

Chapter 13

Latinos and Latinas

Immigrant Bashing and Nativist Political Movements

*Alberto G. Mata Jr. and
Catalina Herrerías*

In this chapter, Alberto G. Mata and Catalina Herrerías describe politicians' stereotyping of Latinos/as as the most recent example of race-card politics. The authors discuss how politicians (1) use racial and ethnic groups to win electoral races, and (2) promote racial and ethnic stereotypes that feed discrimination. Social policies such as the English-only movement and the prohibition of medical care, education, and social services for undocumented immigrants are described as examples that promote discrimination through their implicit rejection of linguistic and cultural diversity. The authors identify the need for more science-based approaches to assist Latinos with assimilation and the English language.

This chapter examines the stereotyping of Latinos and Latinas by politicians as a prime example of race-card politics. The use of stereotypes to scapegoat Latinos and curry favor with the white American electorate is clearest when we examine local, state, and regional political contests and referen-

dums in areas with large concentrations of Latinos and Latinas.

Playing the race card appeals to those troubled by the growing numbers and visibility of Latinas and Latinos (Boyarsky 1993). The stereotypic image of Latinos is of poor, undereducated, primarily Spanish-speaking monolingual immigrants. In fact, only two in five or 40 percent of the Latino population were born outside of the United States, with 52.1 percent having immigrated between 1990 and 2002 (Ramirez and de la Cruz 2002). On the other hand, 60 percent of the Latino population is native born (Navarro 1999), and of this group, nearly 90 percent of those born in the United States report speaking English "very well" (Duncan, Hotz, and Trejo 2005). The large, continual influx of Latino immigrants has undoubtedly aided Americans' general views of Latinas and Latinos as foreigners. As of March 2002, those of Hispanic origin of any race make up 13.3 percent of the U.S. population (Ramirez and de la Cruz 2002). At an estimated 37.4 million, Latinos are currently the nation's largest group of color and are seen as instrumental in defining upcoming political battles (Fineman and Campo-Flores 2001). Latinos are predominantly concentrated in 10 states: California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, Arizona, New Jersey, Colorado, Georgia, and New Mexico (U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce 2004). The Latino population grew by more than 100 percent in five states, including Nevada (217 percent), Tennessee (278 percent), Georgia (300 percent), Arkansas (337 percent), and North Carolina (337 percent) (Population Resource Center 2001). A Pew Hispanic Center report shows Latinos concentrated in eight states currently referred to as *new settlement states* whose growth of Latinos exceeded 130 percent from 1990 to 2000 (Suro and Tafoya 2004). The new settlement states are identified as Arizona, Nevada, Georgia, North Carolina, Oregon, Virginia, Washington, and Massachusetts.

The Latino population in the United States is large, young, and growing rapidly. As a group, the population of Hispanics of any race increased by 58 percent between 1990 and 2000 (Population Resource Center

"Immigrant Bashing and Nativist Political Movements," by Alberto G. Mata Jr. and Catalina Herrerías. Copyright © 2006 by Roxbury Publishing Company. All rights reserved. ♦

2001; Schmitt 2001b). Their overall educational and economic statuses, however, are lower than those of their Anglo counterparts. For example, educational attainment for Latinos is substantially lower than for all other ethnic groups, with less than three in five Latinos 25 years and older completing high school and only 11.1 percent attaining a baccalaureate or higher degree (Ramirez and de la Cruz 2002). In 2003, 15 percent of adolescent Latinos were high-school dropouts, whereas only 6 percent of white and 8 percent of African American teens had dropped out of high school (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2005). The main correlate of limited educational achievement for Latinos is poverty. In 2002, the percentage of Hispanic children under age 18 of any race living in poverty in America is 28.6, compared with 9.4 percent for their non-Hispanic white counterparts (Children's Defense Fund 2004). Latinos also face significant disadvantages regarding the percentage of children ages 3 to 5 who are enrolled in center-based early childhood care and education programs, which are widely recognized as providing a head start for children educationally, cognitively, and socially (Herrerías, Harnden, and Bond 2001). In 2001, 40 percent of Latino 3–5-year-olds were enrolled in center-based programs, as compared with 59 and 63 percent for white non-Hispanics and blacks, respectively (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics 2005).

Despite the challenges facing Latinos in this country, this very diverse population reflects a variety of political perspectives, lifestyles, tastes, levels of buying power, and views about the appropriate roles for men and women. Some Latino families have lived in what is now the United States for centuries. They never immigrated; they became U.S. citizens rather than Mexican citizens when the border changed. For others, specifically Puerto Ricans, their territories were ceded to the United States. Still others migrated to the United States from Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America in search of better jobs or to escape political repression in their homelands.

By and large, most Latinos are trying to promote, enhance, and assure the progress

and well-being of their communities, yet they are mindful of the need for vision, voice and action in local and national political forums. As Latinos' numbers, visibility, and claims for a better life grow, the more culturally conservative and xenophobic Americans have come to see these claims and efforts as *prima facie* evidence of further threats and encroachment (Tanton and Lutton 1994; Reese 1995). When Latinos counter and rebuff racist and nativist claims and actions the nativists stiffen their resolve. The result is increased polarization between group and an expanded base for and manifestation of 1990s-style race politics into the new century.

The race politics of the late 1990s involve a range of American conservative groups, including far right, nativist, and hate group (Auster 1990; Brimelow 1992; Palafox 1996). *Nativism* is an ideology that asserts the primacy of the native born as a country's "true sons and daughters over naturalized citizens and legal immigrants. Originally, nativists in the United States were aligned with the Know-Nothing Party. Most were suspicious of Catholics and new immigrants generally. Beginning in the 1880s, nativists turned on Eastern and Southern European immigrants and adopted anti-Semitic tendencies. When Asian and Mexican laborers threatened to encroach on jobs desired by white workers, they too became targets for nativist backlashes. Fear and hatred of foreigners and racial minorities, and unbridled nationalism, seemed to coincide with periods of marked social or economic change (Lipschultz 1993; Calavita 1996).

Historically, nativists have portrayed Latinos as poor peasants sneaking across the border to have babies in U.S. hospitals so that their children will become American citizens and thus inappropriately obtain access to a broad range of entitlements. Currently they tout images of Latinos as drug lords aiming to destroy America's youths through drugs, and as dangerous gangbangers who shoot anyone unfortunate enough to venture into their neighborhoods. In more troubled times, nativists have resorted to images of Latinos as criminal, violent, and manipulative—images that are powerful indeed and

have a tendency to mute calmer voices claiming otherwise. Yet another perspective comes from some environmentalists who use ecological arguments against immigrants in what has been called "the greening of hate" (Martinez 2001). The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, on the United States reinvigorated the Nativist movement and served as a catalyst to push the issue of immigration and undocumented immigrants to the forefront of the national discourse.

The Latino population is clearly the fastest-growing demographic group in the United States. Of the nearly 4.1 million births in 2000, 20 percent were to Hispanic women (Population Resource Center 2001). Birthrate among Latinas is 3.1 compared to 2.1 for non-Hispanic females. If current population growth continues, it is projected that one in every four Americans will be of Latino origin by the year 2050.

Many non-Hispanic Americans consider Latinos to be harmful to their interests, a drain on their communities, and a threat to a way of life many believe to be under siege. It is not clear whether the use of racialized fears reflects politicians' true feelings and beliefs, is a campaign tactic designed to challenge the opposition and solidify support, or reflects a convenient opportunity to make a once narrowly appealing political agenda more palatable to the unsettled, disaffected, and undecided. In any case, politicians' uses of the race card and scapegoating of Latinos—knowingly or unwittingly—play into efforts that go beyond the contest of the day (Simon 1993). These invectives heighten interethnic suspicions, tensions, and conflicts and call into question social and political reforms that have helped improve the lives of men and women of color, of white women, and of society more generally.

Elected officials, political candidates, and political organizations cater to racial fears and use them to polarize voters (Bustamante 1993). In so doing, they assume that their actions carry few risks to their campaigns or deleterious societal consequences. For some political activists, the play on racial fears, concerns, or issues is a return to what they see as having made this country great. It is,

in other words, a form of nostalgia. For others, taken by Patrick Buchanan's frankness, the concern is to draw attention to the threat that so-called undesirable elements pose and to neoconservatives' prescription for measures to stem the tide, recapture control, and return the inheritance to its "rightful" owners—whites. But what makes such previously questionable claims and agendas now palatable? How are the strident, narrow interests of fringe elements made acceptable to segments of the larger society? What may make these claims appealing to individuals whose personal lives may be subject to unsettling changes beyond their control or influence? In some instances, the answer may lie in the economic restructuring of the past two decades, resulting in changes in their quality of life and standard of living, or in the viability of their social networks and mediating institutions (e.g., schools, churches, synagogues, and mosques).

It is also unclear whether the use of racial fears as a tactic to gain advantage over the opposition and enhance one's candidacy is portable across groups and regions. Clearly, embracing strident messages linked to narrow political agendas in order to present oneself as a champion of the unsettled and disaffected voters remains key to certain campaign strategists and managers. Grass-roots backlash groups are not timid about courting those uncomfortable with the growing number of racial and ethnic minorities in this country. They are not reserved in their criticisms of efforts to improve conditions for minorities and white women when they perceive that those avenues are not available to them or when opportunities for others appear to come at their expense. Regardless of motive, race-card opportunists play into the hands of smaller nativist groups of hatemongers who see the need to reverse the gains of people of color, particularly when they look, sound, or act "different."

Obscured by the fervor and hysteria of fear, resentment, and exclusionary tactics is the fact that more than 55 million immigrants from six continents have made the United States their home. With the exception of indigenous people, all other inhabitants are either immigrants or descendants of im-

migrants, whether that immigration was voluntary or involuntary (e.g., slaves brought to America against their will; American Civil Liberties Union 1997). At present, almost one in three Americans is an ethnic or racial minority (Schmitt 2001a).

When we speak about the new race politics, we are referring not just to state-of-the-art negative campaign themes involving racially coded messages but also to a range of actions, from fervent social crusades to more organized networking efforts and quasi-social institutionalization reflected in foundations, think tanks, and social experiments. These efforts reflect a sense of threat, resentment, and opposition to past ideologies, ranging from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal politics to the liberal social agenda of the 1960s in certain states. Race politics target and scapegoat Latinos as part of the larger campaign to mobilize angry moderate-to-undecided citizens. By aligning aspects of their agenda with the larger society's concerns, fears, resentments, and rancors about the new "outsiders," politicians hope to expand their base and reduce the risk and impact of changes perceived to be threatening.

In some instances, political campaigns seek to enhance their candidates' fortunes while simultaneously silencing American racial and ethnic minorities' cultural, political, and social claims to meaningful involvement in national decision making (Chavez 1991; Skerry 1993; Schuck 1995). The remainder of this chapter focuses on key examples of the new race politics—the English Only movement and the Save Our State (SOS) movement rallying around Proposition 187. Executive Order 13166, a response to Proposition 187, is also discussed. These case studies illustrate the nature, size, and consequences of such anti-immigrant, and specifically anti-Latino, political movements.

The U.S. English Only Movement

The specter of America harboring millions of non-English-speaking residents frightens some Americans (Buchanan 1991; Huddle 1993; Hawkins 1995). Prior to the

1970s, undocumented immigrants labored in agricultural sectors and on the economic fringes of urban metropolitan areas. By the mid-1970s, a major shift to urban occupations increased the visibility of these workers and their families (Muller and Espenshade 1985; Acuña 1988). The swelling of the native Latino population, combined with the large numbers of immigrants, refugees, and undocumented workers coming from Mexico and Central and South America, fed whites' fears of being overwhelmed (Butler 1985). This great concern may well have resulted in the impetus to establish English as the official language in this country. In particular, two significant waves of immigrants—more appropriately classified as *refugees* who were granted political asylum—were the impetus for the English Only movement. The first wave was the several hundred thousand Vietnamese who began arriving in 1975 (Leung and Boehnlein 1996). The second wave occurred in 1980, when over a period of five months, 135,000 Cubans, a disproportionate number of whom were Afro-Cubans, were accepted into the United States (Bernal and Shapiro 1996). English Only has been championed by U.S. English, a conservative group founded in 1983 (American Civil Liberties Union 1996). English First, a Virginia-based group, is another vociferous supporter of this political movement (Dougherty 2000). The English Only movement seeks to mandate English as the only language to be used in official U.S. business, including government offices and voting ballots. The American Civil Liberties Union (1997) indicates that English Only is

based on the false premise that today's immigrants who come from Asian and Spanish-speaking countries will not learn English without government coercion. In fact, the vast majority of Asian and Latino immigrants are acquiring proficiency in English just as quickly, if not faster, than earlier generations of Italian, Russian, and German immigrants. Moreover, only 4 percent of the U.S. population over the age of five does not speak English. (p. 5)

A study of 2,400 U.S. Latinos conducted by Harvard University, the Henry J. Kaiser Foundation, and the *Washington Post* found that only 1 in 10 second-generation Latinos communicate predominantly in Spanish. Also, a study by the National Immigration Forum found that over 75 percent of immigrants speak English with high proficiency within 10 years of their arrival in the United States (Artze 2000).

Clearly, the movement reflects an erroneous, misplaced fear that foreign languages might become more widespread than English (Brimelow 1995), even though only 10 percent of the population speaks a language other than English. Of this group, over 13.5 million are Spanish speakers, and only 12.5 million speak other foreign languages (Hernández-Chavez 1978; Piatt 1990). Ultimately, English Only proponents fear any efforts to promote a more multilingual and multicultural society, believing that doing so would diminish Western European (i.e., English-speaking) traditions and institutions in favor of others that they perceive as inferior.

Proponents of English Only have sharpened and better focused their legislative agendas in over 27 states—although its consequences have been greatest in the Sunbelt states (Chavez 1991). Beginning with four states declaring English as their official language in 1981, 26 states have enacted English Only laws (English First 1999; May and Fahys 2000).

The English Language Unity Act of 2001 was introduced to the U.S. House of Representatives on May 24, 2001, by Representative Bob Barr (R-Georgia) and was simultaneously referred to the House Education and the Workforce and the House Judiciary Committees on that same date. The bill is intended to

reaffirm English as the official language of the United States, to establish a uniform English language rule for naturalization, and to avoid misconstructions of the English language texts of the Laws of the United States, pursuant to Congress' powers to provide for the General Welfare of the United States and to establish

a uniform Rule of Naturalization under Article I, Section 8, of the Constitution.

On June 18, the Judiciary Committee referred H.R. 1984 to the Subcommittee on the Constitution. Then, on July 25, the Education and the Workforce Committee referred the proposed legislation to the Subcommittee on Education Reform. The movement of this legislation is evidently being enjoined by House conservatives and key committees.

Since the 1960s, three major policy issues have shaped national and state debates on these matters. The designation of English as the official language at national, state, and local levels is seen as no less important than the questions of whether we should have bilingual education or language rights in the electoral process. In more mundane terms, foreign languages in the workplace are seen as obstructing common business and governmental operations.

The growth and increasing visibility of Latinos and Latinas throughout southern California and in most major metropolitan areas has added to feelings of being overwhelmed, of losing control of borders and communities, and of needing defensive action. A popular image is one of hordes of illegal aliens seeking to gain what they do not deserve at a cost to U.S. (read white) taxpayers (Tanton and Lutton 1994). Many critics argue that both legal and illegal immigrants come primarily to derive such benefits as public education and health care at the expense of taxpayers whose quality of life is threatened or declining. In a 1996 speech, presidential candidate Bob Dole indicated support for Representative Elton Gallegly's (R-California) bill to cut funding for the education of children of illegal aliens. He cast the issue in this manner:

We shouldn't stick the states with billions and billions of dollars of extra expenses, particularly . . . California. . . . It's not that we don't care, it's not that we're not compassionate. . . . [But] where do you draw the line? (Cited in Seelye 1996, A16)

Other images depict illegal aliens as drug traffickers, gang members, and terrorists. As former CIA Director William Colby once said,

The most obvious threat for the U.S. is the fact that . . . there are going to be 120 million Mexicans by the end of the century. . . . [The Border Patrol] will not have enough bullets to stop them. (Cited in Acuña 1996, 115)

Buchanan sounded another crisis alarm during his unsuccessful presidential bid in 1996 with statistics claiming that more than a million undocumented Mexicans were entering the United States annually. The annual average is scarcely 10 percent of that figure, according to findings of the Binational Study on Migration (American Civil Liberties Union 1997). Similarly, those who enter the United States and overstay their visas are estimated to be less than one-tenth of 1 percent of this country's population. While their labor is an economic boon, for Buchanan their growth is a threat to the nation.

In addition to the fringe right's diatribes, English Only's reports in the electronic and print media have largely repeated their unchecked claims, adding their sensationalized flair to bulletins about the "Latino invasion" (Butler 1985; Auster 1990; Brimelow 1995). The immediate effect of the media's sensationalism has been to further strain white-Latino relations and heighten suspicion (Acuña 1996).

Many large urban centers throughout the United States face fiscal crises. Their public schools, public health centers, and other social services overflow with more clients than they can serve. Local neoconservatives have argued that bilingual education and transitional services are unwarranted and needless expenditures. Programs like these, critics argue, drain otherwise limited resources and exacerbate local and state fiscal crises (Chavez 1991; Acuña 1996).

The Children's Defense Fund (2000) reports that most immigrant families in the United States are gainfully employed and do not seek government benefits of any kind. Furthermore, many in need of government assistance do not even seek it, as they believe that doing so may somehow jeopardize their opportunity to remain in the United States. Research cited by the ACLU regarding studies conducted by the Council of Economic

Advisors, the National Research Council, the Rand Corporation, and the Urban Institute agreed that immigrants do not have deleterious effects on either the earnings or employment opportunities of the American-born population (American Civil Liberties Union 1997). Moreover, immigrants—whether legal residents or undocumented workers—are found to pay more in taxes than they ever receive in services, especially undocumented workers who pay into a system from which they cannot collect. Testimony on the use and misuse of Social Security numbers (SSNs) and Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITINs) disclosed that the Social Security Administration's Earnings Suspension Fund (ESF) contains more than \$420 billion accumulated, unclaimed employees contributions into the system—evidence of undocumented workers' withheld taxes (Waslin 2004).

Neoconservatives' calls for action encouraged legislators and policymakers in the early 1990s to retreat from earlier commitments to and support for bilingual education's limited English proficiency (LEP) programs, and even English as a second language (ESL) programs (Chavez 1991). In California, especially in the Los Angeles Unified School District's understaffed and underfunded bilingual programs, these staffing and fiscal realities led to the adoption of structural immersion programs, such as teaching English to limited-English speakers by immersing them directly in classes with native English-speaking students (Cooper 1994). Bilingual education programs and multicultural and diversity programs were seen as too expensive. Thus, establishing the primacy of English in the conduct of official government business and publicly funded programs was portrayed as simply being fiscally responsible (Stefancic and Delgado 1996). But more fundamentally, the underlying issue for this movement concerns the implications of perpetuating "our common English culture" (Chavez 1991). For the more fervent proponents, such as Terry Robbin, the former head of English Only in Florida, the movement is not just needed for language preservation:

It's precisely because of the large number of Latinas and Latinos who have come here, that we ought to remind them, and better educate them to the fact that the United States is not a mongrel nation. We have a common language, It's English and we are damn proud of it. (Cited in Stefancic and Delgado 1996, 9)

In a similar vein, ex-CIA Director William Colby held that Mexican immigration was a greater threat to the United States than the Soviet Union was (Acuña 1996). Fueling the debates on the need for an English Language Amendment, a 1986 special report by the Council for Inter-American Security claimed that

Hispanics in America today represent a very dangerous, subversive force that is bent on taking over our nation's political institutions for the purpose of imposing Spanish as the official language of the United States. (Cited in Stefancic and Delgado 1996, 17)

Concerned about charges that they were anti-immigrant, xenophobic, and nativist, if not outright racist, the leadership of English Only quickly asserted in their personal statements and literature that they are the only true champions of ethnic and linguistic non-discrimination. They proudly pointed to the fact that their membership included minority-group members—a few of whom were in leadership positions, although most were rank-and-file members.

Nevertheless, claims that English Only proponents were nativist and racist could not long be denied. In 1986, English Only co-founder John Tanton wrote his assessment of the consequences of immigration to California for a study group known as Witan:

"To govern is to populate." Will the present majority peaceably hand over its political power to a group that is simply more fertile? As Whites see their power and control over their lives declining, will they simply go quietly into the night? Or will there be an explosion? Can "home contraceptives" compete with "home progenitiva" if borders aren't controlled? Or is advice to limit one's family simply advice to move over and let someone else with greater productive powers occupy

the space? Perhaps this is the first instance in which those with their pants up are going to get caught by those with their pants down. Since the majority of the retirees will be non-Hispanic Whites but the workers will be minorities, will the latter be willing to pay for the care of the former? They will also have to provide the direct care; how will they get along, especially through a language barrier? (Cited in Stefancic and Delgado 1996, 119)

In 1988, Tanton's study paper was discovered and disclosed during Arizona's English Only campaign. For many, Tanton's essays demonstrated underlying assumptions and premises that were truly nativist and racist at their core. For Linda Chavez and Walter Cronkite, Tanton's Witan paper was troubling and disquieting, leading both to resign from the organization. After Tanton's resignation, two years of struggle followed for English Only's membership. The close scrutiny and criticism of the press did not, however, dissuade English Only's proponents or lead to the group's dissolution. In fact, the English Only campaign regrouped and regained its loyal following shortly thereafter. In 1991, the organization convened a national kickoff rally to create momentum for its next initiative: Campaign for Our Common Language. The underlying goal is to return the United States to traditional Western European-American core values to help Americans weather and withstand the coming invasion and subsequent imposition of "lesser" cultures (Schlesinger 1992; Cheney 1995).

The most disturbing component of English Only's push to one official language is the presumption that English was the original language in this country when, in fact, the geographic area constituting the United States was home to a multitude of languages prior to European settlement. The extinction or near extinction of these indigenous languages was deliberately orchestrated through government policy. In addition,

The United States is also home to numerous immigrant languages other than English. The arrival of some of these languages, such as Dutch, French, German, and Spanish, predates the founding of

our nation. Many others have arrived more recently. The substantial number of residents of the United States who speak languages other than English presents us with both challenges and opportunities. (Linguistic Society of America 1995, 2)

It is not clear how most Americans view the origins and dynamics of such groups as English Only, U.S. English, and English First. Many Americans are lukewarm or uninterested, yet their support for attacks on bilingual education, multicultural education, and affirmative action reinforces these groups. Those who challenge English Only, U.S. English, and English First's actions do not see these efforts as the passing acts of a few crackpots, the dispossessed fringe, or disaffected members of the middle and working classes. Unlike other neoconservative organizations, English Only derives most of its operating funds from membership dues and direct-mail campaigns. Its fundraising letters and pamphlets play upon and capitalize on neoconservative American fears of a "linguistic Babylon," the Balkanization of the United States, and the squandering of limited educational and social service dollars (Stefancic and Delgado 1996, 30). Although many English Only adherents are xenophobic and socially conservative, most probably do not see themselves as nativists, racists, or white supremacists. They do not see their animosities, antipathies, and dislikes as exaggerated or unwarranted. Of course, some recognize that their actions lend support to the causes of supremacists and hate groups, but they see doing so as the price of getting things back to "normal."

On the surface, the rationale for English Only is couched in logical, inclusive, and supportive terms such as those espoused by Mujica (2001), who is the chairman/CEO of U.S. English:

Official English does not forbid anyone from speaking other languages, but rather encourages immigrants to assimilate and learn the language of this country: English. . . . If we cannot communicate with each other because we lack a common language, how can we function as neighbors? In this country where, at

last count, there are 329 languages other than English spoken, we need to maintain one common language. . . . Without English, immigrants cannot acquire well-paying jobs, help their children with homework, or even understand election materials in order to make an informed vote. And realistically, if immigrants want an effective voice politically, English is essential. We should assist immigrants in learning our common language so they too can achieve the American dream.

A rejoinder from Dovalina (2001), the national president of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), exposes the veiled threat behind the superficially benign agenda of English First. He argues that, periodically, harmful elements in our society formulate ways to ostracize specific groups of people for unequal treatment and public denigration. This is the case with supporters of English Only and Official English legislation. Dovalina counters that English Only creates imaginary problems and embellishes half-truths and that the real objective of the English Only movement is to isolate and penalize immigrants by codifying "racism in our nation's laws by focusing on a trait that many non-white immigrants share—they aren't yet fluent in English" (2001, 2). In effect, English Only laws have the potential to sever the connections between people with limited English proficiency and the government. A more logical approach developed by numerous Hispanic organizations, LULAC included, proposes "English Plus," which values speaking more than one language and encourages LEP individuals to learn English while retaining fluency in their native language (Intercultural Development Research Association 1996). Representative Jose Serrano (D-New York) introduced the English Plus Resolution (HCON 9 IH) on January 3, 2001, recognizing the importance of multilingualism to American interests and individual rights, and opposing English-only measures (Serrano 2001). Rather than staying away from diversity, English Plus encourages links between communities across national boundaries that are shrinking because of technology and global economics.

Proposition 187: Fiscal Crisis, Illegal Aliens, and Public Services

In the fall of 1993, Ron Prince convened a small group of southern California grassroots activists to discuss illegal immigration, its consequences, and alternatives to unrelenting invasions of American society by illegal aliens (Stefancic and Delgado 1996). By the end of the day, these 10 individuals, many previously unknown to each other, had decided to launch a statewide referendum, Proposition 187. This measure would prohibit undocumented immigrants from receiving publicly funded medical care, education, or social services. Proposition 187 would also require schools, health centers, and social service agencies to report suspected illegal immigrants and their children to state and federal authorities (Acuña 1996; Calavita 1996). Aligning currents of unrest with race politics is not new. Yet unlike the repatriations of unwanted Mexican workers (undocumented Mexicans and Mexican Americans) in the 1930s and 1950s (*braceros*) (Acuña 1988), this measure is a reaction, and it needs to be linked to the growing population of Latinos and their expectations of a meaningful partnership with, and inclusion in, the body politic.

In May 1994, an initiative to stem "the alien invasion and their unlawful use of educational, social, and medical services" was filed by a coalition of anti-immigrant groups (Bunting 1993). The coalition became known as the California Coalition for Immigration Reform (CCIR). Its theme was "Save Our State" (SOS). Its agenda was put to the voters as a referendum in November 1994, passing by a 59 to 41 percent margin.

The campaign was tuned to a range of white anxieties and fears: a declining standard of living and quality of life; a faltering and changing economy; a sense of being overwhelmed by a range of cultures and peoples of color; and concern for dilution of American values, institutions, and ways of life (Quiroga 1995; R. Simon 1993). In due course, it would come to be championed by a converging range of interests: the Republican Party, United We Stand, Buchanan for President, and even some "new" Democrats.

Republican California Governor Pete Wilson's faltering presidential campaign soon wrapped his candidacy in the SOS message of the "invasion's" imminent dangers; the government's inability to protect U.S. borders; the economic crisis brought about by this last wave of immigrants; and the growing influence and size of the Latino population in the United States, especially in combination with other Third World immigrants.

The message was an appeal to the California electorate to support and elect an uncompromised, conservative state political leadership—a conservative leadership willing to get tough and to check the unrelenting tide of legal and illegal immigration. The message was also an appeal to a leadership that would force the federal government to change its ways—whether or not such changes were ultimately found to be constitutional. Calavita (1996) argues that this symbolic aspect was crucial to the success of Proposition 187 and to Wilson's improved ratings. California voters were angry about the economic changes that had hit the working poor and middle classes, making them vulnerable to layoffs arising from downsizing, mergers, and movements of factories overseas. It was easy to lay the blame for the fiscal crisis on immigrants and to assume—regardless of whether the assumption was based in fact—that immigrants really were obtaining more from the state or federal government than they paid into it.

By early 1994, Governor Wilson's ratings had plummeted. But soon after he endorsed Proposition 187, his ratings increased. The improved ratings can be attributed to the remodeling of his image as a moderate—one willing to get tough and champion immigration reform as no other potential national party standard-bearer had been willing to do. His immigrant bashing clearly distinguished him from the other candidates and served as a spearhead theme in his next two campaigns. Yet according to Acuña (1996), several of Wilson's critics found him more than willing to ignore or distort data and findings about the costs of services used by immigrants and the tax dollars immigrants brought into the state. For example, Wilson

alleged that L.A. County had spent \$946 million dollars in 1991–1992 on services to recent immigrants, adding that the county had only collected \$139 of the \$4.3 billion dollars a year in federal, state and local taxes paid by immigrants. (Flanigan 1993, D1)

The challenge to SOS's claims came from journalists, state government watch groups, the Urban Institute, and even RAND, which is generally considered a conservative research institute. These journalists and researchers questioned the basic assumption that immigrants took more from federal, state, and local services than they put in, suggesting that contradictory findings are due to different assumptions about the numbers of undocumented workers in the United States, their use of social services, and their contributions to Social Security (Calavita 1996). For instance, an Urban Institute report demonstrated that over 50 percent of welfare benefits go to U.S. residents who are 65 years of age or older (Fix and Passel 1994). Moreover, local, state, and federal taxes paid by immigrants more than offset the costs of services that immigrants receive, with a net annual surplus of at least \$25 billion, although variation exists from city to city (Lee 1993; Fix and Passel 1994; Fix and Zimmerman 1995). Other critics, including a 1993 California Senate report, argued that too many politicians were using immigrants as scapegoats for problems with the state's economy. They further chided these politicians and SOS leaders for their failure to heed admonitions that scapegoating immigrants would not begin to solve the state's economic woes.

The immigrant-bashing theme was fueled in part by a decade of marked demographic change in many southern California communities (Acuña 1996; Cornelius 1993). These communities displayed wide differences not only in household income but also in family size, median age, education, and, of course, ethnicity. These changes must also be linked to a major plunge in southern California real estate prices, a downturn in the economy, and plant closings in what was once termed the *miracle economy*.

By 1994, the prior decade's immigrant bashing had reached unexpectedly high levels of anti-immigrant and minority hysteria. Both Republican and Democratic candidates distorted this issue and embraced this concern as their own. The levels of acrimony soon reached such heights that few dared to challenge the backlash against immigrants as divisive, hysterical, a dangerous resurgence of nativism, and quite possibly legalized racism (Acuña 1996; Stefancic and Delgado 1996). Proposition 187 prompted Stuart Kwoh, executive director of the Asian Pacific Legal Center, to express the sentiments of the Asian American opponents of the initiative:

Proposition 187 is a vicious law that is clearly unconstitutional. It reminds Asian Americans of earlier periods of anti-immigration hysteria which led to the Chinese Exclusion Act and the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. (Almendrala 1995, 19)

In the end, Democratic and Republican politicians joined in the fray, adding their spin on how to close the borders, thus stemming the tide of illegal immigration. Most, however, were not as vicious as Proposition 187's supporters, perhaps because they recognized that the Supreme Court had decided in 1982 in *Plyer v. Doe* that the Texas policy of allowing public schools to bar undocumented children was unconstitutional, violating the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Or perhaps they realized that excluding undocumented pregnant women from prenatal care, and their children from receiving inoculations, posed serious and costly public health risks. Ultimately, Proposition 187 divided key Republican leaders into two camps, with William Bennett, Jack Kemp, William Kristol, and Steve Unz choosing to oppose the referendum while Pete Wilson and Patrick Buchanan sought to expand Proposition 187 to other states and the federal government (Acuña 1996; Brimelow 1995; Chavez 1991).

Access to public education, health care, and other social services for immigrants—whether legal or undocumented—continued to be a major theme in the 1996 elections and

in congressional debates in 1997. In July 1999, after a four-and-a-half-year court battle, Proposition 187 was pronounced "officially dead" owing to a mediated settlement (Hernandez 1999). Most of the initiative was found to be unconstitutional. Its two most controversial elements would have (1) barred the children of undocumented immigrants from public schools and (2) denied them and their families subsidized medical and social services.

The future for similar or related initiatives did not appear too promising with the signing of Executive Order 13166 by President Bill Clinton in his final months in the White House (White House 2000). This Executive Order is designed to assist individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) in obtaining better access to services provided by both the federal government and those organizations or service providers receiving federal funds. Jim Boulet, Jr., executive director of English First, was swift to call this document "Clinton's Tower of Babble" and derogatorily say,

It is now this nation's legal duty to make sure you still get your welfare checks, food stamps and all other government benefits should you choose not to trouble yourself to learn the American tongue. (Boulet 2000, 1)

President Clinton indicated that language barriers are what prevent the federal government from more effectively serving large numbers of eligible or potentially eligible recipients in federal programs and that language obstacles can lead to unequal access, the isolation of potential service recipients, and the inability to functionally participate in American society (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund 2000). Policy guidance in support of the executive order was issued by the Department of Justice within the week of the order's signature (Department of Justice 2001).

Detractors of Executive Order 13166 continue to elucidate a multitude of reasons against it and attempt to undermine or negate the order. A letter from the executive vice president of the American Medical Association (Anderson 2001) was sent to

Secretary Tommy Thompson of the Department of Health and Human Services strongly urging the Bush administration to rescind the Department of Justice's policy guidance immediately. He argued that language assistance to LEP individuals as specified in the executive order would serve to complicate and impede rather than facilitate individuals' access to needed health services. On March 8, 2001, House Resolution 969 (HR 969 IH) was introduced by Representative Bob Stump (R-Arizona) and supported by no less than 28 legislators as a way to nullify and void the effects of Executive Order 13166. Another component of this resolution prohibited the use of any federal funds to enforce any order creating an entitlement to service provision in any language other than English.

Boulet (2001) wrote another inflammatory comment on the order; this time saying that it was a "license to kill," referring to a Boston newspaper's report that a Chinese bus driver mentioned to a parent chaperone that he spoke only a little English and might need the parent's help with translation. Shortly thereafter, the bus crashed.

For those individuals with limited proficiency in English, Executive Order 13166 represented a bridge that established an essential connection between immigrants and residents not yet fluent in English. Initially, there was a very real concern expressed by the Latino, Native American, and Asian communities that the revocation of Executive Order 13166 would strengthen and perhaps even hasten the English Only movement (*El Diario/La Prensa* 2001). The *Washington Post* reported that House Republicans abandoned efforts to overturn the numerous federal regulations adopted in the Clinton administration's last months (Eilperin 2001). Nevertheless, constitutional challenges at state levels are always a possibility.

With the dramatic increases in the Latino and Asian populations, President George W. Bush needed to expand and solidify his outreach to these communities. Davies (2001) touted President Bush as delivering a historic radio address to Latinos in Florida in both English and Spanish. The states of Florida, Texas, and California have signifi-

cant voting power, and the president knew that in order to win the 2004 election, he was pressed to increase his share of the Latino vote from 35 to 40 percent (Schmitt 2001c). A review of the 2004 election results finds that President Bush garnered 44 percent of the Latino vote, representing a 9 percent increase from the 2000 election overall (CNN 2004).

Closing Observations

Latinos who promote and work to assure the Latino community's progress and well-being understand the need for meaningful involvement in local and national political forums. As the numbers of Latinos visibly escalate and their claims to a "better life" continue to grow, some whites will experience unsettling anxieties and increasing frustrations about racial and ethnic minorities. Politicians and grassroots campaigns exploit both old and new stereotypes about Latinos and Latinas to give themselves decisive advantages in campaigns. In periods of insecurity, stereotypes may be linked to other fears. Thus, Latinos are scapegoated as the cause of fiscal crises in California and elsewhere. Challenges to such scapegoating by Latinos—demonstrating, for example, that whites are the primary users of public assistance—seem only to encourage further hyperbole, spin, and counterclaims. The heat of political campaigns and elections increases polarization. Sometimes this polarization passes and is not of lasting consequence—at least for the major political parties and the majority of the electorate. For those touched by these scapegoating efforts, however, the pain and scars remain long after the specific political campaign is over. Such is the case with Latinos and other language minorities in California who experienced a double impact: the elimination of both affirmative action in higher education and bilingual education (Rifkin 1998). African Americans likewise experienced the former, directly decreasing the numbers of students of color in California's premier educational institutions.

Occasionally, the scapegoating escalates to proportions well beyond the bounds that

most Americans are willing to accept. This was the case in the 2000 presidential campaign with the rejection of Wilson and Buchanan and their diatribes against the threat of an invasion by Mexican immigrants. George W. Bush's rejection of their overtly racist message and his proactive outreach to Latino voters during his bid for the White House increased the size of his Hispanic constituency.

Numerous internal tensions, differences, and conflicts are found between moderate and far-right fringe conservatives, and between leaders and advocates and their grassroots constituencies. But there is little doubt about their need to reach and enlist the angry and disaffected. Race politics, then, can be seen as an effort to pursue and mobilize moderate and undecided voters' anger, frustrations, and fears. In this contest, Latinos and Latinas continue to be convenient scapegoats for politicians and political groups seeking electorate support.

Yet of all the groups allied with SOS, those who pose the greatest concern today are the ones who fervently oppose the political and social claims of Latinos and other people of color. This is a political coalition that seeks to lessen minority cultural, political, and social claims for a say in political decisions. It seeks to recapture and redirect government at all levels away from progressive liberal directions and toward a more conservative orientation and tone. These politicians and right-wing activists seek to lessen government's scope and to undo liberal and progressive agendas dating back to FDR. They call for a return to the politics of the past, before the rise to prominence of liberal and progressive interests and groups, thereby deflecting, diluting, and disregarding the gains of all women and of African American, Latino, Asian American, and American Indian men.

Although many conservative social reformers and advocates share similar values and worldviews, they differ in particular emphases, priorities, and targets. Nonetheless, the focal concerns of their agendas are generally linked and buttressed by other conservative groups' precepts. Many times, another group's causes and concerns serve as back-

ground. For example, English Only and Proposition 187 proponents were able to further their own interests by working cooperatively. To supporters, Latinos, like all people of color, remain racially and ethnically suspect. The increasing numbers and visibility of Latinos—particularly U.S. Census projections regarding their continual high growth rate—serve as clear evidence of their threat and encroachment. In California, non-Hispanic whites are now officially the minority and Hispanics make up almost one-third of the population (Purdum 2001). Across the United States, the population of Hispanics and Asians grew by 58 and 48 percent, respectively, from 1990 to 2000 (Schmitt 2001a).

One of the by-products of the English Only and SOS movements that bears watching has been the attack on bilingual education, peripherally mentioned in this chapter. Proposition 227, passed by two-thirds of the voters in California in 1998, eliminated bilingual education as it was known historically and replaced it with a one-year structured immersion program (Goodnough 1998; Hanson 2000; Rizzo 2000). Another attack on bilingual education passed in Arizona as Proposition 203 (Crawford 2000–2001). Opponents of bilingual education filed a ballot initiative in Colorado that went before the voters in November 2002 (Hubler 2001). About the same time, a similar initiative was underway in Massachusetts (Greenberger 2001), both largely supported by Steve Unz, the Silicon Valley multimillionaire who helped spearhead and underwrite the successful efforts against bilingual education in California and Arizona. Escamilla et al. (2003) conducted a thorough analysis of the events from 2000 to 2003 surrounding the campaign to defeat Amendment 31, “English Language Education for Children in Public Schools,” in Colorado. Amendment 31 was defeated by a margin of 56 to 44 percent of the Colorado voters. Moreover, Colorado voters have defeated at least three other initiatives between 2001 and 2003 (Escamilla et al. 2003). On the same evening that Colorado voters defeated Amendment 31, Massachusetts voters passed Question 2 with almost 70 percent of

the vote (Vaishnav 2002). The proposed law eliminated traditional bilingual education with a sheltered English immersion program expected to last approximately one year (Secretary of the Commonwealth 2002). Public schools would be required to educate *English learners* (e.g., children who cannot complete routine class work in English and/or those who do not speak English or whose native language is not English) through a sheltered English immersion program, where everything is conducted in English and very little in the learner’s surroundings is provided in his or her native language.

Is it a coincidence that as the numbers of ethnic and racial minorities and “unwanted” immigrants continue to increase, nativists are strategizing to stem this growth and to restrict access to services, education, and jobs? Doing so ensures that ethnic and racial minorities and immigrants will continue to be largely disenfranchised and unable to strip any power from the white majority.

It is not hard to fathom why many Americans’ disbelief, distaste, and disgust continue to grow with each new political campaign and why they are troubled by the current state of race politics. With each new election, campaigns reach new levels of acrimony and negativity. Latino, African American, and women’s rights groups are notable targets for these campaigns. Thus it is important to make sure that moderating influences remain visible, voiced, and proactive.

Paradoxically, many of the same political and social conservatives who champion alternative schools, chartered schools, and vouchers as major reforms of the educational system do not extend these options to bilingual and multicultural education—an irony that is certainly not lost on the parents of these children. The headlines are garnered by the extremists and attention seekers—negative press sells and is, therefore, significantly weightier than most positive coverage. However, as this adversarial process between supporters and opponents of English Only marches on, valuable expertise, resources, and energies are being expended and depleted needlessly. The expertise on both sides of the issue could be more productively engaged in “collaboratively”

working toward implementing a science-based approach to English language acquisition, complete with standards, accountability, and appropriately meaningful evaluation that could result in a win-win outcome. Of course, this approach would also necessitate adequate fiscal backing to ensure equal access to all LEP individuals in need of language assistance. Currently, hundreds are on waiting lists for English language classes across the country. The rhetoric can be converted to proactivity, but only if it is truly in the best interests of *all* Americans, not just white, non-Hispanic Americans.

References

- Acuña, Rudolfo F. (1988). *Occupied America: A history of Chicanos*, 3rd ed. New York: Harper & Row.
- . (1996). *Anything but Mexican: Chicanos in contemporary Los Angeles*. New York: Verso.
- Almendrala, Laarni C. (1995). "Proposition 187 update: The return of the Nativists." *Filipinas Magazine* 3 (33): 19.
- "America 2000: A map of the mix." (2000, September 18). *Newsweek*, 48.
- American Civil Liberties Union. (1996). "English Only." ACLU Briefing Paper No. 6, New York: American Civil Liberties Union.
- . (1997, Fall). "The rights of immigrants." ACLU Briefing Paper No. 20. New York: American Civil Liberties Union.
- Anderson, E. Ratcliffe, Jr. (2001, February 13). Letter from Executive Vice President, American Medical Association to Secretary of DHHS, the Honorable Tommy Thompson. <http://www.englishfirst.org/13166/13166hhsama21301.htm> (accessed July 26, 2001).
- Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2005). *Kids count data book*. Baltimore: Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- Artze, Isis. (2000, October). "To be and not to be." *Hispanic Magazine* <http://www.hispanicmagazine.com/2000/oct/Features/index2.html> (accessed July 31, 2001).
- Auster, Lawrence. (1990). *The path to national suicide: An essay on immigration and multiculturalism*. Monterey, VA: American Immigration Control Foundation.
- Bernal, Guillermo, and Shapiro, E. (1996). "Cuban families." In Monica McGoldrick, Joseph Giordano, and John K. Pearce (eds.), *Ethnicity and family therapy*, 2nd ed., 155–182. New York: Guilford Press.
- Boulet, Jim, Jr. (2000, August 23). "Clinton's tower of babble." *National Review Online*. <http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/comment082300b.shtml> (accessed July 26, 2001).
- . (2001, May 17). "Licensed to kill." *National Review Online*. <http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/comment-boulet051701.shtml> (accessed July 26, 2001).
- Boyarsky, Bill. (1993, August 18). "A thin border between security and prejudice." *Los Angeles Times*, B1, B2.
- Brimelow, Peter. (1992, June 22). "Time to rethink immigration." *National Review*. http://www.vdare.com/pb/time_to_rethink.htm.
- . (1995). *Alien nation: Common sense about America's immigration disaster*. New York: Random House.
- Buchanan, Pat. (1991, August 28). "America has a right to preserve identity." *Conservative Chronicle*.
- Bunting, Glenn. (1993, February 8). "Wilson's huge bill to U.S. uses sleight of hand." *Los Angeles Times*, A3.
- Bustamante, Jorge. (1993, August 13). "Mexico bashing: A case where words can hurt." *Los Angeles Times*, B7.
- Butler, R. E. "Rusty." (1985). *On creating a Hispanic America: A nation within a nation*. Washington, DC: Council for Inter-American Security.
- . (1996). "The new politics of immigration: 'Balanced-budget conservatism' and the symbolism of Proposition 187." *Social Problems* 43 (3): 285–305.
- Chavez, Linda. (1991). *Out of the barrio: Towards a new politics of Hispanic assimilation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Cheney, Lynne. (1995). *Telling the truth: Why our culture and country have stopped making sense*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Children's Defense Fund. (2000). *The state of America's children yearbook 2000*. Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund.
- . (2004). *The state of America's children 2004*. Washington, DC: CDF.
- CNN (2004, November 5). *Election Results*. <http://www.cnn.com/Election/2004/pages/results/scorecard> (accessed September 15, 2005).
- Cooper, Marc. (1994, December 6). "Prop. 187's True Colors." *Village Voice*, pp. 13–16.
- Cornelius, Wayne. (1993, July 12). "Neo-nativists feed on myopic fears." *Los Angeles Times*, B7.
- Crawford, James. (2000–2001). "Bilingual education: Strike two." *Rethinking Schools* 15 (2). <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/>