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What Does it Mean to Belong in San Antonio? How the Battle of the Alamo and the Cart Wars Shaped What it Means to be American through the Institutionalization of Discrimination and Violence Toward Those of Mexican Descent

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What Does it Mean to Belong in San Antonio?

How the Battle of the Alamo and the Cart Wars Shaped What it Means to be American
through the Institutionalization of Discrimination and Violence Toward
Those of Mexican Descent



*Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College*

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M. Sharp

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Introduction

This project reviews the history of the borderland city of San Antonio, Texas, and focusing specifically on the 19th century and reveals not only how the racially motivated violence targeting Mexicans in the city during that era played a significant role in shaping our definition of American as White (and therefore excluding those of Mexican descent), but also how that history and the legacy of the violence that occurred in San Antonio from 1820 to 1860 is reflected in today's immigration discourse as well as detention and deportation practices. In the 19th century, San Antonio was the site of two significant and especially violent wars between the Mexicans and Anglo-Americans— the 1836 Battle of the Alamo, a crucial piece of the Texas Revolution, and the 1857 Cart Wars— both of which stemmed in part from ethnic and racial hostility from Anglo-Americans toward Mexicans in what is now modern-day Texas. While human rights was not a major concern in the 1800s, one cannot discuss or attempt to rectify the modern-day human rights violations in San Antonio, and on a larger scale, America, without the proper historical context. This project works to understand the political and social contexts in which the Battle of the Alamo and later, the Cart Wars, occurred. Additionally, it works to uncover how dark a shadow those events continue to cast on today's political and social climate and defining what it means to be American. Today, Mexican-Americans and Latinx citizens still have to defend their citizenship simply because the Alamo, the Cart Wars, and the events that followed worked to strengthen the concept that American was and is synonymous with White.

Whiteness, power, and the sanctioning of violence are the founding pillars of today's immigration problems and stem from the events that occurred in 19th-century San Antonio.

In order to fully understand the language throughout this project, I will define a few key terms. Throughout the time period of 1820-1860, there were multiple labels for locations and groups of people in the San Antonio region that evolved. Some of these terms are no longer associated with the same groups or are used today. Many of these labels were racial classifications, like Mestizo and Mulatto, as well as terms used to identify regions. The Tejano/Mexican terminology has been Americanized for the most part. With the constantly changing government and racial demographics, the names for these places and classifications for these people changed as well. For example, when modern-day Mexico was still a part of the Spanish colony New Spain through the time of the Texas revolution, the region of modern-day Texas was referred to as Tejas and those from the land were Tejanos. Texas will refer to the land of interest for this project after the annexation of the land as a state within the United States in 1845. The Republic of Texas will refer to the same land from 1836 to 1845. Tejas will be used to describe the land from Mexican independence to end of the Texas revolution in 1836. A Tejano will be defined as someone from Tejas and of Mexican descent. It is similar to modern day terms like Washingtonian or New Yorker but for the purposes of this paper, it will include a racial element. Mexican will be defined as someone from the land that would become the Republic of Mexico or legal Mexican citizens. Texan will be defined as an Anglo-American living in the land of modern-day Texas after it was stolen from Mexico during the Texas Revolution. Anglo-

American will be defined as White American of European descent. Bexar County is the county in which San Antonio was and is located and Bexareño refers to those from the Bexar region.

Mestizo will be defined as someone of indigenous and European descent. Latinx will be defined as a gender neutral term to identify someone from Latin America (Spanish-speaking countries in the Western Hemisphere) or of Latin American descent. Human rights will be defined as all current human rights laws that apply to this project including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other treaties signed by the United States. The use of these treaties in this project is not contingent on the ratification of said treaties.

As a whole, this project strives to connect the events of the past with those of the present through the application of modern-day human rights concepts as a tool of analysis and criticism to draw this parallel. During the period from 1820-1860, many atrocities were committed against Tejanos, which stemmed from racial bigotry. Many of the atrocities committed towards, and acts of suppression involving, Tejanos (the people from Texas when it belonged to Mexico) are present in today's mistreatment of immigrants and Latinx citizens in the United States. Despite the fact that the Alamo and the Cart Wars occurred approximately 200 years ago, there are many troubling aspects in the treatment of Tejanos back then that can be seen in the treatment of Latinx citizens and immigrants in America today.

The sentiments of violence and the alienating mentalities Anglo-Americans inflicted upon Tejanos is ever-present in today's political climate in three major ways: negative stereotypes, the normalization of violence, and views that those of Mexican descent are innately un-American. This alienation was done through creating fear through random and targeted violence towards

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prominent community members and later, through the erasure of the Tejano identity and history. The Anglo-Americans in the San Antonio region in the 1820s to the 1860s also alienated Tejanos by twisting facts, employing scare tactics through attacks and lynching, suppressing Mexican culture, and forcing Tejanos to leave their land. This perversion of the Tejano identity and history has heavily contributed to the negative stereotypes of Mexicans and those of Mexican descent as being excessively violent and uncivilized which continue to exist today.

These actions have also contributed to the modern-day willingness to commit or condone violent acts against Mexicans today, as well as tendency for the media to gloss over such violence. The perversion of the Tejano identity and the framing of Tejanos as unnecessarily violent allowed the systematic oppression of Tejanos, beginning with the unpoliced and unprosecuted acts of violence committed by Anglo-Americans against those perceived as Mexican (and therefore perceived as un-American). Today this stereotype is seen as institutionalized discrimination of Latinx communities through discriminatory policing practices and excessive violence at the hands of the police. This mistreatment is reflected in the current treatment of and discussions surrounding Mexicans and Mexican immigrants, through hate crimes and aggressive encounters between Americans and those of Mexican descent, over-policing, and unjust deportation and detention practices.

The events in 19th century San Antonio contribute to the current perception of American as White and thus non-Latinx. The Battle of the Alamo and the Cart Wars prove that no matter how 'American' one's actions were, or how long they had lived in the area, or what their

citizenship was, Tejano identity or Mexican heritage automatically determined whether they would or would not be accepted as Americans.

On October 24, 2017, ten-year-old Rosa Maria Hernandez was riding in the back of an ambulance on the way to a hospital in Corpus Christi, Texas for an emergency gallbladder surgery when the ambulance was stopped at a Border Patrol checkpoint. When the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents learned that she had been brought to the U.S. illegally as a three-months-old, they followed Rosa Maria to the children's hospital and stood outside her room during the surgery. The federal agents attempted to pressure the family into taking Rosa to a hospital in Mexico. Rosa Maria has cerebral palsy and is said to have only the mental capacity of a four or five-year-old.¹ The federal agents watched her vigilantly during her recovery to the extent that they would not even allow the family to close the hospital room door until the Hernandez's attorney enacted attorney-client privilege. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) stated: "Once medically cleared, she [Rosa Maria] will be processed accordingly."² The family has filed a suit in order to keep Rosa Maria in the country due to her medical needs. After being medically cleared, Rosa Maria was classified as an unaccompanied child since her parents did not travel with her the day of the surgery because they feared being deported themselves. Rosa Maria was then taken into the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) at the BCFS Health and Human Services SAC ICS Shelter in San Antonio, which is located over 150 miles

¹ Marwa Eltagouri, "A 10-year-old Immigrant Was Rushed to the Hospital," New York Times, (October 27, 2017).

² "Undocumented 10-year-old with special needs detained after surgery," CBS News, (October 27, 2017).

away from her home in Laredo, Texas. She was released to her parents shortly after the American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit in early November 2017. The government has yet to decide whether it is continuing to pursue the deportation of Rosa Maria.^{3 4}

This special needs child, who did not actively choose to immigrate to the United States but was brought as an infant, has been treated by ICE with unnecessary severity; some might even say they are treating her as if she were a criminal. She is entirely dependent on her mother, but ORR did not release Rosa Maria into the care of her parents for an extended period of time because her parents had not been deemed “adequate sponsors.”⁵ Congressman Henry Cuellar, the representative for Laredo where the Hernandez family lives, stated: “I understand the CBP has a tremendous duty to protect our nation, but we should be devoting our resources and focus on bigger threats.”⁶ This is a modern example of the legacy of the racialization of Mexicans done at the hands of the 1800 Anglo Americans in San Antonio. Why would federal agents stop an ambulance heading to an emergency surgery for a young child to check her immigration status? The mission of deporting as many Latinx migrants as possible is rooted in the 1800s mentality of needing to keep out violent and lesser (non-White) immigrants.

³ “R.M.H V. LLOYD: Complaint,” United States District Court for the Western District of Texas San Antonio Division. <https://www.aclu.org/legal-document/rmh-v-lloyd-complaint>.

⁴ “Texas releases disabled migrant girl Rosa Maria Hernandez,” BBC, (November 4, 2017).

⁵ R.M.H V. LLOYD: Complaint,” United States District Court for the Western District of Texas San Antonio Division. <https://www.aclu.org/legal-document/rmh-v-lloyd-complaint>.

⁶ Marwa Eltagouri, “A 10-year-old Immigrant Was Rushed to the Hospital,” New York Times, (October 27, 2017).

Today, immigration is one of the most polarized and politically charged topics in the world, particularly in the United States. The current president, Donald Trump, ran his campaign on promises of building a wall on the southern border of the United States to stop immigration and actively deporting Latinx, specifically Mexican, immigrants. In fact, on June 16, 2015, during a speech in which he announced his candidacy for president, Trump called Mexicans rapists and drug dealers. Many of his supporters who believe those stereotypes, voted for him because they also believe that Mexicans are taking American jobs and blame undocumented immigrants for the job crisis.

The unique history of Texas allows Texas to be used as the perfect case study on belonging and defining what it means to be American. Texas history is a history of identity through racial violence and exclusion. This paper focuses specifically on San Antonio from 1820 to 1860, because during this period, Texas went through a tumultuous chain of its own identity issues, particularly in two different ways. First was Texas' unstable relationship with nationhood. Thus, it was a part of the Spanish viceroyalty New Spain, then of Mexico, then of The Republic of Texas, and finally, the United States. Shortly after this period, Texas would become a part of the Confederacy during the Civil War and then, after 1865 and the end of that war, the United States once again. The second way involved its more racialized identity involving a contrasting narrative. On the one hand, the Battle of the Alamo is considered the most important battle of the Texas Revolution. It is used as a story of great American patriotism and bravery. The Battle of the Alamo and its Anglo-American 'defenders' have been glorified

through the naming of streets, stadiums, and schools. The Alamo is the most visited historical site in the state of Texas and one of the most visited landmarks in the country. On the other hand, in reality, the Alamo has no relation to American patriotism at all. The so-called defenders of the Alamo were not defending their own land, which is often presumed, or fighting for the American cause, but instead were fighting for Texas independence in efforts to become their own independent nation. It is a story of Anglo-American immigrants stealing land that is not theirs, demonizing the citizens of that land and violently asserting White dominance over brown bodies contributes to the rhetoric heard today concerning Mexican immigrants. The hostility felt by Anglo-Americans at that time toward Tejanos led to a series of violent outbursts, political suppression, alienation, and forced migration of Tejanos. The Cart Wars, which also occurred in the San Antonio region, were a direct result of increased racial tension and Anglo- American aggression. The unparalleled history of Texas in general and San Antonio in particular allows us to ask, who belongs in a certain area, and what happens when one group decides it is more worthy of belonging than others? San Antonio was the site of two very particular acts of violence surrounding this very question.

Identity played a key roll in the violence between Anglo-Americans and Mexicans. People who are mislabeled as illegal immigrants by law enforcement, authority figures and even the general public receive this designation because they are viewed as not of or belonging in a certain space, which in this case, is the entirety of the United States.

San Antonio is the perfect example of this mislabeling; Anglo-Americans used the categorization of groups by race to associate certain labels with certain races, often mislabeling

people to fit the Anglo-American agenda of gaining power and land. Race, religion, and ethnicity played a significant role in the violence that occurred in San Antonio and still occurs today nationwide. The categorizing and mislabeling of Tejanos were crucial to defining what it meant to belong in the land (and what it meant to not belong) that is now modern-day Texas and later, what it meant to be American. Anglo-Americans gained the power to dictate the history and so, despite the fact that Anglo- Americans immigrated to what was then called Tejas, this is not how the story is told. Because of this, the Mexican roots of Texas tend to be forgotten. Often, the average American pictures Anglo-Americans when thinking of Texas, both in a modern and a historical context. Many children associate Texas with the eponymous cowboy, the White man with the spurred boots and ten-gallon hat with a pistol at his side, defending justice. However, these are both gross distortions of the vast diversity Texas had and continues to have.

Despite the fact that the Anglo-Americans demonized alienated and excluded Mexicans because of their perceived association with violence, making it impossible for them to ever be considered ‘true’ Americans, Texas and Texan pride is in fact rooted in glorified violence and racial suppression of brown bodies. The fact that so many people associate Texas with pistols, cowboys, and the Alamo (all deeply rooted in violence) prove that Texas and violence are intertwined; this is a widely accepted fact. The Wild West has become a franchise and its own genre of film. The entire concept of the Wild West stems from the idea that bad people operated above the law and therefore needed hyper policing, often in the form of a sheriff, to save the day. In western films, there is often a theme or plot line involving the cowboy versus the Indian, and

the cowboy is always the ‘good guy’. This perception of the cowboy is rooted in the immigration of Anglo-Americans to Tejas when it was still part of Mexico; this wave of immigration was approved by the Mexican government as a means of sanctioning violence by Anglo-Americans against indigenous persons in the region. Sanctioning this violence was an attempt by the Mexican government to minimize negative interactions between Mexican nationals and indigenous groups. When Anglo-Americans get to tell the story, brown-bodied people are demonized and viewed as lawless beings who need to be controlled by the law-abiding Anglo-American. This erasure of facts normalizes the violence by putting the Anglo-Texans on a pedestal of justice and bravery.

While Texas has been immortalized through the glorification of the Anglo-American, the Tejanos and Mexicans who lived in that area are often forgotten or their presence is minimized and they are strictly viewed as violent attackers of Anglo towns. For example, the telling of the Alamo is often less factual and more rooted in mythical detail that disparages Mexicans labeling them as excessively violent and idolizes the Anglo-American ‘defenders’ and ignores the fact that they were trespassing on Mexican property. Historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot stated, “human beings participate in history both as actors and as narrators [and that] in vernacular use, history means both the facts of the matter and a narrative of those facts.”⁷ He proceeded to argue that “history does not belong only to its narrators [,though power does, and] while some of us

⁷ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2015), 2.

debate what history is or was, others take it in their own hands.”⁸ This is exactly what the Anglo-Americans did: take history into their own hands by suppressing factual elements that did not work towards their agenda of expansion and use and create narratives to work in their favor. While Anglo-Americans were classified as law-abiding citizens and glorified for their violent acts, Tejanos were demonized for attempting to prevent being colonized once again. Today this is shown in the criminalization of the brown body.

Today, Latinx citizens and immigrants, regardless of their legal status, are often automatically viewed as ‘illegal’ immigrants, particularly in borderlands like San Antonio. A large portion of brown-bodied people is given the label ‘immigrant’ regardless of their immigration status and are forced to prove they deserve to be there. Their brown skin automatically makes them un- American. It is ironic because the Anglo-American immigrants who fought for Texas’ independence are viewed as American patriots, and yet they were not fighting for America at all; they were fighting for their own best interests. Similarly, during the Cart Wars, despite the fact that San Antonio and Bexar County depended on the work done by the Tejano cartmen, many Anglo-Americans selfishly believed their racist opinions and need to brutally act to suppress Tejano businesses and communities superseded the good of the city. Today, Latinx immigrant communities that have been proven to improve the U.S. economy. For example, “almost every major industrial sector experienced an dramatic increase in its reliance on Mexican workers in the 1990s. The percent of agricultural and related workers who were

⁸ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2015), 153.

born in Mexico jumped from 8.8 percent in 1990 to 15.3 percent by 2000 and Mexican workers [are] increasingly important” in American industry work.⁹ Additionally, Mexican immigrants and their children have proven that they contribute to the improvement of American culture and society. A few examples are Guillermo Del Toro (two time Oscar winner), Selma Hayek (Oscar nominated actress, feminist activist, and philanthropist), and Carlos Cadena (notable lawyer, civil rights activist, and judge from San Antonio).¹⁰ These Mexican contributions to society as notable artists, executives, and politicians as well as the impact Mexican immigrants have on others as neighbors, friends, and strangers have been overpowered by the need to suppress immigrant communities. This need has superseded the importance of finding more accessible immigration policies and maintaining basic human rights.

Race in what is now modern-day Mexico is a complicated topic. Due to the prominent presence of the Spanish starting in 1519, there was a significant amount of racial mixing between indigenous persons, Africans brought to the land by the Spanish, and the Spanish themselves. Soon after this mixing became commonplace, a racial caste system originated from colonial New Spain after an event of extreme and unjustified racial violence. In 1612, several mulattoes and Blacks were “savagely mutilated” as a means of suppressing a potential rebellion. This “marked [a historical moment through the] introduction [of] a growing number of African Slaves into

⁹ American Immigration Law Foundation, *Mexican Immigrant Workers and the U.S. Economy: An Increasingly Vital Role*, (Immigration Policy Focus; Volume 1 Issue 2: September 2002).

¹⁰ “6 Famous Mexicans that Migrated to America,” Hispano Press, (October 7, 2016).

¹¹ Obituaries, “Carlos Cadena; Won Key Supreme Court Ruling” (Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles, January 19, 2001).

central New Spain, which generated all sorts of social tensions”. Of these social tensions, the “heightened preoccupation with policing sexuality, [and] the deployment of the Spanish concept of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) against colonial populations” were the most significant effects.¹² The *limpieza de sangre* created a hierarchy in which those of African descent (in the colonial context) and Jewish descent (from the Iberian peninsula) were at the bottom of the social pyramid. This system required specific terminology for different racial categories: Mulatto, the mix of an African person and a European; Creolo (Creole), which were Europeans born in the Americas; and Mestizo, those of indigenous and European descent. While Creolo lost popularity, Mestizo and Mulatto were very common in vernacular usage and in terms of population. By 1820, the majority of citizens in Mexico were multiracial, and one of those races was likely indigenous since the majority of citizens were indigenous. The complexity of determining race in a Mexican context continued to affect the land extending beyond their colonized state.

The internalized racism ingrained in Mexican society during Spanish colonialism created a hierarchy in which indigenous communities were alienated. Many deemed indigenous populations, especially in the northern regions of Mexico, as savage-like, violent, and uncivilized. High-ranking Mexican officials believed that the indigenous populations were dangerous, bothersome, and incapable of coexisting peacefully with ‘civilized’ Mexico.¹³ The

¹² Martínez, María Elena, “The Black Blood of New Spain”, *The William and Mary Quarterly* (2004) 480.

¹³ Samuel Truett, *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*, Duke University Press (2004).

demonization of indigenous persons created by the Spanish viceroalties in New Spain led to the invitation of Anglo-American frontiersmen to the northern region of the territory.

Racial relations and categorization in what is now modern-day Texas were also complicated by the United States' understanding of race and race mixing. It is important to keep in mind that at this time in the United States, race was defined by the one-drop rule: If someone had a traceable history of African descent, that individual would be considered Black and therefore a lesser being.¹⁴ This is crucial in understanding why the Anglo-Americans felt such strong superiority over the Tejanos. Racial mixing was not only culturally shunned, but interracial relationships, or miscegenation, were illegal in the United States. When Anglo-Americans immigrated into Tejas to work in farmlands and ranches, they brought their racist ideologies and slaves with them. Eight years after the first Anglo-Americans immigrated to Tejas, Mexico abolished slavery. The Texas Revolution was a direct result of the abolition of slavery in Mexico; this was one of the most important cultural barriers between Anglo-Americans and Tejanos. Additional cultural differences, like language and religion, and the drive to expand and colonize land that was not theirs were also significant contributing factors that drove the Anglo-Americans to kill for land. This is the world in which the Alamo occurred.

¹⁴ F. James Davis, "Who Is Black? One Nation's Definition", PBS, (April 30, 2018).

Chapter 1: The Alamo

San Antonio offers a unique perspective on the American immigration story. As a part of Texas, San Antonio was a part of the Spanish colonies, independent Mexico, the Republic of Texas, and was later annexed by the United States. San Antonio was ‘founded’ as a Spanish Mission as a part of New Spain in 1718 as the mission of San Antonio de Valero. San Antonio was one of the greatest successes for the Spanish missionaries and was considered “one of the most prosperous and most important missions”.¹⁵ It later became a part of the Republic of Mexico in 1821 after Mexico gained its independence from Spain.

In Bexar County, where San Antonio is and was located, Tejanos and indigenous populations quarreled often. Due to this, the same year Mexico gained independence (1821), the Mexican government invited Anglo-Americans to immigrate to its northern regions, including San Antonio, as a means of protecting Tejanos from ‘indians’. As a direct result of the presence of Anglo-Americans, San Antonio became the battleground of what some consider to be the most important battle of the Texas Revolution, The Alamo. The climate in which the battle of the Alamo occurred created many questions, the most important being who can claim the identity of Texan/Tejano, who belongs? San Antonio became one of many capitals of the Republic of Texas and eventually became a major city as a part of the state of Texas in the United States of America. Through its many roles in its various nation states, San Antonio has consistently been a major focal point of violence and migration.

¹⁵ “Latino Americans Timeline,” PBS, (2013).

In order to analyze the role San Antonio has played in the context of immigration, exclusion of and violence towards brown bodies in perceived White spaces, it is important to recognize a the history of the rivalry between indigenous persons and those who inhabited land that was previously theirs. The Spanish conquistadors and missionaries, like many European colonizers, struggled with indigenous populations. After the mission of San Antonio de Valero was ‘founded’ in 1817, Franciscan missionaries established the mission of San Sabá as a means of controlling the indigenous population just west of the Béxar region. The missionaries unsuccessfully attempted “to convert and colonize the Apache people.”¹⁶ Tejanos from Bexar county, where San Antonio is located, had regular interaction with indigenous peoples. In fact, “for Bexareños, life on the frontier meant being aware of indigenous people on a daily basis.”¹⁷ Their interactions would include “direct contact through trade or violence, indigenous people mainly affected the lives of the Tejanos by controlling large portions of Texas, thus limiting Spanish colonization movement.”¹⁸ While the Mexican independence movement progressed, there was a decrease in defense in the frontier and “Tejanos [were left] to establish security with the diverse and expanding number of indigenous groups in Texas.”¹⁹ One Tejano description of interactions with indigenous groups comes from the Indian commissioner or the Mexican

¹⁶ Samuel Truett, *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*, Duke University Press (2004) 42.

¹⁷ Samuel Truett, *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*, Duke University Press (2004) 36.

¹⁸ Samuel Truett, *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*, Duke University Press (2004) 36.

¹⁹ Samuel Truett, *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*, Duke University Press (2004) 36.

department of Texas, Francisco Ruiz. He stated “the southern Lipans (Apache) are the most cruel of all the barbaric nations I know... I have been told by some of these indians that they sometimes eat those they kill in war.”²⁰ The newly formed Mexican government knew that the hostile relations with indigenous people and the geographical location of Mexico made the new republic incredibly vulnerable in 1821.

The Mexican government proceeded to do what was needed to control the ‘indian’ population and protect itself from such vulnerabilities. By the time Mexico gained independence, “the Spanish government had been aware for decades of the potential threats posed by the Americans, French, and Russians, so efforts to grant land for colonization are well underway by the time of independence.”²¹ In fact, “ambivalence surrounding foreign colonization was voiced early as 1813” but as the number of Anglo-Americans increased “in Texas, the Mexican government [became compelled] to legally address the reality at hand.”²² The geography of Mexico just south of the United States, a newly industrialized power, filled with the hunger to expand and fulfill its ‘manifest destiny’ the Mexican government decided to continue what their colonizers had started by allowing Anglo-Americans to immigrate into their northern territories. They were unaware that their attempts of increasing their national defense would lead to their immigration policies being “‘too successful’[, especially in the case of

²⁰ Samuel Truett, *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*, Duke University Press (2004) 35.

²¹ José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands*, (Cambridge, 2012) 54.

²² José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands*, (Cambridge, 2012) 54.

Texas,] as Euro American settlers [would come] to outnumber the local Mexican population, establishing the social and demographic conditions for an armed confrontation” which would lead to the Texas Revolution.²³ By the time the Mexican government passed an immigration law to control the Anglo-American population the “Anglo-Texan and slave population had grown to about 24,000 inhabitants outnumbering Mexican Texans ten to one.”²⁴

The most important battle of the Texas Revolution would be fought in the same city of the governor that permitted Anglo-Americans to begin to ‘settle’ in Texas. Just before Mexico gained its independence, the Spanish Government, through “officials in Monterey... awarded a grant to Moses Austin” which allowed him to “settle 300 families in Texas in January 1821.” At that particular time, there were numerous “events [that would occur and led] to the reconfiguration of the original agreement between Austin and the fledging Spanish government.”²⁵ The first of these events was Mexico gaining independence from Spain “thus rendering all previous contracts null and void.”²⁶ When Moses Austin died in June of 1821, he had yet to “act on the grant” which was then “taken up by his son Stephen F. Austin.” In 1822, “the Governor of Texas at San Antonio de Bexar” allowed Stephen Austin to complete what his father had started and “lead families into Texas.”²⁷

²³ José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands*, (Cambridge, 2012) 20.

²⁴ José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands*, (Cambridge, 2012) 58.

²⁵ José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands*, (Cambridge, 2012) 54.

²⁶ José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands*, (Cambridge, 2012) 54.

²⁷ José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands*, (Cambridge, 2012) 54.

The Mexican government's "fear of land loss" led them to invite Anglo-Americans to their land creating "policy" that essentially permitted colonization of their own land and "forced the country to incorporate a population that could act decidedly in a battle for supremacy, and later as a 'buffer zone' between the center and periphery of Mexico."²⁸ Mexico knew that Anglo-Americans, particularly frontiersmen, had no issue using extreme violence against indigenous peoples due white supremacy and the engrained entitlement granted by God through the form of 'manifest destiny.' Mexico, "unlike its neighbors to the north and south, [had a] population [that] was predominantly indigenous. This demographic reality" is what inspired "the development of Mexico's immigration and colonization policies."²⁹ Such practices created "the dual threat of 'Indios Bárbaros' and 'Anglo-Americans.'"³⁰ In 1830, the Mexican Government's fear of the "growing, dissatisfied [Anglo-]American population in Texas" resulted in a law that "outlawed immigration from the United States to Texas."³¹ It was logical for the Anglo- Americans who had been living in Texas for more than a decade and were now the majority of the population to no longer wish to be apart of Mexico. They had left the United States and created a new home for themselves and their families. The Anglo-American Texas was rooted in its indigenous, Spanish, and Mexican past but the Anglo-American presence made Texas dissimilar from

²⁸ José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands*, (Cambridge, 2012) 44.

²⁹ José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands*, (Cambridge, 2012) 54.

³⁰ José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands*, (Cambridge, 2012) 20.

³¹ Lily Rothman, "Everything You need to Ace American History" (New York, 2016), 204.

Mexico and the United States. Succession was the rational route. By essentially commissioning the Anglo-Americans to commit violence against indigenous persons, the Mexican Government opened a door which would later allow Anglo-Americans to rationalize violence against Mexicans. This history of ‘us’ verses ‘them’ is an integral trait of San Antonio and has made violence and immigration intertwined in the identity of the city.

Today, San Antonio viewed in a positive light and yet it has a dark history of violence against Mexicans, which is systematically suppressed, allowing its structures on blood-stained land to be monuments and tourist attractions. San Antonio is a city with significant international tourist visitings making it the 7th most visited destination by overseas visitors in 2015 just after New York City.³² The Alamo is one of the most visited Texan tourist attraction and is visited by more than 2.5 million people per year.³³ According to the official Alamo website, “the Alamo today stands at the heart of San Antonio and at the heart of what it means to be Texan... People visit from all over the world to see and learn about the mission and fort’s vital role in defending freedom”.³⁴ What does it mean when the Alamo is a romanticized battle of ‘bravery’, ‘courage’, and a true act of patriotism when the Anglo- Americans and their allies who fought against the Mexican government were, for the most part, immigrants in San Antonio. How is it still seen as an act of patriotism when those fighting for ‘freedom’ were not fighting for Texas to become a part of the United States, but to become its own independent country? “Remember the Alamo”

³² [https://travel.texas.gov/tti/media/PDFs/Texas-2015-Overseas-Visitors-to-Texas-Report-\(11-2-2016\)_1.pdf](https://travel.texas.gov/tti/media/PDFs/Texas-2015-Overseas-Visitors-to-Texas-Report-(11-2-2016)_1.pdf)

³³ <http://www.history.com/topics/alamo>

³⁴ <http://www.thealamo.org/>

is one of the most famous phrases in American History but the story commonly told has many historical inaccuracies and the facts of battle and its aftermath and legacy are highly contested to this day.

The way that the story of the Alamo has been told is inaccurate, though it has elements of factual evidence, and has played an important role in shaping stereotypes of Mexicans still present today. Many aspects of the commonly told version of the Alamo are more reminiscent of a myth or a story, but the agreed-upon evidentiary facts are crucial to the history of San Antonio and defining what role the Battle of the Alamo played and has played in story of immigration. The Texas Revolution officially began in October 1835. The Battle of the Alamo occurred a few months into the war in San Antonio from February 23, 1836 to March 6, 1836. In the first publishing of the Alamo, William P. Zuber wrote a narrative in which the Anglo-Americans were fighting for bravery and country. Those fighting against the Mexican government were viewed as defenders. Zuber immortalized famous ‘defenders’ like well-known Anglo-Americans such as Tennessee congressman and frontiersman Davy Crockett, Kentucky slave-trader James Bowie, who was famous for carrying around a large knife, and is lawyer and Texan separatist colonel William B. Travis.³⁵

William Zuber’s telling of the story is whitewashed and therefore erases the history of Mexican presence in modern day Texas. According to Zuber’s rendition, Travis, the leader of the ‘defenders’, drew a line in the sand and asked his men to join him in crossing the line and

³⁵ Alamo 7th grade lesson plan

fighting to the death. This theatrical rendition portrayed the Mexicans as brutal, violent and savage-like, aided in the erasure of Tejano involvement on the side of ‘defenders’, and idolized men who fought and died for land that was not their own and named them heroes.³⁶ In reality, Anglo-Americans were not the only ones Texans would consider the heroes of this story, but by racializing the two sides of the battle, Mexican and White, Anglo-Americans were able to demonize Mexicans and hold them responsible for the death of their heroes. This story steals the history of John (last name unknown) who was a freed Black man who ‘defended’ the Alamo or Juan Abamillo, Carlos Espalier who was just 17, Gregorio Esparza, Antonio Fuentes, José María Guerrero, José Toribio Losoya, and Andrés Nava who were Mexican and Tejano but fought with the Anglo Americans.³⁷ These non-Anglo defenders are often grouped with the 177 other separatists who were not the famous Davy Crockett, James Bowie or their ‘fearless’ leader William B. Travis.³⁸ The whitewashing is not the only problem with the Anglo-American controlled rhetoric, this story leads to many unanswered questions.

The most important question is how William Zuber was able to provide such specific details of the events of inside the Alamo before the Mexicans sieged the fort when he himself was not there. This question is important because it suggests that Zuber’s account is embellished at best, largely inaccurate and almost an act of pure fiction at worst. In fact, Zuber's account has many holes. Zuber stated that Moses Rose escaped from the Alamo after Travis’ notable speech

³⁶ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2015).

³⁷ <http://www.thealamo.org/remember/history/defenders/index.html>

³⁸ Tuleja, “Usable Pasts”, (University Press of Colorado, 1997) 274-290.

and before the Mexicans made their way into the fortress. Even at the time Zuber published this story, people questioned its validity. William Zuber's main critique was why it took so long for this side of the story to be published since his particular rendition "of this escape was not published before 1873", nearly 40 years after the battle.³⁹ In an article for the Texas Historical Association Quarterly, Zuber wrote "my account of Rose's escape and journey was not the principal purpose of my article in the Texas Almanac for 1873".⁴⁰ He argued that the purpose of his story was to focus on "the substance of Colonel Travis's last speech to his comrades" and that the details of Travis' speech came to him in bits and pieces which is why it took so long for him to publish.⁴¹ Zuber states "The compilation of that speech was a work of much study and long deliberation, besides repeated conversations with [his] mother, to refresh [his] memory. Though I often thought of the speech, and wished that it could be rescued from oblivion, I did not until 1871, believe that I or any other person could perform such a task."⁴² He said that by reading the Texas Almanac, he "experienced a phenomenal refreshment of [his] memory of that [he] had seen, heard, and read of during [his] earlier life. Among other things, [he] recovered scraps of

³⁹ William Beer, W. P. Zuber, Herbert E. Bolton, Edward Hall and A. Burns, *The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Jul., 1902), 68.

⁴⁰ William Beer, W. P. Zuber, Herbert E. Bolton, Edward Hall and A. Burns, *The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Jul., 1902), 68.

⁴¹ William Beer, W. P. Zuber, Herbert E. Bolton, Edward Hall and A. Burns, *The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Jul., 1902), 68.

⁴² William Beer, W. P. Zuber, Herbert E. Bolton, Edward Hall and A. Burns, *The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Jul., 1902), 68.

Travis's speech".⁴³ It seems impossible for someone to recall such specific details from one's youth so many years later.

The fact that Zuber's story became so popular and was not heavily questioned or critiqued even though it seems so incredibly unreliable created a narrative which has been placed in textbooks, films, and books. Zuber's legend of the Alamo glorified the Anglo- American immigrants forty years after the battle, making the historically inaccurate tale of American patriotism and bravery relevant in a more theatrical manor. Zuber's story made the Alamo more than just a war story, but a painted story of Texas pride and through the details he added, the Alamo came alive and spread.

The truth is, Zuber did nothing differently from what we see in today's media. He wrote what he knew would sell. A newspaper editor from an old western film once said, "When fact becomes legend, print the legend", which is exactly what Zuber did.⁴⁴ In fact, Zuber later admitted that he embellished the story, but by that point in time, the damage had already been done and Texans preferred the story of ultimate sacrifice for country and bravery.

Zuber's legacy has overshadowed the facts and remains in the glorification of the Alamo in Textbooks and films and this not only glorifies the violence of the battle itself, but the sentiment that drove the Anglo-Americans in the first place: the views of White entitlement and Tejano inferiority and degradation. The earliest textbook telling of the Battle of the Alamo was

⁴³ William Beer, W. P. Zuber, Herbert E. Bolton, Edward Hall and A. Burns, *The Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Jul., 1902), 68.

⁴⁴ S. Grider, "Chapter 12 How Texans Remember the Alamo", Copyright Date: 1997 Published by: University Press of Colorado, Utah State University Press p 274.

in 1888 in *New History for Texas Schools* by Anna Pennybacker. Her story has a similar flare as seen in Zuber's performative rendition. She wrote "the Mexicans 'kept up a terrible cannonade'" and

"Just before sunset, this suddenly ceased, and Santa Anna ordered his men to withdraw some distance from the Alamo. The weary Texans, who fought for ten days and nights, had toiled like giants, sank down to snatch a few moments' rest. Travis seemed to know that this was the lull before the last fury of storm that was to destroy them all; he ordered his men to parade in single file. Then followed one of the grandest scenes history records. In a voice trembling with emotion, Travis told his men that death was inevitable and showed that he detained them thus long, hoping for reinforcements."⁴⁵

This resembles more of a scene from a play or an old western film rather than what belongs in a text book: subjective facts. Pennybacker proceeds to include a footnote with an "imaginary speech of Travis [by] some unknown author." This is the speech, though imaginary has been "much-quoted".⁴⁶ This imaginary story states that "when Travis had finished, the silence of the grave reigned over all. Drawing his sword, he drew a line in front of his men, and cried, 'Those who wish to die like heroes and patriots, come over to me'".⁴⁷ As the legend says, "there was no hesitation in a few minutes, every soldier, save one, had crossed."

Like Zuber, Pennybacker knew her story would be questioned and uses Rose's story of escape as the source of such specific details. She goes on to say "while some historians doubt

⁴⁵ S. Grider, "Chapter 12 How Texans Remember the Alamo", Copyright Date: 1997 Published by: University Press of Colorado, Utah State University Press, 275.

⁴⁶ S. Grider, "Chapter 12 How Texans Remember the Alamo", Copyright Date: 1997 Published by: University Press of Colorado, Utah State University Press, 275.

⁴⁷ S. Grider, "Chapter 12 How Texans Remember the Alamo", Copyright Date: 1997 Published by: University Press of Colorado, Utah State University Press, 275.

the truth of the story, we deem it to be the interest of the student to let him investigate the matter for himself.”⁴⁸

Despite the fact that historians dispute the likelihood of these events, Pennybacker is just one of many who have printed similarly theatrical and historically inaccurate renditions of the Alamo and other facts of Texas history. Historian Sylvia Ann Grider argues that “Texas children have been fed a steady diet of legend, celebrating specifically the heroic exploits of the Anglo-Americans who fought and won a revolution against Mexico” and this is due to “the way Texas history has been taught in public schools” and the fact that “the record of Texas’s legendary past is more familiar to many Texans than the actual historical record”.⁴⁹

One popular defense of the factually incorrect but attention grabbing version of the Alamo story is by another Texan hero, J. Frank Dobie, a notable Texan writer. He said:

“It is a line that not all the piety nor with of research will ever bow out. It is a Grand Canyon cut into the bedrock of human emotions and heroic impulses. It may be expurgated from histories, but it can no more be expunged from popular imagination than the damned spots on Lady Macbeth’s hands. Teachers of children dramatize it in school rooms; orators on holidays silver and gild it; the tellers of historical anecdotes — and there are many of them in Texas — sitting around hotel lobbies speculate on it and say, ‘Well, we’ll believe it whether it is true or not.’”⁵⁰

This mentality rings true today regarding many aspects of American history that show this country’s leaders in a negative light.

⁴⁸ S. Grider, “Chapter 12 How Texans Remember the Alamo”, Copyright Date: 1997 Published by: University Press of Colorado, Utah State University Press, 276.

⁴⁹ S. Grider, “Chapter 12 How Texans Remember the Alamo”, Copyright Date: 1997 Published by: University Press of Colorado, Utah State University Press, 274.

⁵⁰ S. Grider, “Chapter 12 How Texans Remember the Alamo”, Copyright Date: 1997 Published by: University Press of Colorado, Utah State University Press, 276.

There have been recent movements to remove statues of racist civil war leaders in the south because the glorification of these figures whitewashes the history and diminishes the damage done to people of color, showing we may be living in a more progressive time. A children's history book designed for middle school students published in 2016 entitled *Everything You Need to Ace American History in One Big Fat Notebook* provides a less whitewashed rendition of the Alamo. This book is told to meet Common Core State Standards, state history standards, and has been vetted by National and State Teacher of the Year Award winning teachers.⁵¹ While the text still refers to the Anglo-Americans as 'settlers' when in reality they were violent immigrants, the book does argue that "the new American settlers did not speak Spanish or practice Catholicism, and they kept illegal slaves" and that the cultural differences were a main contributor as to why the 'American settlers' wanted to secede from Mexico.⁵²

While many of the details of the Battle of the Alamo have been whitewashed through the theatrical version popularized after Zuber's publication, the important and verified facts have been pushed to the back burner, minimizing the significance of the brutal violence that occurred against both sides during the battle and after. The Anglo-American story makes López de Santa Ana and his army seem brutal, savage-like and unnecessarily violent when in reality, they were restoring order and regaining control of their land and their city. On February 23, López de Santa Anna, with the Mexican army., seized San Antonio de Valero, "the Mexican province of

⁵¹ Nathalie Le Du, "Editing," Accessed May 1, 2018. <https://www.nathalieledu.com/editing/>.

⁵² Lily Rothman, "Everything You need to Ace American History" (New York, 2016), 204.

Tejas”, from the majority Anglo-American separatists.^{53 54} The battle of the Alamo lasted for 12 days. “On March 6, Santa Anna blew the horns that Mexicans traditionally used to announce an attack to the death,” which was also the day when the Mexican army broke through the fort and killed the majority of the “intermittent [Anglo-American] squatters” and their allies in the fort.⁵⁵ The ‘defenders’ who were significantly outnumbered by “Mexican troops, made a conscious decision to remain in the San Antonio fortress and willingly fought to their deaths, to the last man”.⁵⁶ Haitian anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot stated: “as actors, [people changing history through their actions], the [separatists] captured Santa Anna and neutralized his forces. As narrators, they gave the Alamo story a new meaning”.⁵⁷

The legacy of the Alamo and the Texas revolution was one of discrimination and violence. On July 17, 1836, just months after Texas gained its independence, “the Mexican consulate reported to the secretary of foreign relations in Philadelphia that over 100 Mexican citizens had arrived in New Orleans after being forced from their homes in Texas”.⁵⁸ Despite the fact that Texas was not a part of the United States, “a U.S. general had issued a warning to all

⁵³ Lily Rothman, “Everything You need to Ace American History” (New York, 2016), 204.

⁵⁴ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2015), 1.

⁵⁵ Trouillot, *Silencing the past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2015), 1-2.

⁵⁶ Tuleja, *Usable Pasts* (University Press of Colorado, 1997) 274-290.

⁵⁷ Trouillot, *Silencing the past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2015), 2.

⁵⁸ José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands*, (Cambridge, 2012) 69.

citizens of the León Colony of Texas to leave lest they be ‘put to the knife’ by Texas colonists and volunteers" who vastly outnumbered the Tejanos.⁵⁹ The Leon colony was founded by a “Mexican empresario who was given land to grant to populate the area in the hopes of thwarting increasing migration of Euro-American settlers”. Because the Anglo-Americans so greatly outnumbered the Tejanos, “these former colonists had a demographic advantage that enabled them to expel those they considered undesirable” despite the fact that “the founders of this town, the De León family, fought on the side of Texas and against Santa Ana”.⁶⁰ The warnings from two other towns stated:

“The citizens of Guadalupe Victoria and Goliad are required, for their own personal safety and security, to march immediately towards the East. They can go as they like, that is, by land or by sea; although the latter is preferable because the trip by land would expose you to inconveniences and labors, and because currently there are sufficient boats in the Bay that have been obtained for this purpose. All will be given Passports and letters of protection by means of which you will receive the best treatment. There is no longer a neutral country; Texas will be free, or it will be transformed into a desert.”⁶¹ Texas had already gained independence, so ‘Texas will be free’ meant free of Tejanos.

How could those fleeing trust that the ships were safe when they were being threatened to leave “for their own personal safety?” This letter was issued by General Rusk and he made it clear that “Texas would only be free once Mexicans (even those who had demonstrated their

⁵⁹ José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands*, (Cambridge, 2012) 54.

⁶⁰ José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands*, (Cambridge, 2012) 69.

⁶¹ José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands*, (Cambridge, 2012) 69-70.

loyalty to Texas) were expelled from their lands therefore removing a primary obstacle to further Euro American colonization of the area.”⁶²

The sentiment of making Texas racially pure spread, and consequently, incited more threats and violence. In fact, “Texas military volunteers were showing ‘symptoms of wanting to pass under the knife all Mexicans’.”⁶³ The desired violence Anglo-Americans wished to impose on Tejanos was a direct result of the Texas revolution. The Anglo-American “population, having suffered severe casualties in that conflict, sought retaliation against Mexican communities and they turned first to the settlements along the Guadalupe and San Antonio Rivers.”⁶⁴ In 1837 the towns of “Victoria, San Patricio, La Bahía (Goliad), and Refugio” experienced extreme discrimination and “were the first to feel the vengeance for the massacres at Goliad and the Alamo.”⁶⁵ Many who had fled to east Texas were evacuated and some led further south. Some notable Mexican families fled to Carlos Ranch and they “lived in constant fear of raids and threats if violence from the burgeoning Euro American population who recalled the death trap at the Alamo.”⁶⁶ When the Mexican government attempted to seize Texas and “occupied San

⁶² José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands*, (Cambridge, 2012) 70.

⁶³ José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands*, (Cambridge, 2012) 70.

⁶⁴ José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands*, (Cambridge, 2012) 71.

⁶⁵ José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands*, (Cambridge, 2012) 72.

⁶⁶ José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands*, (Cambridge, 2012) 72.

Antonio in 1842,” a group of Anglo-Americans that were still upset about the Alamo burned down Carlos Ranch as an attempt to “kill all the Mexicans belonging in it”.⁶⁷

The telling of the Alamo has played a crucial role in questions of belonging, identity, and nationality, and the whitewashing of these particular historical events has created a rhetoric that has diminished the rights and validity of the Mexican army, Tejanos, and other non-Anglos living in the San Antonio borderland. The Mexican government played a major role in the Anglo- American colonization of Tejas. The Mexican government and its people had a tumultuous relationship with the indigenous people of the area simply because Mexicans were occupying indigenous land that was not theirs. Similar to how the Anglo-Americans eventually perceived the Tejanos, the Tejanos called the ingenious groups savages. As a means of protecting themselves and their land, the Mexican government invited Anglo-Americans to live in their new country and in 1821, “the first Anglo-American settlers [came] to settle in the Mexican state of Texas”.⁶⁸

Many Tejanos had native and historical roots to the land and their story deserves to be told in a way that preserves their history since they were stripped of their land. The popularized rendition of the Alamo, introduced by William Zuber, reiterated racist Anglo-American beliefs towards Tejanos in a way that painted the Anglo-Americans who died in the battle as patriotic heroes and the Tejanos as unrefined and unnecessarily and brutally violent. Instead, after the

⁶⁷ José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S. - Mexico Borderlands*, (Cambridge, 2012) 72.

⁶⁸ “Latino Americans Timeline,” PBS, (2013).

Mexican- American war, the “Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo incorporated Texas within the U.S. and presented, those from the Bexar region, Bexareños, with the option of leaving their homeland and going into Mexican territory or remaining. Many Tejanos chose to remain in Bexar” and this caused many problems which resulted in violence against Tejanos. There was a fear mentality that spread through borderlands. Americans feared that the loyalty Mexican-Americans had would lead to a reannexation of the land.⁶⁹ This created the political and social climate for the Cart Wars.

⁶⁹ Raúl Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861*, (Chapel Hill, 2008) 206.

Chapter 2: The Cart Wars

In 1845, the United States annexed Texas as a part of an agreement made at the end of the Mexican-American War; as a result, Tejanos were displaced from their homes and were exposed to extreme violence and discrimination. There were high political and racial tensions and even though San Antonio was considered the second most diverse city in the south, Tejanos and those of Mexican descent were one of the most populous ethnic groups. The Anglo-Americans worked to suppress Mexican and Tejano culture legally and individuals would later take it upon themselves to suppress the economic and social success of Tejanos and Mexicans living in the San Antonio area.

When Texas became the 28th state in the United States, the government made it their mission to restrict and limit Mexican/Tejano culture in a city heavily populated by Tejanos. Texan culture was deeply rooted in the Tejano and Mexican influences since the Anglo-Americans moved to Texas when it was still a part of Mexico. While there was violence towards Tejanos, they were still able to maintain their culture. One aspect of Tejano culture that was stripped away was the Fandango. It was both a dance and a term used for a celebration. The “Fandangos were (before the Mexican American war): Many things including family outings an opportunities for chaperoned courtships”. The had evolved from their Mexican origins and “all manner of five occurred at the dances, even murder”. The city council of San Antonio, which

included two Tejanos, outlawed this “piece of [Mexican] culture” in 1849.⁷⁰ More laws followed that attacked Mexican culture. Prohibition of cock & bull fighting on Sundays (apart of the sabbath for catholic Mexican-Americans), no bathing in the San Antonio River and San Pedro Creek nude, and these ordinances were published in English.

Previously, they had been written in English, Spanish and German.⁷¹ This was in efforts of being accessible to San Antonio’s diverse population, the second most diverse city in the south, just after New Orleans. The city’s “inhabitants included people from Wales, Scotland, England, Hungary, the West Indies, Italy, Bohemia, Austria, Switzerland, Spain, Sicily, Turkey, Denmark, Poland, Canada, Moldavia, Holland, Cuba & Novascotia.” The majority of citizens were “people form the United States, Germany and Mexico (Tejanos).”⁷² These laws were not the only political change in San Antonio at the beginning of the 1850’s.

With the introduction of new political parties, government officials and parties began to value Tejanos and Mexicans as potential votes but not as people. This was the beginning of ‘hispandering’ in the United States. Hispandering is defined as the act of modifying political literature and content by simplifying or altering language in a way which it belittles Hispanic intelligence and ability to engage in true political discourse as a means of manipulating voters

⁷⁰ Larry Knight, “The Cart War: Defining American in San Antonio in the 1850’s,” (Southwestern Historical Quarterly (2006) 322.

⁷¹ Larry Knight, “The Cart War: Defining American in San Antonio in the 1850’s,” (Southwestern Historical Quarterly (2006) 322.

⁷² Larry Knight, “The Cart War: Defining American in San Antonio in the 1850’s,” (Southwestern Historical Quarterly (2006) 321-322.

under the guise working in the best interest of Hispanics. This concept is ever present with White presidential candidates claiming to be 'just like your abuela' even though they have voted for increased border patrol and deportation in the past.⁷³ In the 1850's, the Democratic party had control. This was when the democratic party stood for small federal government, more states rights, and laws that stripped Tejanos of their culture as mentioned before.

When the Know-Nothing Party entered San Antonio in 1854, the democrats were first to hispander to the Mexicans for votes since they were the most numerous population in San Antonio. This is one of the first times the Anglo-Americans realized the importance of the rights Mexican-Americans had. Because the democrats had been so anti-Mexican, the Mexican-Americans need some convincing. To demonstrate "some level of respect and acknowledgment of their rights and privileges (accepting them as the American citizens that they were) they elevated Jose Antonio Navarro from heroic Mexican-Texan to the personification of American (a Tejano who fought in the Alamo)".⁷⁴ Navarro later wrote an open letter helping Mexican-Americans work with the democrats against the Know-Nothing party. Despite the racist laws rooted in racial suppression and white supremacy, Navarro advocated for the lesser of two evils, a phrase used often during the previous presidential election. By doing so, voting for the better of the two main stream options, Mexican-Americans continued to be oppressed, both in the 1800s and today.

⁷³ Sam Samuels, "Hillary Clinton, Not quite an Abuela," (NPR December 26, 2015).

⁷⁴ Larry Knight, "The Cart War: Defining American in San Antonio in the 1850's," (Southwestern Historical Quarterly (2006) 320).

Tejanos did as expected and united together with the Democratic party to prohibit the Know Nothing Party from gaining political traction. And despite the fact that the newly Mexican-American population was conforming to the racist laws and voting for the democratic party, Tejanos were still experiencing extreme violence and it continued to get worse. Historian Jason E. Pierce argues that Anglo-Americans needed violence in order to claim their power and control minority groups in order to continue expansion and development. Pierce states: “Anglo-Americans relied on the violence to take possession of the west. Upon completing that conquest, they also used it to smother challenges to their ascendant economic and political hegemony”.⁷⁵ He continues by referencing another historian, Richard Maxwell Brown who said Anglo-Americans used violence “to ‘preserve their favored position in the social economic and political order.’”⁷⁶ Brown neglects the aspects of “whiteness in his discussion of vigilante violence, [but] clearly it provided an underlying basis on which ‘their favored position’ had been constructed.”⁷⁷ White democrats considered themselves “law-abiding citizens” which was their excuse for heavily policing and monitoring brown people, whom they viewed as lazy and criminal. But these “law-abiding citizens could at times embrace, lynching, vigilantism, and

⁷⁵ Jason Pierce, *Making the White Man’s West: Whiteness and the Creation of the American West*, (Colorado, 2016) 209.

⁷⁶ Jason Pierce, *Making the White Man’s West: Whiteness and the Creation of the American West*, (Colorado, 2016) 209.

⁷⁷ Jason Pierce, *Making the White Man’s West: Whiteness and the Creation of the American West*, (Colorado, 2016) 209.

mob violence to allegedly protect societal values and a status quo implicitly based on ideas of White racial supremacy and privilege.”⁷⁸

Violence was a means of asserting their dominance over Mexican-American citizens and limit their ability to succeed. In fact, violence became “the most powerful tool for marginalizing non-White peoples and protecting the White man’s west.”⁷⁹ This vigilanteism was seen after the Alamo when Texan separatists were seeking revenge for the brutal battle. It was also seen in the attacks of successful Mexican-American cartmen in Bexar County and the numerous amounts of lynchings of Mexican-American citizens. Violence as an fundamental characteristic of the West and “the western experience has long been recognized as integral to the settlement and development of the region”.⁸⁰ Anglo-Americans entered Texas as a means of suppressing indigenous peoples. Once apart of the United States, Anglo-Americans worked to suppress all racial minorities. As an effort to maintain their rights, “Non-Anglos, including American Indians and Hispanic outlaws, employed violence, resisting American expansion and trying to retain control of their lands and territory.”⁸¹ Instead of yielding success, minorities were unable “to defeat the domination of White Americans and the social and economic order their arrival

⁷⁸ Jason Pierce, *Making the White Man’s West: Whiteness and the Creation of the American West*, (Colorado, 2016) 209.

⁷⁹ Jason Pierce, *Making the White Man’s West: Whiteness and the Creation of the American West*, (Colorado, 2016) 209.

⁸⁰ Jason Pierce, *Making the White Man’s West: Whiteness and the Creation of the American West*, (Colorado, 2016) 209-210.

⁸¹ Jason Pierce, *Making the White Man’s West: Whiteness and the Creation of the American West*, (Colorado, 2016) 209-210.

presaged. Western communities grew [and] violence remained critical to creating and enforcing the dominance of Whites over non-Whites, making both spatial and psychological boundaries in the process.”⁸² This need to assert power over others extended all over the south west; From Texas to Washington State, Anglo-Americans employed violence to smother challenges to their control; and vigilante movements, in various times and places, targeted American Indians, [Blacks], Hispanics, the Chinese, and in rare instances in European ethnic groups.”⁸³ One particular example of vigilante movements acting to suppress Mexican-American economic prosperity and success was the Cart War.

The Cart Wars were a series of blatant and racist attacks on Tejano cartmen that occurred in the San Antonio region in the 1850s that severely affected Tejano life and well-being. At this time, Tejanos had created significant economic success carting goods and information throughout the Bexar region, almost functioning as what we would see as today’s trucking companies. Their work was pivotal to the economic prosperity of not only their own community, but also to the city of San Antonio. The Tejano “cartmen hauled the freight and news that kept San Antonio alive, prosperous, and informed to and from the city.”⁸⁴ The Tejano cartmen were also known to

⁸² Jason Pierce, *Making the White Man’s West: Whiteness and the Creation of the American West*, (Colorado, 2016) 209-210.

⁸³ Jason Pierce, *Making the White Man’s West: Whiteness and the Creation of the American West*, (Colorado, 2016) 209-210.

⁸⁴ Larry Knight, “The Cart War: Defining American in San Antonio in the 1850’s,” (Southwestern Historical Quarterly (2006) 324.

be “more efficient and performed the job more cheaply than” the Anglo-Americans did.⁸⁵

Because of these factors, many historians point to the Cart Wars occurring for three main reasons, all centered around the desires of the region’s less productive White men who:

- 1.) often “believed their jobs were unfairly taken by Mexicans”
- 2.) wanted the economic success of the Tejano cartmen
- 3.) were “perhaps some Anglos who simply hated Mexicans”.⁸⁶

The Anglo-Americans’ use of violence and exclusion towards those of Mexican descent who were ‘taking’ Anglo-American jobs for lower pay was widely viewed as acceptable behavior within the San Antonio region, including by the government, which neither publicly condemned nor took action to quell the attacks.

Today, this mentality has nationalized and is a central reason why so many uncultured and uneducated Americans, many of them White, feel undocumented immigrants should be removed from their communities and deported, disregarding the allocation of basic human rights and immigrant rights provided by international human rights law.⁸⁷ Additionally, the Cart Wars left a legacy of Anglo-Americans putting those of Mexican descent in dangerous working conditions while underpaying them due to the fact that the economic benefits of cheap

⁸⁵ Larry Knight, “The Cart War: Defining American in San Antonio in the 1850’s,” (Southwestern Historical Quarterly (2006) 324.

⁸⁶ Larry Knight, “The Cart War: Defining American in San Antonio in the 1850’s,” (Southwestern Historical Quarterly (2006) 324.

⁸⁷ The United States ratified the Convention on the Status of Refugees in 1968. See United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “States Parties to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol.” Accessed May 01, 2018, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/>

'immigrant' labor rendered the maltreatment of brown bodies irrelevant. Similar to 1850s San Antonio, many argue that the United States economy is reliant on immigrant labor, yet the same underpayment and maltreatment issues remain.

At the time of the Cart Wars, "the San Antonio Herald [stated] that 'giving up the employment of Mexican carts and Mexican cartmen would be equivalent to signing the death warrant to the prosperity of San Antonio.'"⁸⁸ We see the same argument today: utilize the disadvantageous situation Americans have put Latinx immigrants in by giving them the jobs that Americans would demand to be paid more for. Instead of appreciating and valuing the efficiency and hard work of Latinx persons in the United States by paying them fairly and treating them well, there is a clear sense of institutionalized systematic oppression that resembles what existed in San Antonio in the 1850s that encourages hazardous working conditions with little pay. The Cart Wars created an ethical dilemma for those who benefitted from the Tejanos' services: support the 'Mexican cartmen', including their low pay, for superior work or allow the attacks to continue.

The Cart Wars themselves consisted of five increasingly violent battles from July 1857 to November of that same year. These battles occurred simply to terrify the Tejanos in order to assert control and convince them to "give up their occupations."⁸⁹ This was a campaign of what today would be considered pure domestic terrorism: nothing was ever stolen from the carts. The

⁸⁸ Larry Knight, "The Cart War: Defining American in San Antonio in the 1850's," (Southwestern Historical Quarterly (2006) 324.

⁸⁹ Larry Knight, "The Cart War: Defining American in San Antonio in the 1850's," (Southwestern Historical Quarterly (2006) 324.

first attack occurred on July 3rd, 1857, and was committed by men who were “fully armed, and whose features were either masked or blackened’ in Golid County.” The six carts they attacked were “loaded full of goods” traveling from Port Lavaca to San Antonio.⁹⁰ While the ‘goods’ were not stolen, “the disguised men wounded two cartmen”. The second attack was just outside of the town of Goliad on July 14th, just eleven days after the first attack. During this attack, there were “fifteen to twenty attackers [who] fired numerous shots, none of which hit the cartmen. However, the wheels of numerous carts were cut, but as in the first attack, no goods were taken.”⁹¹

The third attack was on July 31, 1857, and transpired near Goliad as well. This attack followed the increasingly violent trend of terrorizing innocent cartmen with violence in order to intimidate them into leaving their professions. “For the first time, an attack appeared to be murderous. The attack wounded four men, three of them Mexican and one Anglo. The three Mexicans suffered no serious wounds but the Anglo, Charles G. Edwards, was reported to be mortally wounded.”⁹² Despite his injury, Edwards made a statement saying that he was targeted by the attackers and they “seemed determined to kill him.” The evidence supports this; he was

⁹⁰ Larry Knight, “The Cart War: Defining American in San Antonio in the 1850’s,” (Southwestern Historical Quarterly (2006) 325.

⁹¹ Larry Knight, “The Cart War: Defining American in San Antonio in the 1850’s,” (Southwestern Historical Quarterly (2006) 325.

⁹² Larry Knight, “The Cart War: Defining American in San Antonio in the 1850’s,” (Southwestern Historical Quarterly (2006) 325.

shot at close range and the attackers broadened their scope for racial targets. Their “new message was clear: Anglos who supported Mexican cartmen against American teamsters would suffer.”⁹³

This murderous trend continued with the fourth attack, which happened September 12th, 1857, in Bexar County, the county where San Antonio was located. On September 12, 1857, Nicanor Valdez and other Tejanos were transporting U.S. military supplies from San Antonio to the port on the gulf of Mexico at Lavaca.⁹⁴ Approximately forty men in masks and painted faces from Helena in Karnes County shot Valdez and his coworkers, including his brother. This was one of many attacks led by Anglo-Texans of Karnes County who wanted to “disrupt Mexican cart traffic.”⁹⁵ This attack led to the death of “one of San Antonio’s most storied citizens, Antonio Delgado.”⁹⁶ He “received fourteen shots, which killed him instantly” while Valdez and his brothers, Esteban and Mariano, were wounded.⁹⁷ This attack was on “leading citizens of Bexar County” traveling through Goliad and Karnes counties “where they had received assurances that the attacks were over.” The Tejanos had been lied to and Delgado, a would-be hero by Anglo-American standards aside from his race because of the numerous wars he fought

⁹³ Larry Knight, “The Cart War: Defining American in San Antonio in the 1850’s,” (Southwestern Historical Quarterly (2006) 325.

⁹⁴ Raúl Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861*, (Chapel Hill, 2008) 205.

⁹⁵ Raúl Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861*, (Chapel Hill, 2008) 206.

⁹⁶ Larry Knight, “The Cart War: Defining American in San Antonio in the 1850’s,” (Southwestern Historical Quarterly (2006) 325.

⁹⁷ Raúl Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861*, (Chapel Hill, 2008) 205.

in, was murdered. Delgado had fought for Mexican independence against Spain in 1811, “along with General Andrew Jackson at the battle of New Orleans in 1815, and carried dispatches for the Texas revolutionaries in the first battle of Bexar in 1835.”⁹⁸ Delgado consistently fought for the freedom of the land which eventually became the U.S. state of Texas. When the survivors of the attack made it back to the city of San Antonio, they reported it to law enforcement. Nicanor Valdez relayed to the judge at the justice of the peace that “he recognized the two assailants, having seen them in Helena only hours before the ambush”.⁹⁹ This was a premeditated act of violence as a means of murdering a prominent member of Tejano and Texan society to send a message to Tejanos and their sympathizers.

Historian Larry Knight poses an interesting question. He states: “The ‘American’ attackers had killed a ‘Mexican’ competitor but who was more American?... Were [Delgado’s] three fights for freedom — all fought on what was now American soil— not enough to qualify him as an American?”¹⁰⁰ The Cart Wars was a way of telling Tejanos that they did not belong. But who belonged more in that space? A man who fought for those who lived on that physical land’s freedom against 3 different governments or the Anglo-Americans who immigrated into Mexican land and then claimed it for their own? Legally, these Tejanos were American citizens.

⁹⁸ Larry Knight, “The Cart War: Defining American in San Antonio in the 1850’s,” (Southwestern Historical Quarterly (2006) 325.

⁹⁹ Raúl Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861*, (Chapel Hill, 2008) 205.

¹⁰⁰ Larry Knight, “The Cart War: Defining American in San Antonio in the 1850’s,” (Southwestern Historical Quarterly (2006) 325.

They had the right to vote just like any other citizen and they boosted the region's economy by working more productively for less pay. None of this made the Tejanos 'American enough' in the eyes of the racist, power hungry Anglo-Americans. By the attackers not stealing the product from the carts, it shows that the Cart Wars were nothing other than a violent expression of racism as a means of spreading fear.

The violence the Tejanos faced at this time was not only random violence used as a tool to spread terror amongst Tejano communities, but the specifically targeted violence of the Cart Wars disrupted the businesses the Tejanos were creating. It the murder of Charles G. Edwards caused fear in the few allies the Tejanos had. The murder of Antonio Delgado showed Tejanos that no matter what they did, even fighting against Mexico for Texan independence was not enough to keep them safe in their home. The Anglo-American invaders displaced Tejanos from their home by creating an environment so hostile they could no longer feel safe. In 1857, Manuel Robles y Pezuela, a Mexican Minister, sent a letter expressing his concerns for Mexicans in Bexar county to Secretary of state Lewis Cass. The letter stated:

“It is averred that, in the neighborhood of San Antonio de Bejar, in said state of Texas, communities of armed men have been organized for the exclusive purpose of hunting down Mexicans on the highway and spoiling them of their property and putting them to death. [...] It is also affirmed that from the town of San Antonio de Bejar, the residents of Mexican origin have been expelled, living there in a peaceable manner, under the protection of the laws of the United States and of the treaties subsisting between the two governments. Sundry families, the victims of these unheard prosecutions, have commenced reaching the Mexican territory in utter destitution and after suffering the hardships of a weary march on foot compulsorily undertaken for the salvation of their

lives. These families have been forced to abandon all the interests which they had at stake.”¹⁰¹

Later, the governor of Texas, “Elisha Marshal Pease issued a report on the violence and provided protection for the cart drivers” but this was more of a political move rather than a means of protecting citizens and enforcing laws against assault and murder. The fact is, the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo gave Tejanos, specifically those from Bexar county, “Bexareños, with the option of claiming either American or Mexican citizenship” and the majority of Bexareños chose to remain in Bexar county.¹⁰² Despite the fact that Tejanos had every right to remain in Texas after annexation, their newfound citizenship held no significance to those who desired to make Texas a place for prosperity for White Americans.

Though rarely discussed in history, The Cart Wars played a significant role in defining what it meant to be American in a borderland. It proved that legal citizenship meant nothing to those fueled by hatred. Tejanos attacked during the Cart Wars were American citizens, and were citizens of the republic of Texas prior to the annexation. In fact, these Tejanos made an active choice to remain in Texas and become American citizens rather than have Mexican citizenship, they chose the United States over the country they had cultural roots in. This was an act of American patriotism unlike the Anglo-Americans that were born into American citizenship.

¹⁰¹ Larry Knight, “The Cart War: Defining American in San Antonio in the 1850’s,” (Southwestern Historical Quarterly (2006) 320.

¹⁰² Raúl Ramos, *Beyond the Alamo: Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861*, (Chapel Hill, 2008) 206.

After Texas became a member of the United States, Tejanos were the victim of extreme violence, the most obvious reason was overt racism, but there was also a wide-spread fear of the ‘reannexation’ of Texas by the Mexican government. Anglo-Americans used violence as a means of scaring Mexican-Americans into submission. From 1848-1850, eight people of Mexican origin were lynched. From 1851-1860, 160 people of Mexican descent were lynched. Americans feared that the loyalty Mexican-Americans had would lead to a “reannex[ation]” of the land. In efforts of securing “territorial boundaries Anglos-[Americans]” initiated a several violent counter-offensives.¹⁰³ Mexican-Americans were not safe. So much so that “hundred of Mexican families fled Texas”. An “official who assisted the repatriation of these families [stated] ‘they [could not] live any longer in the State of Texas, as they [were] denied protection and many ha[d] been killed by irresponsible armed posses who ha[d] killed innocent people without reason’”.¹⁰⁴ This created wide-spread fear amongst Tejano communities rendering them powerless.

Today, bigotry and racism are at the core of aggressive immigration and deportation practices in the United States. Especially since the election of Donald Trump, there has been an increase of stories circulating in media outlets showing Latinx people with immigration status or citizenship who have been confronted by ignorant White Americans demanding to see their

¹⁰³ William D. Carrigan, *The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin*, *Journal of Social History* (December 1, 2003) 423.

¹⁰⁴ William D. Carrigan, *The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin*, *Journal of Social History* (December 1, 2003) 423.

papers or being told to ‘go back to [their] home countr[ies]’.¹⁰⁵ Recently, ICE has been going into immigration courts detaining immigrants who are in the process of gaining legal immigration status.¹⁰⁶ Today there are less acts of overt physical violence, like the murders committed during the Cart Wars, but in the few years surrounding the Cart Wars, Tejano’s and newly Mexican-Americans were victims of the great White American pastime, lynching. This rendering any apology or legislative protection insignificant.

The Cart Wars and the residual violence after the fact created an environment in which Tejanos and those of Mexican descent could no longer feel safe in their home that was taken over by violent Anglo-American immigrants. San Antonio’s history of violence toward Tejanos and Anglos-Americans allowed there to be a precedent of violent retaliation. The Cart Wars would not had occurred without the events of the Alamo looming in the not so distant past. Not only did they set forth a rhetoric of dehumanization of Mexicans. Additionally, much of the resentment toward Tejanos in San Antonio was a direct result of the brutality the Anglo-American ‘defenders’ faced in the battle of the Alamo. Racism was a clear motivator as well. Anglo- Americans were used to being at the top of the social ladder. When they came into Tejas as immigrants, they had no political standing, just the authority, provided by the Mexican government, to assert themselves violently over the indigenous population. When Texas was annexed by the United States, the violent practices of suppressing brown bodies took a new

¹⁰⁵ Jeremiah Dobruck, “Video shows California professor telling couple to ‘go back to your home country’”, *The Mercury News* (March 5, 2018).

¹⁰⁶ James Queally, “ICE agents make arrests at courthouses,” *LA Times* (March 16, 2017).

direction in San Antonio. Lynchings increased, businessmen were attacked despite the fact that the economy in San Antonio depended on the work of Tejano cartmen. Anglo-Americans were using violence to demonstrate what ‘American’ meant, White. Even the news papers that defended the cartmen referred to them as Mexican despite the fact that they were indeed American citizens.

This idea that American is defined by whiteness is still ever-present. Brown people in this country are constantly asked to prove that they are American. Immigration enforcement racially profiles because they assume that brown bodies are less American than White ones. The violence Latinx bodies face today in the United States is a direct reflection of the precedent set forth by 19th-century San Antonio. By erasing this history, many Americans remain ignorant to the historical context of immigration reform and embody the legacy of violence, exclusion and racism the lone-star state has set forth through the events that occurred in San Antonio.

Conclusion:

The Battle of the Alamo and the Cart Wars are two specific acts of violence that have largely influenced the United States' treatment of Mexicans historically and still today. The way in which the story of the Alamo has been told throughout history and today has erased any Tejano or Black involvement on the side of the 'defenders', making the situation an 'us versus them' making "us" the Anglo-Americans and "them" the Mexicans. The way writer William Zuber embellished his telling of the Alamo, and those, such as Anna Pennybacker, who built off of his version, allowed an interesting story to take precedents over the historical fact. Zuber and Pennybacker's stories were used as a means of dehumanizing and demonizing Mexicans by painting them as excessively violent and savage-like. This created a toxic environment in San Antonio by deepening the racial divide. Eventually the racial tensions reached a point in which some Anglo-Americans deemed it acceptable to violently attack Mexicans in order to create fear in Mexican communities. The Cart Wars and the lynchings that occurred after were acts of racism and hatred. The violence committed against Mexican-American citizens was a means of saying that citizenship did not make one American and brown skin would prevent individuals from ever truly being accepted as American. Not long after, national immigration laws would reflect this mentality with the Asian exclusion acts and discriminatory immigration quota systems.

As this project concludes, I work to connect the events of the past to those of the present. I show how San Antonio's history is crucial to understanding modern-day human rights

violations in the San Antonio region by discussing how Anglo-Americans worked to equate whiteness with American-ness (and therefore discriminated against brown people), how a legal case was used to help strip Mexicans of their racial identity, the institutional discrimination of all non-White immigrants and how that relates to today's political and racial climate, and lastly, how this relation has led to the increase of immigration enforcement and therefore, to the increase of detainment, which has resulted in privatized immigration facilities abusing their power and stripping detainees of their rights as human beings.

When Mexico gained independence from Spain and invited Anglo-Americans to immigrate to the Mexican region of Tejas in order to control and suppress the indigenous groups, the Mexican government essentially permitted Anglo-Americans to colonize the land where they resided. The Mexican government believed “encouraging immigrants to settle in [the northern frontier] regions was the only feasible alternative to maintain control” due to their “problems [with] a large, hostile Indian population in these regions and the paucity of federal resources to suppress them militarily”.¹⁰⁷ These Anglo-American frontiersmen who were the first to immigrate to Mexico moved with the sole desire to benefit economically from the prosperous land and ranches the Mexican government had set aside for them. They still considered themselves American and had no desire of assimilating into Mexican or Tejano culture. In fact, many of these Anglo-American immigrants refused to do what was legally required of them to be considered “legal settlers” because it required steps of assimilation. The law required “those

¹⁰⁷ Laura Gomez, *Manifest Destinies*, New York (October, 2007) 57.

emigrating from the United States were required to become naturalized Mexican citizens and to convert to Catholicism if they were not already Catholic”. It is estimated that about “40 percent of the American immigrants to Texas in the 1820s ignored those requirements— thus becoming ‘illegal aliens’ to Mexico.”¹⁰⁸

The violence that ensued as a result of these immigrants cultural intolerance and desire to occupy land that was not theirs created a world in which Anglo-Americans would be able decide who belonged in the land that is modern day Texas and who did not. The Alamo, this battle that is considered to be one of bravery and honor, was the beginning of mass violence committed by Anglo-Americans against Mexicans, especially Tejanos. The Anglo-Americans stole Tejano land, and their story in a way which manipulated public opinion and perception of Mexicans. These opinions and perceptions of Tejanos being against the Texas revolution and that Tejanos were monsters who brutally murdered the undeserving Anglo-American defenders created a scenario in which the Cart Wars could occur. The need to blame someone for such a massive loss on the part of the Anglo-Americans would later be used to justify the vigilante acts of violence committed against Tejanos in the cart wars as a form of retribution and through the act of lynching.

When the United States annexed Texas, “more than 115,000 Mexicans were collectively naturalized under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo” despite the fact that naturalization to the United States had been limited to “‘free White persons’, meaning that only White immigrants to

¹⁰⁸ Laura Gomez, *Manefest Destinies*, New York (October, 2007) 57.

the United States could become citizens.¹⁰⁹ Historian Laura Gomez argues that “the collective grant of American citizenship in some senses conferred legal whiteness on Mexicans as a group with a distinctly non-White history.”¹¹⁰ The treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo played a crucial role in the American racialization of Mexicans and its relation to immigration processes. When the naturalization law changed in 1870, it was a reconstruction effort after the civil war and the law then limited naturalization to Whites and Blacks. There was no physical border nor were there any “institutionalized procedures to regulate Mexican immigration until the 1940s.”¹¹¹ Most Mexicans who wished to migrate to the United States did so without the complications of the immigration process and therefore, many Mexicans did not feel the need to naturalize. That being said, there was one important legal case with an argument which would later be used by asian migrants striving to avoid deportation at a time when Asian immigrants were targeted by the U.S. government.

Though there was a low demand to naturalize by Mexican immigrants due to the lack of a physical border between the United States and Mexico, Ricardo Rodriguez’s case was the first notable case of a Mexican migrant seeking naturalization which subsequently created more legal precedents of whiteness being equated with American Citizenship. *In re Rodriguez* was tried in Texas in 1897. Rodriguez, was seeking naturalization after living in San Antonio for ten years.

¹⁰⁹ Laura Gomez, *Manefest Destinies*, New York (October, 2007) 138-139.

¹¹⁰ Laura Gomez, *Manefest Destinies*, New York (October, 2007) 139.

¹¹¹ Laura Gomez, *Manefest Destinies*, New York (October, 2007) 139.

Rodriguez argued that “Mexicans were White enough, despite not being truly White.”¹¹² The case sighted the mass naturalization that occurred through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo because at that time, only White immigrants could naturalize. Rodriguez’ case was based on the theory that because Mexicans were naturalized when only Whites could naturalize, Mexicans must therefore be White. The judge who ruled on the case Thomas Sheldon Maxey struggled with determining whether or not Mexicans could be considered White through the eyes of the law. Though he eventually decided that “Mexicans were deemed to be White for purposes of naturalization”, Maxey was unsure what precedent he should use, social science or the law. He was receiving pressure from the press and politicians, Anglo-Americans who wanted to limit the citizenship of Mexicans in order to suppress “the rising number of Mexican American voters”.¹¹³ Maxey believed Rodriguez “look[ed] Mexican” and “if the strict scientific classification of the anthropologist should be adopted, he [(Rodriguez)] would probably not be classed as White and it was certain he [was] not an African or a person of African descent”.¹¹⁴

Instead of depending on social science, Judge Maxey used legal precedent that “gave Mexicans political rights, suggesting that these laws had earlier conferred White status on Mexicans.”¹¹⁵ Maxey cited the 1836 constitution of the Republic of Texas which stated that “all men except ‘Africans and their descendants’ and ‘Indians’” were citizens and therefore the law

¹¹² Laura Gomez, *Manefest Destinies*, New York (October, 2007) 139.

¹¹³ Laura Gomez, *Manefest Destinies*, New York (October, 2007) 140.

¹¹⁴ Laura Gomez, *Manefest Destinies*, New York (October, 2007) 140-141.

¹¹⁵ Laura Gomez, *Manefest Destinies*, New York (October, 2007) 141.

included Mexicans as citizens “by default”.¹¹⁶ Then later when Texas was Annexed, the congressional bill “incorporated the former Mexican citizens who were citizens of Texas.”¹¹⁷ These laws sparked a conversation on the race of Mexicans. Some Tejanos were labeled “not White enough or too Indian and/or too Black to become Texas citizens”.¹¹⁸ Regardless of the law, Anglo-Americans were more concerned with limiting non-White immigrants and suppressing brown bodies from having political or economic power. As if the Cart Wars and the lynchings that followed did not cause enough damage to the Mexican American communities, but now any Mexican who wanted to become a United States citizen could only do so by stripping themselves of their Mexican heritage and race. This too was an act of violence.

These brutal acts of the Cart Wars and the events that followed went unnoticed by a national audience due to the chaos happening in the nation as a whole. Shortly after the Cart Wars, the Civil War broke out. The only race feud gaining national traction was regarding the abolition of slavery in the United States. After the war, the country and the government claimed to be working toward reconstruction of the damages of the war, both physically and institutionally. Many times, when race has been discussed in this country, it has been about Black and White people exclusively when in reality, the United States government and many of its citizens have institutionally discriminated against all racial backgrounds that are not White. The abolition of slavery in the United States, while significant and important, distracted from the

¹¹⁶ Laura Gomez, *Manefest Destinies*, New York (October, 2007) 141.

¹¹⁷ Laura Gomez, *Manefest Destinies*, New York (October, 2007) 141.

¹¹⁸ Laura Gomez, *Manefest Destinies*, New York (October, 2007) 141.

several other racial abuses committed in the name of white supremacy. Interpersonal race relations between Blacks and Whites have continued to be the most significant racial dichotomy in the country, which history books have perpetuated by erasing the history of other ethnic and racial groups, thus keeping the focus on the Black-versus-White schism.

Similar to the suppression of Mexican-American history, the history of the institutionalization of ethnic and racial exclusion as a means of maintaining a certain racial aesthetic in the United States through the criminalization of Asian bodies in America has been censored as well. One of the most notable 19th-century immigration laws was an act of exclusion that targeted one particular race, which was deemed too ethnic for a picturesque America. This criminalization happened through the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, one of the first significant immigration laws in the United States. The next major immigration law was a quota system legislated in the Johnson Reed Act, which was essentially a system in which northwestern European countries held the highest number of slots for U.S. immigration status and countries with citizens perceived as ‘less White’ had lower quotas.¹¹⁹

These laws were an effort to keep America white and this mentality persisted for decades. In the 1940s, in regard to Asian exclusion, Earl Warren, the then-attorney general of California who would later become the Chief Justice of the United States, stated: “‘We believe that when we are dealing with the Caucasian race we have methods that will test the loyalty of them, [referring to Italians and Germans], but when we deal with the Japanese we are in an entirely

¹¹⁹ Miles Rodriguez, “Migrants and Refugees in the Americas,” Annandale-on-Hudson, NY (September 14, 2017).

different field and cannot form any opinion that we believe to be sound”¹²⁰ Essentially, what he was saying was that he could trust white immigrants because they bonded over their shared race, regardless of their religion or native language, but ‘ethnic’ immigrants could not be trusted. This was an attempt to make the United States reflective of colonial times through creating similar racial demographics.¹²¹ This is similar to a mentality heard today by many who believe ‘ethnic’ immigrants are detrimental to the United States.

The current president of the United States ran his campaign on the slogan, “Make America Great Again”, which caused many Americans to question what that means when America has never been great for everyone. During the last Republican National Convention, a nightly news program asked Trump supporters what they thought “Make America Great Again” meant, many referenced colonial times. When a Black interviewer challenged that response by asking “except for slavery?” the woman being interviewed agreed “except for the slavery stuff”.¹²² Another interviewee stated America was great when “the founding fathers put pen on paper in 1776 and decided to build a country based on laws” despite the fact that colonial america existed under the english law and succession was an act of treason. When challenged based on the governmental abuses against women, indigenous persons, and Blacks, the

¹²⁰Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 2014), 176.

¹²¹ Miles Rodriguez, “Migrants and Refugees in the Americas,” Annandale-on-Hudson, NY (September 14, 2017).

¹²² Trevor Noah, “Alex Wagner,” The Daily Show with Trevor Noah, (July 21, 2016). <http://www.cc.com/video-clips/m3nvk4/the-daily-show-with-trevor-noah-exclusive---when-was-america-great->

interviewee called them “a few hiccups along the road”.¹²³ In addition to the desire of making America in the image of colonial times, President Trump and his supporters want to strengthen our physical southern border by building a wall. In addition to the executive order Trump signed that targeted travelers from Muslim countries (a list compiled and monitored under the Obama administration), Trump and his administration have increased the number of border patrol agents, added immigration checkpoints, and have given local police the ability to act as immigration enforcement officers through the 287(g) program.¹²⁴ ¹²⁵ Trump is using this program to target Hispanic migrants while very little to monitor and decrease the amount of Nordic or European migrants.

The requirements for these local police officers to enforce federal immigration law are United States citizenship, a current background investigation, experience in their current position, and no pending disciplinary actions. Additionally, they are required to attend a “four-week basic training program and a one-week refresher training program (completed every two years)” provided by ICE. This program is in effect in twenty different states through 76 law enforcement agencies, 25 of which are in Texas.¹²⁶ ICE agents are required to be between the ages of 21 and 37 (which can be waived if applicant was a veteran or has experience as a federal

¹²³ Trevor Noah, “Alex Wagner,” The Daily Show with Trevor Noah, (July 21, 2016). <http://www.cc.com/video-clips/m3nvk4/the-daily-show-with-trevor-noah-exclusive---when-was-america-great->

¹²⁴ Linda Qui, “Fact-Checking Claims About Trump's Travel Ban,” New York Times, (February 23, 2017).

¹²⁵ Nicholas Kulish, “Trump’s Immigration Policies Explained,” New York Times, (February 21, 2017).

¹²⁶ “Delegation of Immigration Authority Section 287(g) Immigration and Nationality Act,” Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Accessed May 1, 2018. <https://www.ice.gov/287g>

officer), must have a bachelor's degree minimum and "at least one year of graduate study unless [the agent] received Superior Academic Achievement in [their] undergraduate degree" and they cannot be convicted of a felony or a conviction of a misdemeanor relating to domestic violence. Additionally, agents must pass a written exam, pass several physical fitness tests, and undergo extensive training.¹²⁷ Even with all of these stringent qualifications, many ICE and border patrol agents are still unable to uphold immigration law in a manner that is consistent with basic human rights.

Many state and local law enforcement agencies do not have an education requirement and a four week training program is not an appropriate supplement. When even the ICE officers operate in a way that displays cultural and general ignorance, the state and local officers could be unprepared to be able to operate in a delicate manner. Racial profiling is a key aspect in the way these immigration enforcers operate. While the majority of people who have immigrated to the United States illegally are Latinx, immigration enforcement agencies target Latinx people, once again enforcing the idea that United States citizenship is associated with whiteness. This increase of patrolling has increased the rate of detention and the government is unable to deport immigrants at the rate they are detaining them causing over crowding and the need for more detention centers.

The government has turned to the privatization of detention facilities, which are more focused on the bottom line and neglect inmate care more than average prisons do. One company

¹²⁷ "How to Become an ICE Agent: Career and Salary Information," Criminal Justice Degree Schools, Accessed May 1, 2018. <https://www.criminaljusticedegreeschools.com/criminal-justice-careers/ice-agent/>.

with a contract with the federal government is the Geo Group. The Geo Group has 71 facilities with 75,365 beds in the United States. Three are “special purpose, state-of-the-art residential centers” which operate “on behalf of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement,” one of which is located just outside of San Antonio in Karnes County (the same location of one of the violent attacks of the Cart Wars).^{128 129} The Geo Group has invested significant money on lobbying in the House of Representatives, the Senate, the Department of Justice, the White House, and the Department of Homeland Security.¹³⁰ George C. Zoley, the Chairman of the Board, Chief Executive Officer and Founder of the Geo Group has made a plethora of donations to candidates and political parties that support the increase of deportation of Latinx migrants. He has donated to the Geo Group itself, the Republican Party of Florida, and Republican candidates like Tom Graves, Kevin McCarthy, Cory Gardner, Andrea Leigh McGee and John Culberson, to name a few.¹³¹ Men like George Zoley are financially invested in the mass detention of Latinx immigrants and funding bills and candidates that perpetuate the mistreatment of immigrants. None of this in itself is illegal, though many might argue it is immoral. However, the Geo Group faces far more serious accusations of maltreatment of detainees. The Geo Group is the center of a class action suit regarding prison labor.

¹²⁸ “Locations,” The Geo Group, Accessed May 1, 2018. <https://www.geogroup.com/Locations>.

¹²⁹ “ICE,” The Geo Group, Accessed May 1, 2018. <https://www.geogroup.com/ice>.

¹³⁰ “The Geo Group,” Open Secrets, Accessed May 1, 2018. <https://www.opensecrets.org/lobby/clientagns.php?id=D000022003&year=2018>.

¹³¹ “Donors: George Zoley,” Open Secrets, Accessed May 1, 2018. <https://www.opensecrets.org/search?q=George+Zoley&type=donors>.

Many detainees have accused The Geo Group and those who work at their Aurora Detention Facility of mistreatment and lack of compensation for labor. When United States district judge John L. Kane heard the case and “denied The GEO Group’s bid to dismiss claims it violated the Trafficking Victims Protection Act by forcing unpaid detainees to clean tier living areas under the threat of solitary confinement”.¹³² The plaintiffs “claim they were required to perform tasks like scrub bathrooms, wax floors and maintain the center’s landscaping. In return, they were paid \$1 per day at the 1,500-bed Aurora Detention Facility”.¹³³ Additionally, many detainees were subjected to “clean[ing] the pods for no pay, and coerced into doing the work with threats. The plaintiffs alleged the unpaid work violated the TVPA’s prohibition on forced labor and sought to represent more than 1,000 detainees who had been coerced into working for free since 2004.”¹³⁴

This case has the potential to create precedent for human rights and labor violations in federal immigration detention centers. The plaintiffs are arguing that The Geo Group has violated human trafficking laws, but one could also argue that it violated the 13th Amendment of the constitution. Since the detainees were coerced to work for free or almost free, it could be argued that they were forced into involuntary servitude. The 13th Amendment states that involuntary servitude can occur legally if it is a part of a punishment of a crime but if labor was not a part of the migrants sentencing, than this situation could still qualify as a 13th Amendment

¹³² Daniel Kowalski, “Slave Labor Suit Against Geo Advances in Denver,” Lexus Nexis (July 9, 2015).

¹³³ Daniel Kowalski, “Slave Labor Suit Against Geo Advances in Denver,” Lexus Nexis (July 9, 2015).

¹³⁴ Daniel Kowalski, “Slave Labor Suit Against Geo Advances in Denver,” Lexus Nexis (July 9, 2015).

violation. A case like this could not have better timing since tensions regarding immigration are incredibly high and there has been consistent activism for migrants to receive proper treatment and be granted basic human rights.

The mistreatment of Mexican workers is nothing new. This was a crucial element of the Cart Wars in which Mexican and Tejano cartmen worked for less than their White counterparts and yet were still more efficient. This was one of the first instances in which White citizens argued that the economy, then the economy of San Antonio, depended on cheap Mexican labor, despite the fact that these Mexican cartmen were citizens. The national economy has been depending on cheap immigrant labor through guest worker programs. Today the national agricultural industry relies on cheap immigrant labor.

These human rights violations seen today are deeply rooted in the history of American borderlands. San Antonio provides the perfect example of why taking a closer look at the history of the land allows a deeper understanding of how deeply ingrained human rights violations are today into the American people's consciousness. However, in attaining this deep understanding, we can begin to take the first step in dismantling such prejudices and violations.

Many Texans support candidates, like President Trump, who strongly oppose the illegal migration of Latinx persons. This is truly ironic. Texas may not have ever become a part of the United States if it weren't for the many illegal Anglo-American immigrants who lived in Mexico and eventually fought for the secession of Texas.

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