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From Revolution to Rejection: Tejanos and the Road to the Civil War

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From Revolution to Rejection: Tejanos and the Road to the Civil War

HIST-497-A Research Methods

Professor Diller

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The relationship between white Anglo Southerner settlers and Mexican people in Texas directly impacted the participation of Mexican Americans in the American Civil War. This relationship was one of equal participation in the Texas Revolution; afterwards, the racist discrimination of Anglo settlers led to Mexican people withdrawing from military service during the Mexican-American War, though they held important roles in the Texas Republic. During the Civil War, Mexican people largely fought for the Confederacy in an effort to earn respect and equality and avoid the Anglo settlers' racism and violence. Historians have studied the causes of these wars and their actors extensively, but further study is required regarding the connection between these conflicts, the rapidly developing racial boundaries in Texas, and the impact of these on Mexican Americans in Texas. The race-based class system brought from the United States by the Anglo settlers created the exclusionary and discriminatory conditions against the Mexican people in Texas, generating the conditions that led to the choice of Mexican Americans fighting for the Confederacy.

Historiography

The Texas Revolution was very important for the history of Mexican Americans in Texas. In his book *Mexico and Texas, 1821-1835; University of Texas research lectures on the causes of the Texas revolution*, historian Eugene Campbell Barker claims that the continued exertion of control over the territories by the Mexican government, as well as the resistance to the increasing Anglo involvement in the region, caused the Texas Revolution.¹ Historian H.W. Brands argues that this was the most significant war in the history of Texas as a modern U.S. state in the book *Lone Star Nation*.² He also claims that the Southerners who settled in the region could not help themselves but love the useful land.

¹ Eugene Campbell Barker. *Mexico and Texas, 1821-1835; University of Texas Research Lectures on the Causes of the Texas Revolution*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1965.

² H. W. Brands. *Lone Star Nation*. Westminster: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2005.

During the Texas Republic, the status of the Mexican American people was unstable. *The Texas Republic; a Social and Economic History* by William Ransom Hogan argues the importance of the “common people” during the Texas Republic.³ He emphasized the importance of the changing economic and social structure in Texas and how this affected Mexican Americans. Historian Stephan Oates argued that the multicultural nature of places in Texas like San Antonio was integral in the formation of Texas culture today in *The Republic of Texas*.⁴

Southerner expansionists in Texas managed to create a narrative that favored themselves during the borderland disputes. In *How Myth Became History: Texas Exceptionalism in the Borderlands*, historian John Emory Dean discusses the process of creating a favorable narrative that eventually led to the support of the presidency in beginning the Mexican-American War.⁵ Because of the large amounts of Anglo individuals settling in Mexico's territory and essentially creating their legal system, the borders became difficult to define. James Brooks, a historian of Indigenous history, provides a broad perspective on the different experiences of the minority groups on the border in his *Captives and Cousins: Violence, Kinship, and Community in the New Mexico Borderlands, 1680-1880*. These groups formed connections between themselves due to the mistreatment and necessity of having allies against the Anglo settlers.⁶

Five schools of thought and their historian proponents cover the causes of the Mexican-American War starting with assigning the responsibility of initiating the war to a participant, whether it be Mexico, America, the American South, the American North, or even general governmental bodies. Historian Ramon Ruiz covers in his book *The Mexican War - Was*

³ William Ransom Hogan. *The Texas Republic; a Social and Economic History*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969.

⁴ Stephen B Oates. *The Republic of Texas*. Palo Alto, Calif: American West Pub. Co., 1968

⁵ John Emory Dean. *How Myth Became History: Texas Exceptionalism in the Borderlands*. (University of Arizona Press, 2016).

⁶ James Frederick Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Violence, Kinship, and Community in the New Mexico Borderlands, 1680-1880* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

it Manifest Destiny? the argument of general governmental bodies being a cause for war, due to it not holding much merit in the discussion of the causes of the war.⁷ The second school focuses on the driver of the war being commercial and economic interests in the west. New England merchants had established trade routes in the Atlantic Ocean and expanded their sights westward to the Pacific and the trade opportunities there as historian Norman A. Graebner states in his essay, “The Land-Hunger Thesis Challenged”. He also claims that the westward movement is “meaningless unless defined in terms of commerce and harbors,” focusing on the mass settlement of US citizens in Mexican territory.⁸

The American appetite for land is a primary driver in the settlement of Texas and the Mexican-American War and Richard Stenberg blames Polk’s presidential influence and hunger for power in his essay, “Polk Accused” and his arguments are supported by historian Glenn Price in his book, *Origins of the War with Mexico; the Polk-Stockton Intrigue*.⁹ Their claims lie in the fact that it did not seem like the president’s office did much to prevent the war, and instead let themselves be used by the Southern powers.¹⁰ The fourth school of thought follows the popular idea of the American version of Manifest Destiny, with the desire to establish an “area of freedom” in the Texas territory. John Eisenhower explores Manifest Destiny and the vigor of the new nation to expand westward in his book *So Far from God : the U.S. War with Mexico*.¹¹ The Puritan belief was that their religion was above all others and God had given them the land to establish a Protestant claim to promote Protestant morals, giving the American people the moral right to begin a war with Mexico. David Clary, an American historian, argues that the Mexican

⁷ Ramón Eduardo Ruiz, *The Mexican War--Was It Manifest Destiny?*, 1963

⁸ Ruiz Ramón Eduardo and Norman A Graebner, “*The Land-Hunger Thesis Challenged*,” in *The Mexican War - Was It Manifest Destiny?* (San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 47.

⁹ Glenn W. Price, *Origins of the War with Mexico; the Polk-Stockton Intrigue*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1967.

¹⁰ Ramón Eduardo Ruiz and Richard R Stenberg, “*Polk Accused*,” in *The Mexican War - Was It Manifest Destiny?* (San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 65.

¹¹ John Eisenhower. *So Far from God : the U.S. War with Mexico, 1846-1848*. New York: Random House, 1989.

government was the “enemy” or the aggressor and that the US had the moral upper hand in the war in his book *Eagles and Empire : the United States, Mexico, and the Struggle for a Continent*.¹² In his essay, “The Conspiracy Thesis”, James Ford Rhodes, an industrialist and a historian, places the blame upon the South and the hunger for more land to fill with enslaved people.¹³ The strive for “slave power” in the South can be seen even during periods of peace with Mexico, although the country had outlawed the practice of enslavement.¹⁴ Mexico gave these Southerners exceptions but Southern expansionists like John Calhoun continued to ask for the annexation of Texas and enslavers continued to demand autonomy from the Mexican government.

The Mexican people that ended up on the US side of the newly formed Texas border after the Mexican-American War had a completely new set of obstacles. David Weber argues that the territory of Texas was invaded and forcefully taken by the Southern expansionists, causing difficulty when defining the culture of Mexican Americans in his book *Foreigners in Their Native Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican-Americans*.¹⁵ Carlos Bosch Garcia, a historian from Mexico, argues that the American people were hostile and had no desire to assimilate the Mexican people into their territory or culture. This placed limits on the “call by God”, or the puritan belief in cultural superiority and spreading that morality, and he describes this further in his essay “Race and Colonization”.¹⁶ The new “Mexican Americans” faced extreme racism and danger, contrasting the minor mistreatment they received before as they were now the minority

¹² David Clary. *Eagles and Empire : the United States, Mexico, and the Struggle for a Continent*. 1st ed. New York: Bantam Dell, 2009.

¹³ Ramon Eduardo Ruiz and James Ford Rhodes, “The Conspiracy Thesis,” in *The Mexican War - Was It Manifest Destiny?* (San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 9.

¹⁴ “1824 - Constitution Federal De Los Estados Unidos Mexicanos” (2019). *Mexican Government Documents*. 3. https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/hornbeck_mex_2/3

¹⁵ David J Weber. *Foreigners in Their Native Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003.

¹⁶ Ramón Eduardo Ruiz and Carlos Bosch Garcia, “Race and Colonization,” in *The Mexican War - Was It Manifest Destiny?* (San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 62.

and the group not holding political power in a new land. In the book *Testimonio: A Documentary History of the Mexican-American Struggle for Civil Rights*, Francisco Rosales compiles primary sources to support his argument that the new Americans were highly and systematically discriminated against as the mistreatment became regular in legal arenas.¹⁷ Arnoldo De León details the mistreatment taking place in his book, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes Toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900*. He argues that the Anglo settlers in the area acted in an abnormally hostile way, causing immediate racial divisions.¹⁸ Nicholas Villanueva continued this argument by providing further evidence of extreme violence through his book, *The Lynching of Mexicans in the Texas Borderlands*. He argues that the majority of this extreme violence happened in the borderlands.¹⁹

Mexican Americans were standard participants in the American Civil War, joining both the Union and the Confederacy. In the book, *Blue and Gray on the Border: the Rio Grande Valley Civil War Trail*, Christopher Miller and his collaborators argued that there were many different opinions on the American Civil War among the Mexican people based on their opinions on enslavement and their circumstances.²⁰ These opinions led them to both sides, with the majority of Mexican Americans taking the Union side. Thomas Cutrer covers the Southwest arena of the war in his book *Theater of a Separate War: The Civil War West of the Mississippi River, 1861–1865*. He argues that the war would not have had the same outcome if the Union had not had assistance from the Southwest and those Mexican Americans fighting there.²¹ The Civil

¹⁷ Francisco A Rosales. *Testimonio: A Documentary History of the Mexican American Struggle for Civil Rights*. Houston, TX: Arte Público Press, 2000.

¹⁸ Arnoldo De León. *They Called Them Greasers : Anglo Attitudes Toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).

¹⁹ Nicholas Villanueva. *The Lynching of Mexicans in the Texas Borderlands*. Albuquerque, [New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 2017.

²⁰ Christopher L. Miller, Russell K. Skowronek, Roseann Bacha-Garza, and John L. Nau. *Blue and Gray on the Border : the Rio Grande Valley Civil War Trail*. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2018).

²¹ Thomas W Cutrer. *Theater of a Separate War The Civil War West of the Mississippi River, 1861–1865*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

War in Texas lasted longer than many other arenas of conflict and this is covered in Gregory Downs' chapter "Three Faces of Sovereignty: Governing Confederate, Mexican, and Indian Texas in the Civil War Era," in the book, in Adam Arenson's *Civil War Wests*.²² He argues that because of these continued conflicts in Texas and the growing resentment of Anglo Southerners in Texas, many racial and political issues persisted in postwar Texas.

The scholarship tends to focus on the wars in Texas or the Civil War separately, with few connections between them. Although much of their story is forgotten, the Mexican American people are a very important connection between these two wars and their experiences have direct impacts on their identity and the eventual conflict within the United States. This paper will discuss the wars in this region and the effects they had on the Mexican people, leading to the involvement of Mexican Americans in the United States Civil War.

Spanish and Mexican Texas

Mexico gained a claim to the territory of Texas after their War of Independence with Spain ended in 1821. Spanish people already occupied this land in 1689, but the European population in the area was limited because of the frequent altercations with the Indigenous people there. The majority of these Spanish settlers were in Texas for the purpose of establishing missions and establishing control of the border territories near French colonial rule.²³ Early Mexican²⁴ individuals, a mix of Black, Indigenous, and European descent, began settling in the area in the late 18th century, causing the populations in San Antonio de Béxar and Nacogdoches

²²Adam Arenson and Gregory Downs. "Three Faces of Sovereignty: Governing Confederate, Mexican, and Indian Texas in the Civil War Era," in *Civil War Wests: Testing the Limits of the United States*. 1st ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015.

²³ Donald E Chipman. *Spanish Texas, 1519-1821*. 1st ed. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992.

²⁴ Those immigrating from the Mexican territory of the 1820s.

to rise to very high numbers: 1,463 in San Antonio and 500 in Nacogdoches by 1780, outnumbering the Spanish²⁵ people in the area.²⁶

After the Mexican victory in the war against Spain, the territory of Texas was split between states in 1821, most of which was in Coahuila y Tejas. The settling of Texas was encouraged by the government, with the allotment of free land to individuals who decided to immigrate there. Along with the new Mexican immigrants came Anglo-American²⁷ settlers looking to evade the high land prices in the United States. Mexico attempted to prevent the overwhelming immigration of Anglo individuals through the Law of April 6, 1831, but by 1834 the Anglo settlers outnumbered the Mexican people by 30,000 to 7,800, not including the 6,000 enslaved individuals brought with the Anglo settlers.²⁸ The Anglo settlers were expected to become naturalized Mexican citizens but they quickly sought to undermine the Mexican government.²⁹

Tejanos and the Texas Revolution

The Texas population during the Mexican rule in the early 19th century was made up of Mexican and Anglo individuals who coexisted peacefully, uniting under the dissatisfaction of the Mexican government due to its increasingly strict rule. Social class in Texas was defined by wealth, government position, land possession, and family.³⁰ There was minimal racial discrimination, although those of mixed descent faced some difficulties like the day laborers on

²⁵ Individuals of direct descent from Spain (not mixed).

²⁶ Gerald E. Poyo and Gilberto M. Hinojosa, eds., *Tejano Origins in Eighteenth-Century San Antonio* (San Antonio: Institute of Texan Cultures, 1991), 86

²⁷ Southerners of White European descent.

²⁸ *Decreto de 6 de Abril de 1830* [Law of April 6, 1830], Republic of Mexico, 1830, Broadside Collection, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

²⁹ David Montejano. *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*. 1st ed. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987. 52

³⁰ Arnaldo De León, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes Toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983). 108

Texas ranches.³¹ Anglo-Southerners were allowed many exceptions to laws in Mexico when they settled in the territory of Texas which was controlled by Mexico at the time in 1821. Mexico abolished enslavement in 1837 but allowed these settlers to continue to use enslaved labor on their land, to maintain peace between the groups. A tipping point for the displeased Texas residents was the leadership of Colonel Juan Davis Bradburn because of his strict land policies and his strong hand when it came to any uprisings, peaceful or malevolent. His office caused the Mexican and Anglo people to come together and formed the conditions for the Texas Revolution.

The Texas Revolution began in October of 1835 with many Tejanos participating in the army for the Republic of Texas in hopes of uniting with those who had only recently encroached on their land.³² Tejanos also wanted the rights for which the Anglo settlers were fighting against Mexican authority and their assumption was that they would receive these provisions if they supported the cause, even with no explicit guarantees. Tejano's participation was expansive and there are many Texas records of Tejanos fighting alongside Southerners in the Alamo, working together against the Mexican army.³³

Tejanos held many roles in the Texas army, but few were high-ranking compared to their Anglo counterparts. Captain Juan Seguín of San Antonio is a very important example of a military leader during the Texas Revolution. He organized a Tejano company that supported the Texan army in the Battle of San Jacinto and the Siege of Bexar with participants like the Tejanos Juan Abamillo, José Miguel Aldrete, and Juan Antonio Badillo.³⁴ Joseph Lopez was a participant in the Siege of Bexar, and later petitioned the Republic of Texas for a pension based on his

³¹ Raúl A Ramos. *Beyond the Alamo : Forging Mexican Ethnicity in San Antonio, 1821-1861*. Chapel Hill: Published in association with the William P. Clements Center for Southwest Studies, Southern Methodist University, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2008. 22

³² Rosales, 2000, 78.

³³ John Myers. *The Alamo*. Lincoln ;: University of Nebraska Press, 1984. 132

³⁴ Miguel Soto. "Sobre Juan N. Seguín, A revolution Remembered. *The Memoirs and Selected Correspondence of Juan N. Seguín*." *Historia mexicana* 42, nox. 4 (1993).

experience, claiming: “I could mention many incidents, that happened during these five days, but for brevety sake I will give a slight sketch of the battle...” and went on to explain the many horrors of the battle.³⁵ Several Tejanos participated in the Battle of the Alamo including the ones named above with other participants including Damacio Jiménez, Antonio Fuentes, José Toribio Lesoya, and Andrés Nava.³⁶

The Texas Declaration of Independence was created in March of 1836, near the end of the Texas Revolution, and it was signed by just three Mexican individuals among the fifty-seven Anglo signers: José Antonio Navarro, José Francisco Ruiz, and Lorenzo de Zavala.³⁷ The primary grievances brought up by the Declaration of Independence were the lack of protection provided by the Mexican government (against the alleged Indigenous attacks), the increasing military power in the state, the threat of losing their enslaved laborers, and other issues surrounding education and land ownership. The Texas population was calling for a complete separation from Mexican authority, wanting to form a Texas republic where they may govern themselves.³⁸ This document made it clear that enslavement would be allowed under the new Republic and left out any mention of specific rights for the Mexican citizens of Texas. This caused some Tejanos³⁹ to leave the fight after the Declaration was made public, as they were disappointed by the racism and the growing anti-Mexican language.

³⁵ *First Hand Account of the Siege of Bexar From the Republic Pension Application of Joseph Lopez*, December 1835. Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

³⁶ Brands, 2005. 23

³⁷ *Texas Declaration of Independence*, March 2, 1836. Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

³⁸ *Texas Declaration of Independence*, March 2, 1836. Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

³⁹ Mexicans in the territory of Texas, primarily of mixed descent. This term was especially used after Texas became a republic.

The war ended in April of 1836 with the Battle of San Jacinto. With the Treaty of Velasco, the Mexican government agreed to give the territory to the Texas Republic.⁴⁰ When allocating the 1837 pensions promised to those who participated in this war, the Tejanos were overlooked, causing frustration from those who had served their time without compensation, this showed the first signs of systematic prejudice against them which would carry on as people like José Antonio Menchaca, eventual Mayor of San Antonio, continued the fight for unity with their Anglo neighbors.⁴¹

Tejanos During the Texas Republic

The government of the Republic of Texas was modeled after the government of the United States. The constitution established three branches of government and upheld many of the same regulations and processes as the United States House of Representatives and Senate. The Declaration of Rights in the Texas Constitution covered many provisions expressly given to all men in the area, with a specific address to the equality of all men, no matter what national origin. Tejanos J. Antonio Navarro and Lorenzo de Zavala, who signed Texas' Declaration of Independence, also signed the Declaration of Rights.⁴² Because of the active role the Tejanos played in the Texas Revolution, the Declaration of Rights ensured that they would not be excluded from equal rights as citizens: "no man or set of men are entitled to exclusive public privileges or emoluments from the community."⁴³ Many Tejanos went on to be directly involved

⁴⁰ *The Treaty of Velasco (Public), May 14, 1836*, Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

⁴¹ Antonio Menchaca. "*Muster Roll of Captain Antonio Menchaca's Mounted Men, Municipality of Bexar, October 1836 through March 1837.*," TSL. 1837.

⁴² "*Constitution of the Republic of Texas.*" Laws of the Republic of Texas, in Two Volumes. Houston, 1838

⁴³ "*The Declaration of Rights. In the Constitution of the Republic of Texas.*" Laws of the Republic of Texas, in Two Volumes. Houston, 1838

in the government, the military, and politics. Some of these active Tejanos included Mayor José Ángel Navarro of Santa Anna⁴⁴ and Salvador Flores, a military leader, simplifying the integration of the Tejano people into the culture of Texas at the time.⁴⁵ The trust that was being built between them and their Anglo neighbors was growing and relationships were forming.

The Texas Revolution brought with it a growing mistrust for the Mexican government, Mexican people, and Tejanos, especially as the Anglo population in Texas increased, more than doubling from the twenty-thousand before the revolution.⁴⁶ The new settlers had no relationship with Tejanos and this caused friction as they began to interact more, with differences between them becoming quickly apparent. Soon, the mistrust in the Mexican people became synonymous with mistrust in Tejanos, and these changes contributed to an exodus to Mexico as the tensions and mistreatments increased.⁴⁷ Mistreatments included many accusations made against prominent Tejanos, even with important roles in local government, like Mayor Juan Seguín of San Antonio who was accused of attempts to aid the Mexican government in recapturing Texas in 1842.⁴⁸ He later fled to Mexico and served in the army against the United States because of the hostility he faced at his home.⁴⁹ Another individual who faced this increasing hostility was Capitán Juan Moya of Mexico who fought in the Texas revolution against the United States army. He and his family remained in their hometown which became part of Texas in 1836. Here, they faced threats and hostility against them from their new Anglo neighbors. Moya and his son

⁴⁴ Camilla Campbell, "Navarro, José Angel [The Elder]," *Handbook of Texas Online*

⁴⁵ Woods, Thomas. "Flores de Abrego, José Salvador Ramon [Salvador Flores]," *Handbook of Texas Online*

⁴⁶ James Ernest Crisp. "ANGLO-TEXAN ATTITUDES TOWARD THE MEXICAN, 1821-1845." Order No. 7629828, Yale University, 1976. 93

⁴⁷ Eisenhower, 1989. 215

⁴⁸ Juan Seguín to Captain Pratt, March 26, 1837, A.J. Houston Collection, Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

⁴⁹ Miguel Soto. "Sobre Juan N. Seguín, A revolution Remembered. *The Memoirs and Selected Correspondence of Juan N. Seguín.*" *Historia mexicana* 42, nox. 4 (1993).

were eventually lynched in jail by their neighbors in June of 1874 after being detained as suspects in a crime they did not commit.⁵⁰

There were Southerner efforts at assimilation for Tejanos before the Mexican-American War began but these were limited. They began with attempts to ensure that United States laws would be understood by Spanish speakers with an 1839 act to translate different laws because Southerners assumed that those in the Texas territory needed to assimilate into their culture, while no effort was given to understand the Mexican individuals.⁵¹ No effort was made for the relationship between the groups and although the majority of the Anglo Southerners settling the area were protestant, their religion seemed to be forgotten during their interactions with the Mexican people.⁵² There was pushback against rights for Mexican Americans even after their support in the Texas Revolution, as shown in the petition of citizens in the municipality of Nacogdoches in 1836.⁵³ These citizens were against giving suffrage to Tejanos because they refused to aid in revolutionary efforts, because of the desire of those in this municipality to be united with Mexico, taking it as far as to call for a total loss of suffrage to all Mexican Americans in the Texas territory. It was assumed that the Tejanos in Nacogdoches had allegiance to Mexico. Even before these individuals were considered citizens of the United States or were technically not within their territory, Southerners were infringing on their rights, displaying their early prejudices against Mexican Americans.

⁵⁰ Gloria Candelaria Marsh, "Moya, Juan," *Handbook of Texas Online*

⁵¹ "An Act to Translate the Laws of the Republic into the Castilian Language and Promulgate the Same.," TSL. 1839.

⁵² Ramón Eduardo Ruiz and Carlos Bosch Garcia, "Race and Colonization," in *The Mexican War - Was It Manifest Destiny?* (San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 62.

⁵³ "Petition of the Citizens of the Municipality of Nacogdoches to Prohibit Mexican Suffrage, September 1836. ," TSL. 1836.

The United States Before The Mexican-American War

While Texas Congress called to be admitted into the Union, leaders like President Van Buren feared the admittance of another pro-enslavement state. President John Tyler revived the topic with pressure from John Calhoun, secretary of state, to protect his presidency and gain support from the South. It was a struggle between those who called for more Southern power and those who wanted the North to control the United States government.⁵⁴ People in the United States expressed their opinions on the Mexican-American War with their concerns ranging from enslaved people in Texas, Anglo Southerners, and Indigenous people in this region. There was a concern for the enslaved individuals in Texas and opposition to the idea of forming a “new slave territory” as stated in the 1846 newspaper article “Whigs and Democrats--The War” in *Practical Christian*.⁵⁵ “The Mexican War and American enslavement” in the *Vermont Temperance Herald* accused pro-enslavement individuals of attempting to gain more land and therefore more power by initiating the Mexican-American War, followed by the incorporation of Texas into the Confederacy rather than the Union.⁵⁶ Northern abolitionists maintained that the Anglo-Southerners in that area were fabricating tensions between themselves and the Mexican government to gain new territories to “fill with slaves”. Although these abolitionist groups were made up of primarily Christian groups, the political North in the United States expressed the same sentiments in various articles and letters.⁵⁷ Enslaved Black people and abolition took up a large portion of the discourse of the opposition to the war in the United States, but these concerns were overshadowed by the ones in favor of the war brought up by Southerner settlers in Texas.

⁵⁴ “*Ratification of the Texas Annexation: Vote Totals*” TSL. 1845.

⁵⁵ W. H. F. 1846. “*Whigs and Democrats--The War*.” *Practical Christian* 7 (4): 0002.

⁵⁶ “*The Mexican War and American enslavement*.” 1847. *Vermont Temperance Herald* 2 (30): 2.

⁵⁷ “*MEXICAN WAR, &c.*” 1846. *Pleasure Boat* 2 (5): 1.

For Southerners, safety was a concern that was brought up frequently in the years after the Texas Revolution. They claimed that because the United States did not control this territory, protection against attacks by the Indigenous people or the Mexican people in the territory was limited. One record of these attacks is the Great Raid of 1840 by the Comanche tribe, but few other attacks are recorded.⁵⁸ Some dissenters suspected the Southern settlers in Texas of lying when citing different attacks. There are a few records of attacks against these settlers which may have been in retaliation to some possible initiation of Anglo Southerners and these events were used as the rationale for the Mexican-American War.⁵⁹ Regardless of the factual foundation of these claims, President James Polk referenced these attacks in his address of the declaration of war against Mexico.⁶⁰ He cited "... the long-continued and unredressed wrongs and injuries committed by the Mexican Government on citizens of the United States in their persons and property..." as reasons for declaring war. Although other reasons were named, like misconduct with a diplomat, it was apparent in his address that this declaration was due to a long series of conflicts between the groups in Texas, like the Great Raid of 1840 and the Battle of Salado Creek, all culminating in the Mexican-American War.⁶¹

The Mexican-American War

Tejanos were upset with the government of the Republic and felt slighted by its shortcomings. The unfulfilled promises of the provisions given in the Constitution of the Republic of Texas, the mistreatments suffered by Mexican Americans in Texas, and the rising tensions between both the Mexican government and the Indigenous groups in the area caused another exodus to Mexico for many of these individuals. It also caused many Tejanos to join the

⁵⁸ Donaly E Brice. *The Great Comanche Raid: Boldest Indian Attack on the Texas Republic* McGowan Book Co. 1987

⁵⁹ Clary, 2009, 43

⁶⁰ James K Polk. "Speech by President James K. Polk, May 11, 1846." DMWV. 1846.

⁶¹ Thomas W. Cutrer, "Salado Creek, Battle Of," *Handbook of Texas Online*; Brooks, 1845

Mexican army against the United States during the Mexican-American War. This partly accounts for the lack of Mexican American involvement on the United States side of the Mexican-American War. One of these individuals who assisted during the Texas Revolution and later switched to the Mexican army is José María Jesús Carbajal who held prominent positions in Bexar and integrated himself greatly into United States culture. He commanded part of the Mexican army against the United States in 1846 as the highest-ranking Tejano officer. Many others joined Mexico but held lower positions in the army.⁶²

Another reason Tejanos may not have sided with their fellow Anglo-Texans on the side of the United States is because of the mass distrust of the identity of the Mexican American people amid a growing Anglo-Southerner population.⁶³ Although their help during the Texas revolution was gladly welcomed, Tejanos were largely not involved in the Mexican-American War due to the morphing of Texas society's opinion during the Republic regarding their identity in Texas. Carlos de la Garza is one example of these Mexican Americans who were not trusted because he offered asylum to those who were immigrating back to Mexico. Anglo-Texans observed this and assumed he was housing spies.⁶⁴ The Anglo archive in Texas reveals the mistrust of Tejanos in the personal accounts of United State participants such as Davy Crockett and John Calhoun. Davy Crockett details the excitement and enthusiasm he and his fellow soldiers had at the beginning of their adventures in Texas which quickly intensified into a hunger for violence. Their assumptions of the manipulations by the Mexican people are especially apparent in his entry from February 22, 1836: "Some of the Scouts came in and bring reports that Santa Anna has been endeavoring to excite the Indians to hostilities against the Texans, but so far without

⁶² Harbert Davenport. "General José María Jesús Carabajal." *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (1952): 475–83.

⁶³ Crisp, 1976. 39

⁶⁴ Hobart Huson, "Garza, Carlos de la," *Handbook of Texas Online*

effect,” proving that Anglo-Texans believed Mexico was fabricating conflict against them.⁶⁵ John Calhoun made speeches and wrote letters advocating for strong offensive military strategies against the Mexican people because of the military prowess they displayed in the war and the threat Calhoun believed they posed.⁶⁶

Legislation and Treatment of Early Tejanos

After the Mexican-American War, the United States made attempts to incorporate the Tejanos as citizens, starting with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. This treaty was signed in response to the victory of the United States in the Mexican-American War and articles eight and nine attempted to implement rights given to these new citizens. These articles were broad, however, with article nine stating: “The Mexicans who, in the territories aforesaid, shall not preserve the character of citizens of the Mexican Republic, conformably with what is stipulated in the preceding article, shall be incorporated into the Union of the United States”.⁶⁷ This article allowed different interpretations, all limiting the United States citizenship and rights of Tejanos. Although the 1836 Constitution for the Republic of Texas required provisions and full rights to be afforded to Tejanos, the Treaty of Guadalupe fell short of these requirements.⁶⁸ The first constitution of the state of Texas was written in 1845 and this document contained specific allowances for the enslaving of individuals in Texas and did not include any distinct comments on the equality of all men in the state, removing previous protections.⁶⁹ The Tejanos who were in the territories now owned by the United States, and elected not to move to the

⁶⁵ Davy Crockett, *Exploits and Adventures in Texas*, ed. Colonel Crockett in *History in the First Person: Eyewitnesses of Great Events: They Saw It Happen*, ed. Louis Leo Snyder and Richard B. Morris (Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole Co., 1951), 73

⁶⁶ J. C. Calhoun, “MR. CALHOUN TO MR. HOWARD. Department of State, Washington, Sept. 10, 1844.” *Niles’ National Register* 16, no. 15 (December 14, 1844): 234.

⁶⁷ *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo* [Exchange copy]; 2/2/1848; Perfected Treaties, 1778 - 1945; General Records of the United States Government, Record Group 11; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

⁶⁸ “*Constitution of the Republic of Texas*” (1836). Tarlton Law Library at Tarlton Law Library, 1836.

⁶⁹ “*Constitution of the State of Texas, adopted in Convention, at the City of Austin 1845*”. Austin: Printed at the Office of the ‘New Era’, 1845.

newly established Mexican territory, no longer had a right to their Mexican citizenship and the full rights afforded to them in their old country. The decision to incorporate them into the United States was completed with minimal attention, causing extreme tensions in the territory as the citizenship of Tejanos was placed under debate.⁷⁰

It is estimated that around two thousand Mexican people decided to move across the newly established Mexican and United States border with the Mexican government encouraging this and providing resources to aid them.⁷¹ Some Mexican people elected to stay in Texas, becoming Tejano, and these individuals on the side of the United States after the border formation were suddenly left citizenship in their home country. Tejanos were stripped of their citizenship and rights that they possessed in the territory they had previously called their home. Even during the attempts at unifying Texas, with the “Joint Resolution for the Admission of the State of Texas into the Union” passed in 1845, the viability of the Tejano people in the territory as citizens was widely disputed.⁷² With the admission of Texas into the Union, José Antonio Navarro became the first and only Mexican delegate in the constitutional convention, and the racism that he experienced there was just a taste of the racism experienced by those in Texas.⁷³ Because of their skin color, or lack of whiteness, the Mexican people were assumed to be more “vulgar and unabashed”.⁷⁴ They were considered the lowest species of humanity, lower than the enslaved people in Texas, and Anglo people would gather to watch them dance as a spectacle, as reported by George Wilkins Kendall in 1841.⁷⁵ Mexican women were treated as sexual conquests

⁷⁰ Weber, 2003, 37

⁷¹ Rosales, 2000, 43

⁷² “*United States Congress. Joint Resolution for the Admission of the State of Texas into the Union.*” 1845.

⁷³ Nancie L. González, *The Spanish-Americans of New Mexico a Heritage of Pride* (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1969). 163

⁷⁴ De Leon, 1983. 37; Muir, Andrew Forest. *Texas In 1837: An Anonymous, Contemporary Narrative*. Basel/Berlin/Boston: University of Texas Press, 1988. 106

⁷⁵ Kendall, George Wilkins. *Narrative of an Expedition Across the Great Southwestern Prairies, from Texas to Santa Fé*. Nabu Press. 1845

and many were assaulted during the Texas Republic, but few interracial marriages occurred because of a desire to keep the Anglo race “uncontaminated”.⁷⁶

Those who persevered through these difficulties and remained in Texas carried on with the fight for their citizenship and continued to experience the pushback of the rapidly increasing Southerner population. Texas was developing an Anglo-majority population, with people settling there through the mass westward expansion in the 1850s.⁷⁷ The renewed hostility brought by the new settlers was incredibly racially motivated with increasing discrimination based on Tejano’s appearance. The *mestizo*⁷⁸ nature of most of these individuals were looked down upon with disgust by the Anglo settlers who had not come across this race before.⁷⁹

Tejanos were resistant to their incorporation into the United States, citing honor and a desire to retain their Mexican roots and culture.⁸⁰ The long history of tensions between the groups made it difficult to find common ground. Any attempts at assimilation on the part of Tejanos were thwarted by increasing systemic discrimination being enforced through the works of Anglo Southerners like John Calhoun who firmly believed in the inferiority of the Mexican race.⁸¹ The Compromise of 1850 formed firm borders in Texas that solidified the identity of Tejanos and somewhat put an end to the majority of the debate against their US citizenship.⁸²

The general sentiments of the new American and Texas citizens towards Tejanos were largely unfavorable. Mistreatments experienced by Mexican Americans everywhere were written about extensively, like the Mission Camp murder where a Mexican American was murdered,

⁷⁶ De Leon, 1983. 39-46

⁷⁷ Modern School Supply Company, and E. W. A Rowles. *The comprehensive series, historical-geographical maps of the United States*. [Chicago, Ill.: Modern School Supply Co, 1919] Map.

⁷⁸ Mixed race individuals including Spanish and various Indigenous ancestries.

⁷⁹ De León, 1983, 83; Muir, 1988. 106

⁸⁰ Garcia, 1963. 62

⁸¹ David J Weber and John C. Calhoun. “*The Government of a white race*” in *Foreigners in Their Native Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003. 32

⁸² “*The Compromise of 1850*.” National Archives and Records Administration. National Archives and Records Administration, 1850.

written about in a letter from the Secretary of the Arizona Territory.⁸³ Anglo-American citizens assumed that Mexican Americans were lazy and misguided people who did not have Protestant morals or work ethics. They were accused of being greedy and violent like in a letter from F. W. Meyer (1910), stating, “Something MUST be done to protect Americans in Mexico. Because... the Mexicans murder good Americans.”⁸⁴ The Anglo-Southerners had no desire to make a peaceful effort to interact with or teach the Tejanos their culture to build stronger relations. Some assimilation strategies involved stripping their culture and aggressively enforcing the Southern culture through schooling and violence, like the dangers faced from the growing Texas Rangers in 1835.⁸⁵ Lynching and other violence against Mexican Americans became a regular political tool that Southerners employed as they attempted to segregate Texas and remove the Tejanos from “their land.”⁸⁶ As Anglo Southerners captured political power through racist violence, the canyon between the “white race” and Tejanos increased.

These mistreatments caused the Tejanos to grow even more resistant, so the groups remained separate and the cultural differences between them deepened.⁸⁷ The tensions resulted in poll taxes and *grandfather clauses*⁸⁸ in the 1860s that limited the voting rights of Tejanos, causing their citizenship to become limited. Other discriminations against them included loss of land, exclusion from education beginning in the 1840s, and the establishment of a firm class system that placed Tejanos on the bottom. The once affluent individuals who held large amounts

⁸³ “Correspondence of the Secretary of the Arizona Territory, 1864-1893,” 1860.

⁸⁴ Rosales, 2000. 10, 51

⁸⁵ Frederick Eby, *The Development of Education in Texas*. New York: Macmillan, 1925. 42; Newton, Michael. *The Texas Rangers*. New York: Chelsea House, 2011. 12

⁸⁶ Arnaldo de León and Robert A. Calvert, “Civil Rights,” *Handbook of Texas Online*,

⁸⁷ David J Weber, William Rogers, and Robert Stockton. “A duty before God” in *Foreigners in Their Native Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003. 45

⁸⁸ Clauses from some constitutions of states preventing voting restrictions from being placed on those who are descendants of voters, causing newer citizens to have their voting rights taken away in a more simple manner.

of power and land in Texas before the War were suddenly impoverished and struggling to maintain their position in society.

Tejanos in the Civil War

Tejanos participated in the Confederacy during the American Civil war, although this decision seems to be counterintuitive. Their participation went directly against the Mexican stance on enslavement which was abolished in Mexico in 1829. The Tejanos decided to fight in the war on the side of those who had been mistreating them during the Republic of Texas and after the admittance of Texas to the United States. Although the process of this decision may seem meaningless, the Tejanos were acting strategically to further themselves in Texas society. They were at the bottom of the class structure, with limits to their education, vocations, and civil rights. They assumed that their military participation would afford them natural rights as their Anglo neighbors grew to trust in them.

Although participation in the Confederacy was prevalent, *Unionism*⁸⁹ sentiment was also an essential part of Texas culture, especially among Tejanos. Those who sided with the North did so based on the United States protection in the western frontier, the better economic and political stability of the North, and the desire to be a part of an established nation. The prevalence of pro-enslavement Anglo-Texans dictated the ultimate choice to join the confederacy.⁹⁰ Other reasons for the participation of Tejanos in the Confederacy were their desire to remain close to home to protect their own. Many knew that their participation in the Civil War could be compulsory because of the Confederate Conscription Acts which ranged from 1862 to 1864, requiring certain individuals to participate in the war with few provisions added later.⁹¹ The men

⁸⁹ Supporters of the North

⁹⁰ Claude Elliott, "Union Sentiment in Texas, 1861–1865," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 50 (April 1947)

⁹¹ "An Act to further provide for the public defense", approved April 16, 1862.

preferred to join the war on their terms and closer to home. Were they to join the Union, this would have sent them to the North to fight, leaving their families vulnerable.

Meanwhile, other Mexican Americans in the United States at this time appear to have joined the Union's cause, receiving more recognition and higher rank. In the book, *Libby Life, Experiences of a prisoner of war in Richmond, VA, 1863-1865*, Federico Fernández Cavada discusses his experience as a prisoner in Confederate Virginia.⁹² This memoir showed that Mexican Americans living in places like Arizona and California were joining the Union in the Civil War, and they were more aligned with the anti-enslavement beliefs of Mexico. Some significant Mexican American participants include Diego Archuleta, a Mexican American General from New Mexico. Archuleta served in the Mexican army during the Mexican-American War and then joined the New Mexico Militia during the Civil War to protect his political interests, although he previously supported the Confederacy.⁹³ Another important Mexican American during the Civil War was Antonio María de la Guerra, a California Senator and Civil War Captain.⁹⁴

Tejanos enlisted in the War and many took important positions in the Texas military, fighting along the Rio Grande on the South side of the war. Some important figures include Santos Benavides, the highest-ranking Tejano as a colonel in the Confederate army. He held a very important role in the cotton industry of the Confederacy, making money for them during the War by securing a transportation route for the cotton to Mexico.⁹⁵ The payroll of Santos Benavides' mounted volunteers showed the influence that he had during the war and the number

⁹² Cavada Fernández Federico. (1865). *Libby Life: Experiences of a prisoner of war in Richmond, Va 1863-65*. J.P. Lippincott & Co.

⁹³ Paul Pierpaoli. "Archuleta, Diego." *The Encyclopedia of the Mexican-American War: A Political, Social, and Military History*, 2013.

⁹⁴ *Records of California men in the war of the rebellion 1861 to 1867* By California. Adjutant General's Office, SACRAMENTO: State Office, J. D. Young, Supt. State Printing. 1890.

⁹⁵ Jerry Don Thompson, *Vaqueros in Blue and Gray* (Austin: Presidial, 1976). 73

of men he commanded.⁹⁶ Another individual involved in the War was José Rafael de la Garza who was a commander in the Civil War stationed in Louisiana. He remained in this position until his death on the battlefield in the Battle of Mansfield in 1864.⁹⁷

Many Tejanos held lower positions in the Confederacy because of their status during the Civil War but still had large impacts on the outcomes. The Civil War is when the term Tejano began to be used widely to identify those who fought in the Benavides Regiment or General Henry Hopkins Sibley's army of New Mexico. The majority of the battles that were fought by these groups were along the Mexican border and in other areas in the South like the Battles of Laredo, Valverde, and the Second Battle of Sabine pass.⁹⁸ The Battle of Laredo was fought in Texas to establish a route for cotton to Mexico. The Battle of Valverde was fought by Sibley's army, with several from the confederate cavalry in Texas.

After the war, the mistreatments against Mexican Americans caused a second mass exodus back to Mexican territory in the 1860s, and the Mexican government continued to aid these migrations through the end of the nineteenth century.⁹⁹ It was clear to them that there would not be opportunities for them in the United States and the fight for civil rights was proving futile.

Conclusion

Despite the prominent and involved role of Tejanos alongside Southern settlers in the Revolution against Mexico, racial and eventually systemic discrimination developed as the population of Anglo-Southerners increased, bringing their race-based class views with them.

⁹⁶ MR 1188, *Confederate and Texas State Troops military rolls, Texas Adjutant General's Department Civil War military rolls* (March 21, 1861). Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

⁹⁷ Thompson, 1976. 82

⁹⁸ Thomas W Cutrer. *Theater of a Separate War The Civil War West of the Mississippi River, 1861–1865*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017). 132

⁹⁹ Weber, 2003, 25

To establish trust and respect between themselves and their Anglo neighbors, Tejanos continued to engage in social participation, and, during the Civil War, military service, largely in the Confederate Army; their efforts ended in disappointment.

The tumultuous experience of Mexican Americans in Texas, ranging from troubles with national identity to difficulty in attaining civil rights as citizens of the United States, has continued to have impacts on Mexican Americans today. Throughout their ambivalence to American culture and the discrimination they faced from the Anglo settlers in their land, Mexican Americans continued to play an active role in their fight for civil rights. Their participation in the Civil War could be explained by their desire to establish themselves as loyal citizens of the United States, along with all the benefits it brings. Spanish America was ruled by wealth and power, and status was based upon these requirements. The Mexican people were entering the race-based class system of the United States with little understanding of the lack of control they had over their status. A class system based upon race leaves little power in the hands of those who are not considered “white”. During the Texas Revolution, Mexican people like José Antonio Navarro and Juan Seguín operated under the assumption that their wealth and power gave them the same status as their Anglo counterparts. This notion that the Mexican people had quickly changed during the Texas Republic with the influx of Anglo settlers and Tejanos began to fight for civil rights any way they could, including military service. Despite their important contributions to Confederate military efforts, Tejanos continued to endure racial discrimination; many fled to Mexico, and those that remained upheld their fight for civil rights.

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