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## Warren R. DeBoer, *Traces Behind the Esmeraldas Shore: Prehistory of the Santiago-Cayapas Region, Ecuador*

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# Governor Miguel Otero's War: Statehood and New Mexican Loyalty in the Spanish-American War<sup>1</sup>

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RICHARD MELZER

After months of teetering on the brink of war, the United States Senate officially declared war on Spain on 25 April 1898. When President William McKinley called for 125,000 volunteers to expand the U.S. Army for this national emergency, the country's response was immediate and enthusiastic. The response was especially impressive in Territorial New Mexico. Within hours of the Senate's definitive action, Secretary of War Russell Alger wired a telegram to New Mexico Governor Miguel Antonio Otero. Alger asked for volunteers to serve in a special regiment of "mounted riflemen" under the command of Colonel Leonard Wood and Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt. Governor Otero replied without hesitation, claiming that New Mexico had a "full squadron of cavalry ready for service" and could readily send additional volunteers, as needed.<sup>2</sup>

In their patriotic exuberance, Governor Otero and his adjutant general, Henry B. Hersey, had begun to offer New Mexican volunteers as early as two months before war was declared. By April 25 they had written at least six letters to Secretary Alger and other high officials in Washington, D.C. Each letter stressed the advantage of New Mexico citizens as soldiers, boasting that they were "born horsemen," good shots, and experienced in camp life. Between 75 and 95 percent could speak both Spanish and English, a "great benefit" in campaigns fought in far-flung regions of the Spanish Empire. New Mexicans of Spanish descent were said to be particularly eager to enter the fray. "All their sympathies," wrote Otero, "are entirely with the United States..., and against Spain."<sup>3</sup> To prove this assertion, the governor had surveyed all

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this article was presented at the 1998 Historical Society of New Mexico's Annual Conference held in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Clifford P. Westermeier, *Who Rush to Glory; the Cowboy Volunteers of 1898: Grigsby's Cowboys, Roosevelt's Rough Riders, Torrey's Rocky Mountain Riders* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, 1958), 29.

<sup>3</sup> Henry B. Hersey to Adjutant General, U.S. Army, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 26

National Guard units in the Territory, asking "how many would volunteer in the event of war with Spain." All but one guardsman expressed their eagerness to volunteer.<sup>4</sup> Otero even offered to resign his office and enlist in the Army to prove his personal loyalty to the American cause.<sup>5</sup> In Adjutant General Hersey's words, New Mexicans were "ready and anxious to...follow the 'Stars and Stripes' anywhere."<sup>6</sup>

Many New Mexicans—both Anglo and Hispano—were eager to volunteer for military service, especially to prove their loyalty to the United States.<sup>7</sup> From an early stage of the international crisis, doubters had questioned if New Mexicans in general—and Hispanos in particular—would remain loyal to the U.S. or revert in their loyalty to Spain if the two nations went to war. New Mexico, after all, had been a part of the Spanish Empire for over two hundred years. The Spanish language and culture still dominated much of the region, and many still recognized Spain as their mother country in social, if not political terms.<sup>8</sup>

Miguel Otero responded to doubters in the strongest terms. When the *New York World* asked how many soldiers New Mexico

February 1898, reel 80, frame 554; Henry B. Hersey to Lt. Col. A.L. Wagner, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 4 March 1898, reel 80, frame 556; Henry B. Hersey to Lt. Col. A.L. Wagner, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 10 April 1898, reel 80, frame 609; Miguel Otero to Secretary of War, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 7 April 1898, reel 138, frame 74; Miguel Otero to Secretary of War, n.p., 12 April 1898, reel 139, frame 16; and Miguel Otero to Secretary of War, n.p., 22 April 1898, reel 139, frames 135-37; all in the Territorial Archives of New Mexico, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico (hereinafter Miguel Otero Papers, TANM).

<sup>4</sup> Miguel Otero to Secretary of War, n.p., 22 April 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 139, frames 135-37.

<sup>5</sup> Miguel Otero to William McKinley, n.p., 25 April 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 139, frame 133.

<sup>6</sup> Henry B. Hersey to Lt. Col. A.L. Wagner, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 10 April 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 80, frame 609.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Melzer and Phyllis Ann Mingus, "Wild to Fight: The New Mexico Rough Riders in the Spanish-American War," *New Mexico Historical Review* 59 (1984):110-12. There is a long-standing myth that Hispanos from New Mexico served in large numbers during the Spanish-American War. See, for example, Howard R. Lamar, *The Far Southwest, 1846-1912: A Territorial History* (New York: Norton, 1970), 199.

<sup>8</sup> In this study the term "Hispano" is used to refer to persons of pure or mixed Spanish descent. According to Lynne Marie Getz, "The term was widely used by Hispanos themselves from the territorial period through the 1930's." Lynne Marie Getz, *Schools of Their Own: The Education of Hispanos in New Mexico, 1850-1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 125n.

would "furnish" in the event of war following the sinking of the battleship *Maine* in Havana Harbor, the governor declared that

New Mexico will furnish...more men in proportion to her population than any State or Territory in the Union; a large majority of her soldiers are Spanish speaking and...will rally round the stars and stripes and fight as hard for this government as any soldiers of the United States.<sup>9</sup>

Later, when Dr. R.H. Skipwith of Lincoln, New Mexico, expressed concern about Hispano sympathies, Otero replied that "in absolutely every instance where I have run [such] rumors down I find they have been started for some selfish motive.... The Mexican people generally, throughout the territory, have shown conclusively that their sympathies are with the United States."<sup>10</sup>

Despite Otero's emphatic words, rumors regarding Hispano loyalty persisted in the spring of 1898. Spanish-language newspapers in New Mexico were suspect if they urged caution in the diplomatic conflict brewing with Spain, rather than indulge in the jingoism so prevalent in the nation's yellow press.<sup>11</sup> Once hostilities began, Hispanos were accused of expressing their support of Spain in formal and informal settings. In Las Vegas, New Mexico, Hispanos were said to "scowl at the flag, ...sneer at the military, [and] have treason on their tongues and...in their hearts."<sup>12</sup> In Santa Fe, an Hispano band played Spanish national hymns with enthusiasm, but its members lost their zeal and returned to their homes when patriotic American hymns were called for by a crowd of listeners. Another incident reportedly took place west of the plaza in Santa Fe. As a U.S. Army officer walked by a saloon, a group of Spanish sympathizers emerged, "filled with liquid

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<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Miguel Antonio Otero, *My Nine Years as Governor of the Territory of New Mexico, 1897-1906* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1940), 35-36. Otero and his predecessor, William T. Thornton, routinely received telegrams from the press requesting their opinions on national and international affairs. See, for example, *New York Herald* to Miguel Otero, New York, 12 May 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 128, frame 812.

<sup>10</sup> Miguel Otero to R.H. Skipwith, n.p., 26 April 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 139, frame 147.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Untitled Editorial, *Las Vegas La Voz del Pueblo*, 16 April 1898.

<sup>12</sup> "Traitors Not Wanted," *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, 6 May 1898.

Spanish enthusiasm" and yelling "Viva España." The officer responded by "flooring" two of the "well lubricated" Santa Feans and fighting the rest with the help of a U.S. Marshall who had rushed to the scene.<sup>13</sup>

Letters to Governor Otero from several sections of the territory told of other outspoken Spanish allies. C.W. Wingfield wrote from Tularosa that "at least three families of the natives sympathize with Spain and express themselves openly." Wingfield was "confident there will be trouble" unless something was done to handle the situation soon.<sup>14</sup> By late May, Thomas W. Henley, a justice of the peace in Nogal, New Mexico, wrote of "quite a scare" among Anglos who were "anxious" to protect themselves against local Spanish sympathizers. In a near panic, Henley asked Governor Otero how he and his neighbors could obtain "arms and equipment...at once" because, in his opinion, Anglo lives were "in danger."<sup>15</sup> Aware of such fear, a former Pirkerton agent living in Albuquerque offered his services "to watch those that are favorable to the Spanish Cause [*sic*]" and report any "irregular" activity he uncovered.<sup>16</sup> If revealed, the *Sierra County Advocate* suggested that all "enemies and spies...be deported to the country they love so well, or given a...passport to hotter climates without further parley."<sup>17</sup>

An often repeated rumor involved Catholic priests who supposedly urged their parishioners to support Spain, rather than the United States, in the current conflict. Father John Roux of Santa Cruz was, in fact, accused of leading church members in a procession behind a Spanish flag.<sup>18</sup> Newspapers that reported such incidents added to the atmosphere of mistrust in New Mexico. The *Silver City Enterprise*, for example, described the "deplorable" lack of Hispano loyalty to the United States. Despite fifty years of "privilege and protection...as citizens under the stars and stripes," most Hispanos were said to be "as

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<sup>13</sup> "¿Qué Haremos?" *Las Vegas La Voz del Pueblo*, 6 August 1898; and Untitled Editorial, *Sierra County Advocate*, 12 August 1898.

<sup>14</sup> C.W. Wingfield to Miguel Otero, Tularosa, New Mexico, 8 May 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 128, frames 783-84.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas W. Henley to Miguel Otero, Nogal, New Mexico, 20 May 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 128, frame 847.

<sup>16</sup> A.L. Emery to Miguel Otero, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 10 May 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 128, frames 796-800.

<sup>17</sup> "Shoot the Spies," *Sierra County Advocate*, 20 May 1898.

<sup>18</sup> Anselmo F. Arellano, "Through Thick and Thin: Evolutionary Transitions of Las Vegas Grandes and Its Pobladores" (Ph.D. diss., University of New Mexico, 1990), 367.

foreign as they had been before the [American] conquest and defeat of Mexico in 1846."<sup>19</sup> It was only a matter of time until the press in other parts of the United States read and repeated these scathing insults. In the most damaging editorial of its kind, the *New York Times* wrote of reports from New Mexico that "as a rule, the Spanish-speaking part of the [Territory's] population has given all its sympathy to Spain...and has demonstrated as freely as its members dared, a deep hostility to American ideas and...policies." Many Hispanos were said to "not [even] know that they are Americans" despite years of "kindness" bestowed by national and territorial authorities.<sup>20</sup>

But of all the charges of disloyalty leveled against Hispanos, none were more damaging than those regarding Hispano enlistment in the U.S. Army. Despite early predictions that a large percentage of volunteers from New Mexico would be Hispano, few Spanish surnames appeared on company rosters in the spring and summer of 1898. Although Governor Otero received many telegrams and letters from both Anglo and Hispano civilians eager to volunteer for combat, Hispanos were conspicuously absent from the troop trains that left for training and deployment. Of the original 351 New Mexicans who joined the First Volunteer Cavalry Regiment under Colonels Leonard Wood and Theodore Roosevelt, only six, or less than 2 percent, had Spanish surnames. In fact, of the 351 who served in the regiment soon known as the Rough Riders, only fifteen were native New Mexicans. Later, when one hundred reinforcements were mustered into the Rough Riders, not a single volunteer boasted a Spanish surname and none were native New Mexicans. Finally, when four companies of the First Territorial Regiment were organized with 424 infantrymen and fifteen officers in the summer of 1898, only 6 percent of the Territory's volunteers could claim Spanish roots.<sup>21</sup>

What do these statistics and accusations regarding New

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<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Arellano, "Through Thick and Thin," 367.

<sup>20</sup> "Topics of the Times," *New York Times*, 24 August 1898. Not all out-of-territory newspapers were critical of New Mexico in the war. See, for example, "Unjust to New Mexico," editorial, *Denver Daily News*, 27 April 1898.

<sup>21</sup> Company Muster Rolls, Adjutant General Files, TANM, reel 85, frames 1006-52; and reel 87, frames 725-30 and 793-842. As María E. Montoya has pointed out, "looking at Spanish surnames is not the best method for determining ethnicity; however, New Mexico used this method prior to the 1960 census when Hispanic New Mexicans finally had an option within the categories of "White." María E. Montoya, "The Dual World of Governor Miguel A. Otero," *New Mexico Historical Review* 67 (1992):22n.

Mexico's loyalty in the Spanish-American War reveal? Were large segments of the Hispano population staunchly loyal to Spain because Spain was fondly remembered as the mother country in New Mexico's proud colonial past? Or were Hispanos still loyal to Spain because they were largely alienated by their treatment under U.S. rule, despite guarantees incorporated in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848?

Native Hispanos had ample cause for complaint under American rule. One irate observer listed many reasons for Hispano discontent in a letter printed in *La Voz del Pueblo*, an East Las Vegas, New Mexico, newspaper. According to this correspondent, Hispanos had little to be grateful for because a majority had suffered at the hands of greedy merchants, unfair employers, and often unresponsive lawmen. Subjected to such abuse, most Hispanos had been reduced to a state of peonage with little hope of improved status in the future.<sup>22</sup> Others agreed with this assessment. Former governor Edmund G. Ross wrote of "shrewd" Anglo lawyers who had moved into the Territory and acquired millions of acres of native land grants by first "ingratiating" themselves to the local population and then cheating them with various "tricks" of the legal profession.<sup>23</sup>

Hispanos also resented the frequent criticism they received for speaking Spanish rather than English in their communities and homes. This so-called failing was mentioned nearly every time New Mexico's status as a territory was debated elsewhere in the United States. The same *New York Times* editorial that questioned New Mexico's loyalty while the war raged overseas called the use of Spanish in the Territory "disgraceful as well as dangerous." The *Times* in fact supported the radical notion that every New Mexican who could not speak, read, and write English be disenfranchised.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, Hispanos resented their second-class status as citizens of a territory that had unsuccessfully applied for statehood more times than any other territory in U.S. history. How could Hispanos be expected to be loyal patriots in a country that repeatedly rejected their overtures with insulting references to their language and customs? Hispano authors asked this question in many poems and editorials of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-centuries. A typical poem of this

<sup>22</sup> Arellano, "Through Thick and Thin," 374-75.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Robert W. Larson, *New Mexico's Quest for Statehood, 1846-1912* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1968), 141-42.

<sup>24</sup> "Topics of the Times," *New York Times*, 24 August 1898.

era, entitled "Lo de siempre" ("Same as Always"), appeared in print in *Santa Fe El Nuevo Mexicano* just ten days prior to the sinking of the *Maine*:

No quiso el Tío Samuel  
Admitirnos como estado,  
Y al Nuevo Mexico fiel  
El Congreso ha rechazado

Por achaques de la plata  
Que aquejan a la nación,  
Una grande oposición  
Nuestros planes desbarata,  
Nuestra aspiración la mata

Medio siglo hace cabal  
Que el estado prometieron  
Y ni antes ni ahora cumplieron  
Su promesa tan formal;  
No fué promesa verbal  
Sino consta en un tratado  
Bien escrito y redactado  
Que aprobaron dos naciones,  
Y aún rehusan los Solones  
Admitirnos como estado.<sup>25</sup>

Hispano New Mexico's apparent lack of loyalty in the Spanish-American War can thus be explained in two ways: first, by unbroken cultural loyalty to the ancient *patria*, Spain, and, second, by frequent mistreatment under its new ruling nation, the United States. While both explanations are plausible, at least two additional reasons for native behavior are equally viable, given social, economic, and political conditions in New Mexico in 1898.

While some pointed to the small number of Hispano volunteers as damaging proof of all Hispano sentiment, few considered how the native population's economic plight might well have affected its ability

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<sup>25</sup> For a reprint of the complete poem, see Doris L. Meyer, "Anonymous Poetry in Spanish-Language New Mexico Newspapers, 1880-1900," *Bilingual Review* 2 (1975):272-73.



to serve the United States in combat. Put simply, the average Hispano male was in no condition to leave home and fight on distant shores. Most were so absorbed in their families' daily struggles to survive that they had little time or interest in abstract international crises involving Spain or any other foreign nation. As Governor Otero said in a later interview, the average "native" was "too busy making a living, and has to work too hard to do so for a generally large family, to know much or care much about European, African, Australian, South American or Caribbean affairs.... He has all he can attend to at home."<sup>26</sup> To make matters worse, New Mexicans faced a smallpox epidemic from the fall of 1897 to the fall of 1898. Urgent requests for help from eighteen communities across the Territory arrived on Governor Otero's desk in Santa Fe. As usual, the poor were hit hardest. How could Hispanos leave their families in the midst of such a health crisis in their homes and villages? At least two communities had resorted to quarantines, limiting options even further.<sup>27</sup>

But weren't poverty-stricken New Mexicans willing to enlist if only to earn military pay for their destitute families? This would seem a strong incentive to volunteer but for the tragic experience of many Hispanos who served in the nation's last great war. One generation removed from the Civil War, young Hispanos of the 1890s probably heard stories of the poor treatment that their fathers' generation received during the Confederate invasion of New Mexico in 1862. Motivated by patriotism and the promise of pay and rations for their families, over 2,500 New Mexicans had volunteered to serve by early 1862. Once in uniform, however, these same soldiers faced poor training, inferior equipment, inadequate rations, discrimination in the ranks, and irregular pay. Discipline and morale suffered so badly that some Hispanos deserted and two companies revolted.<sup>28</sup> Not even Hispano officers were immune to abuse. As one historian has noted,

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<sup>26</sup> Miguel Otero interview by William E. Curtis, 1 July 1905, Miguel Otero Papers, Box 4, Folder 3, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico (hereinafter Otero Papers, CSR-UNM). Also see *Las Vegas La Voz del Pueblo*, 9 July 1898. On the abject poverty of most Hispano families of the late nineteenth century, see Alvar W. Carlson, *The Spanish-American Homeland* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 79-83.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, P.L. Lujan to Miguel Otero, San Marcial, New Mexico, 23 November 1897, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 128, frame 326.

<sup>28</sup> Darlis A. Miller, "Hispanos and the Civil War in New Mexico," *New Mexico Historical Review* 54 (1979):105-23.

Captain Rafael Chacón's memories of his years in the U.S. Army during the Civil War were "less about service to his adopted country than about the persistent conflict with Anglo soldiers who derogated Mexican American troopers on a daily basis." After experiencing such indignity in the line of duty, members of Chacón's generation experienced "confounding divisions between loyalty to the United States and their disenchantment with its common mistreatment of them in the military."<sup>29</sup>

Adding insult to injury, Colonel Edward R.S. Canby, the Union Army commander in New Mexico, declared that Hispanos not only lacked "affection for the institutions of the United States," but harbored a "strong...hatred for...Americans as a race." Canby did not hesitate to blame "these ignorant and impulsive people" for "secretly and industriously" fanning the flames of discontent in the Southwest.<sup>30</sup> Not surprisingly, Canby used Hispanos as scapegoats to explain his army's defeat at the key Battle of Valverde. Hispanos realized Canby's strong bias when he "dismissed most of them, sending some north...and simply letting others go home."<sup>31</sup> Given the collective memory of their fathers' experience in the Civil War, it was predictable that Hispano youths of the 1890s were hesitant to enlist and risk the same insults and abuse in the U.S. Army.

A final explanation for an apparent lack of Hispano loyalty shifts attention from Hispano hardships to Governor Miguel Otero's political agenda in the Spanish-American War. Throughout his nine years as New Mexico's chief executive, Otero had two main political goals in 1898: to rebuild his Republican Party by rewarding his supporters and punishing his enemies and to prove New Mexico's worthiness for statehood. These goals were closely related in the governor's mind. To prove to the nation and its leaders that New Mexico was worthy of statehood, the Territory's military volunteers would have to serve admirably on and off the battlefield. To do so, they

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<sup>29</sup> Genaro M. Padilla, *My History, Not Yours: The Formation of Mexican American Autobiography* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 174. Also see Jacqueline Dorgan Meketa, *Legacy of Honor: The Life of Rafael Chacón, a Nineteenth-century New Mexican* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), Chapters 8-11.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Chris Emmett, *Fort Union and the Winning of the Southwest* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), 251-52.

<sup>31</sup> John Taylor, *Bloody Valverde: A Civil War Battle on the Rio Grande, February 21, 1862* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 104-05.

would have to be trusted allies of Otero's wing of the Republican Party and be so assimilated into Anglo society that there would be little chance of misunderstanding and friction in their relations with fellow Anglo soldiers. Sending volunteers of lesser "quality," by Otero's standards, could spell disaster for New Mexico and its statehood chances.

Who could be trusted with such an important mission? As reflected in New Mexico's company rosters, the vast majority of Otero's acceptable volunteers were Anglos, not Hispanos. Despite his own Hispano heritage, Otero's upbringing, social ties, and early professional career made him as close, if not closer, to Anglo society than he had ever been to his Hispano roots.<sup>32</sup> Otero's ethnic preferences were clearly shown in his social relations and political appointments once he entered the governor's mansion in 1897. Of the governor's friends and associates mentioned in his autobiographical chapter on social life in Santa Fe, over 93 percent had Anglo surnames.<sup>33</sup> Politically, of his first nine political appointments in Rio Arriba County, eight were Anglos, although the vast majority of the residents of Rio Arriba were Hispano. The same trend occurred elsewhere, as when six of Otero's original seven appointees to leadership roles in the National Guard had Anglo surnames.<sup>34</sup> Anxious to organize a modern Republican Party, the governor made so many Anglo appointments that at least one Hispano newspaper objected that old Spanish families were conspicuously neglected.<sup>35</sup> Dismissing these charges in the Hispano press, Otero worked to strengthen his already strong political ties with influential Anglo editors, including Max Frost of the *Santa Fe New Mexican* and Thomas Hughes of the *Albuquerque Citizen*. The governor included Hispanos among his allies in the press and in his reorganized party, but only those who, like himself, were identified as "advanced" and "eager to become part of the American [i.e., Anglo] tradition."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> See Miguel Antonio Otero, *My Life on the Frontier* (New York: Press of the Pioneers, 1935); and Miguel Antonio Otero, *My Life on the Frontier, 1882-1897: Death Knell of a Territory and Birth of a State* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1939).

<sup>33</sup> Calculated from Otero, *My Nine Years as Governor*, 249-63.

<sup>34</sup> Montoya, "The Dual World," 20; Otero, *My Nine Years as Governor*, 11; and Herbert T. Hoover, "History of the Republican Party in New Mexico, 1867-1952" (Ph.D. diss., University of Oklahoma, 1966), Chapter 5.

<sup>35</sup> Montoya, "The Dual World," 20.

<sup>36</sup> Montoya, "The Dual World," 20; and Cynthia L. Secor-Welsh, "Governor Miguel

It was, therefore, predictable that Miguel Otero first turned to his Anglo political allies when the Spanish-American War broke out and officers were needed to organize companies of volunteers to serve with the Rough Riders. Within moments of receiving a War Department telegram requesting troops for a "Cowboy Regiment of expert horsemen and marksmen," Otero wrote to William Henry Harrison Llewellyn of Las Cruces, asking Llewellyn and Pat Garrett to raise a company of men and serve as their officers, with implied political rewards for the future.<sup>37</sup> The governor dashed off similar letters and telegrams in the following days.<sup>38</sup> True to form, he appointed Henry B. Hersey, his adjutant general of the National Guard, as the commanding officer of the Rough Riders from New Mexico. Three of New Mexico's four Rough Rider captains were Anglo, including Frederick "Fritz" Muller, a National Guard captain whose National Guard troop had enforced a "no Mexicans" rule in its ranks;<sup>39</sup> Muller and his troop were the first to volunteer and the first New Mexicans accepted in the Rough Rider regiment. All Rough Rider lieutenants and all but one sergeant (George Armijo) were also Anglo. The same favoritism was repeated each time new companies and reinforcements were summoned from the Territory; fourteen of the fifteen New Mexican officers in the First Territorial Regiment were Anglos and most were Otero supporters.<sup>40</sup> Angered by the appointments of men close to Otero, Thomas Catron, the alleged leader of the Santa Fe Ring, reportedly stormed into the governor's office soon after the war began.<sup>41</sup> Catron only calmed down when he asserted that one

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Antonio Otero, 1897-1906: Agent for Change" (Master's thesis, University of New Mexico, 1984), 58-65.

<sup>37</sup> Miguel Otero to William Henry Harrison Llewellyn, n.p., 25 April 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 139, frame 134.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Miguel Otero to Richard Hudson, n.p., 26 April 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 139, frames 151-53; and Albert W. Thompson, "I Helped Raise the Rough Riders," *New Mexico Historical Review* 14 (1939):287-88.

<sup>39</sup> Otero, *My Nine Years as Governor*, 146. Otero was aware of Muller's attitude when he wrote his memoirs in 1940, but it is difficult to say whether he was aware of it when he appointed Muller to be an officer in the Rough Riders.

<sup>40</sup> Otero, *My Nine Years as Governor*, 146. New Mexico's officers are listed in Otero, *My Nine Years as Governor*, 42, 46. Otero "absolutely" denied any political influence in these appointments.

<sup>41</sup> According to Howard Lamar, the Santa Fe Ring was "essentially a set of lawyers, politicians, and businessmen who united to run the [New Mexico] territory and to make money," especially in lucrative land transactions. Lamar, *The Far Southwest*, 146.

Otero-appointed captain (George Curry) was such "a damn fool...he will most likely get killed," although he feared that another captain (W.H.H. Llewellyn) "won't go where he can be killed."<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile, Governor Otero seldom recruited Hispanos and consistently put off most who volunteered to serve either as individuals or in groups. Although some were financially or medically unable to serve and others were unwilling to enlist (given, perhaps, their families' cultural loyalty to Spain or memories of previous experiences in the U.S. Army), many patriotic Hispanos did volunteer in the Spanish-American War by personally contacting Governor Otero. Several letter writers offered whole companies of "pure Mexicans," with as many as five hundred natives from Taos County alone.<sup>43</sup> Although Otero repeatedly asserted that he "would like very much to get as many of the native boys as possible to enlist," not one of the many Hispanos who volunteered in writing ever got the chance to prove his loyalty by donning a U.S. Army uniform.<sup>44</sup>

In response to these numerous offers, Otero wrote encouraging words but made no promises, and he repeatedly urged Hispano correspondents to listen intently for any new calls for volunteers in the future. In typical fashion, Otero wrote to George Serna in Lincoln, New Mexico, that Serna "must take [his] chances" in finding an opportunity to enlist when the next call for volunteers was announced in the press. The governor insisted that he could not notify volunteers individually whenever new recruits were needed; he urged Serna to have friends in Roswell or Socorro watch the papers and alert him by horseback when the next call for volunteers went out.<sup>45</sup> Such a reply was a far cry from the individual notifications and offers made to

<sup>42</sup> H.B. Hening, ed., *George Curry, 1861-1947: An Autobiography* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 120-21. Thomas Catron also may have been pacified by Otero's appointment of Catron's son, John, as a Rough Rider lieutenant. Otero, *My Nine Years as Governor*, 191.

<sup>43</sup> Arellano, "Through Thick and Thin," 365; Tomas C. Montoya to Miguel Otero, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 7 July 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 128, frame 1189; Otero, *My Nine Years as Governor*, 38; and "Taos People Patriotic," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 22 April 1898. It is not possible to determine the exact percentage of Hispanos who were unable or unwilling to volunteer in 1898, nor is it possible to calculate the percentage who were willing to serve, but never could.

<sup>44</sup> For an example of this frequently stated goal, see Miguel Otero to Blas Sánchez, n.p., 26 May 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 139, frame 327.

<sup>45</sup> Miguel Otero to George Serna, n.p., 7 June 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 139, frames 367-68.

Otero's favored Anglo allies. And it was hardly in keeping with Otero's frequent vow to do "everything in my power to assist [Hispanos] wishing to enlist."<sup>46</sup>

Why did Miguel Otero claim to want Hispanos to enlist and then frustrate those who came forward as volunteers? One answer to this apparent riddle was political: many Hispanos were simply of the wrong political stripe (Democratic) or of the wrong wing (anti-Otero) of the Republican Party. But the most significant reason why Otero favored Anglos over Hispanos in the ranks and as officers was revealed in a letter from the governor to Iowa Senator William B. Allison, dated three days before New Mexico's Rough Riders were mustered into service and departed for combat. In Otero's words to this Republican leader,

In selecting the squadron for Col. Wood's regiment, I did not like to include a great number of the native citizens, because I have lived [in New Mexico] long enough to know that the [Anglo] "cow-boy" generally does not get along any too well with the New Mexican...and...look on [Hispanos] with just a little disfavor.<sup>47</sup>

Otero hoped to avoid a politically embarrassing clash of cultures that might draw unfavorable attention to New Mexico. As always, the governor's focus was on New Mexico's ability to impress leaders in Washington that the Territory was well prepared to shed its colonial status. Division among rival soldiers from New Mexico could hardly serve this goal, especially if such division caused poor morale, loss of discipline, and perhaps battlefield losses.

The few Hispano volunteers who served in the Spanish-American War were the exceptions who proved the rule regarding Otero's several biases. This was especially true of Maximiliano Luna, the governor's cousin and the highest ranking Hispano to serve in the Rough Riders from New Mexico. Luna had been born into one of the most affluent, influential families in New Mexico. Luna had also

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<sup>46</sup> Miguel Otero to Blas Sánchez, n.p., 26 May 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 139, frame 327.

<sup>47</sup> Miguel Otero to W.B. Allison, n.p., 3 May 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 139, frame 178.

received the best possible education, attending the Jesuit school in Las Vegas, New Mexico, from 1877 to 1888, and then Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., while his father, Tranquilino, served as New Mexico's congressional delegate. A nephew of the powerful Republican leader, Solomon Luna, Maximiliano had served in various political posts prior to 1898 and was known as one of Otero's closest Hispano allies; when the governor organized an eleven member blue-ribbon committee to aid with Cuban relief efforts in January 1898, Luna was one of only two Hispanos appointed in the Territory. Articulate in English as well as in Spanish, Luna was known as a fine orator in both languages. Athletic, he was an accomplished horseman with riding skills ideal for service in the cavalry.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps most importantly, Luna, like Otero, was as comfortable in the Anglo world as he was in the Hispano culture. Luna could be counted on to mix with Texas cowboys or any other Anglo group he might encounter in uniform without fear of friction and possible repercussions. As one newspaper editor put it, "In attributes...and adaptability there was no difference between...Luna and the Americans of other race stocks with whom he was thrown in contact in the army and in civil[ian] life." In the words of a Colorado editor, Luna was "American to the Core."<sup>49</sup> He was, therefore, Otero's ideal candidate to represent Hispano New Mexico in the war. The governor needed "A-1 men" like Luna if he was to redeem New Mexico's questioned honor.<sup>50</sup>

Luna understood and dutifully accepted his pivotal role in the war with Spain. In fact, he was eager to be given the chance to fight. When one of the four troops from New Mexico had to be left behind for lack of space on the transport ships to Cuba, a coin toss was made to determine if George Curry's H Troop or Maximiliano Luna's F Troop would be given the chance to fight:

In one of the most dramatic moments of the war, [Colonel] Wood tossed a coin, fully aware of Luna's great desire to fight the Spanish and thereby demonstrate

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<sup>48</sup> "Maj. Maximiliano Luna," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 15 March 1899; and Miguel Otero to Maximiliano Luna, n.p., 19 January 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 138, frame 523.

<sup>49</sup> Unlabeled newspaper clippings, Scrapbook #1, A.M. Berere Papers, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico, pgs. 40 and 49.

<sup>50</sup> Miguel Otero to Russell Alger, n.p., 26 April 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 139, frames 139-40.

Hispano New Mexico's absolute loyalty to the United States. The coin fell to the ground. The decision was made. Luna would go to Cuba.<sup>51</sup>

The few other Hispanos selected for military service shared many of Luna's attributes and much of his enthusiasm. All were bilingual and most were well educated. José Marcelo Baca, for example, wrote vivid letters describing his combat duty in Cuba; several of his letters appeared in *La Voz del Pueblo* of Las Vegas.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, those Hispanos accepted as volunteers usually had strong political or personal ties to the governor. Rough Rider sergeant George Armijo, for example, was not only the grandson of the legendary Don José Francisco Chaves, but also the son of Mariano Armijo, the editor of *El Nuevo Mundo*, a pro-Otero Albuquerque newspaper. Like Luna, Armijo was Miguel Otero's cousin; infantry officer Page Otero was the governor's older brother. Finally, most accepted Hispano volunteers were members of affluent Spanish families that remained loyal to the United States if only because they had profited so handsomely in political and economic terms under U.S. rule.<sup>53</sup>

Given Governor Otero's clear bias in favor of Anglo volunteers and assimilated members of the Hispano elite, it was unfair to characterize most Hispanos as disloyal because only a few of them served in the Spanish-American War. Moreover, it was unfair to criticize Spanish-language newspapers as disloyal simply because they urged the McKinley administration to exercise caution before declaring war against Spain. Once the war had begun, these same papers were as patriotic as any English-language newspaper in the Territory. Hispano poets, editors, and private citizens expressed their adamant support in patriotic verse, editorials, and letters-to-the-editor while the war raged overseas.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Melzer and Mingus, "Wild to Fight," 119; and Hening, *Curry*, 124.

<sup>52</sup> Anselmo F. Arrellano and Julian Josue Vigil, *Las Vegas Grandes on the Gallinas, 1835-1985* (Las Vegas, NM: Editorial Teleraña, 1985), 59-60.

<sup>53</sup> See Graeme S. Mount, "Nuevo Mexicanos and the War of 1898," *New Mexico Historical Review* 58 (1983):384-85. Don José Francisco Chaves was a veteran Navajo fighter, a congressional delegate, and a long-time political boss in Valencia County. He was assassinated under mysterious circumstances in 1904. Lamar, *The Far Southwest*, 129, 134-35, 163-64; and "Col. J. Francisco Chaves," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 15 March 1899.

<sup>54</sup> See, for example, *Santa Fe El Nuevo Mexicano*, 28 May 1898, quoted in Doris



But what of the pro-Spanish rallies reported in Anglo correspondence and the English-language press? Father Roux, who supposedly led such a demonstration, hastened to deny these charges in a letter to Governor Otero that was later published in the *Santa Fe New Mexican*. The French priest, who had taken out naturalization papers weeks before the reported incident, asserted that he could not have flown a Spanish flag, no less have carried it in a procession, because he did not own one. According to Roux, the "only flag...that will ever wave over the church [at Santa Clara] will be the American flag [because we] are all loyal Americans."<sup>55</sup>

Contrary to rumors, many more Hispanos gathered at rallies in support of the United States than at gatherings in support of Spain. Many were among the admiring crowd that witnessed the Rough Riders' swearing in and departure from Santa Fe on May 6. Governor Otero reported to President McKinley that "the entire population turned out en masse" as the Rough Riders' train progressed through New Mexico.<sup>56</sup> Within days, Hispanos joined Anglos at a large patriotic rally in Las Vegas. Speakers asserted that the citizens of Las Vegas, "regardless of politics or their place of birth, were truly loyal and patriotic."<sup>57</sup> A similar mass meeting was held at the courthouse in Santa Fe. With both Anglo and Hispano leaders present, "rousing" speeches were delivered and a committee of eight was "appointed to draft resolutions in support of the war." All eight committeemen were Hispano.<sup>58</sup> Further south, the Hispano Mutual Protective Association of Old Town Albuquerque unanimously resolved that "we as citizens of the United States pledge our lives, fortunes and sacred honor to the cause of the government [and]...the national honor."<sup>59</sup>

Hispanos continued to express their loyalty to the United States

Meyer, *Speaking for Themselves: Neomexicano Cultural Identity and the Spanish-Language Press, 1880-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 99; John Nieto-Phillips, "'No Other Blood': History, Language, and Spanish-American Ethnic Identity in New Mexico, 1880s-1920s" (Ph.D. diss., University of California-Los Angeles, 1997), 99-100.

<sup>55</sup> "Personal Mention," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 21 July 1898.

<sup>56</sup> Otero, *My Nine Years as Governor*, 43; Miguel Otero to William McKinley, n.p., 10 May 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 139, frames 206-07; and "New Mexico to the Front," *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, 9 May 1898.

<sup>57</sup> Arellano, "Through Thick and Thin," 365.

<sup>58</sup> "Voice of the People," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 27 April 1898.

<sup>59</sup> "Loyal Americans," *Albuquerque Morning Democrat*, 3 May 1898.

at Fourth of July celebrations in the summer of 1898. Three of the eight citizens who organized Santa Fe's elaborate Independence Day festivities of 1898 were Hispano. Their program included speeches (in Spanish and English), a reading of the Declaration of Independence (in Spanish and English), and a "grand pyrotechnical display" scheduled for late evening. The celebrations in Las Vegas' old and new plazas were much like those in Santa Fe.<sup>60</sup> On a smaller scale, Protestant missionary Mary C. McWhirt organized a "patriotic picnic" in the small Hispano community of Ocaté. Writing in the *Home Mission Monthly*, McWhirt reported that the Fourth of July included games, "a very stirring patriotic address by a Mexican," the singing of patriotic songs (in English), and the wearing of a "badge of our national colors" by each child. An estimated five hundred residents attended.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, New Mexico volunteers, Anglo and Hispano, proved their loyalty by fighting admirably on the front lines of combat in Cuba. Although few Hispanos were given the chance to serve and fight, those who did left an unblemished record in battle after battle. José Marcelo Baca of Las Vegas boasted that Spanish bullets apparently feared him because he had emerged unharmed in three battles. "I have done a good job," wrote Baca, "for [not one] Spaniard I have shot at has...remained standing." A Spanish general was among those who fell in Baca's deadly range. Witnessing this display of marksmanship, Baca's commander assigned the young New Mexican to a squad of expert sharpshooters.<sup>62</sup>

Rough Rider commanders praised all New Mexican volunteers with kind words and choice assignments in the course of the war. After only a few days at their training camp in San Antonio, Texas, Colonel Leonard Wood had complimented the Territory's entire contingency, calling its soldiers "a splendid looking body of men."<sup>63</sup> Later, in Cuba, Leonard Wood and Theodore Roosevelt showered praise on both Hispano and non-Hispano New Mexicans for their heroic action in battle. Maximiliano Luna was said to have literally laughed in the face of danger as he followed Roosevelt into the worst fighting at Las

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<sup>60</sup> "El Dia 4 De Julio," *Las Vegas La Voz del Pueblo*, 25 June 1898; and "Santa Fe's Celebration," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 2 July 1898.

<sup>61</sup> Mary C. McWhirt, "A Patriotic Picnic," *Home Mission Monthly* 13 (1898):18-19.

<sup>62</sup> Arrellano and Vigil, *Las Vegas Grandes*, 59-60.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Henry B. Hersey to Miguel Otero, San Antonio, Texas, 14 May 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 128, frame 823; and Otero, *My Nine Years as Governor*, 43.

Guasimas.<sup>64</sup> Roosevelt singled out Private Henry J. Heffner of Gallup for his courage and sacrifice in the same battle on June 24. The twenty-three-year-old soldier

was mortally wounded through the hip. He fell without uttering a sound, and two of his companions dragged him behind a tree. Here he propped himself up and asked to be given his canteen and his rifle.... He...began shooting, and continued loading and firing until the line moved forward. We left him alone, dying in the gloomy shade.<sup>65</sup>

New Mexicans were equally courageous at the Battle of San Juan Hill. New Mexico's Captain Muller helped lead the charge into heavy enemy fire on Kettle Hill, shouting "Forward, men! We're going to get 'em! Come on, everybody!"<sup>66</sup> Roosevelt later recalled that New Mexico's Muller, Llewellyn, and Luna were the first American captains to plant their troop flags on the summit of Kettle Hill when that strategic goal was finally taken.<sup>67</sup> New Mexicans suffered hardships and multiple casualties in this famous battle; at least seven wounded New Mexicans "kept on fighting until the end of the day, and in some cases never went to the rear at all, even to have their wounds dressed."<sup>68</sup> Of the 270 New Mexicans who saw action in the war as a whole, thirty-one were wounded and ten died of either combat wounds or tropical diseases.<sup>69</sup> One reported death brought particular sorrow to the Territory. Although false, news of Maximiliano Luna's death in battle produced an unprecedented outpouring of grief in New Mexico. Friends and family were relieved when they learned that the captain had survived.<sup>70</sup> According to Theodore Roosevelt, Luna was "The only man

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<sup>64</sup> Peggy and Harold Samuels, *Teddy Roosevelt at San Juan: The Making of a President* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 160.

<sup>65</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *The Rough Riders* (New York: New American Library, 1961), 64.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Samuels and Samuels, *Teddy Roosevelt at San Juan*, 245.

<sup>67</sup> Roosevelt, *The Rough Riders*, 88.

<sup>68</sup> Roosevelt, *The Rough Riders*, 99-100.

<sup>69</sup> Melzer and Mingus, "Wild to Fight," 121.

<sup>70</sup> "Sad If True," *Albuquerque Morning Democrat*, 26 June 1898; "Captain Max Luna All Right," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 27 June 1898; J.W. Churchill to Miguel Otero, Washington, D.C., 27 June 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 128, frame 1042;

of pure Spanish blood who bore a commission in the army and [who] demanded the privilege of proving that his people were precisely as loyal Americans as any others. I was glad...to take him [to Cuba and into battle]."<sup>71</sup>

Luna's commanders continued to praise and support the young captain when rumors circulated questioning his bravery under fire. Perhaps contrived by political enemies to counteract the sympathy and praise engendered by Luna's reported death, these rumors surfaced in towns across New Mexico in July 1898.<sup>72</sup> Luna responded with a detailed account of his role in combat, and his report appeared in supportive territorial newspapers.<sup>73</sup> Luna's fellow officers and men added to his defense by speaking highly of his "unflinching bravery and cool leadership" in the heat of battle.<sup>74</sup> Most importantly, Leonard Wood defended Luna's honor in writing and by appointing the captain to Wood's personal staff. Wood was so impressed with Luna's work that he also appointed him to a committee that inspected Cuban prisons and offered him a promotion to the rank of major.<sup>75</sup> Vindicated, Luna returned to New Mexico after the war and received "one continual ovation," in Governor Otero's words.<sup>76</sup>

New Mexico's other Hispano and non-Hispano Rough Riders received equally warm welcomes when they returned to the Territory in the fall of 1898. Before proceeding home, sixteen New Mexican veterans had visited President McKinley in the East Room of the White House. Clad in their khaki campaign uniforms, the sixteen greeted the chief executive with loud "blood-curdling" Rough Rider yells. When

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and Miguel Otero to Mrs. Maximiliano Luna, n.p., 21 July 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 139, frames 630, 632.

<sup>71</sup> Roosevelt, *The Rough Riders*, 43.

<sup>72</sup> Arellano, "Through Thick and Thin," 379-80.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, the *Albuquerque Weekly News*, 16 July 1898.

<sup>74</sup> "Rough Riders Returned," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 8 August 1898; *Albuquerque Weekly News*, 20 August 1898; and Thompson, "Helped Raise," 297.

<sup>75</sup> Leonard Wood to the Editor, *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 25 August 1898; Miguel Otero to Thomas Hughes, n.p., 25 July 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 139, frame 648; and Miguel Otero to Charles Dick, n.p., 2 February 1899, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 139, frames 1239-40.

<sup>76</sup> Miguel Otero to Theodore Roosevelt, n.p., 7 September 1898, Miguel Otero Papers, TANM, reel 139, frame 777. Tragically, Luna later drowned while crossing the Agno River in the Philippines. Serving with the 34th Infantry at that time, he was only twenty-eight. "Lieutenant Maximiliano Luna Drowned," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 18 November 1899.

asked by the president if they would be willing to fight for their country again, the New Mexicans "responded that they would go back the very next morning if the president commanded."<sup>77</sup>

Despite rumors to the contrary, New Mexicans had thus proven their loyalty to the United States. No loyalty oaths or trials of treason were required in the Territory, as happened in the aftermath of the Civil War. But did New Mexico's loyalty in the Spanish-American War further its cause of statehood, as Miguel Otero and others had so hoped? Did Otero win his political war for statehood while helping to win a military war fought thousands of miles from home?

The governor certainly referred to the Territory's role in the Spanish-American War whenever possible during his remaining eight years in office. Otero stressed New Mexico's "glorious" war record in many speeches, including one given at the White House in December 1900, another at his second inauguration in 1901, and a third at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition held in St. Louis in 1904.<sup>78</sup> In addition, Otero frequently mentioned New Mexico's fine war record in his annual reports to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. In 1902, for example, Otero's territorial report presented fourteen main reasons why New Mexico was ready for statehood, including the fact that New Mexico had sent "more soldiers to the defense of the country per capita in the civil and Spanish-American war than any other State or Territory."<sup>79</sup> Admired for their thoroughness, Otero's reports were often quoted in the Eastern press, helping to dispel erroneous reports about New Mexico's unfitness for statehood (for a depiction of New Mexico's struggle for statehood, see Figure 1 and Figure 2). The same *New York Times* that had editorialized about New Mexico's "semi-traitorous" population in August 1898 thus quoted Otero's annual report and its reference to New Mexico's proud war record two months later.<sup>80</sup>

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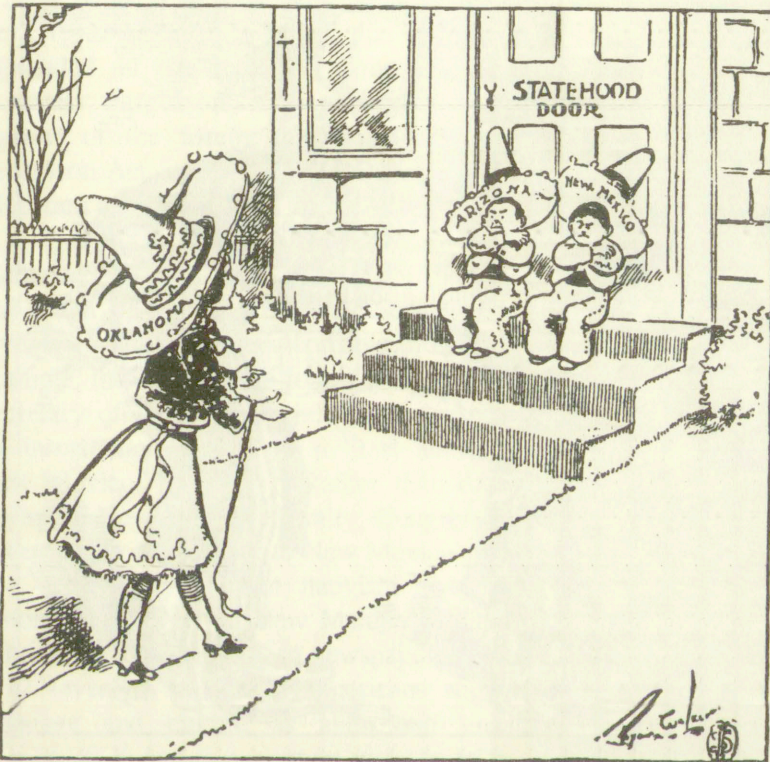
<sup>77</sup> Melzer and Mingus, "Wild to Fight," 125.

<sup>78</sup> Cynthia Secor Welsh, "A 'Star Will Be Added': Miguel Antonio Otero and the Struggle for Statehood," *New Mexico Historical Review* 67 (1992):40; and "Second Inauguration Speech," 22 June 1901, Box 4, Folder 11; and "Speech at St. Louis: Louisiana Purchase," 18 December 1904, Box 4, Folder 13, Otero Papers, CSR-UNM.

<sup>79</sup> *Report of the Governor of New Mexico to the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902), 42.

<sup>80</sup> "New Mexico and Statehood: Gov. Otero Presents the Territory's Claims for Admission," *New York Times*, 28 October 1898.

Figure 1



"Miss Oklahoma-Boys, you may not want to go in, but please let me pass." *Literary Digest* 30 (1905):196.

Figure 2



"Uncle Sam-'Well, sonny, what's the matter?' New Mexico: 'Please, sir, I just came from the Senate, and I don't know whether I'm a State or a Territory.'" *Literary Digest* 30 (1905):273.

Congressional Delegate Harvey Fergusson also referred to New Mexico's admirable role in the war when he spoke to Congress regarding a bill he had introduced to improve education in the Territory. Fergusson declared that although New Mexicans had been repeatedly shunned in their struggle for statehood, they were "not embittered" and were still fiercely loyal in the war. They had, in fact, responded to President McKinley's call for volunteers "in a shorter time than the majority of the states," proving that they were "as loyal and as...ready to fight as any people in the United States." The *Congressional Record* noted that Fergusson's stirring words were applauded in the halls of Congress.<sup>81</sup> Passed in both houses of Congress, Fergusson's bill was signed into law on 21 June 1898. In the opinion of the foremost authority on New Mexico statehood, the Fergusson Act "probably did more than any other one thing to promote education and prepare the people of New Mexico for statehood."<sup>82</sup>

Despite the Spanish-American War and the Fergusson Act, statehood proved an elusive goal for over a decade. In fact, it seemed that much of the progress that New Mexico had made in 1898 was reversed by political developments in the following years. In 1900, for example, the U.S. Senate passed a curious resolution requesting that the Secretary of War furnish information about "the nature and extent of the insurrection against the military authorities of the United States in New Mexico" in 1847.<sup>83</sup> Rather than focus on new, positive proof regarding New Mexico's loyalty, Congress seemed intent on digging up old evidence detrimental to New Mexico's case for statehood.

In an age when nativism swept the country, other critics continued to dwell on New Mexico's cultural differences. A study of political cartoons printed in newspapers across the nation from 1902 to 1912 revealed that many Americans still thought of New Mexico's language and culture as alien and unacceptable. Ironically, the Territory's image in caricature was sometimes confused with the hated Spaniards of the recently concluded conflict.<sup>84</sup> In a second twist of

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<sup>81</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, 55th Congress, second session, 25 May 1898, *Congressional Record*, 31:5191-192. The bill's text appeared in the "Delegate Fergusson's Bill," *Albuquerque Morning Democrat*, 25 February 1898.

<sup>82</sup> Larson, *Quest for Statehood*, 194.

<sup>83</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Letter from the Secretary of War in Response to Resolution of the Senate of 5 June 1900, 56th Congress, first session, Document No. 442.

<sup>84</sup> Richard Melzer, "New Mexico in Caricature: Images of the Territory on the Eve of Statehood," *New Mexico Historical Review* 62 (1987):335-60. For a description of the



irony, New Mexico was sometimes confused with the culturally "foreign" and supposedly inferior colonies recently acquired from Spain.<sup>85</sup> Many national leaders, including Theodore Roosevelt, uttered racist remarks about Latinos in general and Hispano New Mexicans by extension. Even as the Rough Riders journeyed to the front lines to help liberate Cuba, Roosevelt readily shared his belief in Social Darwinism and the racial inferiority of Latinos.<sup>86</sup> Despite Roosevelt's vow to his fellow Rough Riders that he would "go back to Washington to speak for [New Mexico],"<sup>87</sup> his strong racism and various political concerns prevented him from truly helping the Territory achieve its statehood goal while he served two terms in the White House.

Exasperated, New Mexicans could only respond to such unreasonable perceptions by reasserting their loyalty to the United States and steadfastly defending their native rights and customs. Otherwise, they could hope that the second-class status and degrading rejection they had faced for so long would not be forced on the newest American possessions conquered in the Spanish-American War. In a fitting action, the New Mexico Territorial Council proposed a resolution in early 1899, urging the U.S. Senate to ratify the proposed peace treaty with Spain, but, in the "interest of humanity and of liberty," grant political independence to the citizens of Puerto Rico and the Philippines so that the U.S. occupation of those lands "should be only temporary." The Council's resolution passed by a vote of ten to two.<sup>88</sup> Unfortunately, the U.S. Senate did not heed New Mexico's advice, leaving Puerto Rico and the Philippines to suffer years of violence, mistrust, and injustice, much as New Mexico

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American image of Spaniards, see Gerald F. Linderman, *The Mirror of War: American Society and the Spanish-American War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1974), 120-27.

<sup>85</sup> John R. Chávez, *The Lost Land: The Chicano Image of the Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 75; and Larson, *Quest for Statehood*, 304.

<sup>86</sup> Samuels and Samuels, *Teddy Roosevelt at San Juan*, 58-59. For other examples of such racism, see A. Gabriel Meléndez, *So All Is Not Lost: The Poetics of Print in Nuevomexicano Communities, 1834-1958* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 43-44.

<sup>87</sup> Quoted in Otero, *My Nine Years as Governor*, 63.

<sup>88</sup> Proceedings of the New Mexico Territorial Council, 25 January 1899, TANM, reel 13, frames 29-30.

had faced before and after the Spanish-American War. What Americans had not learned from a tragic past was about to be repeated in an equally tragic future.