

# Homeland Security, Militarism, and the Future of Latinos and Latinas in the United States

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My purpose in this essay is to begin to outline the many ways recent developments in the United States affect one sector of the North American working class: the diverse Latino communities in the United States. Let me begin by reminding the reader that what I will be calling the “Latino community in the United States” is in fact a patchwork of heterogeneous groups with distinct identities, histories, and cultural traditions. Latinos are everywhere, no longer limited to the Southwest or New York City; there are Puerto Ricans and Dominicans on the East Coast, Salvadorans and Guatemalans on the West Coast, distinct Cuban communities in Florida and New Jersey, Mexicans along the southern border, and others in cities ranging from Raleigh, North Carolina, to Seattle, Washington.

More striking, perhaps, is the fact that more than half (51 percent) of all adult Latinos in the United States are first-generation immigrants (compare this to just a decade ago, when only 22 percent were foreign born and 78 percent were born in the United States).<sup>1</sup> An additional 20 percent are the U.S.-born children of those immigrants. Third- and fourth-generation Latinos (a generic term for all groups of Latin American descent) increasingly make for a minority, now constituting only roughly 25 percent of the Latino population. Of those 25 percent, only a fraction identify themselves as Chicano or Chicana, a fact that has cultural and political implications, as we shall see. Put another way, because the first generation is gener-

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ally preoccupied with economic survival, the sector of the Latino community committed to progressive change is almost always quite small and generally finds itself in the position of having to renew itself by drawing on continuous pools of new immigrants and their children.

The Latino subgroups with the longest history in the United States are, of course, Mexicans and Mexican Americans (a traditional term for ethnic Mexicans in the United States). Most of the West and the entire Southwest was once indigenous and later Mexican land conquered and occupied in a preemptive first strike (inspired by Providence itself according to the war planners) during the U.S. war against Mexico from 1846 to 1848. Since the time of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, then, peoples of Mexican origin have made up an important part of the labor force that has contributed to the building of the United States.

Today even the Mexican group is crisscrossed by class, gender, and generational lines. The well-heeled Mexicans shopping at upscale malls in San Diego and El Paso have little in common with the migrant workers picking strawberries, packing poultry, or making expensive garments in sweatshops. The newly arrived immigrant is unfamiliar with the worldview of the second- or third-generation Chicano raised in the United States and schooled in the ways of U.S. popular culture, consumer capitalism, and race-based discrimination. Increasingly, the third- or fourth-generation Chicano or Chicana (a term signifying more than anything else adherence to a militant political stance, whether a regressive ethnic nationalism or a liberal to left progressive agenda) has little in common with the third- or fourth-generation Hispanic (a generic term related to *Latino* but with conservative political overtones) who sees nothing wrong with the status quo and merely wants to grab his or her piece of the American dream.

The 2000 census teaches us several interesting facts about the way Latinos are contributing to the changing face of the United States. First, more legal immigrants arrived in the decade of the 1990s than in any previous decade in U.S. history. The economic boom (or more accurately, the stock market bubble) of the Clinton years attracted large numbers of people from around the world, many of whom would discover only later that household incomes did not rise during the same period.<sup>2</sup> Second, the majority of these immigrants came from Latin America (approximately 51 percent; with 26 percent coming from Asian countries). And finally, Mexican immigrants, who made up the bulk of the Latin American group, are now spread out across the fifty states.

Let us take the example of the Old South or, as Trent Lott used to say, the Old Confederacy. According to the 2000 census, the increase in Latinos between 1990 and 2000 in North Carolina was 393.9 percent, 337 percent in Arkansas, 299.6 percent in Georgia, and 278.2 percent in Tennessee.<sup>3</sup> In Senator Lott's home state of Mississippi, the number of Latinos more than doubled during the 1990s. Whereas

in 1990 only nineteen of the state's eighty-two counties had two hundred or more Latino residents, by 2000 more than half, or forty-eight, counties had two hundred or more Latinos. These numbers are probably too low given the census bureau's track record of undercounting Latinos.

For the most part, the new arrivals are workers searching for a better life; they do not have much education, and they are deeply attracted by the promise of economic opportunity north of the border. According to a recent survey, 83 percent of Mexican immigrants polled were confident that their children would be better off financially than they are.<sup>4</sup> The overwhelming majority of these immigrants will work hard, their children will become educated, and they will make significant contributions to our society. But the same study projects that by 2025, when Latino workers will make up 25 percent of the labor force, they will be less educated and earn significantly less than their "white" counterparts.

Because these new immigrants have yet to experience the disconnect between the promise of democracy and equality in this country and what the United States has actually delivered to working people of color over time, many of them will adopt an uncritical view of current events. If local and national authorities proclaim that war against Iraq is necessary and the mass media reinforces that message, many new arrivals will accept it as fact. Some will even join the armed forces or encourage their children to do so. What better way, they ask, to show our gratitude to the United States? What better way to get an education (assuming the recruiters' promises are true)? What better way to prove our patriotism and show that we, too, are real Americans?

### **Code Brown: Homeland Security and U.S. Latinos**

What many of these immigrants do not know is that while they were arriving in this country or busy working to provide their children with greater opportunities, across the nation—but especially in California—a severe backlash against Spanish-speaking immigrants occurred that gave us Propositions 187 (elimination of social services for undocumented workers), 209 (elimination of affirmative action programs), and 227 (elimination of bilingual classes). Led by former governor Pete Wilson, conservatives who promoted these initiatives now claim that they were not anti-Mexican but only anti-illegal immigration. Yet from a Spanish-speaker's point of view, the attacks on bilingualism, for example, could only be interpreted as an overt act of hostility. This reaction was even more pronounced in the case of Proposition 187, which sought to eliminate the social safety net for immigrant families. By the end of the decade, the hate speech directed at Mexicans and immigrants in general reached critical mass, suggesting that the new century would be no less racist for Latino working people than the previous 150 years had been.<sup>5</sup>

In the summer of 2003, the wave of anti-immigrant rhetoric in California

interfaced effortlessly with the conservative push to recall Democrat governor Gray Davis and efforts to undermine the candidacy of Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante. Republican candidates Tom McClintock and Arnold Schwarzenegger teamed up with right-wing radio hosts and journalists to attack Bustamante for his brief affiliation while in college with the Chicano student organization Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA). The Fox network (Bill O'Reilly, Sean Hannity, and others) joined the fray and piled on current MEChA members because of the organization's slogans adopted thirty years ago. The Schwarzenegger campaign took a less visible but no less aggressive stance towards MEChA in an effort to discredit Bustamante. According to an editorial in the San Diego *North County Times*, Schwarzenegger operatives contacted newspapers throughout the state, urging them to write anti-MEChA op-eds.<sup>6</sup>

In the attacks on MEChA, the full force of anti-Mexican bigotry and demographic fear come together. Among other things, *méchistas* were accused of being racist, separatist, a fifth column for the Mexican takeover of the Southwest, and somehow related to the KKK, Nazism, and communism. After publishing a defense of MEChA on the Web and in local newspapers, I was inundated with the fiery if confused discourse of the Far Right. Self-declared Hispanics or American Indians launched some of the more heated missives. Here is just one representative sample: "Why are you so full of hate and envy? I read your rhetoric and almost had to stop when I read 'white privilege.' As a fellow member of the population with 'Hispanic' roots, I am embarrassed by you and your, to borrow your style, LEFT-WING myopic hate group."<sup>7</sup> A noxious mixture of Cold War residue, nineteenth-century racist tropes, and hysteria about changes in the state's population, the attacks reveal a desire for a return to the pre-civil rights era, a time when colored people knew their place. As one letter writer warned me: "Your damm right there is some Anti-Mexican Racism going on. I am sick and tired of supporting illegal 'visitors' to my country. I am tired of my government kissing V. Foxes ass. You sit in your tax-supported ivory tower and accuse people like me of being racist while supporting the most racist la Rasa bunch of MECHAs. If Arnold wins I have a feeling there is going to be a whole lot of shaking going on."<sup>8</sup>

After September 11, 2001, the number of Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) abuses skyrocketed, primarily against Muslim and Arab people, but also against Latinos. In January 2003, INS Operation Game Day swept up hundreds of innocent workers in San Diego during preparations for the Super Bowl, many of them Mexican. In Missouri, where significant numbers of migrants from the Mexican state of Oaxaca now reside and work in the tourist industry, the INS, now known as the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), conducted roundups of innocent workers who had organized their community to start a Centro Latino where they hoped to discuss the possibility of forming a union.

The most infamous case involving a Latino and the war on terror is that of Jose Padilla, arrested in May 2002 and since held as an enemy combatant without access to legal counsel even though he is a U.S. citizen. The use of a 1909 Supreme Court decision on a union-busting case in Colorado to justify Padilla's detention is one of the less-well-known abuses of the Ashcroft Justice Department. Despite the ruling by the Second U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in December of 2003 that the Bush administration lacked the authority to hold Padilla as an enemy combatant, the federal government appealed to the Supreme Court in order to retain custody. As of April 2005 Padilla was still in prison.<sup>7</sup>

Fueled by the fear of domestic terrorism and the rapidly shifting demographics I have described, an upgraded and potent form of white supremacy has taken shape over the past ten years. Writing for the Internet newspaper *World Net Daily* (where one finds "fair and balanced journalism" by conservative bomb-thrower Ann Coulter, for example) two months after September 11, Joseph Farah described radical Chicanos as "activists who see themselves as 'America's Palestinians' [who] are gearing up a movement to carve out of the southwestern United States. . . . The leaders of this movement are meeting continuously with extremists from the Islamic world."<sup>8</sup>

Recently, the raw material for this kind of Internet conspiracy fantasy found its way into the mainstream through the writings of Samuel Huntington and Patrick J. Buchanan. Huntington is best known for his so-called clash of civilizations analysis of the war on terror in which he not so cleverly disguises his concerns about domestic demographic changes within a Eurocentric caricature of Islam. In a preview of his new book *Who We Are: The Challenges to America's National Identity* (2004), he wrote:

The persistent inflow of Hispanic immigrants threatens to divide the United States into two peoples, two cultures, and two languages. Unlike past immigrant groups, Mexicans and other Latinos have not assimilated into mainstream U.S. culture, forming instead their own political and linguistic enclaves—from Los Angeles to Miami—and rejecting the Anglo-Protestant values that built the American dream. The United States ignores this challenge at its peril. . . . A plausible reaction to the demographic changes underway in the United States could be the rise of an anti-Hispanic, anti-black, and anti-immigrant movement composed largely of white, working- and middle-class males, protesting their job losses to immigrants and foreign countries, the perversion of their culture, and the displacement of their language. Such a movement can be labeled "white nativism."<sup>9</sup>

Several years earlier, it was conservative millionaire Ron Unz (the principal sponsor of Proposition 227) who had articulated a rough draft of the same complaint. Unz's

analysis of the Los Angeles riots of 1992 cut directly to the white fear that animates an ever-expanding body of anti-Mexican writings. Unz wrote in the wake of the riots: “Suddenly, the happy multicultural California so beloved of local boosters had been unmasked as a harsh, dangerous, Third World dystopia. . . . the large numbers of Latinos arrested (and summarily deported) for looting caused whites to cast a newly wary eye on gardeners and nannies who just weeks earlier had seemed so pleasant and reliable. If multicultural Los Angeles had exploded into sudden chaos, what security could whites expect as a minority in an increasingly nonwhite California?”<sup>10</sup> Huntington’s privileged location at Harvard University lends credibility to Unz’s otherwise irrational claim and gives an Ivy League imprimatur to the latest form of neoracism.

In his best-selling *The Death of the West: How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization*, Buchanan had dredged up conservative rhetoric from the 1960s to convince readers that MEChA posed a serious threat to national security. The organization, warned Buchanan, is “a Chicano version of the white-supremacist Aryan Nation . . . and is unabashedly racist and anti-American.”<sup>11</sup> Quoting freely from the founding fathers but most approvingly from Teddy Roosevelt about the dangers of ethnic identities, Buchanan claimed: “With their own radio and TV stations, newspapers, films, and magazines, the Mexican Americans are creating an Hispanic culture separate and apart from America’s larger culture. They are becoming a nation within a nation.”<sup>12</sup> This same phrase—“nation within a nation”—to describe Latinos in the United States has been appropriated recently by more mainstream pundits like George Will.<sup>13</sup>

In San Diego, columnist Joseph Perkins, in a February 2002 op-ed, explained that the fear inspired by immigrants from Middle Eastern countries was related to the University of California’s recent decision to grant in-state tuition to academically qualified undocumented students. Perkins wrote: “The president is talking about getting tough on immigrants in this country who overstay their visas. Meanwhile, California is getting soft on undocumented immigrants by offering them in-state college tuition rates. So much for securing the homeland against foreign infiltrators.”<sup>14</sup> In Perkins’s distorted thinking, the U.S.-educated children of Mexican workers morph into al-Qaeda sleeper cells determined to infiltrate America in order to destroy it. The racist logic that underlies such an argument seems self-evident. (The fact that Perkins is African American could make this a topic for another essay.)

#### **Life Chances for Native-Born Latinos**

Mexican American or Chicano and Chicana youth, that is, the children of families who have been in the United States for decades, if not centuries, continue to have a relatively limited range of life chances. Today, over one-third of all Latinos are under eighteen years of age. With a high school dropout rate around 40 percent and

high rates of incarceration (in California, Latinos make up 36 percent of the prison population, but only 32 percent of the state population), many Latino youth see little hope for the future. For first-generation immigrants from Mexico, the situation appears desperate with a 61 percent high school dropout rate.<sup>15</sup>

The cost of a college education in California is rising sharply. Increased fees and artificially stringent admissions criteria will keep the number of Chicanos and Chicanas in the University of California system frozen below 10 percent for the foreseeable future. Recent changes in the California state college system will make access more difficult. Even at community colleges, where most Latino college students are found, there are proposals to double the fees. Among college graduates who attended graduate and professional programs in 2000, Latinos made up only 1.9 percent (compared to 3 percent African American, 3.8 percent whites, and 8.8 percent Asian). Of all doctorates earned in the United States in 2000, Latinos made up only 4 percent, and their numbers are declining.<sup>16</sup>

Across the board, economic conditions for Latinos have deteriorated since the 2000 election. Although Latinos have a high rate of participation in the labor force, over 11 percent of Latino workers live in poverty. About 7 percent of Latinos with full-time jobs were still living below the poverty line in 2001 (compared to 4.4 percent for African Americans and 1.7 percent for whites). The Economic Policy Institute recently noted that according to a variety of measurements, the United States currently finds itself in “the longest continuous stretch of job decline since 1944–46.”<sup>17</sup> Since March 2001, the economy has lost 3 million private-sector jobs. What is clear from the data is that Latinos are working extremely hard but remain trapped in minimum-wage jobs. Many hold multiple jobs at low wages. Whatever economic “recovery” took place in early 2004 was limited to the financial sectors and did little to ameliorate conditions for working-class families.

Health care figures for Latinos are also striking. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, in the year 2001 only 49.7 percent of Latinos under sixty-five years of age had private health insurance, compared with 80 percent for Caucasians and 61.9 percent for African Americans. The Bush administration has opposed the Immigrant Children’s Health Improvement Act that would expand federal health care in order to cover legal immigrant children and pregnant women. Ironically, green card holders are more than welcome to serve in the U.S. military, and many of the early casualties during the invasion of Iraq in March of 2003 were among the some forty thousand noncitizen soldiers who serve in today’s ranks.

### **Latino Youth as the Pentagon’s Target**

Military recruiters, well aware that the economic situation for Latino youth is relatively bleak, have targeted this group as one of the primary objectives for their efforts in coming years. The recent “Strategic Partnership Plan for 2002–2007,”

written by the U.S. Army Recruiting Command, noted: “The Hispanic population is the fastest growing demographic in the United States and is projected to become 25 percent of the U.S. population by the year 2025.” The plan goes on to state that “priority areas [for recruitment] are designated primarily as the cross section of weak labor opportunities and college-age population as determined by both [the] general and Hispanic population.”<sup>18</sup> Not surprisingly, the top two recruiting battalion areas according to this document are Los Angeles and San Antonio.

The targeting of Latino youth for military recruitment was initiated by former secretary of the Army Louis Caldera (now president of the University of New Mexico) who once declared that “Hispanics have a natural inclination for military service” and that the Army could “provide the best education in the world.”<sup>19</sup> The very notion that Hispanics constitute an ethnicity-based military caste would seem to belong to an earlier century, yet it is sustained by comments such as these made by Caldera and reiterated by the Mexican American commander in Iraq, Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, who told *Hispanic* magazine: “When I became a soldier the ethics and the value system of the military profession fit almost perfectly with my own heritage. It made it very easy for me to adapt to the military value system.”<sup>20</sup>

Given the overall economic context and the military’s interest in Latino youth, we can be sure that the enlisted ranks will fill up with increasing numbers of Latinos. In 2002, a deputy assistant secretary of the Army told a San Antonio newspaper: “We know Hispanics represent approximately 22 percent of our recruiting market.”<sup>21</sup> That means Latino youth are being targeted at about twice their rate in the general population. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Puerto Rico, where high unemployment rates facilitate military recruitment efforts. In 2002, the Army initiated the Foreign Language Recruitment Initiative designed to give recent immigrants crash courses in English, and President Bush signed Executive Order No. 13269 on July 3, 2002, in order to expedite the naturalization process for non-citizens in the U.S. military.

A careful reading of 2001 Department of Defense statistics reveals that of Latinos in all the service branches, 17.7 percent had “Infantry, Gun Crews, and Seaman-ship” occupations. Of those Latinos in the Army, 24.7 percent occupied such jobs, while 19.7 percent of Latinos in the Marine Corps had such jobs.<sup>22</sup> It is important to remember that in 2001 Latinos made up only 12.5 percent of the general population.

Visit any high school with a large Latino population, and you will find JROTC units, Army-sponsored computer games, and an overabundance of recruiters, often more numerous than career counselors. Although the Pentagon periodically claims that JROTC is not being used for recruiting purposes, the Army’s own literature states that “Junior ROTC is a strategic initiative that allows us to present the idea of the military lifestyle to High School students. By mission JROTC attempts to cre-

ate better citizens, but also emphasizes military values, and presents the idea of the military lifestyle.”<sup>23</sup>

Two additional Pentagon-sponsored programs merit our attention. The increased presence of military recruitment programs in the nation’s public schools is a little-known consequence of the Department of Defense’s plans for maintaining manpower levels in coming decades. By targeting teachers, counselors, coaches, principals, and other school personnel known in Pentagon jargon as “influencers,” each branch of the armed forces seeks to create a pool of unofficial recruiters who are in daily contact with young people and who can guide them toward military careers.

The centerpiece of these stealth-recruiting strategies is the Educator Workshop Program (EWP). According to the Marine Corps EWP Web site, teachers and others who participate in the program “get a basic understanding of the Marine Corps and are better equipped to advise their students about our career opportunities. These workshops dispel the myths about recruit training and the Marine Corps’ mission by providing you with a first hand experience that is truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”<sup>24</sup>

After being bused to boot camp, EWP participants are given a week-long glimpse of military life in a kind of ersatz shock and awe designed to instill enhanced respect in recruits. Experiences range from the initial harangues delivered by drill instructors to visits to weapons training activities, as well as the final act of the so-called Crucible, a seventy-two-hour ordeal that pushes recruits to the limits of their endurance and concludes with a patriotic spectacle complete with amplified anthems at the foot of a mock Iwo Jima memorial. The approximately forty educators from each recruiting area who participate every year are flown to either San Diego or Parris Island, lodged in nearby hotels, and reimbursed on their return with a \$225 per diem.

The desired reaction from educators was expressed succinctly by Staff Sergeant Jesús Lora, a public affairs officer for the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego: “I’ve talked to one from last year’s Educator Workshop and she said it was an experience that will be treasured forever. She now passes the experiences she felt last year and teaches it to her students.”<sup>25</sup> This, of course, is precisely the point: the so-called influencers are expected to communicate their excitement about their well-controlled and sanitized “experience” of boot camp to their young charges.

But not all influencers are welcome in the workshops. An article written by a recruiter in Lansing, Michigan, advised EWP organizers to eliminate as workshop participants anyone with prior military experience. Because one of the goals of EWP is to “dispel all misconceptions about the Marine Corps that infiltrate the American society,” military veterans are considered potentially disruptive given their firsthand knowledge of military values and practices.<sup>26</sup>

The Pentagon thus courts professional educators in order to exploit their

influence over young people. In a complementary move designed to achieve the same result, military veterans are moved into school systems through the so-called Troops to Teachers program (TTT). Initiated as a Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Education (DOE) collaboration in 1994, TTT seeks to place veterans in teaching positions across the country, with an emphasis on districts in poor and underserved areas. The No Child Left Behind act of 2001 will provide funding for TTT through the 2006 fiscal year. To date, over six thousand teachers have been placed, and another six thousand are currently in training or seeking employment. In California, where cash-strapped school systems such as Los Angeles and San Diego serve large African American and Latino communities, military veterans are given a six-week crash course and placed directly into the classroom.<sup>27</sup>

Given the crisis in state education budgets and ongoing teacher shortages, it would seem that there is nothing inherently wrong with a program that attempts to help veterans transition into careers in education. But the long-term impact of exposing children to military values and experiences coincides well with the recruiters' goal of "getting them while they're young." A recent *Washington Post* article on TTT captured the agendas of some of the veterans turned teachers:

Such teachers also can make good ambassadors for the military. When [George] Hartman [a former gunnery sergeant in the Marine Corps] took over his business education classroom from a former Navy man, he put in a call to his local Marine recruiter. "I said, 'I want calendars. I want pens. I want all this Navy stuff out of my classroom, and I want to put Marine junk in here,'" he said. . . . Chrystal Puryear, 33, a Head Start teacher at Davis Elementary in Southeast Washington, tends to talk about the military less with her students than with their parents. . . . "They don't think they have any options, and I tell them the military is always an option. They will teach you what you are capable of."<sup>28</sup>

Both the EWP and TTT programs form key elements in the ongoing effort to instill military values as collective common sense. A complete analysis of the wide array of related programs would require a separate article. Yet the so-called Take Charge! initiative designed by the Army Recruiting Command, for example, is disguised as a stay-in-school program. Across the nation, education officials are encouraging teachers to contact local recruiters about such programs. In 2003, the Wisconsin State superintendent of public instruction advised district administrators that "the Army also has two new programs you might consider integrating into instructional programs or other activities at school. One program addresses the history of the U.S. Army, and the other is a character development program based on Army values."<sup>29</sup>

The debacle of the American war in Southeast Asia produced a generation

of young people wary of warrior masculinities, cheap patriotism, and foreign policy adventurism. The Bush administration's manipulation of September 11, exaggerated claims about the threat of Saddam Hussein's Iraq, and media complicity allowed many to wrap themselves in the flag once again. If the United States was to conduct itself as a missionary for free markets and democracy in the coming decades, a reserve force of foot soldiers for its legions would have to be continually replenished. What better institutional site for conducting such a campaign than the nation's dysfunctional public school systems, which have been thrown into chaos by massive budget cuts, overcrowding, and neglect?

Despite overwhelming obstacles and a multimillion-dollar Pentagon recruitment campaign, local communities are reacting to the presence of militarism in their school systems. Just last year, at historic Roosevelt High School in East Los Angeles, a group of students was so appalled at the intrusive behavior of military recruiters that they formed an organization called Students Not Soldiers and demanded the hiring of real career counselors. At California State University–Northridge, just north of Los Angeles, students and faculty have protested the university's contract with Army ROTC, a contract that brings Pentagon funding on campus and unlimited access to students for recruiters. In Puerto Rico, student members of the Frente Universitario por la Desmilitarización y la Educación (FUDE) (University Front for the Demilitarization of Education) recently established a civil disobedience camp at the University of Puerto Rico–Mayagüez in order to block the construction of a ROTC building.

These acts of resistance to the ongoing militarization of public education are rarely reported and not well known. Most Latino students and their parents, therefore, will fall prey to a limited range of opportunities (what we might call the economic draft or economic conscription) and the Pentagon's propaganda blitz about free money for college and travel. For all working-class youth with limited horizons, these appear as powerfully seductive messages.

As progressive scholars and activists, we must struggle to understand the pressures felt by working-class communities. It will not suffice to shake our heads in disapproval at their displays of uncritical patriotism, especially within the context of the culture of fear continually cultivated by governing elites. Homeland security for these communities comes together at the intersection of limited life chances, concerns about their children's future, and the militarization of the entire culture.

### Conclusion

In his classic 1907 study of European militarism, Karl Liebknecht argued that the primary purpose of any standing army was to protect the interests of the capitalist elites or, in modern parlance, the corporate class. "The task of militarism," Liebknecht wrote, "is above all to secure for a minority, at whatever cost, even against

the enlightened will of the majority of the people, domination of the state and freedom to exploit.”<sup>30</sup>

Focusing his activism on the youth of his day, Liebknecht argued that the struggle against militarism must begin with the young workers in both the urban and rural areas of the nation. He emphasized: “We must not overlook the question of the education of young people, which is the most essential part of anti-militarist propaganda” (166). But the counterdiscourse of antimilitarism must reach beyond individuals: “We have to consider the question not only of the youths liable to military service, but also the parents, especially the mothers, who should be specially mobilized for educating the young people in anti-militarism” (174).

Almost one hundred years after Liebknecht delivered the lectures that would become his book, we clearly have much to learn from his insights. Updated with only a few changes of language for the new context, his *Militarism and Anti-militarism* offers us a precedent with which to analyze our own moment, an analysis that exposes the cynicism and greed of those who would govern the world in the name of free markets and democracy.

Liebknecht reminds us that the children of working families bear the brunt of militarism. It is not that working people are completely deceived by the flag waving and the patriotic rhetoric. On the contrary, they are painfully aware of the losses they must endure. He wrote: “The proletariat knows that the wars which are waged by the ruling classes impose on it heavy sacrifice of life and property for which it is rewarded with miserable pensions for the disabled, funds in aid of veterans, street organs and kicks of all kinds after it has done the work. The proletariat knows that in every war brutality and baseness are rampant amongst the peoples participating in it and culture is set back for years” (18).

With the United States engaged in protracted military commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan, and with domestic crises in education and health care, Latino communities are slowly awakening to the fact that a permanently militarized economy and culture will not benefit them or their children. If the homeland to be secured willingly seeks Latino youth for the ranks of its military while continuing to portray Spanish-speaking communities as a foreign threat to national identities, what will be the long-term gains for the vast majority of Latino working families? We can only hope that, in the great tradition of radical social movements and militancy that mark Mexican, Latin American, and Chicano histories, Latinos in the United States will continue to add their voices to the national and international chorus demanding a different future than the one envisioned by the oligarchs of the new imperialism.

## Notes

1. Diane Schmidley, “The Foreign-Born Population in the United States: March 2002,” *Current Population Reports* (2003).
2. See Robert Pollin, *Contours of Descent: U.S. Economic Fractures and the Landscape of Global Austerity* (London: Verso, 2003).

3. "The Road to a College Diploma: The Complex Reality of Raising Educational Achievement for Hispanics in the United States," *The Interim Report of the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2002), 6.
4. Robert Suro and Jeffrey S. Passel, *The Rise of the Second Generation: Changing Patterns in Hispanic Population Growth* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2003).
5. Otto Santa Ana, *Brown Tide Rising: Metaphors of Latinos in Contemporary American Public Discourse* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002).
6. "Our View: MEChA Issue Is a Red Herring," *North County Times* (San Diego), September 12, 2003, [www.nctimes.com/articles/2003/09/12/opinion/editorials/9\\_12\\_0319\\_53\\_32.txt](http://www.nctimes.com/articles/2003/09/12/opinion/editorials/9_12_0319_53_32.txt) (accessed April 14, 2005). For my defense of MEChA, see Jorge Mariscal, "MEChA: The Right's Tool to Further Anti-Mexican Racism," *San Diego Union Tribune*, September 10, 2003.
7. Letter dated December 4, 2003.
8. Emphasis in original. Letter dated September 3, 2003.
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