

Chapter 5

Covert Racist Discourse: Metaphors, Mocking, and the Racialization of Historically Spanish-Speaking Populations in the United States

Introduction: What is Covert Racist Discourse?

Slurs and gaffes are salient forms of racist talk for White Americans, rendered visible within widely shared linguistic ideologies and the ways that these intersect with the folk theory of racism. Critical approaches to White racism invite us to look for other racist discourses that are invisible to these ideologies and to the folk theory. And indeed, we can find them. I illustrate these “covert racist discourses” with a way of speaking that Whites do not understand as racist, but which works to reproduce negative stereotypes of people of color, in this case, members of historically Spanish-speaking populations in the United States. I call this covert racist discourse Mock Spanish (Hill 1993a, b, 1998, 2001, 2005b).

By “covert” and “invisible” I mean “for Whites.” Latinos/as have indeed noticed Mock Spanish and related forms of Spanish used by Whites, and objected to them. I discuss examples of such objections here, drawn from published material, from personal communications from colleagues, and from interviews. However, Whites, who are usually quite guarded about public race talk (Bonilla-Silva 2003), use Mock Spanish without any of the usual hedges. Consider an example of a Mock Spanish utterance:

- (1) Does CIM Stand For “Consider It Mañana”? (Strassman 1992).

The sentence in (1) was the title of a lecture on “Corporate Information Management” presented at the Department of Defense on September 22,

1992. It seems very unlikely that the speaker would have hedged the title with the expression, "I'm not a racist, but I'm going to talk about whether CIM stands for 'Consider it mañana'." This frame, "I'm not a racist, but . . .," discussed by van Dijk (1993), provides a good test for whether an utterance is covert racist discourse or not. If the frame works, the utterance is visibly racist in the ways shown in Chapters 3 and 4. If it does not work, but analysis can show that racist meanings must be conveyed by the phrase, we have encountered covert racist discourse. In this case, much evidence shows that the choice of "mañana" to lighten up the title in (1), make it a bit of a joke, requires that those who "get" the joke have access to a stereotype of speakers of Spanish as lazy procrastinators (Hill 2005b).

Another kind of evidence that this language is covert and invisible as racist is the absence of public reaction. The Mock Spanish tag line "Hasta la vista, baby" was made famous by Arnold Schwarzenegger in the 1992 film *Terminator II: Judgment Day*. In the film the utterance is not a sincere farewell, since Schwarzenegger says it as he blows his enemy into a million pieces with an enormous automatic weapon. The phrase is so catchy for Whites that Schwarzenegger has used it repeatedly in his own campaigns and when campaigning for other Republican candidates, and it has been borrowed by Democratic candidates as a reliable applause line. But the pleasure of the phrase requires access to a negative stereotype of Spanish speakers as treacherous and insincere, the kind of people who would tell you politely "Until we meet again" and in the next instant blow you away. But in the dozens of times I have heard the phrase, I have never heard anybody frame it with "I'm not a racist, but . . ."

The Spanish Language in the United States

Since Mock Spanish is directed against Spanish speakers, to understand it in context we must briefly review their history in the United States. A community of speakers of Isleño Spanish (originating primarily in the Canary Islands) became citizens when their lands were incorporated by the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. The language is still spoken in southern Louisiana, although it is moribund (Campbell and Muntzel 1989; LeStrade 2002). Statehood for Florida and Texas in 1845 brought more Spanish speakers into the union. After 1848, with the conquest of the enormous Mexican territories that make up the southwestern United States and California, Spanish became the nation's most important language after English. Article IX of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo guaranteed Mexican citizens of the conquered territories full rights in the United States, in the language seen in (2).

- (2) "The Mexicans who, in the territories aforesaid, shall not preserve the character of citizens of the Mexican Republic, conformably with what is stipulated in the preceding article, shall be incorporated into the Union of the United States, and be admitted at the proper time (to be judged of by the Congress of the United States) to the enjoyment of all the rights of citizens of the United States, according to the principles of the Constitution; and in the mean time, shall be maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty and property, and secured in the free exercise of their religion without restriction."

Unfortunately, these guarantees proved to be largely meaningless, since until the post-Civil War Reconstruction amendments to the US Constitution, American citizenship was restricted to "Free White Persons." Indians were not permitted to become citizens until 1924. Many Mexicans in the new territories were thought (correctly) to have "Indian blood." Menchaca (1993) has documented the legal struggles undertaken by this population. Menchaca (1995) and Sheridan (1986, 2006) review the theft of their land, water, stock, and other forms of capital and labor opportunities over 150 years, leading to the marginalization of Mexican American populations into the nearly caste-like status that can be observed in much of the region today.

In addition to the old populations, today immigration from all over the Spanish-speaking world has contributed an enormous diversity of Spanish-language ways of speaking and Spanish-heritage communities to the American scene. Unfortunately, this diversity is seldom recognized by Whites, who understand populations of Spanish-language heritage within the homogenizing framework that Zentella (1995) has called "chiquita-fication." Thus populations originating in countries as diverse as the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Colombia are assimilated to the system of White stereotypes originally developed around Mexican Americans.

The same racism that permitted Mexican Americans to be stripped of material resources also marginalized the Spanish language, as Spanish was either ignored or actively proscribed. Although after 1924 Mexican Americans were all citizens, the bilingual public health and safety announcements, voter informational materials, and ballots required by law today did not appear until the late 1960s and early 1970s, and court interpretation remains a hit-or-miss affair. First-language Spanish was forbidden in public schools, with students suffering draconian punishment for speaking it. Against enormous odds, some Spanish-language mass media including newspapers, radio, and theater survived, but the language was for many years quite absent from public space, which was defined as White and English-speaking. The same racist attitudes that led Mexican Americans to be evaluated as backward, superstitious, treacherous, and dirty were reflected in evaluations of

their language, assigned a place as illiterate and ungrammatical "border Spanish" which was thought to hold its speakers back from the benefits of the full modernity that could be obtained through English.

The Official English movement

Pressure against Spanish never really ceased, and during the last two decades it has again intensified. Organizations like US English, ProEnglish, and English First have funded dozens of state-level initiatives as well as campaigns for federal legislation to make English the "official" language of government. Employers, often supported by the courts, have tried to create English-monolingual workplaces.¹ Public schools are retreating to English-only policies in many districts, with opportunities for publicly funded bilingual education now sharply restricted in California and Arizona and threatened in several other states. The right of students to speak their home language even in the halls and on the playground is under attack in some districts (Reid 2005; Crawford 1992a, 1992b, 2000, 2004 reviews the Official English movement and the fight against bilingual education).

While labels like "English First" suggest a concern for the well-being of the English language, those who advance official-English policies cannot rationally be worried about the status of the language. English is unquestionably the most important international language today. And indeed the organizations most actively involved in advancing the officialization of English and restrictions on the use of other languages give minimal attention to efforts such as funding innovations in English-language instruction, prizes for English-language works of literature, or institutes that will encourage the study of English and English-speaking culture in other countries. Instead, it seems clear that their motives are merely exclusionary. However, their efforts have framed the debate over language politics in the United States. Those who wish to defend US Spanish both as a national resource for all Americans and as a heritage for historically Spanish-speaking communities are constantly forced to expend their energies in struggle within this framework.

Beyond the political promotion of "official" English, explicit attacks on Spanish are part of everyday practices among Americans of English-language heritage across a wide front. In the previous sentence, I wrote "Americans of English-language heritage" rather than "White Americans," my usage in previous chapters, because African Americans have often joined in attacks on Spanish and its speakers. They vote heavily in favor of Official English legislation, and the limited materials to which I have access suggest that African American elites, like middle-class Whites, are heavy users of Mock Spanish. I have not included attention to African American attitudes here,

because my data are very limited. But many African Americans may share with Whites negative attitudes about Spanish.

Informal pressure against Spanish is a ubiquitous fact of American life. For instance, at a website that offers a wide range of paraphernalia expressing right-wing political views, one can purchase for \$15.00 an anti-immigrant t-shirt that says "OK, you snuck in. Speak English." To get a sense of the company one might keep wearing such an item, another shirt in the site's small inventory bears an image of a Confederate battle flag with the slogan "Ban illegal immigration, not Southern heritage."²

Objections to the public use of Spanish extend even to details of orthography and pronunciation. Sociologist José Cobas, a faculty member at Arizona State University, reports a long struggle, still unsuccessful, to make the university's bureaucracy place the acute accent over the "é" in his given name in official correspondence and documents (José Cobas, personal communication, July 15, 2004). The journalist Aly Colón reports that he resorted to inserting an accent mark by hand on his byline so that his surname would not read like a body part (Wides-Muñoz 2006).³ Pronunciations are also hotly contested, with Whites often insisting on "hyper-anglicized" versions of Spanish personal and place names. Peñalosa (1981) early identified this practice as emanating from White racism. Louisor-White and Valencia Tanno (1994) documented the struggles of Spanish-heritage newsreaders on Los Angeles television stations to be permitted to pronounce their own names in Spanish. While such pronunciations are now quite common, they remain marked and objectionable for many Whites. I have been present when Whites have ridiculed, with exaggerated "r"-rolling and other parodic strategies, the pronunciations that two Latina television newsreaders in Tucson, Lupita Murillo and Barbara Grijalva, use for their names. The choice of /tuk'son/ vs. /'tuwsan/ for the city's name is politically charged, with Whites insisting on the latter pronunciation even though it leads to inevitable misspellings (we all regularly get mail addressed to "Tuscon"). Our airport code is TUS, a not-unexpected victory for the Anglo pronunciation.⁴

The rejection of Spanish as a language that is valid in public space is evident as well in gross grammatical errors in public notices of all types. Peñalosa (1981) noted signs posted over the sink in public restrooms that read "Wash your hands/Lave sus manos" (Spanish *Lavarse las manos*, or perhaps *Lávese las manos*). Peñalosa commented that it was astonishing to see three grammatical errors in three words, but exactly the sign that he critiqued is still easy to find nearly 30 years after his observation. An astonishing example of ungrammatical public Spanish greets drivers entering the United States from the Mexican side of the border at the Mariposa Crossing between Nogales, Sonora, and Nogales, Arizona. As they reach the inspection area, they encounter a huge sign reading "All vehicles must stop/Todos

vehiculos deben pararse." The Spanish translation is grossly ungrammatical and unidiomatic, as well as misspelled, and especially entertaining to many speakers of local Spanish who argue that *pararse* means "to stand up," not "to stop," which for them is simply *parar*. Humorous examples abound: A school in California sent out a reminder letter to parents who had been asked to sign what in English is called a "permission slip." The reminder message called this item "Un resbalón parental de permission." The word *resbalón* does not mean "slip" in the sense of "permission slip," but refers instead to skidding, sliding, or, most humorously, a moral lapse. Thus *un resbalón parental* can mean something like "a parental sexual misstep."⁵ All of these examples come from parts of the country where literate Spanish speakers could have easily been asked to proofread them. The signal that is sent (and received by Spanish speakers) is that their language is not taken seriously enough to require consultation with them.

Many Whites object to bilingual health and safety postings in any context. Predictably, they are objects of parody. In the 1980 comedy film *Airplane*, as the catastrophe begins, warning lights come on over the seats, with the "bilingual" message seen in (3).⁶

- (3) "No smoking
El no a you smoko
Fasten seatbelts
Putana da seatbeltz"

Informal pressure against Spanish in the United States includes a ritualized linguistic routine: On overhearing someone speaking a foreign language, one aggressively confronts them and insists "This is America! We speak English here!" (Urciuoli 1996). In April 1998 I heard this line when I had to change planes in the Dallas-Ft. Worth Airport. The terminals in the airport were connected by an automatic tramway, and each exit was announced in both English and Spanish over a public address system. On my tram that day were a dozen teenagers chaperoned by two well-dressed adult couples. When the first announcement in Spanish came on, one of the men said loudly and indignantly, "This is America! We speak English here!" Of course Dallas-Ft. Worth is an important international airport, with a huge amount of traffic in and out of Latin America. Apparently, this gentleman would have preferred to have foreign visitors miss their flights than to have Spanish on the airport's public address system.⁷

A shocking instance of this routine occurred on my own campus. On March 3, 2006, Mauricio Farah G., of the Human Rights Commission of Mexico, was an invited speaker at a colloquium of the Latin American Studies Program at the University of Arizona. While the organizers of the colloquia apparently assumed that people specializing in Latin American

Studies will understand Spanish, university functions are open to the general public. Mr. Farah reported his experience as follows:

- (4) "Empecé agradeciendo, en español, la invitación que me permitía estar allí.
Los gritos seguían: 'This is America!'"
[I began in Spanish with thanks for the invitation that had permitted me to be present. The outcry followed: "This is America!"]

Mr. Farah was shouted down by several members of Border Guardians, a small anti-immigration group headquartered in Tucson. They proudly report this bit of activism on their website (Border Guardians' Victories! 2006). Mr. Farah received an apology from the President of the University of Arizona, and spoke again in March 2007; on that occasion, the Center for Latin American Studies provided a translator (which could easily have been done during the previous year, had the Border Guardians requested one rather than shouting down the speaker).⁸

A staple of anti-Spanish rhetoric is that hearing Spanish makes "Americans" feel like aliens in their own country. A clichéd expression of this feeling is objection to the message on many automatic telephone answering systems, "Press 'One' for English." A Google search on this sentence on August 8, 2007, produced an astonishing 438,000,000 hits! An amateur recording in a country-music style of a song with this title was a YouTube hit during the Summer of 2007, when the US Congress was considering an immigration bill that, in the view of its opponents, granted "amnesty" to "criminals." Objection to "Press 'One' for English" is now a hardy perennial of right-wing talk-radio ranting.

A moral panic was precipitated in the Spring of 2007 by the release of a recording of a Spanish-language arrangement of "The Star-Spangled Banner," the US national anthem, under the title "Nuestro Himno." Recorded by a number of leading Latino and Latina recording artists, this was an exceptionally beautiful arrangement, both musically and in the poetry of its language. However, it was greeted with passionate opposition. Even President Bush, who has boasted of his ability to speak Spanish, observed that

- (5) "I think the national anthem ought to be sung in English, and I think people who want to be a citizen of this country ought to learn English and they ought to learn to sing the national anthem in English" (Bush: Anthem Should Be Sung in English 2006).

Some observers of the panic pointed out that "The Star-Spangled Banner" has been translated into many immigrant and Native American languages.

President Bush himself had sung the anthem in Spanish, backed by a "Viva Bush" mariachi band from his home state of Texas, when campaigning in Mexican American communities (Candidate Bush Would Sing the Star-Spangled Banner in Spanish at Hispanic Festivals 2006).

Even a single word in public Spanish can trigger an indignant reaction. In a game against the New York Yankees on May 5, 2006, the Texas Rangers celebrated the Cinco de Mayo holiday with uniforms that read "Los Rangers." This use of *los*, the masculine plural definite article, falls entirely within the overlapping ranges of Booster Regionalist Anglo Spanish (linking Texas to a romantic Hispanic heritage) and Mock Spanish appropriations of Spanish morphology. But when the right-wing commentator Michelle Malkin posted a picture of the uniform with the offending Spanish definite article, correspondents on her blog were outraged:

- (6) "I understand the Rangers wanted to do something innocuous to recognize a holiday celebrating historical and cultural pride. But the politically correct selectivity here is telling. While it's considered a celebration of 'diversity' to acknowledge the military sacrifices of another nation's heroes, it's considered racist to acknowledge the military sacrifices of one's own. Case in point: Can you imagine if someone proposed changing the Rangers' jerseys to 'Confederate Rangers' to celebrate Confederate Heroes' Day? Oh, and I'm sure I'll be labeled a racist for pointing out the double standard."⁹

In summary, formal and informal pressure to exclude Spanish from public space in the United States is intense and takes many forms. As Urciuoli (1996) has pointed out, Whites are comfortable with the language only in contexts like ethnic festivals and Mexican-themed restaurants. At the same time, however, Whites use a great deal of Spanish in the registers of Regionalist Anglo Spanish and Mock Spanish reviewed below. This simultaneous suppression and appropriation suggests strongly that what is at stake is White privilege, their right to control the symbolic resources of Spanish and shape these to their own purposes.

Even the fiercest advocates of Official English and the proscription of Spanish deny that they have a racist agenda.¹⁰ They argue that they are patriots, insisting on English and objecting to Spanish because national unity requires a single language, and because they want immigrants to learn English so that they can enjoy the full measure of success that America offers (Woolard 1989). However, once we start looking for it, obvious racist language targeting members of historically Spanish-speaking populations¹¹ is easy to find. Santa Ana (1999, 2002) showed that the language of journalism in the *Los Angeles Times*, a newspaper considered to have a centrist or moderately liberal editorial perspective, is demonstrably

organized within a culture of White supremacy. Texts about immigration in the newspaper in Santa Ana's large sample were replete with very negative metaphors, the most frequent being IMMIGRANTS ARE ANIMALS.¹² After I read Santa Ana's work, I started watching for these racist metaphors, and found that they were astonishingly frequent. Two recent examples were uttered by politicians addressing national audiences. On October 18, 2005, the Secretary of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff, made the statement in (7):

- (7) "We are moving to end the old '**catch-and-release**' style of border enforcement, increasing removals by tens of thousands a year" (Mann 2005).

Chertoff refers to a technique in recreational fishing, where a fisherman takes the fish off the hook and throws it back in the water, and uses this to criticize a practice whereby immigration agents would arrest undocumented immigrants and, if they were not wanted for any crime, release them with a ticket requiring them to appear for a deportation hearing at a later date.

In a second case, Senator John McCain of Arizona, a candidate for the Republican nomination for the presidency in 2008, was twitting an opponent. Mitt Romney of Massachusetts, a well-groomed suburban businessman and former governor, had attempted to project an image as a "man's man" by insisting that in his youth he had "hunted small varmints . . . rodents and rabbits." Romney had employed a landscaping firm to care for his yard that used undocumented Guatemalan immigrant workers, giving McCain an opening to attack him by producing an especially ugly image of Guatemalans as proliferating "rodents and rabbits."

- (8) "Maybe he [Romney] can get out his **small-varmint gun** and drive those Guatemalans off his yard" (Roston 2007).

Santa Ana follows Lakoff (Lakoff 1987; Lakoff and Johnson 1980), arguing that IMMIGRANTS ARE ANIMALS is a constitutive metaphor "that reproduces a view, with all the entailments, and most importantly the political and social consequences to disparage human beings. Its dominant use thus sustains the racist world view" (Santa Ana 1999:217). To say that a metaphor is "constitutive" means that it creates our understanding rather than merely elaborating it. The abstract frame IMMIGRANTS ARE ANIMALS is productive, permitting speakers to draw on their entire experience of animals, as prey, as domestic, as food, as fighting animals, as sexual creatures, in order to create fresh utterances.

Constitutive metaphors of this type seem to be invisible. Santa Ana points out that the various usages derived from IMMIGRANTS ARE ANIMALS are prosaic; they do not stand out, but reinforce the “conceptual linkage” between IMMIGRANTS and ANIMALS at a level below conscious awareness. Santa Ana (1999:217) observes of the *Los Angeles Times* that

Rather than explicitly legitimating racist practices and power relationships, in these political contexts the newspaper merely reflects the embodied basic values of the American political order that subjugates immigrants to other citizens.

That is, these metaphors have remained invisible because they reflect the foundational role of racism in White American worlds. They are visible only to people who are outside that system, or who are victims of it, and to careful scholars like Santa Ana. Thus these metaphors, like Mock Spanish, exemplify covert racist discourse (and they do not appear in the frame “I’m not a racist, but. . .”). But, unlike Mock Spanish, once noticed these metaphors are visibly repulsive and clearly racist, filling the same semantic role that “squaw” occupied from the seventeenth century to suggest that Indian women were closer to does and mares than to women. Santa Ana’s work strongly supports the central claim of the critical theory of White racism, that racism is built into the very foundations of White American culture, shaping unreflecting thought, speech, and behavior among those who share it.

Mock Spanish: Covert Racist Discourse and Indexicality

“Mock Spanish” (Hill 1998, 2005b) is a set of tactics that speakers of American English use to appropriate symbolic resources from Spanish. In Mock Spanish, Spanish loan words like *macho* “male,” *cerveza* “beer,” and *mañana* “morning, tomorrow,” expressions like *hasta la vista* “until we meet again,” and even a few morphological elements such as the Spanish definite article *el* and the masculine singular suffix *-o* are assigned new pronunciations, new meanings, and new kinds of cultural value (Agha 2003) in American (and even international) English.

Mock Spanish works to create a particular kind of “American” identity, a desirable colloquial persona that is informal and easy going, with an all-important sense of humor and a hint – not too much, but just the right non-threatening amount – of cosmopolitanism, acquaintance with

another language and culture. At the same time that Mock Spanish helps to constitute this identity, it assigns Spanish and its speakers to a zone of foreignness and disorder, richly fleshed out with denigrating stereotypes.

Like the IMMIGRANTS ARE ANIMALS metaphor, Mock Spanish has passed unrecognized as racist among Whites. I suspect that its function in White racism remains covert partly because it works by indexicality, a semiotic process that is not highlighted in White American linguistic ideology. This chapter will show how this indexicality works. First, though, I locate Mock Spanish within a wider range of appropriations of Spanish-language resources into American English.

Mock Spanish in context: Forms of Anglo Spanish

Spanish-language loan words appear in English by the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Early examples include "peon," from *peón* "peasant," and "grandee," from *grande*, a title of nobility – and, of course, "race," from *raza*. Throughout the history of this borrowing, loan words of Spanish origin have been especially susceptible to odd phonological developments and to pejorating semantic change. "Grandee" illustrates both of these. The usual patterns of anglicization should yield /grænd/ or /'grændiy/ (illustrated, for instance, in the anglicizations of the toponym "Rio Grande"), but "grandee" is hyper-foreignized, with unusual stress on the last syllable, a treatment that is also common for Spanish surnames like "Pérez," pronounced /pəR'ez/. It is also slightly pejorative; to call someone a "grandee" is usually not a compliment (and of course "peon," although it exhibits normal phonological anglicization, is negative in Spanish but an insult in English).

The American English pronunciations of Spanish-origin place names are of special interest. These are often "hyperanglicized," suggesting that speakers are at pains to avoid anyone thinking that they might be speaking Spanish. A good example of hyperanglicization is the treatment of Spanish-origin stressed 'a' as /æ/. Place names with Spanish *San* "saint, holy" are almost invariably realized as [sæn], even though first-language English permits [an] as in "mañana," or [hwan] from Spanish "Juan." An example noticed by Peñalosa (1981) is ['sæn 'piydrow] "San Pedro" (California) instead of ['san 'peydrow], which would be a normal anglicization. The more important the place name, the more likely it is to be hyperanglicized. Two interesting cases where White pronunciations are hyperanglicized are "Tucson" and "Los Angeles." In English the first is pronounced /'tuwsan/, where Spanish is /tuk'son/. English /'las 'ændʒələs/ "Los Angeles" is of interest because the pronunciation /las/ for "Los" is almost invariant in this

place name, where other California and southwestern place names often exhibit /lows/. Place names can be subjected to further modifications, as in clipped "San Antone" from "San Antonio" (Texas), or clipped and boldly mispronounced "San Berdoo" from "San Bernardino" (California), or merely boldly mispronounced as in /Rə'fəRiyow/, the official pronunciation of the city of Refugio (Texas).

Several varieties of American "Anglo Spanish" can be identified (Hill 1993a; "Anglo" is the term used in the US Southwest for English speakers). "Cowboy Anglo Spanish" is the nineteenth-century source of words like "adobe," "lariat," "corral," "mustang," and "buckaroo," along with many other loan words associated with the technology and culture of open-range cattle herding and its associated landscapes ("mesa," "arroyo"). Cowboy Anglo Spanish overlaps with Mock Spanish and contributed several items to its vocabulary (Hill 1993a). Cowboy Anglo Spanish is notable for the phonological strangeness of many of its lexical items. "Buckaroo," from *vaquero* "cowboy," like "grandee," exhibits hyper-foreignization (see Cassidy 1978 and Wentworth 1942 for discussion of this item). "Dalleywelters," a technique of roping stock where one end of the lasso is looped around the saddle horn (from Spanish *¡Dále vuelta!* "Give it a turn"), is a case of "hyperanglicization," where the pronunciation seems to be exaggeratedly distant from the Spanish source. The lexicon of Cowboy Anglo Spanish suggests that those who borrowed these words into English did not speak Spanish well. For instance, "lariat," from Spanish *la reata*, treats the definite article and the noun as a single word, which is a symptom of very restricted language contact. Cowboy Anglo Spanish does not attest to a golden era of bilingualism in the Old West. Instead, it provides evidence that those who spoke it were working hard to distance themselves from the Spanish language and members of its heritage community.

While a few Cowboy Anglo Spanish items persist in specialized vocabularies in some parts of the United States, it has largely passed out of use in its core areas (Sawyer 1959, 1975). It survives mainly in frozen forms that are periodically reinforced by use in films, such as "tough hombre," and in words that were recycled into Regionalist Anglo Spanish and Mock Spanish.

"Regionalist Anglo Spanish" has at least two varieties. The most obvious is "Booster Regionalist Anglo Spanish," which appears especially in California and the Southwest. It shows up by the 1880s as these regions began to market themselves to tourists and potential residents by drawing on the presence of Spanish-speaking and Indian heritage communities to create new regional images (e.g. Gutiérrez 1989; Thomas 1991). The recruitment of these symbolic resources, which seems so natural today (although not to everyone, as we shall see), was by no means a foregone conclusion. Indians and Spanish speakers were throughout these regions the

victims of ferocious discrimination, and these symbols were often adopted only reluctantly by White boosters. Wilson (1997) has described Santa Fe, New Mexico, as a "reluctant tourist town" where the Anglo business leaders would have preferred to market the city as modern and up-and-coming. However, when they realized that wealthy easterners came to Santa Fe in search of spiritual inspiration from Indians, they began to promote the "Pueblo" architecture which has for many years been required for all construction in the city. Until late in the twentieth century the New Mexico Spanish-speaking community felt quite left out of the Santa Fe tourist boom, and to this day may be more threatened than benefited by it (Rodríguez 1987). But "Spanishness" along with Indianness is important in marketing Santa Fe and New Mexico. The public linguistic landscape of Santa Fe is so Spanish that local tourist and real estate marketing materials often include glossaries to aid newcomers (Hill 1993a). In Tucson real estate developers embraced Spanish nomenclature only in the 1960s, with the curious result that the older parts of the city, which have the highest percentage of Spanish-heritage residents, have streets with English names (or numbers), while the new developments on the edges of the city, which are heavily White, have Spanish street names and subdivision names. Villott (2000) found in Tucson an almost perfect correlation between average household income by US Census tracts and the ratio of Spanish to English street names: the wealthier the neighborhood, the more Spanish street names it has.

Booster Regionalist Anglo Spanish, like public Spanish informational signage, is inattentive to standard Spanish grammar and orthography. For instance, I have encountered "Buenas dias" (Spanish *Buenos días*) on a breakfast placemat at a Mexican-themed restaurant in Las Cruces, New Mexico. A recent October produced a newspaper advertisement from a Tucson jewelry store, announcing a sale celebrating "La día de muerte" (Spanish *El día de los muertos*).¹³ Ungrammatical street names and subdivision names in Tucson led to protests from local Spanish speakers, and for the last 15 years or so all such names have had to be cleared for Spanish grammar and spelling by an officer of Pima County.

A sub-variety of Regionalist Anglo Spanish is the use by individuals of a few Spanish items to signal a regional identity as an "old timer" in the Southwest. I believe this to be largely a masculine practice. It includes sincere, as opposed to mocking, uses of Spanish greetings and other expressions. An example appeared in an e-mail that I recently received from a White male colleague. The e-mail, which was a sincere expression of thanks for a favor, bore the subject heading *Mil Gracias*. Such usages are surely appropriations (see Chapter 6), but they suggest positive images of Spanish speakers as warm and courteous, in contrast to the Mock Spanish usages of the same items that I will discuss below.

Spanish words are often recruited to lend apparent authenticity to journalistic reports on Spanish-heritage populations, often without any attention to Spanish grammar, and these also overlap with Mock Spanish. For instance, a *New York Times Magazine* article on the influence of Latinos on US Catholicism was entitled “Nuevo Catholics,” assimilating the Spanish word to English grammar by leaving out number agreement (Rieff 2006). An article in *Time* magazine on Mexican politicians campaigning among immigrants in the US was entitled “Don’t stop thinking about mañana,” a play on the words of the famous Fleetwood Mac song, “Don’t stop thinking about tomorrow,” which President Clinton had used as campaign theme music (Katel 2001). This usage crossed the line into Mock Spanish in a recent article in the *Washington Post* travel section for Sunday, December 3, 2006 (Lyke 2006) under the Mock Spanish headline “No crowds? No rush? In Mexico, no problemo.” The article included phrases like “gorgeous pescado” and “mongrel perro.” None of these “Spanish” words challenged monolingual speakers of English, since they are all familiar from Mock Spanish or transparent in context. But they invite English-speaking readers to think of themselves as worldly and cosmopolitan.

As we might expect from the previous discussion, even in regions where Booster Regionalist Anglo Spanish is very common, we encounter objections from English speakers to Spanish in this function. But opposition to Booster Regionalist Anglo Spanish and related usages does not come from a recognition of its grammatical errors or objection to it as appropriation or theft. Instead, complainants find it un-American and alienating, reflecting, not a claim by Anglos on Spanish-language symbolic resources in order to legitimize their regionalist *bona fides*, but politically correct catering to immigrants. I have already discussed the case of the “Los” on the uniform shirts of the Texas Rangers at their Cinco de Mayo ball game. Another example occurred recently in Tucson, when the *Arizona Daily Star* decided to rename their Sunday travel section with a classic bit of Booster Regionalism, ¡Vamos!, complete with double exclamation points. On March 4, 2007, the paper kicked off the new name with the following remarks from the Reader Advocate:

- (9) “Today’s Accent section has a new name – ¡Vamos! – that nicely fits its new mission to give readers a sense of what it’s like to live here. ¡Vamos!, pronounced VA-mos, is Spanish for ‘let’s go,’ ‘Come along with us.’ It’s the *Star*’s way of saying, ‘Come, let us show you . . .,’ Features Editor Maria Parham said. . . . I’m eager to hear your thoughts on ¡Vamos!. In the meantime, let’s go” (Kornmiller 2007a).

Only two weeks later, the Reader Advocate had to confess that “Those who called to criticize the section all focused not on the content or its

organization but on the name – ¡Vamos!” (Kornmiller 2007b). Among the comments reported were those in (10):

- (10) “A terrible, terrible decision to use a Spanish name for a general interest section. What in the world were you people thinking?” As one (online) commenter put it: “What’s next? ‘Tacos’ for the food section?” (Kornmiller 2007b).

The Reader Advocate was pushed into a very unusual explicit (albeit partial) statement of the functions of Booster Regionalist Anglo Spanish, in (11):

- (11) “The *Star* mixes languages every day, just as many Southern Arizonans do . . . Editors saw ¡Vamos! as an extension of a line that is already blurred, and blurred mostly by English speakers for their own purposes, which is to give what they’re doing a sense of place. That was the editors’ goal with ¡Vamos!” (Kornmiller 2007b).

A brief history of Mock Spanish

The oldest token I have identified of an item that is today Mock Spanish is “peon,” pronounced [ˈpijan], first attested in 1634, according to the Oxford English Dictionary.¹⁴ In the United States Mock Spanish appears early. A jail could be called “calaboose,” a bold mispronunciation of Spanish *calabozo*, by 1792 (DARE I:508).¹⁵ “Adios” appears as a hostile dismissal by 1837 (DARE I:13). “Vamos” as a command meaning “Get out of here!” (usually “vamoose”) appears by 1900 (Parker 1902, cited in Bagley 2002:67; Parker reports the utterance from an incident in southern Utah in 1857). But the full flowering of Mock Spanish is not evident until the middle of the twentieth century. Gray et al. (1949) report a rich array of Mock Spanish forms among English-speaking students at the University of Arizona. These include bold mispronunciations in salutations such as “hasty lumbago” and “buena snowshoes.” Raymond Chandler’s mystery novel *The Long Goodbye* (1953) attests an example from the same period. No Mock Spanish appears in Chandler’s earlier books, but in *The Long Goodbye* an evil doctor threatens to beat up Chandler’s detective Philip Marlowe. As Marlowe beats a retreat, “Dr. Vukanich” says, “Hasta luego, amigo. Don’t forget my 10 bucks. Pay the nurse” (Chandler 1981[1953]:131).

Coinciding with the rise of the Official English movement, Mock Spanish exploded in the 1980s and 1990s in every type of media, from major Hollywood film and television productions to minor sites of mass reproduction such as t-shirts, greeting cards, and dog dishes (Hill 1993a, b). Mock

Spanish from this period until today has become an important resource for American English speakers. It lends colloquial flair to every level of usage, from everyday talk to dialogue in films and television shows to political oratory at the highest level. It is a staple of humor in films, and especially in television cartoons aimed at children.¹⁶ Also during this period, probably influenced by Hollywood films and American television, Mock Spanish spreads around the English-speaking world; I have identified examples from Scotland, Ireland, England, and Australia. Mock Spanish appears everywhere in the United States; I have collected anecdotes from every region, and Breidenbach (2006) assembled a rich collection of tokens from English speakers in South Carolina from about 2000.¹⁷

Tactics of appropriation in Mock Spanish

Mock Spanish borrows Spanish-language words and suffixes, assimilates their pronunciation to English (often in a hyperanglicized or boldly mispronounced form), changes their meaning, usually to make them humorous or pejorative, and uses them to signal that the moment of English-language speech or text thus embellished is colloquial and informal. Mock Spanish can accompany lexicon located at the extremes of vulgarity, but it can also lend a tone of American authenticity, of being a "real person," to speech in quite formal contexts.

The core vocabulary of Mock Spanish is probably no larger than 100 words.¹⁸ Occasionally new forms enter from popular culture. For example, in the early 1990s Camel cigarettes were advertised on billboards in Latino-dominant neighborhoods with a picture of the character Joe Camel and the caption *Un tipo suave*, "a cool guy." A tip jar bearing the handwritten label "El tip-o suave" turned up on the counter of Bentley's Coffee House, near the University of Arizona. Ricky Martin's 1999 hit song "Livin' la vida loca" contributed this expression, as in a recent *New York Times* article on undergraduate drunkenness which reported that campuses are addressing "la vida loca with in loco parentis" (Freedman 2007). However, very few such new expressions have appeared during the nearly two decades that I have studied Mock Spanish; most of its vocabulary is attested from the 1950s or even earlier. Mock Spanish is used primarily by monolingual speakers of English, who are not able to draw freely on Spanish vocabulary for useful new words.

Four major tactics reshape Spanish loans into Mock Spanish. In semantic pejoration, Spanish words of neutral or even positive meaning are moved down into a semantic space that ranges from the merely jocular to the deeply negative and insulting. In this space expressions of leave-taking, like "Adios" and "Hasta la vista," become insults and threats. Mock Spanish



Figure 2 Semantic pejoration in Mock Spanish.

“Adios” is especially rich. It can be used to constitute a claim of an authentic “old-timer” identity and a stance of southwestern warmth. But insulting usages are very common. For example, an *Arizona Daily Star* column published February 1, 1993, reflected the attitude of the community that it had been betrayed:

- (12) “When Alaska Airlines said adios to Tucson yesterday, it pointed to the tough problem of keeping Southern Arizona connected to the nation’s hard-pressed air travel system” (Ducote 1993).

The word appeared in the meaning “Goodbye and good riddance” in the astonishing context of an advertisement for a training course for human resources professionals:

- (13) “Sexual Harassment Training in Spanish – Adios to Lawsuits.”¹⁹

A bus-bench advertisement for a Tucson pest-control firm, seen in Figure 2, declared “Adios, cucaracha” to passers-by in a fancy upscale Anglo neighborhood; “Cucaracha” is also part of Mock Spanish vocabulary.

A *New York Post* editorial for December 21, 2006, observed that New York State comptroller Alan Hevesi was about to plead guilty to a felony

under the headline "Adios, Alan."²⁰ In my collection is a nationally marketed Hallmark greeting card in the "Shoebox" line (on recycled paper) that bears a little figure in serape and sombrero saying "Adiós" (complete with accent mark). Inside, the card reads

- (14) "That's Spanish for sure, go ahead and leave your friends, the only people who really care about you, the ones who would loan you their last thin dime, give you the shirts off their backs, sure, just take off!"

Spanish-language terms of address and titles are useful as insults. These include "amigo," "Señor," "Señorita," and "Compadre." Another widely used product of semantic pejoration is "nada," which in Spanish means, simply, "nothing," but in Mock Spanish means "absolutely nothing, less than nothing." The Sony Corporation during 2007 ran an advertisement in upscale publications (I saw it in the *New Yorker*) showing a well-dressed businessman wearing his expensive headphones in a crowded and noisy airport waiting area over the legend YADDA YADDA NADA, meaning that absolutely no unwanted sound will penetrate the headphones. Spanish words for money like "dinero" or "pesos" imply that the items thus priced are bargains. An especially rich play on this usage of "pesos" appeared on a Taco Bell cup acquired by José Cobas's teenaged son:

- (15) "One Grand Prize Winner will win a Million Pesos (That's \$93,000 amigo) And become El Presidente of Taco Bell! Thousands will WIN INSTANTLY! Cash Prizes from 100–10,000 pesos (\$9 to \$939)!" (José Cobas, personal communication, May 22, 2006).

Another example attests to the internationalism of Mock Spanish as well as its presence in elite contexts. An offer of a cut-rate subscription to the upscale British literary magazine *Granta* came in an envelope that bore the invitation "Carpe dinero!" Other famous pejorated items include "macho," which in Spanish includes the simple meaning "male" and need not imply masculine excess. Again, the *New York Times* provides an example, from an editorial criticizing the state of American politics:

- (16) "Republican presidential candidates are still playing *¿Quien es mas macho?* [sic] Mitt Romney and Rudolph Giuliani are in their cardboard tough-guy armor, bickering about 'sanctuary cities' and who used to treat his immigrant constituents more harshly" (Is it Fixed Yet? 2007 [editorial]).

"Mañana," which in Spanish means "morning" or "tomorrow" and need not connote procrastination or laziness, conveys only this pejorated sense

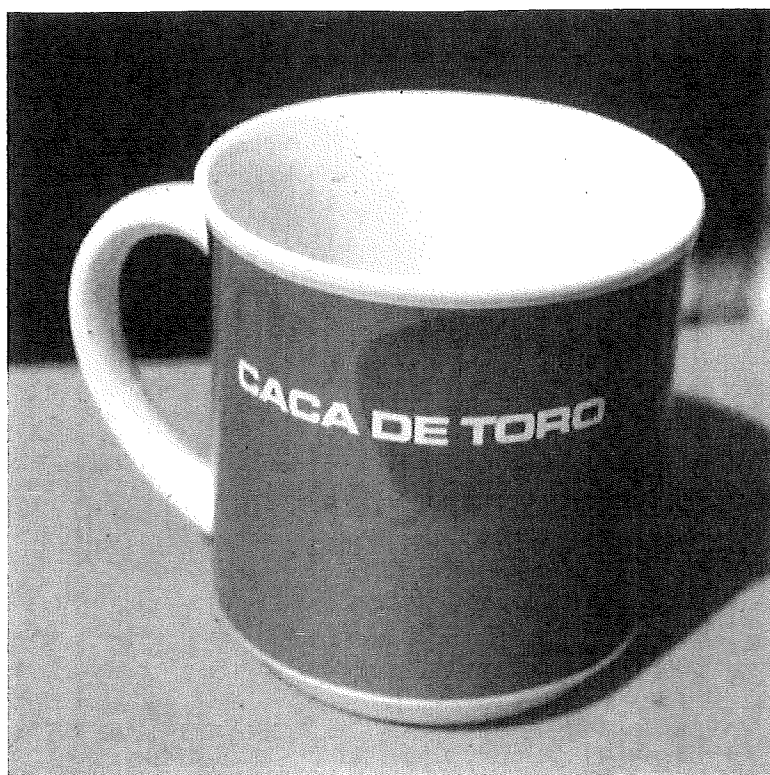


Figure 3 Euphemism in Mock Spanish.

in Mock Spanish (Hill 2005b). All Spanish words that appear in Mock Spanish are targets for semantic pejoration. They need not necessarily be insults, but they cannot be in any way formal or serious.²¹

Rodríguez González (1995) confirms Mock Spanish semantic pejoration. For instance, he points out that the Spanish suffix *-ista* in English, in contrast to *-ist*, nearly always conveys a negative stance. Hence, "Peronist," a neutral usage, compared to "Peronista," a negative label. Recent examples include "Clintonista," a not-very-thoughtful ally of former President Clinton, or "fashionista," a slavish follower of fashion.

The second tactic for constructing Mock Spanish is euphemism. Spanish words that are insulting, lewd, or scatological in Spanish are substituted for vulgar English words. "Loco" for "crazy" dates from 1887 (DARE III:396). Scatology is illustrated in the use of the Spanish nursery word "caca" as a euphemism for English "shit." A coffee cup in my collection, shown in Figure 3, was purchased at a nice gift shop near the University of Arizona several years ago. It bears the inscription "Caca de toro," and might be used on a desk in a place of employment where English "Bullshit" would be unacceptable.

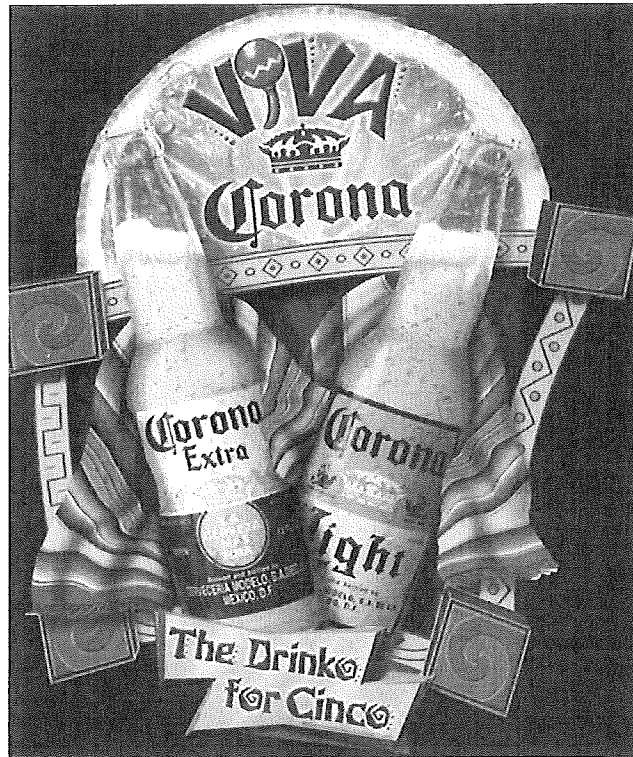


Figure 4 Borrowed Spanish morphology in Mock Spanish.

For several years a bumper sticker reading “Caca pasa” (for English “Shit happens”) was ubiquitous in Tucson. A usage that is especially offensive to Spanish speakers is “cojones” (pronounced /kə’howniyz/), and sometimes spelled as “cajones” (Spanish for “boxes”; Spanish speakers find this hilarious). Speaking in 1996 as US Ambassador to the United Nations, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright used the word in an address to the Security Council, arguing that a Cuban pilot who had shot down a spy plane from Florida had shown “not *cojones*, but cowardice” (Gibbs 1996). *The Economist*, the upscale British weekly magazine addressed to the international Anglophone business community, once featured on its cover an image of US President George W. Bush with an arrow pointing to his crotch bearing the legend “No *cojones* on Palestine and Israel” (*The Economist*, April 3–9, 2004).

The third tactic for constructing Mock Spanish is to add Spanish morphology, especially the definite article “el” and the suffix “-o” (although other suffixes, such as “-ista,” noted above, occasionally appear), to English words. The most common example is “No *problemo*,” from English “No problem.” The Spanish word is *problema*. Figure 4 shows this usage in a beer advertisement: Corona beer is “The *Drinko* for *Cinco*.”

A second example of “-o” suffixation is “mucho,” as in “Sell mucho book-os,” overheard in the University of Arizona bookstore. “Mucho” (pronounced /'muwtšow/), accessible because it is clearly related to English “much,” is the only adverb available in Mock Spanish; Spanish *muy* almost never appears. For instance, Spanish grammar absolutely requires *muy macho*, not Mock Spanish “mucho macho” as in (17).

- (17) “The yacht used to be called ‘Bouy Toy,’ so named by its former owners, a gay couple, according to sources at the Capitol Yacht Club. Apparently, the fellas down at the marina kind of razzed ol’ Duke, a former ‘top gun’ fighter pilot, about the gay-themed name. And apparently, Cunningham couldn’t take it. He changed the boat’s name from the sweet-and-saucy Bouy Toy to the **mucho macho** Duke-Stir in December 2004, according to Coast Guard records” (Marshall 2005).

“Mucho macho” appears to be a fixed expression; it is attested as well in (18), from a *New York Times* film review headline:

- (18) “For Fun, a Mucho Macho Black Hero” (Kerr 2002, reviewing *Undercover Brother*).

A recent addition to the universe of “-o” suffixed Mock Spanish items is the website www.eurocheapo.com, using the association between Spanish and cheapness to market a site that helps the user find travel bargains in Europe.

The use of “el” is illustrated in the name of a screensaver from the early 1990s, an electronic aquarium called “El Fish.” This was a pun on “Electronic Fish,” but it worked nicely since something called “el fish,” within the semantically pejorated universe of Mock Spanish, is something less than a real fish. “El” and “-o” are often found together, forming locutions like “el cheapo” and “el foldo,” as in (19), from a blog commentary on the Iraq war.

- (19) “So the generals have done the big el-foldo [*sic*] and are signing on to the McCain escalation plan.”²²

The “el . . . -o” frame can be used for any reference that the speaker or writer wishes to locate within a jocular colloquial register, and suffixation with “-o” can proliferate through an utterance or text, as in this example from the personal ad section of the student newspaper at the University of California at San Diego:

- (20) “Don Thomas! Watcho your backo! You just mighto wake uppo con knee cappo obliteratedo. Arriba!”²³

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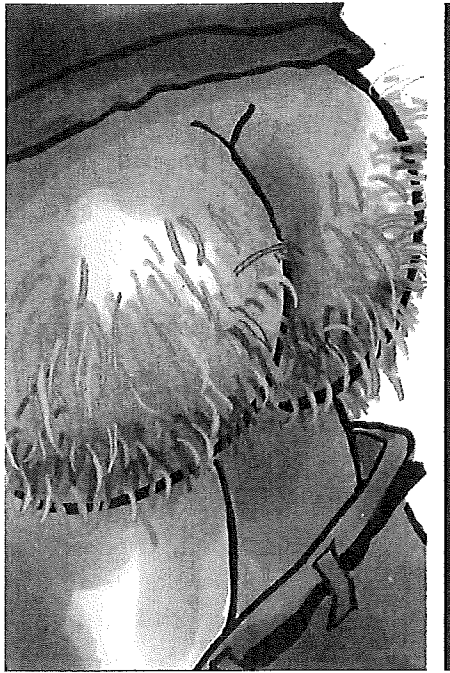
The frame “numero X-o” is especially productive. “Numero Uno” is of course common, but constructions like “numero Two-o” and “numero Eleven-o” also appear.²⁴

The last major tactic for Mock Spanish is hyperanglicization and the closely related tactic of bold mispronunciation. All Mock Spanish tokens are anglicized; one cannot speak Mock Spanish except in a broad American English accent. Some phonological adaptations in Mock Spanish represent merely normal anglicization to the English sound system. For instance, anglicized Spanish “d,” as in “San Diego” or “adobe,” is a stop /d/ or a flap /D/, not a spirant /ð/, and is alveolar, not dental. Vowels change their qualities to fit the English canon. Thus Spanish “e” in final position, as in “adobe,” becomes /iy/ rather than /ey/, since English does not have /ey/ in unstressed word-final position in native vocabulary. Under stress, it remains /ey/, as in [how'zey] “José” – a pronunciation which provides the Mock Spanish fixed expression “No way, José.”

However, many Mock Spanish words – and some important words that are not really Mock Spanish, such as place names of Spanish origin – are not merely anglicized, they are hyperanglicized or boldly mispronounced. In normal anglicization, Spanish-origin stressed “a” is approximated with English /a/ (as in “father”), as in Mock Spanish words such as “caca,” “mañana,” and “Hasta la vista, baby.” However, in hyperanglicization we encounter /æ/, as in the joke “Grassy-Ass” for “Gracias” (diversely realized in images on humorous greeting cards; see Figure 5), or /bæn'diyDow/ (where /D/ is an alveolar flap) “bandit.”

Bold mispronunciation, a subclass of hyperanglicization, is quite old; for instance the pronunciation of Spanish “o” as Mock Spanish /uw/ rather than /ow/ is attested in “calaboose” and in Cowboy Spanish items like “vamoose” from *vamos* and “buckaroo” from *vaquero*. Today this tactic yields bilingual puns like “Fleas Navidad,” which shows up every year on humorous Christmas cards with pictures of dogs, and that hardy perennial “Moo-cho” with a picture of a cow. The opposite treatment is “Much Grass” from “Muchas gracias.” A whole set of jocular leave-takings formed with “hasty” as a bold mispronunciation of “hasta” uses this technique: “hasty lumbago,” “hasty banana,” etc.

A specialized development of bold mispronunciation is parodic imitation of a Spanish accent in English. Such parodies were a staple of comedy routines in the 1940s and 1950s. Today, however, they are more visible as racist than are other forms of Mock Spanish. They have more in common with the intentional mockery that Ronkin and Karn (1999) labeled “Mock Ebonics” and Chun (2004) called “Mock Asian” than does Mock Spanish, which does not explicitly make fun of Spanish. However, examples of parodic imitation can be found. The example in (19) is reproduced exactly (although in black and white instead of color) from the “South of the



MUCHO GRASSY ASS

Figure 5 Hyperanglicization and bold mispronunciation in Mock Spanish. The hair appears as green in the original.

Border" website, advertising a tourist trap on the state line between North Carolina and South Carolina:

- (21) "BUENS DIAS, AMIGO! pedro VER' GLAD YOU COME!! pedro got 112 meelion amigos, who stay weeth heem, opp teel now all satisfy come back, send frans . . . thees make pedro ver' HAPPEE . . . like for frans come back all time . . . pedro hope YOU make 112 meelion and wan happee amigos! you come back soon, too, yes?"²⁵

This example, which appears with a stereotyped image of "Pedro" wearing white pajamas, a striped serape, and an enormous sombrero, would probably be judged to be racist by many Whites as well as by Latinos. However, other examples are less obvious. In (22) we see a brief passage written in support of a congressional candidate by a left-wing blogger who calls himself "¡El Gato Negro!."

- (22) "Some of joo may remember Coleen Rowley as one of the only peeples een the FBI who was focused on the future 9-11 highjackers. She weel breeng much needed security experience to her new job as Congress-woman. But eef joo theenk that she ees a one-issue candidate, I invite joo to go to her website and read her position on unplanned pregnancy,

she could teach the 'abortion ees icky' crowd a theeng or two. *Amigos*, thees *tres señoras* need jour help een retaking the Congress for *las Democratistas*, and stopping the steenky, corrupt Republiculo agenda right een eets' tracks ¡*Vámanos!*" (¡El Gato Negro! 2006).

¡El Gato Negro! is probably from a Spanish-speaking community (although not necessarily a fluent speaker of the language). I suspect this because of the bilingual pun "Republiculo," combining "Republican" with *culo* "ass," which is much more sophisticated than most Mock Spanish coinages. So this case may exemplify what Chun (2004) called "legitimate mockery," mockery by speakers licensed as insiders. Another case of this type is the controversial nationally syndicated column "Ask a Mexican." The author, Gustavo Arellano, uses a rich vocabulary of Spanish and English vulgarisms. I read these as attempts at reappropriation (see discussion in Chapter 2). However, such efforts risk being read as self-hatred (Navarro 2007).

Indexicality and the Multiple Functions of Mock Spanish

Mock Spanish has multiple functions. It constructs a light, jocular, humorous stance. "Stance" (Ochs 1996) is a term used today in sociolinguistics for the speaker's positioning or alignment, both affective and "epistemic" (that is, in reference to the truth or likelihood of an assertion) in regard to her utterance. Mock Spanish also constitutes an identity, signaling that the speaker possesses a desirable colloquial persona that is peculiarly "American." At the same time, Mock Spanish locates "Spanish" – as a language – as marginal, disorderly and "un-American." It covertly reproduces negative stereotypes of the Spanish language and Spanish-language-heritage populations. Finally, it asserts control over the symbolic resources of Spanish, which it reshapes in the interests of Whiteness. These functions are accomplished almost entirely by the semiotic process known as "indexicality."

Indexicality is one of the three major relationships between the sign and its object – what the sign stands for – that were distinguished by the nineteenth-century American philosopher C. S. Peirce (Parmentier 1994). The others are the "iconic" and "symbolic" relationships. An indexical sign or index is grounded in its object – that is, connected to it and recognized as a sign for it – by proximity, contiguity, or necessity. Examples of Peircean indexes are a weathervane, which indexes the direction of the wind, smoke, which indexes fire, or symptoms such as hives or fever, which index physiological disorder or illness. Iconic signs are grounded in their objects by resemblance; for instance, a map resembles the territory for which it stands.

Symbols are grounded by convention: the word "cat" is a sign referring to the animal because the English-speaking community is committed to this denotative value for the sound sequence /kæt/ and the orthographic sequence "cat."

Peirce's idea of indexicality was adapted in linguistics by Jakobson (e.g. 1971) and his student Silverstein (e.g. 1976, 1979) in order to investigate words like "this, that," "here, there," "yesterday, today, tomorrow," the pronouns "I" and "you," and tense markers. Jakobson called such words "shifters," because they change their meaning depending on the context in which they are uttered. For instance, to assign reference to temporal expressions like "now" or "yesterday," or tense markers like "will," we must know when the utterance in which they were used occurred. If I say on September 16, 2007, that "Yesterday I went to a nice party," we know that the party took place on September 15, 2007. Similarly, to assign reference to "this," "that," "here," "there," we must know where the utterance occurred. To assign reference to "I" or "you," we must know who was speaking, and to whom. Thus, in Peircean theory, these words are "indexical," ineluctably linked to their contexts.

Silverstein (1976) distinguished these "referential indexicals" from "social indexicals." A particular language, or a particular class or regional dialect of a language, can function as a social indexical that signals an identity as "speaker of X" or "person from Y." Where there is language conflict, as between English and Spanish in the United States, the social indexicality of language choice may be very complex. For instance, the city of "Tucson" is exactly the same place whether it is called /tuk'son/ or /'tuwsan/, but in saying /tuk'son/ the speaker signals her Chicana identity, a commitment to her right to speak this word in Spanish, and her primordial claim to the place and its resources.

Silverstein (1976, 1979) points out that social indexicals are "creative": they produce or entail their context, rather than being determined by it. The identity indexed by /tuk'son/ – "politically conscious Chicano/a asserting the public validity of Spanish pronunciation and primordial claim to place" – is not an element in nature that can be assigned a "referential index." Instead, it is precisely projected by the speaker saying /tuk'son/: upon this pronunciation, the context of situation includes that dimension of identity, that political stance. In contrast, the pronunciation /'tuwsan/ indexes several possible stances and identities, such as, "I am not a Spanish speaker," or "I am a member of a Spanish-heritage community, but I am no radical, so I am not going to make trouble by asserting my linguistic heritage in a contested pronunciation of this place name." In yet another option, the local Spanish slang name for Tucson is *La Tusa*. To use this name indexes yet another identity, as a *barrio*-oriented *cholo*. For instance, a Tucson low-rider club bears this name. Since this name is largely unknown

to the English-speaking community, it functions primarily to signal an identity as an insider among others who would also use the name.²⁶

Silverstein (1979) observed that social-indexical functions can become the objects of "metapragmatic awareness," where speakers develop views on appropriate usage and can discuss these. However, usages can have some functions that are accessible to metapragmatic awareness, but others that are not. Users of Mock Spanish exhibit this kind of split in metapragmatic awareness. Most English speakers are aware in a general way of the positive functions of Mock Spanish in enhancing White identities, but oblivious to its negative functions of denigration, marginalization, and racist stereotyping.

Visible functions of Mock Spanish: Positive indexes of identity and stance

English-heritage speakers and even members of Spanish-heritage communities often volunteer that Mock Spanish expressions are funny and cute. English-heritage speakers, questioned about using a Mock Spanish item, will suggest that they used it because they have "picked up a little Spanish." This rationalization is at least 50 years old. Gray et al. (1949) argued that Anglo University of Arizona students who used expressions like "Hasty lumbago" did so because they had grown up in the border region and knew Spanish. Thus the positive indexicality of Mock Spanish, of a light, colloquial stance, possession of a sense of humor, and a cosmopolitan identity, is accessible to speaker awareness.

The positive indexical function of Mock Spanish in creating a light stance and a desirable colloquial persona is not only available to metapragmatic awareness, it is so important in this function that to be able to use Mock Spanish is a vital part of the rhetorical skill set of someone who aspires to a prototypical "American" identity.²⁷ A canonical example that demonstrates this function appears in the film *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* from 1992. In the film Arnold Schwarzenegger plays a hero machine, a "Terminator," who has been sent from the future to defend a child, John Connor, who will grow up to save humanity by defeating an army of evil machines. Consider the following dialogue, which occurs as John Connor and his mother are fleeing the forces of evil in a car driven by Schwarzenegger as the "Terminator."

- (23) *Mother*: Keep it under sixty-five. We don't want to get pulled over.
Terminator: Affirmative (in machine-like voice, with German accent).
John Connor: No no no no no no. You gotta listen to the way people talk! You don't say "Affirmative," or some shit like that, you say "No

problem." And if somebody comes off to you with an attitude, you say "Eat me." And if you want to shine them on, you say "Hasta la vista, baby."

Terminator: Hasta la vista, baby (still in machine-like voice).

John Connor: Yeah, later, dickwad. And if someone gets upset, you say "Chill out!" Or, you can do combinations.

Terminator: Chill out, dickwad (in machine-like voice).

John Connor: That's great! See, you're gettin' it!

Terminator: No problemo (in nearly normal voice).

In this dialogue the famous tag "Hasta la vista, baby" is introduced for the first time. In his final utterance in the scene, the Mock Spanish tag "No problemo," the Terminator's voice sounds fully human for the first time in the film. That is, it is through the use of Mock Spanish that Schwarzenegger's Terminator moves from being a machine, a symbol of fascist foreignness amplified by his German accent, to being a sympathetic protagonist who talks "the way people talk." The English vulgarisms that accompany the Mock Spanish in this little language lesson – "Eat me," "dickwad" – suggest the range of the register of colloquialism constituted by Mock Spanish.²⁸

In *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, the Terminator becomes, not merely human, but "American." This use of Mock Spanish to construct an explicitly "American" voice appears in other films as well. In 2006, the film *Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby* was an enormous hit for the comedian Will Ferrell. The DVD of the film, which appeared in time for Christmas, was heavily marketed as appropriate family entertainment for the holiday season. Ferrell played Ricky Bobby, a NASCAR racing champion who hits hard times when his preeminence is challenged by Jean Girard, a French driver from the Formula One circuit. The character of Girard parodied the anti-French sentiment that had exploded in 2003 when the French refused to endorse the US invasion of Iraq. Jean Girard is not only French, effete to the highest degree, in contrast to Ricky Bobby's down-home style, he is gay! (This antithesis of all that is "American" is played to over-the-top perfection by the great comedian Sacha Baron Cohen.) Ricky Bobby's first confrontation with Jean Girard comes in a bar when the French driver switches the jukebox from country music to cool jazz. As Ricky Bobby reaches back to punch out the French interloper, he says "Welcome to America, amigo." Another plot twist is that, in despair over his failures on the track, Ricky Bobby breaks up with his best buddy Cal Naughton. In the last moments of the film, Ricky and Cal reunite. Mock Spanish plays a key role in this moment of tender all-American male homosociality. Cal's track nickname is "Magic Man," and Ricky announces that finally he, too, has picked a perfect nickname: It is "El Diablo," which

Ricky asserts "is like Spanish for a fighting chicken, with the claws, and the beak!"²⁹ This clever touch, which shows that Ricky, typical of Mock Spanish users, knows nothing at all about Spanish, is part of the film's satire of NASCAR-centered "Americanness," and the film's use of Mock Spanish, appearing at pivotal moments in plot transition, is very telling.³⁰

Mock Spanish nicknames are an important index of a certain kind of American masculinity. President George W. Bush is famous for giving nicknames to friends and subordinates, and many of those that have been published are Mock Spanish. Among those recorded are "Pablo" for his first treasury secretary, Paul O'Neill, "Camarones" for Carl Cameron, a correspondent for Fox News, and "El Grande Jorge" for Congressman George Miller of California.³¹ At his 56th birthday golf outing July 6, 2002, Bush wore a baseball cap with the embroidered legend "El Jefe," and joked to reporters that the expression was "French." Another Mock Spanish nicknamer is right-wing radio personality Rush Limbaugh, who often refers to himself as "El Rushbo." The most elaborate Limbaugh nickname is probably "El loco poco Dicko" for former Democratic congressional leader and presidential candidate Dick Gephardt.³²

The use of Mock Spanish is certainly not restricted to the political right. The late columnist Molly Ivins, who was far to the left in American political terms, called Bush "El Chico" and employed Mock Spanish to humorous effect in many of her essays. Ivins constructed a regional identity as a down-to-earth Texan, but Mock Spanish usage can be heard even from New England, as in another example from the political left, from the *Boston Globe's* columnist Ellen Goodman, in (24):

- (24) "But the sexier and racier question dominating the early chatter [about possible Democratic presidential candidates for 2008] is the possible mano-a-womano, black-and-white matchup that could be offered with Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama atop the national ticket" (Goodman 2006).

Mock Spanish is available to convey a down-to-earth colloquial stance not only in everyday interaction, but in the highest levels of public life. Mock Spanish is always good for a laugh, for showing that, even in a formal context like Ellen Goodman's *Boston Globe* op-ed on the Democratic presidential candidates, the writer is serious, but not so serious that you wouldn't like her. When Ambassador Madeleine Albright said "cojones" in front of the Security Council of the United Nations, she was transformed from a double-chinned dowager with a formidable bosom, the stuff of Marx Brothers caricature, to a tough, savvy, all-American broad who could be promoted with confidence to the exalted position of Secretary of State. President Bush's Mock Spanish nicknames are part of his image as a

likeable fellow. And for at least two decades scriptwriters have drawn endlessly on Mock Spanish tags to create characters like John Connor in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* and Ricky Bobby in *Talladega Nights*, who resonate as "real people" for an American audience.

Mock Spanish and negative indexes of racist stereotypes and marginalization of Spanish

If Mock Spanish is such a useful tool in creating stances and identities that many Americans find enjoyable and positive, what could possibly be wrong with it? Indeed, should we not think of Mock Spanish as making a continual display of the importance of the contribution of Spanish to the American language, and as showing American openness to and respect for this linguistic heritage? Metapragmatic discourses by Whites about the functions of Mock Spanish often include this notion, that Mock Spanish is a symbol of our diversity, or of the speaker's respect for Spanish language and culture. Regrettably, it is easy to show that this is very unlikely, but to do so is a scholarly exercise that cannot be accomplished within the terms of the folk theory of racism and personalist-referentialist linguistic ideologies. I have never met a speaker from an English-language heritage who suggested that anyone might object to Mock Spanish, or who believed that using Mock Spanish might be a way to reshape and control the Spanish language, or who was willing to admit that Mock Spanish might play a part in denigrating and marginalizing Spanish and its speakers. English-heritage Americans are more likely to find such a proposal to be not merely ridiculous, but profoundly threatening. Several years ago I gave a talk about my work to the Chicano Studies Program at the University of Arizona. A reporter from the student newspaper, the *Arizona Daily Wildcat*, wrote up the talk in a short piece (Schechter 2000). Letters to the editor vigorously attacked what they believed my ideas to be, and the entire staff of the *Wildcat* joined in an editorial denouncing my work as divisive and "just go[ing] too far."³³

So, what is the evidence for the negative functions of Mock Spanish? First, Mock Spanish associates the Spanish language irrevocably with the non-serious, the casual, the laid-back, the humorous, the vulgar. "Spanish" is available for joking and for insult; it cannot lend gravitas or sophistication. Compare, for example, a case of "Mock German": the marketing of an expensive computer keyboard, intended for programming specialists, under the name "Das Keyboard" (überGeeks only!).³⁴ Here, the German definite article "Das" is intended to convey fine engineering and high-tech credibility. It is unimaginable that such a product could be called "El Keyboard." "El Keyboard" would be a bargain-basement item marketed to

people who need a product that is no more than basic, or, at best, a way of joking about something familiar and not terribly special.³⁵

Mock Spanish, with its relentlessly anglicized and even hyperanglicized and boldly mispronounced phonology and pidgin grammar, assigns native Spanish fluency to the realm of the "un-American." To pronounce Spanish place names or the names of public figures with any approximation of native Spanish-language phonology is to risk being accused of being stuffy, effete, p.c., even ridiculous. A *Saturday Night Live* television skit called "NBC News Employees" that aired on November 10, 1990, made this very clear.³⁶ The skit included the Latino actor Jimmy Smits. All the Anglo characters make themselves ridiculous (I make this judgment from having shown the skit many times in talks and to classes – and also from a line given to the Smits character: "If you don't mind my saying, sometimes when you take Spanish words and kind of over-pronounce them, well, it's kind of annoying") by insisting on phony-sounding hyper-foreignized pronunciations of everyday Spanish names like "Nicaragua," "San Diego," "Broncos" (the Denver football team), and names for Mexican food. A running joke involves the name of Smits's character, Antonio Mendoza, who keeps insisting that he prefers that his name be pronounced just /mɛn'dowzə/, and not /men'doθa/ or /men'dosa/. I take this as an important part of the construction of a desirable identity for the Smits character, who is displayed in the skit as the only person present who is unpretentiously comfortable with an all-American voice. In contrast to this proscription against accurate Spanish pronunciation by Whites, we have seen that a Spanish speaker who insists on such pronunciations, even one who pronounces his or her own name with Spanish phonology (as do many Latino and Latina newsreaders on television), is heard as making a highly marked political gesture.

Another indication that Mock Spanish indexes racist stereotypes is that it often appears accompanied by highly stereotypical and offensive images of "Mexicans" (as in the "South of the Border" website quoted in (21)). It is common in anti-Spanish contexts such as anti-immigrant websites. On one such site, a picture of Congressman Tom Tancredo (R-Colorado), among the most vitriolically anti-Hispanic members of the US Congress, a person who described the city of Miami as "third-world," is captioned with the words in (25):

- (25) "Tom Tancredo is America's '*Numero Uno* Point Man!' in Congress on Illegal Immigration!" (italics and extra exclamation point in original).³⁷

On another such site, a "Gringo dollar" is pictured; the idea is to print it out and send it to the Republican National Committee. The presidential image on it is George W. Bush, alongside the legend "Gringo de Mexico."

The denomination is "00 Nada pesos." Across the base of the fake bill is written "Secure America's borders. Stop catering to illegals. Then we'll send American dollars."³⁸

Mock Spanish, with its utter neglect of Spanish grammar and its distancing from Spanish phonology, creates a linguistic space for what I have called "orderly disorder" (Hill 1998). This space is "orderly" because it is part of a larger, cultural order where Spanish has been assigned a non-serious function, and disorderly because in it Spanish loses the grammatical constraints indigenous to it. Within this space, even bilingual messages involving health and safety that are required by law are likely to be grossly ungrammatical. A dramatic illustration of such orderly disorder was identified by Barrett (2006), who conducted research in an Anglo-owned Mexican restaurant where Anglo servers spoke a Mock Spanish-influenced pidgin to Spanish-speaking kitchen staff. One tactic of the English speakers was to use Spanish words from which Spanish syntax and morphology were stripped, such as "Could you *hablar por telefono* and see if he can *trabajo*?" (Barrett 2006:180, 185). Even written communications to Spanish-speaking staff used this kind of language. The resulting misunderstandings, which at best compromised the efficient running of the restaurant and at worst led to lapses in sanitation, were invariably blamed on the Spanish speakers.

One case in my files of such Mock Spanish-influenced usage arguably led to the death of an American citizen. In April 2001, a Peruvian military pilot shot down a suspected drug-smuggling plane, only to discover that he had accidentally killed an American missionary and her infant daughter. Accompanying the Peruvian flight was an American spotter plane; one member of the spotter crew tried to stop the Peruvian from firing by radioing these words: "Are you sure it's a bandido?" (Kelley 2001).³⁹

The "orderly disorder" of Spanish is taken for granted and even appreciated by English speakers, who think of themselves as "knowing a little Spanish." An important contributor to this opinion is the fiction that "Spanish is easy" (the collocation "Spanish" and "easy" returned 89,900,000 Google hits on August 12, 2007; see Schwartz 2006 for additional discussion). Spanish is by far the most studied foreign language in the United States, with three times the number of students of its nearest competitor, French. This sense of empowerment over Spanish among Whites contrasts with the most acute anxiety among Spanish speakers about English, as documented by Urciuoli (1996). Urciuoli's respondents believed that they must never mix the two languages, that even a slight Spanish accent in English is discreditable, and that to code-switch by using Spanish and English expressions in the same sentence (a practice which decades of linguistic research has shown is an important dimension of linguistic order in US Spanish bilingual communities) suggests ignorance of English. This contrast, between the casual disorderliness of Spanish as used by English

speakers to construct a White public space, and the hypervigilance over linguistic boundaries within that space required for Spanish speakers, strikingly exemplifies the way that practices associated with Whiteness can become unmarked and unnoticeable, while very similar practices associated with Color become the object of intense monitoring (Hill 1998).

Finally, the connotations conveyed by the semantic pejoration of Mock Spanish vocabulary items constantly reproduce and reinscribe vulgar racist stereotypes of the Spanish language and people of Spanish heritage. To find "mañana" entertaining, one must have access to the stereotype of laziness. For "adios" and "hasta la vista" to function as brush-offs or hostile threats, one must have access to the stereotype of treachery and duplicity, of superficial politeness and friendliness that is really only a thin veil for vicious motives. An ad for a sale at an upscale Tucson furniture store with the headline "Contemporary and Southwestern dining, for pesos!" makes sense only if speakers understand goods priced in pesos to be especially cheap, since obviously the meaning is not literal. The store would never have accepted Mexican currency, which is almost impossible to exchange in Tucson.⁴⁰ Other Mock Spanish expressions index stereotypes of dirt, disorder, and sexual looseness. These effects, like the humorous colloquial stance projected by Mock Spanish, are the product of social indexicality. In these cases, however, we see not only the creative indexicality of stance projection, but what Silverstein (1979) has called "presupposing" indexicality, in that the jokester who uses the Mock Spanish words and expressions humorously presupposes the negative stereotypes as background. However, the usages not only reinforce the stereotypes by presupposition, they can also create or entail them, making them available to people who did not have them in mind.

We can exemplify this function by showing how Mock Spanish reproduces the stereotype of Latin political corruption by using Mock Spanish political titles like "el presidente" and "Generalissimo." "Generalissimo El Busho" is a favorite insult of the left-wing cartoonist Ted Rall, who dresses President Bush in an absurdly over-decorated military uniform with huge epaulettes and a high-peaked military cap covered in braid and insignia, as seen in Figure 6.

In order to "get the joke" of Rall's insult – indeed, to understand that it is an insult – one must have access to the stereotype of the overblown, inauthentic, and corrupt military dictator who rules over a Latin American "Banana Republic." We can be sure that the stereotype plays a role in the usage, because explicit statements of this stereotype occasionally surface. For instance, in March 2001, the editors of the leftist magazine *The Nation* suggested that "Mr. President" was not a good title for George W. Bush, since he had not been elected (he was installed by a 5–4 decision of the US Supreme Court). They ran a contest in which readers were invited to

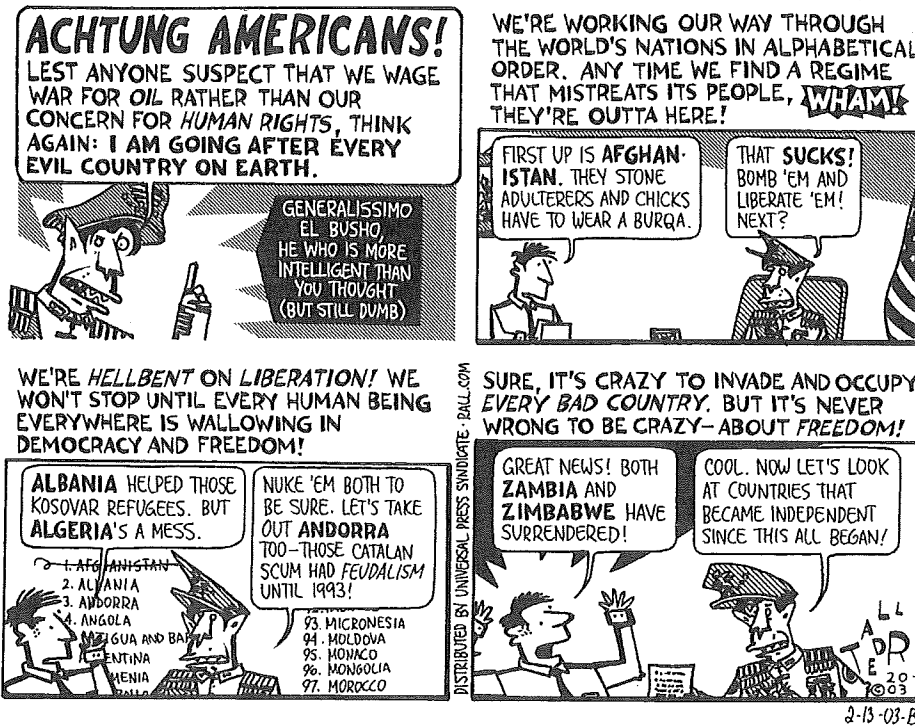


Figure 6 "Generalissimo El Busho": Entailing racist stereotypes in Mock Spanish. Rall © 2003 Ted Rall. Reprinted with permission of Universal Press Syndicate. All rights reserved.

submit an appropriate title. Inevitably, "El Presidente" was suggested. *The Nation* editors commented, "A Banana Republican, of course."⁴¹ The liberal blogger Kevin Drum used the header "Banana Republicans" for remarks about the politicization of the 2006 mid-term elections by the US Department of Justice.⁴² Knowing the liberal politics of these writers, we can be sure that "Banana Republican" is an insult. In case we doubted our conclusion, a *New York Times* op-ed essay by Bill Keller, who deplored intemperate attacks on President George W. Bush, explicitly labeled the Spanish political word "junta" an "insult."

- (26) "I doubt anyone ever referred to his father as a 'chicken hawk' or to the first Bush administration as a 'junta.' These are insults, not arguments" (Keller 2003).⁴³

A fascinating irony of the Banana Republic stereotype is that the original Banana Republic was not created by Latin Americans possessed by some essential instinct for Ruritanian misrule, but by Americans who in 1910 installed a corrupt dictatorship in Honduras to protect the interests of the

United Fruit Company. Similar American-assisted coups installed at least three other notorious military dictatorships: Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic in 1930, Carlos Castillo Armas in Guatemala in 1954, and Augusto Pinochet in Chile in 1973. However, very few White Americans know this history. The "Banana Republic" stereotype is extraordinarily resilient, and it shapes relationships between the United States and Latin America at the highest level. Interestingly, these relationships are inflected not only by the presumption of corruption, but by the idea that Latin America is somehow a trivial part of the world that can be taken lightly, a position entirely consistent with the trivializing jocular stance constructed by Mock Spanish. Before the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush, who as a former governor of Texas had some notion of the importance of US relations with Mexico, put Latin American policy high on his agenda. This initiative, however, was interpreted by critics as revealing Bush's lack of gravitas. The remarks in (27), by Maureen Dowd of the *New York Times*, were typical:

- (27) "W.'s advisers tried to make him look more impressive in his first forays into diplomacy by keeping the big world leaders at bay and letting him hang out with lesser leaders he could talk to in Spanish. So now we have a whole new alliance with Central and South American countries simply because W. feels more comfortable at what *USA Today* dubbed 'amigo diplomacy'" (Dowd 2001).

The stereotype of the "Banana Republic" continues to make sense to Americans for a variety of reasons. Explicit statements of the stereotype occur in what Myers (2005) has called "race talk" among intimates. Woolard (1989) reported that the stereotype of the corrupt Latino politician strongly influences supporters of the campaign to make English an official language. Its resiliency is, I believe, at least partly due to the constant use of forms like "el presidente" as jokes and insults in Mock Spanish, where White Americans simultaneously construct themselves as humorous, delightful, all-American, and "knowing a little Spanish," while projecting a very negative image of the Spanish-speaking world, its language, and its citizens.

In the vast majority of cases of Mock Spanish usage, the stereotypes are entirely implicit, projected by indexicality. To call President Bush "Generalissimo El Busho" can only be funny if we have access to the Banana Republic stereotype. Otherwise, it would simply make no sense. Since American English speakers do find expressions like "Generalissimo El Busho" funny, inviting jokesters to repeat it often (Ted Rall even has a section on his website where "Generalissimo El Busho" paraphernalia can be purchased), the Banana Republic stereotype is made more real.

Technically, in Peircean terms, the relationship between "Generalissimo El Busho" and the proposition "Latin American politicians are corrupt, phony, and incompetent" is not exactly one of index and object. In Silverstein's (1979) terms, the proposition is an entailment or creation, a projection, constituted by expressions like "Generalissimo El Busho." Since the phrase exists in English, speakers who share referential linguistic ideology must assume that it stands for some object in the world. That is, it is what Peirce called a "dicent" or "dicisign," where a sign of another type is "apprehended as" an index (Parmentier 1994). Both "Generalissimo El Busho" and the stereotype of the Banana Republic are really symbols, signs grounded in their objects by convention. The convention of the Banana Republic emanates from the culture of White racism, within which the stereotype is a kind of truth. In American English the expressions "Generalissimo" and "El Presidente," which are titles of respect in Spanish, are very difficult to use with a straight face. They carry a very heavy burden of history, of the voice of White racism, which evokes and reinforces the fictional property of the world, the Banana Republic, that is White racism's creation.

The creative indexicality of Mock Spanish expressions – the ways that they invite hearers to make negative inferences, to become aware of stereotypes to which they might not have paid attention – occurs because the pressures on interlocutors to make sense of Mock Spanish are quite intense. Mock Spanish is a very important tactic of colloquial American English and its registers of jocular intimacy. To stand apart from it, to refuse to make the inferences and "get" the jokes, to join in the fun, is to reject this mutuality and intimacy and its pleasures, to be divisive, and, finally, to be un-American.

Why are the negative functions of Mock Spanish below the limits of awareness?

Silverstein (2001[1981]) suggested that one property of linguistic expressions which makes them accessible to consciousness is "unavoidable referentiality." Linguistic ideology takes the expressions of Mock Spanish to be "referential," to "mean the same" as the corresponding English words.⁴⁴ So "mañana" means "tomorrow" or "later." But if we admit indexicality to our analysis, we can see that the word projects many non-referential meanings. The first is a stance, which can be glossed something like this: "I am using this word because it is a humorous way to talk about delay, implying a bit of naughty laziness." The second is an identity, of which this description is an approximation: "In using this word, I signal that I am more than an uptight, sober, rigidly responsible White person, who is always on time.

I am a nicer, funnier, more interesting person than that." To enjoy the mutuality of the implicated stance, and to buy into the projected identity as a congenial interlocutor, one must be able to retrieve something like this: "The naughty laziness in my stance is like the laziness and irresponsibility of a Spanish speaker, someone who would, in the baptismal moment, have said *mañana* (the 'real' Spanish word)." The stereotype, "Spanish speakers are lazy," which would be visible to linguistic ideology as racist were it to be uttered in that raw form, is never spoken, so referential linguistic ideology finds no purchase. What could be wrong with a word that means "later" while showing that the speaker "knows a little Spanish"? Nor is the word "*mañana*" accessible as a slur or an epithet: there is certainly no overt hostility in the usage, so performative linguistic ideology finds no purchase either. Furthermore, the negative entailments of "*mañana*" are surely not intentional, in the usual sense. Indeed, should these entailments be explicitly expressed, users of those expressions might quite sincerely point out that they do not believe them. So these usages are invisible to personalist linguistic ideology. Even if they are pointed out, within the folk theory of racism, which requires racist intentions and beliefs, they do not count as racist. However, within the critical theory of racism, we can understand that such utterances are part of a collective project, in which negative stereotypes are constantly naturalized and made normal, circulating without drawing attention to themselves. By constant repetition in this covert form, they become part of the basic cognitive tool kit of White Americans, just like the metaphor IMMIGRANTS ARE ANIMALS. If we focus on individual beliefs and intentions, as the folk theory of racism insists, we completely miss the way in which these stereotypes work in a cultural system, living in interactional space created in mutual engagement, as people get jokes, apprehend stances, and orient toward identities.

I have suggested that the negative entailments of Mock Spanish expressions are invisible because these expressions work as social indexicals. However, the positive entailments of these usages are visible to Whites, in spite of their non-referential properties. Thus, the analysis presented above is not completely satisfying. I suspect that an important reason, in addition to its non-referentiality, that the negative indexicality of Mock Spanish is invisible is because this is actively repressed. The positive stances and identities entailed in Mock Spanish support the project of White virtue. But the negative entailments, the racist stereotypes, undercut that project, and undercut it in a way that is both unintelligible within the folk theory of racism and deeply threatening. Mock Spanish is not redneck ranting. Most Whites encounter it almost daily, use it themselves, and certainly have heard it from public figures and characters in entertainments that they admire and enjoy. The suggestion that this everyday way of being funny might simultaneously be racist simply lies outside the regime of truth and sanity. It is

frightening and dangerous, an attack on White virtue at the most basic level.

Latino/a reactions to Mock Spanish

I have called Mock Spanish a covert racist discourse, because its racist functions, in reproducing negative stereotypes, are invisible (or at least deniable) for Whites. However, Mock Spanish is visible as racist to many Latinos and Latinas. While the Puerto Rican sociologist Clara Rodríguez (1997) reported that when she first heard Mock Spanish, she was baffled by it, the sociolinguist Fernando Peñalosa (1981), working in southern California, identified the racist functions of hyperanglicization and bold mispronunciation of Spanish loan words as long ago as the 1970s. Spanish speakers object to the use of offensive words like *caca* and *cojones* in public English, and many also object to the ungrammaticality of expressions like "No problema," and mis-spellings like "Grassy-Ass," as showing disrespect for the language.

In 1997 Dan Goldstein and I conducted interviews with 11 Anglos, 1 African American, and 12 Latino/a subjects, who were asked to look through a scrapbook of examples of Mock Spanish, Booster Regionalist Spanish, and bilingual announcements. They were invited to comment in any way that they wished on the examples (Hill and Goldstein 2001). We encountered some diversity among our 12 Latino and Latina subjects. A few thought that some Mock Spanish usages were cute and funny. Several expressed sympathy for Anglos who had to struggle with words that might be difficult for them to pronounce (none suggested that Anglos were cosmopolitan people who knew some Spanish!). Others thought the scrapbook examples were simply dumb, empty, and meaningless. Two young men recognized that some of the usages might be offensive, but that they "didn't let it bother them." But several respondents, ordinary people all, not scholars, reported that they found the usages demeaning, disrespectful, and racist. Some examples are given in (28–31).

- (28) "Muchos smoochos"? [on a greeting card with an image of Snoopy].
These playing on words, sometimes these are very demeaning. I don't know, I have a hard time with that."

In (29), a man responds to an example of a political advertisement with the headline "Don't let Congress say Adios to Mining Jobs," over a picture of a man in a hard hat leading two small blond boys away from a gate labeled "closed." This respondent objects to linguistic appropriation (see Chapter 6):

- (29) "It's a double message, adios and, a, a, a white uh, uh male adult with two uh white kids, um, what a double message. What a co-, covert way of once again, uh, playing with people's minds."

Two men objected to the pejoration of the word *macho* in its Mock Spanish usage, as in (30):

- (30) "That whole word in itself was totally bastardized. It used to have an entirely different meaning, which had nothing in reference to how much you would drink, or what-, how many women you could, you know, what was your conquest. Basically a, a macho, a, Machismo was a very comprehensive person that could communicate, uh, that could show his emotions and express them; once it crossed the border it changed its whole definition to being sarcastic, egotistic, narcissistic. I'm gonna drink you under the table and how many women can I-."

One woman, after looking at the entire scrapbook, volunteered a comprehensive critique of the materials she had seen:

- (31) "Some of those you just kinda hafta be real careful, because you, you, you know you get somebody to read it and because they're using maybe one or two Hispanic words in there or something like that, you think, oh, you know, they're kinda, they're nice, they're uh, they, they like our people or whatever, and then all of a sudden underneath it you can see a real message of, you know, hate or dislike or, or, or being really um uh, discriminatory towards, towards the Hispanics, and so you kinda have to take 'em with a grain of salt."

Conclusion

White speakers of American English, when confronted with the proposal that Mock Spanish presupposes and reproduces racist stereotypes, vigorously reject this idea. Surely no racism is intended by such ordinary, and even entertaining and delightful, usages, which liven up television and cinematic dialogue, provide a resource for entertaining political commentary from all points of view, and are frequently heard in everyday conversation. And many examples of Mock Spanish do seem to be entirely benign to the unreflecting overhearer. Consider the following exchange, which I noted down on a Sunday morning in March 2001 in the Elk City Cafe in Redway, California. Both speakers were obviously Anglos, and all apparently Spanish words in the exchange were uttered with normally anglicized phonology.

- (32) *Counter server* (female): How's it going?
Customer (male): Oh, mas o menos.
Server: Not so bueno, huh?

It is certainly wrong to accuse these speakers of intending a message of racist denigration. However, I hope to have shown that this innocuous bit of chit-chat is part of a much larger system of White racism and its discourses. This little exchange has played a part in naturalizing, in making normal and commonsensical for the speakers and those Whites who overheard them, the idea that if Spanish is to be "American," it cannot sound like Spanish, and it cannot be serious. To become American, Spanish words must be transformed into light talk like (32), or into jokes and insults. Furthermore, if we think for a moment, we realize that a Spanish-speaking counter server and customer, exchanging very similar sentiments in real Spanish, would have been vulnerable to censure with the "This is America" routine, which any White customer present (this café, located on the main highway through town, was a White-dominated space) might have initiated. In fact, it is highly likely that, had the server been a Latina, she would have received explicit instructions from her manager not to speak Spanish in the serving area of the restaurant, for fear of making White customers uncomfortable. Indeed, it is highly likely that had she been a Latina, she would not have been a server at all; she would have been backstage, washing dishes and mopping the floor (Barrett 2006).

In summary, even these friendly folks in the Elk City Cafe on a sunny Sunday morning participated, through unreflecting everyday practice, in the reproduction of White racism as a cultural system. I hope to have made clear that the cultural projects of White racism work through diverse devices. Spanish and its speakers are assigned to the lower, colored levels of the racial hierarchy, and material and symbolic resources are appropriated from them for the purposes of Whites. The many kinds of pressure, formal and informal, against the Spanish language in the public arena also function to accomplish these purposes, as do explicit slurs and the utterance of stereotypes. But the unending repetition of unmarked appropriations of Spanish, from the banal Sunday-morning conversation in the Redway Cafe to the prose of *New York Times* opinion pieces and the high dudgeon of White diplomats, must also be a very important part of the White racist project, and may be especially important and useful precisely because it is covert. However, as I have tried to show, these usages are not covert and invisible to Latinos and Latinas. Instead, they are felt as demeaning, as degrading, as disrespectful, as an audible, visible, and unpleasant effect, albeit a less important one than material oppression and the threat of violence, of living in a racist society.

Chapter 7

Everyday Language, White Racist Culture, Respect, and Civility

Above-Ground White Racism and the Evidence of Language

White racism lives in the minds of American Whites in a curiously misapprehended shape. Most of them understand it as a peripheral part of America's past that does not require much attention. The kind of celebratory history of the United States that most White Americans are exposed to in school glosses over the extraordinary truths: nearly 250 years of slavery, more than 100 years of White terrorism and Jim Crow, 300 years of genocidal warfare against American Indians, repeated pogroms against Mexican and East Asian Americans, and the blinding, mind-boggling contradictions of American leadership – that many of the framers of American democracy, men held in nearly universal reverence by White Americans, owned Black slaves, and that the majority of White American leaders since the Civil War, at every level and in every social field, have been White supremacists and segregationists. This literally white-washed history makes it impossible for most White Americans to think seriously about how racism might live in the very foundations of their traditions: for instance, in strange aberrations like the role of the Electoral College in presidential elections (Epps 2007), or in the absence of any provision for the legal movement of labor in the so-called North American Free Trade Agreement (in sharp contrast with the Schengen Agreement that shapes the free movement of labor within the European Community), or the “right-to-work” laws in the former slave states that make American labor unions weak and marginal. Nor do they realize how this history lives in their talk, where to say “American” can be shown to evoke an image of a White man,

uninterrupted by the legal stipulations of citizenship in the Fourteenth, Fifteenth, or Nineteenth Amendments to the US Constitution.

White historical amnesia exists alongside active inattention to the vividly visible racial stratification of contemporary American society, including the astonishing levels of imprisonment of African American men, for whom the United States is a carceral dystopia. Should Whites somehow be forced to notice racial disparities in wealth, education, and opportunity, well-documented traditions of rationalization permit them to blame the people of color who are its victims, since venerable stereotypes of laziness, improvidence, sexual license, dirt, and stubborn ignorance are always ready to hand.

Unfortunately, a good deal of recent scholarship on White racism, while acknowledging its continued existence, does not fully capture its realities. For instance, much scholarship suggests that White racism today lives "underground," expressed subtly in a chilly climate and in "benign neglect," rather than in beatings and lynchings and verbal muggings with slurs and epithets. It is true that upstanding White citizens no longer pack sandwiches to attend lynchings. Yet news of racial violence and racist threats against people of color arrives daily. I write this as the morning paper reports an epidemic of threats against people of color using the ugly symbol of lynching, the hangman's noose. News that White kids in Jena, Louisiana, had threatened Black kids by hanging nooses in a tree on the local high school grounds in the Spring of 2007 was easily assimilated to the "Ku Kluxer," "Redneck" stereotype of the folk theory of racism. But a noose hung on the door of a Black professor at Columbia University Teachers' College in New York City does not fit the folk theory so easily. Nor can it be assimilated to the "chilly climate" scenario, where people of color are merely left out of informal social moments like after-class drinks or the Saturday afternoon tennis game. A noose means only one thing: it is a White on Black death threat. And that is how the New York police understood it, assigning the matter to their hate crimes unit (Gootman and Baker 2007).

The linguistic landscape revealed in this book hardly supports any claim that White racism has gone underground. The underground dimensions of White racist language are, indeed, important, and in Chapters 5 and 6 I have discussed several types of covert racist discourse. Linguistic anthropologists trace to Franz Boas and Benjamin Whorf their understanding that cultural ideas are most effectively encoded in discourse precisely when they are organized below the level of metalinguistic and metapragmatic awareness, in unassailable presuppositions that are almost never made explicit. In Chapter 5 on Mock Spanish and in Chapter 6 on linguistic appropriations, I showed how racist stereotypes that date back hundreds of years can persist

in this “underground” form. But I have also tried to show that one reason that covert racist discourse remains underground is that Whites actively resist acknowledging its existence. Furthermore, covert racist discourses have authors, influential Whites who appropriate new linguistic resources from ways of speaking associated with people of color, and reshape these to serve their own purposes.

But racist and racializing stereotypes do not live only in covert racist discourse. They appear as well in highly visible and overt racist talk and text, at the highest levels of American society, and in the most elite media. Indeed, when it came time to finish drafting Chapters 3 and 4, on slurs and gaffes, I discovered that the last couple of years had brought a positive embarrassment of riches. Between the Spring of 2003, when I first drafted the chapter on Senator Trent Lott’s notorious December 2002 statement in support of racial segregation, and Fall 2007, as I prepared this book for submission, so many new moral panics over racist utterances had occurred that it was difficult to select which to mention. I had to set aside rich materials on Senator George Allen of Virginia, on Don Imus, on Michael Richards, on Senator Joseph Biden of Maryland (who remarked on February 7, 2007, that Senator Barack Obama was “the first mainstream African American who is articulate and bright and clean” [Thai and Barrett 2007]). Each one of these incidents produced, day after day, the overt inscription of ugly stereotypes, in the most explicit language, in every medium of information and entertainment. And this is to say nothing of the incidents that never moved beyond the campus of the University of Arizona or the local news here in Tucson. The astonishing moment when thugs from the “Border Guardians” shouted down an invited speaker, a representative of the government of Mexico, in a scholarly colloquium at the University of Arizona (mentioned in Chapter 5), was reported only in the local papers.

In summary, much of the everyday language of White racism has not gone underground. Instead, it circulates in the full light of day. Every slur, every stereotype in its repertoire receives frequent exposure and publicity. While Chapter 3 shows that people are most likely to utter explicitly racist statements in their own voices when they are protected by anonymity, and while scholars like Myers (2005) and Picca and Feagin (2007) have suggested that explicit racist talk circulates most freely when interaction is “backstage,” moral panics around gaffes repeat explicitly racist words, provide them with immense publicity, and attach them to famous names in an elaborate discourse of motives. In summary, the analyses presented here suggest that, while White racist language has its subtle side, much of it is not subtle at all, and it is not underground. Instead, it is posed in the spotlight, wrapped in red, white, and blue.

White Racist Culture as a System of Contradictions, Erasures, and the Intersubjective Creation of Meaning

Alongside the assertion that White racism has moved underground, a good deal of recent scholarship centers on so-called "structural racism" or "institutional racism." The recognition of structural racism, which foregrounds the racist impacts of formal policy in government, banking, criminal justice, education, and other institutional domains, was an important step forward from an exclusive focus on individual bigotry. The theory of White racist culture illustrated here aims to enlarge our understanding of racism once again. I have advanced a rather simple theory of how White racist culture is organized in such a way that White racism can persist, and yet be deniable or even invisible to those who participate in it. I recognize two basic components that make possible this deniability and invisibility, the folk theory of racism and several linguistic ideologies. These interlock in such a way that Whites can misapprehend the workings of their world and erase its many contradictions. And, since this misapprehension and erasure benefits them, preserving their illusions of virtue and their genuine privileges, both material and symbolic, there is little incentive to critique or challenge it.

The folk theory of racism, outlined in Chapter 1, is crucial to White misapprehension and erasure. The folk theory takes "race" for granted as a basic biological category, holds that people naturally aggregate at every social level along racial lines, and sees "racism" as what happens when backward and marginal individuals believe that some races are inferior to others, and act on these beliefs. Alongside the folk theory of racism, several linguistic ideological complexes are important. Referentialist ideology sees the principal function of language as the exchange of information and the enlargement of our knowledge of the truth. The words of language are thought to be linked by history to this task, and people should know the truth and choose the words that best represent it. The conduit metaphor suggests to us that the meanings in words pass unproblematically from speaker to hearer, so that the truth is easily shared.

While referentialist ideology understands meaning as residing in words, personalist ideology sees individual intention as the most important source of meaning. Even though the meaning of words is thought to be unproblematic, established at historical moments of authoritative baptism, personalist linguistic ideology holds that we cannot really know what a person's words mean until we assess her beliefs and intentions. Finally, performative ideology holds that language is powerful, that it can have material effects in the world, including hurt and comfort to individuals.

None of these linguistic ideologies is in itself racist. While I have suggested that linguistic ideologies are saturated with political interests, in the broad sense these particular ideologies are probably neutral in reference to the cultural project of racism. Indeed, all of these ideologies encompass important insights, and genuine advances in our understanding of the nature of language and speech have been produced by adapting the frameworks for thought that they provide. But, taken together with one another and with the folk theory of racism, these neutral understandings lead us away from productive anti-racist analysis, and towards the reproduction of White racist culture. The folk idea of race as a biological category obscures the way that race is a social-cultural and, especially, a political-economic category, and leads us into fruitless debate about whether disparities are due to "race" or "class." The idea that racists are marginal and backward obscures the role of elites in the perpetuation of White racism. The folk-theory notion that "people prefer to be with their own kind" reproduces the understanding of "kind" as "race" with unspoken precision. Furthermore, it makes all forms of discrimination morally equivalent, and obscures again the way that political and economic dominance are required in order to accomplish the projects of White racism, and are not available to people of color. The idea that racism is a matter of individual belief, together with the referentialist ideology of words and the conduit metaphor, obscures the way that racism is perpetuated through indexicality, in the intersubjective spaces where meaning is negotiated and inferences are made without ever being made explicit. This intersubjective space, the site where culture is made public and exchanged at every level of interaction, including the most quotidian, is neglected by scholarship on institutional racism with its focus on policy.

Thus referentialist and personalist ideologies are neutral in regard to racism, but the forms of common sense that they make possible draw us deeper into the traps set by the folk theory. The folk theory of the racist as ignorant, backward, and marginal makes ordinary Whites intensely resistant to recognizing the racist history and content of common expressions in their own language. The debate over "squaw" in Phoenix in 2003 and 2004 made clear that they draw on the folk theory and on referentialist and personalist understandings about the meanings of words in order to justify their resistance. The moral panics around gaffes, with their important metacultural role in perpetuating stereotypes, are driven by personalist and referentialist ideologies working together. Personalist linguistic ideologies require us to evaluate a speaker's beliefs and intentions before assigning meaning to her words. Referentialist ideology requires that we get this exactly right, so that we can be sure exactly what kinds of truths we are hearing, or whether we are hearing lies. Personalist ideology admits to motives, like joking and light talk, that suspend the referentialist connection

between core beliefs and the truth of words. The semiotic play that this suspension provides opens up opportunities for creativity that include social life's greatest pleasures. Yet in a White racist culture, it also licenses speakers to assign the blame for the pain inflicted by racist utterances to their "oversensitive" victims. Curiously, performative ideology, which makes slurs visible as racist language and should work as well to make salient the hurt felt by victims, is seldom invoked by Whites. The folk theory of racism, which admits only Ku Kluxers to be racists, always permits the claims of White virtue to trump a claim of injury on the part of a person of color.

The interlocking workings of the folk theory of racism and the diverse dimensions of linguistic ideologies outlined above make it possible for White Americans to rationalize and erase the racism that permeates and shapes their world. There is nothing special about such processes: this is, in fact, how all cultures work. The task of cultural analysis is to penetrate the contradictions and inconsistencies that underlie the seeming coherence and validity of our worlds. When these worlds turn out to be damaged and damaging, as is the case in a cultural world centered on White racism, cultural analysis can help us understand how to change them.

Respect, Civility, and Equality: Interrupting the Everyday Language of White Racism with Foundational American Values

In Chapter 4, I introduced the idea of "social alexithymia" (Feagin 2006), Hernán Vera's term for White Americans' curious lack of empathy for the feelings of people of color. We can now see that this lack of empathy involves a chain of reasoning that goes something like this: "I am a good and normal mainstream sort of White person. I am not a racist, because racists are bad and marginal people. Therefore, if you understood my words to be racist, you must be mistaken. I may have used language that would be racist in the mouth of a racist person, but if I did so, I was joking. If you understood my meaning to be racist, not only do you insult me, but you lack a sense of humor, and you are oversensitive." Notice that this entire chain of reasoning makes the speaker the sole authority over what her words shall mean. But this exclusive control is merely the common sense of personalist logic, and it is very hard to interrupt common sense.

But White Americans do share other values that are not consistent with this kind of common sense. Most of them claim that they believe strongly in respect for others, in civility in communicative exchange, and in the

equality of all human beings. If they truly believe in the principle of equality, then respect and civility must be extended to everyone, regardless of race. Under these values, the claim of an interlocutor or an overhearer or an audience member that a word or a sentence caused pain should enjoy equal status with the claim of a speaker that no harm was intended. The usual civilities of everyday life should prevail: The speaker should acknowledge respect for the claim of pain, apologize, and discuss how to avoid any repetition. The constant repetition of the idea that anyone who calls language "racist" and objects to it is "oversensitive" or "angry" or "divisive" violates this norm of civility and mutual respect among fellow citizens. The only possible explanation for this violation is that those who commit it believe that people of color somehow do not deserve full citizenship, civility, and respect. And even under the folk theory, such a belief is racist. Indeed, from the point of view of the critical theory of racism, the victims of racism have special qualifications to detect and name it. Van Dijk (1993:18) argued that "knowledgeable minority group members" are our surest guides to where racism is active. People of color have produced some of the most profound thinking about racism, and, while they pick their battles carefully, letting much that is offensive pass by without objection, both in small acts of everyday rejection and in deliberate public manifestations by entire communities, they have been active in resistance. When I have talked to people of color about "covert racist discourse," I often find that they have understood this concept, in an informal way, since childhood. Among Whites, the idea of "linguistic appropriation" is a concept encountered, if at all, during a university education. Among African Americans, it is a commonplace of everyday understanding. So, not only do people of color deserve civility and respect as fellow citizens, they deserve the attention of anti-racist Whites as knowledgeable experts in the analysis of White racism, which is surely one of the greatest challenges faced by American society.

Along with accusations of "oversensitivity," the media ritual of the moral panic over "gaffes" should cease. I have followed these affairs for about a decade. Their terms are rigidly formulaic. The exchange of blame and excuse is utterly predictable, with Harvard-educated *Washington Post* columnists and middle-western talk radio hosts alike invoking the same hackneyed formulas, knotting up once again the frayed ends of the folk theory of racism and the personalist rhetoric of motives to return to the same tired conclusions about decent people who somehow slipped. It is time to simply hold people responsible for their words. If victims claim that those words were hurtful and damaging, that alone should carry blame and bring appropriate punishment. Arguments about whether or not speakers are racist are not useful, and function largely to reproduce White racism's central ideas.

What about the covert racist discourses? While I have quite self-consciously stopped using Mock Spanish, sacrificing a useful resource for an enjoyable kind of light talk, I am not optimistic that others will follow my example. There is probably no way to purge the American language of the various forms of Anglo Spanish, and there is certainly no way to shame rich White kids out of trying to talk like poor Black kids, no matter how silly they sound. But in matters of public usage, basic respect and civility should be the rule. If a community wishes to honor its Hispanic or Native American or African American heritage — by naming a charity walk, a festival, a street, a shop, or by developing a museum exhibit or a historical tour route, or by adopting a preferred architectural style — attentive (rather than merely *pro forma*) consultation with leaders in the communities closest to that heritage should be a given. Such celebrations are an opportunity as well to fund work by heritage-community artists, and to involve young people who might otherwise be alienated in useful and remunerative work. Otherwise, there is no honor, there is only erasure and appropriation, usually accompanied not only by hurt and anger and further alienation, but also by silly mistakes, distortions, and the flattening of language and history that produces the homogenized world that many White Americans themselves claim is objectionable.

These are very simple ideas for interrupting the everyday language of White racism. They require Whites and people of color to respect one another, to talk to one another long enough to listen to objections, to deliver apologies, and to consult about simple questions of representation and compensation. Small exercises in common courtesy are a start in interrupting the processes that I have described in this book. But nobody should think that even such a minimal intervention will be easy. As the materials in this book have illustrated, courtesy and respect unfortunately cannot be taken for granted. While the efforts of ordinary people to change how they interact are very important, people in authority especially need to make this change, to substitute the rituals of blaming and making excuses with rituals of apology and difficult negotiations toward increasing mutual understanding. I believe that Americans of good will of all colors desire change, so perhaps, once they are able to recognize where common sense today leads them astray, the probability of accomplishing change will grow. With effort, the everyday language of White racism that I have treated in these chapters may join slavery and official segregation as a part of American memory.