when he was twenty-five years old, he met a life-transforming patron, the radical activist Fred Ross, who trained Chávez and many other young idealists to organize labor, mobilize voters, use the media, and challenge exploitative bosses and corrupt officials. Chávez was short, shy, quiet, and ill-educated, but he electrified audiences and attracted followers perhaps because of his convincing sincerity and unrelenting pursuit of justice. He communicated simply, factually, clearly, with reticence unadorned by rhetoric. When he set out to organize a farmworkers' union in 1962, the prevailing opinion was that his task was impossible:

every previous attempt had broken down between the bosses' power and the workers' fear. He built a following slowly, unspectacularly, without provoking agribusiness into repression until his organization achieved a critical mass. In 1965 he launched an apparently hopeless, overambitious campaign of attrition against grape producers for the right of collective bargaining: he enlisted interunion cooperation, founded a radio station to disseminate propaganda, launched mass marches, and won the applause of churches, the sympathy of most of the public, and the endorsement of politicians. After five years, the growers recognized the union.

The success of the farmworkers' organization Chávez founded was short-lived. He had garnered over 100,000 members by 1978, when his fame compelled the prosecuting authorities to release him after his arrest for defying antipicketing legislation in his native Arizona. But it is the tragedy of trade unions that they thrive on workers' poverty and degradation and wane when they improve their members' lives. The conservative turn of the 1980s represented a check for the labor movement throughout the developed world. The new glut after the 1986 Immigration Act cheapened labor. Chávez's union dwindled and his power waned. Even the term "Chicano" gradually fell out of favor. But Chávez had genuinely ignited communal self-awareness among Mexican Americans and inspired emulation in other Hispanics.

Among the evidence of a new mood of Hispanic self-assertion in the sixties were the high-school students' walk-outs that started in Los Angeles in 1968 and spread across the Southwest, demanding the inclusion of Hispanic history and culture in the syllabus and parity for Hispanics in student representation. Many universities responded to the demand for reformed curricula. In 1969 the Plan de Santa Bárbara emerged from a gathering of *chicanista* activists at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Essentially, it was a program for creating Chicano Studies courses in universities, but its rhetoric was more far-reaching. The plan proclaimed a "Chicano renaissance" and condemned "the socio-economic functions assigned to our community by Anglo-American society—as suppliers of cheap labor and dumping ground for the small-time capitalist entrepreneur," alleging that this

was why "the barrio and *colonia* remained exploited, impoverished, and marginal."⁹ The program was potentially vexatious and despotic, demanding common assent from Chicano educators irrespective of whether their views had been heard. But it proved extremely powerful in addressing, not only for Chicanos, one of the cruelest problems that afflict Hispanics in the United States: the low status and prestige that accrues from underrepresentation in higher education and, in partial consequence, top jobs.

Meanwhile, a further breakthrough in political organization occurred with the launch of what the founder, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, called the Justice Crusade. He was an ex-professional boxer—an exemplar of the unappealing options available for Hispanics who sought a profession with a means of social ascent. He was genuinely indifferent to materialism, and borrowed a line from Spanish intellectuals of the early twentieth century who claimed that their country's economic failure, compared with the hard-nosed capitalism of some competitor nations, was evidence of spiritual superiority. In a poem written as if by the bandit-hero Joaquín Murrieta (see above, p. 166), "My parents lost the economic struggle," Gonzales admitted, "but triumphed in the battle for cultural survival." He denounced "gringo society" as suffering from "American social neurosis, sterilization of the soul, and a full belly." He called himself heir of both Cuauhtemoc and Cortés, celebrating a syncretic identity, simultaneously Spanish and indio. He hardly vacillated in taking to its logical conclusion the case for the restitution of land that López Tijerina had made. "This land," he said, referring explicitly to his home state of Colorado and implicitly to the whole hemisphere, "is ours."¹⁰ In March 1969 he organized the first national get-together of Chicano activists in a "Youth Liberation Conference" in Denver. It produced a luridly over-written joint statement, called the Plan Espiritual de Aztlán: "in the spirit of a new people that is conscious not only of its proud historical heritage but also of the brutal 'gringo' invasion of our territories, we, the Chicano inhabitants and civilizers of the northern land of Aztlán from whence came our forefathers, reclaiming the land of their birth and consecrating the determination of our people of the sun, declare

that the call of our blood is our power, our responsibility, and our inevitable destiny."¹¹

Remarkably, the Chicano movement pinned its credentials to the same myth that Gaspar Pérez de Villagrá had invoked, as we saw in Chapter Two, to justify the Spanish invasion of New Mexico nearly four hundred years before. The language of blood, race, nationalism, and *mission civilisatrice* that animated the document was already old-fashioned in its day and doomed to become politically incorrect or at best obsolete. But at the time it excited real commitment among thousands of enthusiasts to the program the plan outlined: seizing control of the ruling institutions of "our barrios, *campes*, pueblos, lands, our economy, our culture, and our political life." The formation of a Chicano political party, La Raza Unida, in May 1969 was among the results, with a flurry of local election gains to its credit in its brief spell of fluorescence in the early 1970s. Though the party did not last, it was influential in establishing networks of cooperation among Chicanos who remained in political life in the mainstream parties.

Although the Plan de Aztlán recognized "no capricious frontiers in this bronze continent," and Rodolfo Gonzales used "*mejicano, español*, Latino, hispano, Chicano, or whatever I call myself" as if there were no difference, the Chicano movement derived both its great strength and its greatest weakness from addressing and embracing Mexican Americans in an increasingly plural United States. The best hope for Hispanics to advance together lay in collaboration across traditional categories. None of the changes of the 1960s would have happened if Hispanics' numbers had not grown. Demographic buoyancy gave them clout in the marketplace and power in competitive recruitment environments in the worlds of trade unionism and higher education.

AFTER CHICANOS, THE SECOND biggest group of Hispanics defined by where they and their ancestors came from consisted of Puerto Ricans. Strictly speaking, Puerto Ricans are not immigrants, as all Puerto Ricans are born on US soil, and Congress extended US

citizenship to inhabitants of Puerto Rico in 1917, just in time to make them liable for service in World War I. But they joined a country where most people considered them, if they thought about them at all, as members of "an alien and inferior race."¹² The island's first US military governor reported that "the so-called white race have a decided color—a reddish brown not unlike the color of those persons in the US who have more or less Indian blood." Whitley Reid, a US delegate at the Paris conference at the end of World War I, feared the "degeneration" threatened by Puerto Rico's "mixed population, a little more than half colonial Spanish, the rest negro and half-breed, illiterate, alien in language, alien in ideas of right, interests and government." Puerto Ricans commonly encounter some of these prejudices to this day.¹³

The courts repeatedly restricted islanders' rights, openly acknowledging that the citizenship of Puerto Ricans was second-class, and excluded, for instance, the right to vote in federal elections and the right to be a candidate for the presidency. Among the most terrifying effects of racial prejudice was the repeated and systematic selection of Puerto Rican patients and prisoners to be human guinea pigs in medical experiments. Pedro Albizu Campos, the independence-movement leader who exposed the scandal in connection with cancer research in 1932, was probably himself the victim of experimental radiation exposure when he was in prison on faked charges more than thirty years later.

In 1922 the Supreme Court ruled that Puerto Ricans did not enjoy all the rights of citizens under the Constitution unless they were on the soil of a state of the union. This restriction continued to apply even after 1940, when legislation formally defined Puerto Rico as US soil—but not, of course, the soil of a state. In 2005, the *Puerto Rico Herald* pointed out that it was still the case that "in effect, a plane ticket can give to a Puerto Rican civil rights that the Congress has so far refused to grant to those who remain on the island."¹⁴

In 1921, in the first flush of the concession of nominal US citizenship, there were fewer than 12,000 Puerto Ricans in the whole of the continental United States. By the 1930s, there were over 50,000 in

bliteration of fellow addicts and the redemption of fellow gangsters. He was "a skinny, dark-face, curly-haired, intense Puerto-REE-can,"²⁰ half Puerto Rican, half Cuban, and mainly black, divided between shame at his crinkly hair and the greater shame he felt when he had it restyled and greased down to ape white looks. His mother remembered Puerto Rico through a romantic veil as "my pobre, but happy," a lush, soft, sinuous, scented land full of flowers. The concrete-hard, right-angled reality that surrounded Piri in El Barrio stank and hurt. In turn, he romanticized gang warfare when he fictionalized it later, larding it with camaraderie, sharing, humor, and pathos in his story of "The Blue Wings and the Puerto Rican Knights," whose sidewalk braggadocio escalated into a shooting war. Pedro Pistolas, the crazy man of the gang, fell to a shotgun blast. "The steel pellets tore away most of Pedro's childlike face," but the author succumbed to slushy yet emotionally convincing sentiment. "Nobody would ever again turn his dreams into nightmares," Thomas wrote of the victim.²¹ Sometimes, whole gangs self-reformed. The Young Lords, a Chicago street gang, mutated into a national political party militating among continental Puerto Ricans on behalf of the island's independence movement.

Despite discrimination and restricted opportunities, Puerto Ricans were bound to benefit from the booming US economy of the 1950s. In 1957, Leonard Bernstein's brilliant musical *West Side Story*, with Stephen Sondheim's ingenious lyrics, romanticized gang life and, when it transferred to the cinema in 1961, transformed perceptions of Puerto Ricans. In some ways, it captured the realities of the Puerto Rican dilemma, caught between attraction to promised prosperity and indignation at actual injustice. "Life is all right in America," sings a member of the girls' chorus, referring, in the loose usage that seems irremediable, to the United States. "If you're all white in America," reply the boys. The girls sing of credit, Cadillacs, and washing machines, the boys of money-grubbing, capitalism, and crime. The antiphony represents the dilemma. Like Corky Gonzales, the male characters sense the moral superiority of poverty.

Most things in the United States, however, rise and fall with the bottom line, and the rhythms of Puerto Rican migration followed

those of the economy. Whenever there was a downturn or slump—in 1963, for instance, or the 1970s—Puerto Ricans' thoughts turned homeward. As Anita in *West Side Story* said to her admirer when he was thinking of going back to San Juan, "I know a boat you can get on." According to the *New York Times* in 1978, Puerto Ricans were the first community in the United States collectively to give up on the American Dream,²² but tension between materialism and spirituality has become a common topos of Hispanic rhetoric about the United States. Corky Gonzales voiced it. Sondheim caught its tone. The sociologists Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan took a snapshot of Puerto Ricans in their classic 1963 study of migrants in New York City.²³ Their picture was of a community condemned to poverty by bad health, poor education, low skill levels, a neglectful Church, feeble communal institutions, and "multi-problem families, afflicted simultaneously by a variety of miseries—a child who is a drug-addict, another who is delinquent, a father who is psychologically or physically unable to work, or perhaps is not there." The authors raised the possibility—only to doubt or dismiss it—that Puerto Ricans might ascend to the general population's levels of prosperity and security "by the same path that Italians took" forty years before. Increased political activism drew Glazer's and Moynihan's attention. For most of the 1970s, poor economic conditions held back all of the city's poor, among whom Puerto Ricans were disproportionately represented. Gang warfare returned in the early seventies, disciplined by bloodily enforced bans on addictive drugs, equipped with assault weapons instead of the zip guns, shotguns, and knives of the era Bernstein had romanticized.

In the last generation of the twentieth century and early in the twenty-first, however, the Puerto Rican profile in the continental United States changed. It became increasingly bourgeois, not only because of the enfeeblement of US manufacturing. Among new migrants there were so many teachers, nurses, and social workers that Puerto Rico itself suffered a shortage of workers in those occupations. Puerto Ricans spread beyond New York, Chicago, and their other traditional pockets of concentration. In Florida their numbers quadrupled