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*EARLY MEXICAN-AMERICAN RESPONSES TO
NEGATIVE STEREOTYPING*

DORIS L. MEYER

A LARGE proportion of the writing of Anglo-American travelers to Mexico in the early nineteenth century shows that they thought that the Mexicans were an inferior people.¹ This was not only because Mexican social and religious customs were different and therefore suspect, but also because they were a racial mixture and thus considered biologically inferior.² Most early travelers firmly believed in Anglo-Saxon supremacy and its corresponding expansionist political philosophy; as a recent study points out: “. . . there was a distinct belief afloat not only that the Anglo-Saxon was really a superior race, but also that the Anglo-Saxon peoples had a kind of regenerative function to perform in Mexico—if not elsewhere.”³ From this perspective, Anglos judged Mexicans as feudalistic, indolent and morally corrupt. According to Cecil Robinson in his analysis of Mexicans in American literature, “. . . to the early writers the Mexican was just plain lazy and deserved to lose out, as he surely would to the energetic productive northerner.”⁴

Nineteenth century Anglo writers were influenced in their negative opinion of Mexicans by earlier prejudices dating back three centuries to the conflict between Protestant England and Catholic Spain. As David Weber observed in his study of the historical roots of Mexican-Americans:

Anti-Spanish views inherited from England were far more complex than simple anti-Catholicism, however. The English colonists also believed that Spanish government was authoritarian, corrupt and decadent, and that Spaniards were bigoted, cruel, greedy, tyrannical, fanatical, treacherous and lazy. In responding to these

charges, Spanish historians have found it convenient to give them a pejorative label: the Black Legend.⁵

In addition to these prejudices, the early nineteenth century writers did not distinguish between the frontier Mexicans, with whom they generally came in contact, and the Mexicans of the central part of the country whose culture was more developed. As Weber added:

If Americans found these frontier Mexicans ignorant and economically backward, it was because schools scarcely existed and because the frontier was too isolated to enter fully into the economic life of the rest of the nation. . . . Anglos generalized about frontier society, assuming that it typified all of Mexico.⁶

If this combination of prejudices and misunderstandings was not sufficient fuel for anti-Mexican sentiments, the relatively easy victory of U.S. troops in the Mexican War of 1846 increased the Anglo-American sense of superiority and added to their contempt for the defeated Mexicans.⁷ The fact that the invasion was maneuvered by the politics of Polk's "Manifest Destiny" was not then considered morally reprehensible. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which was negotiated in 1848 guaranteed to all Mexicans in the ceded territory "all the rights of citizens of the United States" (Article IX). But the guarantees in writing did not change the prevailing Anglo sentiment that Mexican-Americans were second-class citizens.

Writers of western dime novels, popular in the late nineteenth century, perpetuated existing prejudices and often referred to Mexicans as "greasers," a term that was also used in the Eastern press.⁸ Paradoxically, other authors at the end of the century preferred to romanticize the "mission culture" of the southwest giving rise to the equally inaccurate stereotypes of the gallant hidalgo and the picturesque peon and his burro. Thus, as Philip Ortego has observed, "Mexican-Americans have been characterized at both ends of a spectrum of human behavior (seldom in the middle) as untrustworthy, villainous, ruthless, tequila-drinking, philandering *machos*, or as courteous, devout, and fatalistic peasants who are to be treated more as pets than people."⁹

The negative stereotyping of Mexican-Americans was, therefore, the result of a combination of influences and circumstances that were accepted by many Anglo-Americans in the late 1800s, particularly by those who had no direct contact with the Southwest and who merely echoed old prejudices. The effects it had upon the lives of Mexican-Americans were far-reaching as the two cultures adjusted to one another, especially in the territory of New Mexico, home of the oldest Spanish-speaking settlements in the Southwest. Local and national hostilities toward Mexican-Americans influenced issues such as statehood, public education, land ownership as well as social contacts.¹⁰ Mexican-Americans in New Mexico were well aware of the prejudices they faced and the threat that negative stereotyping posed to their rights as citizens of the U.S. and to their ability to preserve their own culture. Evidence of this awareness is found in the Spanish-language newspapers of the period, a prime source of Mexican-American intellectual history in view of the fact that little other contemporary material in Spanish has survived.¹¹

The newspapers reveal a three-part reaction by Mexican-Americans to negative stereotyping—first, an awareness of being rejected on the grounds of inferiority or unfitness, especially regarding the ongoing quest for statehood; second, a strong defensive reaction critical of unfounded negative stereotyping; and third, a campaign to transform the image of Mexican-Americans through education. Both in prose and verse, journalists and ordinary citizens expressed concern for the future dignity and well-being of Mexican-Americans in New Mexico burdened by the onus of negative stereotypes. A sampling of their ideas will demonstrate that, almost a hundred years ago, there was among Mexican-Americans a sense of identity and purpose which, in itself, contradicts the common pejorative notion that they were a passive and fatalistic people.

Among articles of the first type is a letter to the editor of *El Nuevo Mexicano* in Santa Fe which was published on the front page of the September 13, 1890 issue. Its author, "R.M.F.," wrote to express his outrage over the proposed visit of a congressional sub-committee to New Mexico with the intent of assessing the New Mexicans' capacity for self-government. He pointed out that such

action was unprecedented and unnecessary and that it constituted a direct insult to the people of the territory. He went on to say that the Democrats were to blame for spreading the idea in Congress that New Mexicans were not ready for statehood, and he urged the electorate to vote them out of office. Notwithstanding the political rivalry behind the allegations, the letter indicates that a negative image of Mexican-Americans was affecting the exercise of their political rights as guaranteed by the Treaty of 1848. The author's words show the resentment that many Mexican-Americans must have felt.

This is the height of injustice, which is already excessive, heaped upon this people by a few ambitious and unprincipled demagogues. . . . This is another indignity, this investigatory commission brought upon us by the democratic party, and which leads us to exclaim: how long will the Lord permit this people to endure abuses of this nature by certain men whose only aim is to keep them and the territory in political vassalage with the object of their getting fat on the spoils of the job. It is time now that our native population shake off this yoke which for so long has kept them in political slavery.¹²

A similar sentiment is expressed in an anonymous poem entitled "Lo de siempre" published in *El Nuevo Mexicano*, February 5, 1898. It begins with the following verse:

<i>No quiso el Tio Samuel</i>	(Uncle Sam has refused
<i>Admitirnos como estado</i>	To admit us as a State
<i>Y al Nuevo México fiel</i>	And faithful New Mexico
<i>El Congreso ha rechazado.</i>	Has been rejected by Congress.)

Remembering that it was exactly fifty years ago that statehood was promised to New Mexico, the poet indicated in his imagery that the delay was due to the poverty and defenselessness which New Mexicans had not been able to overcome:

<i>Cual harapiento mendigo</i>	(Like a ragged beggar
<i>De la puerta nos despiden</i>	They dispatch us from the door
<i>Y en contra nuestra deciden</i>	And they decide against us
<i>Sin proceso ni testigo.</i>	Without trial or witness.)

The only solution the author could suggest was the hope that Congress would reconsider its irrational actions:

<i>La esperanza es el consuelo</i>	(Hope is the consolation
<i>De las almas afligidas,</i>	Of afflicted souls
<i>Que al sentirse doloridas</i>	Who feeling pained,
<i>Dirigen su vista al cielo;</i>	Direct their sight to heaven;
<i>No se logró nuestro anhelo</i>	Our desire was not achieved
<i>En el caso ya pasado</i>	In the term just passed
<i>Pero se verá logrado</i>	But it will be successful
<i>Y tendrá nueva atención</i>	And will get new attention,
<i>Eso esta que sin razón</i>	This case which without reason
<i>El Congreso ha rechazado.</i>	Has been rejected by Congress.)

In another newspaper, *El Nuevo Mundo* of Albuquerque, an editorial of July 17, 1897, deals with the same theme; its author also referred to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and its guarantees which had been overlooked:

We have often looked with impartial determination for the motives that both the House and Senate could have to deny us the fair right that we have to claim our elevation to statehood; but unfortunately, we have not been able to find any satisfactory explanation; since our population statistics and natural resources have all made us suppose that this territory, under Statehood, would in a very short time be able to vie with if not surpass the rest of the States of the American Confederation.

All of the above Mexican-American writers realized that New Mexico was being discriminated against unjustly by Congress, and expressions of outrage, exasperation and puzzlement are the dominant motifs of their work. None of the above suggests specifically that negative stereotyping of Mexican-Americans was responsible for congressional disapproval. Nevertheless there exists an idea of the variety of psychological tensions that this rejection produced and an indication that Mexican-Americans were becoming painfully familiar with their forced role as "unqualified" citizens.

Other Mexican-Americans were not content to vent their emotional frustrations or speculate as to why they were on the defensive. They went a step further and met the problem head-on by

discussing the existence of negative stereotyping, the reasons for it and the injustices which it represented. These writers were primarily Mexican-American journalists writing anonymously in response to frequent criticisms and insults directed at native New Mexicans by eastern journalists, travelers and politicians. Their rebuttals are examples of forceful journalistic prose, based on reasoned arguments with frequent touches of sarcasm aimed at the eastern critics. Two of these essays in particular cited represent the composite Mexican-American attitude toward negative stereotyping in the 1890s. The first is from *El Nuevo Mundo*, Albuquerque, May 29, 1897.

YESTERDAY AND TODAY: Something about the Past and Present of New Mexico.

If the TUBERCULARS who come to seek health in the benign quality of our climate and the pure breezes of our mountains; if the INTELLIGENT tourists who, from the window of a PULLMAN running at a speed of 60 miles an hour, perform the miracle of studying our people and their customs had judgement, or even the rudiments of instruction, the eastern press would neither fill its columns with unbelievable tales nor would it feed its innocent readers with stories in which, in such a stupid and unjust manner, they criticize the limited culture of a people who instead of feeling shame should be even more proud of carrying in their veins the blood of two illustrious as well as heroic races; since the Aztecs as much as the Spaniards, for their prowess, valor and lineage, have become justly worthy of the bronze of immortality of the imperishable crown of glory.

Hernando de Cortés, Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, Netzagualcoyotl, Cuahutemoc, and a thousand wise men and warriors of the Iberians and indigenous races, are with great justice the pride of today's generations who, through the dense fog of the centuries, can still admire their epic deed feeling their heart beat with noble and blessed praise.

But let's leave digressions behind; as we said before, the articles, or rather the undeserved invectives, that appear from time to time in the newspapers of the East do not have, in all justice, any reason for being; since the tourists that write them (only with the aim of publicizing their travel impressions) are very far from being educated or informed persons; the SO-CALLED WRITERS of this sort are excursionists who travel for PLEASURE and this says it all. These original critics establish their points of comparison between the best classes of the cities of New York or Chicago with the lowliest of our people, and thus the natural discordance of the TRAVEL NOTES and the lack of foundation of the insults to our race which they accuse of being dirty, ignorant, unattractive, etc., etc. But if these travelers made a just and fair comparison among equal classes of society, then the victory would be ours; since not now nor ever have our people lived like the ANGLOS in true pigsties located in the neighborhoods of New York, for ex-

ample. From the descriptions of these tourists we are considered more barbarous than the ancient redskins, found in this country by the Breton conquerors, and it is just a miracle that they do not consider us cannibals. If these train-bound passengers would like to take the trouble to study even a little the history of these regions, they would understand that the brave colonizer who had to devote half his time to the struggle for survival and the other half to conducting campaigns against the indomitable Apache and bloody Navajo who frequently robbed many of his cattle, he would understand that that colonizer, like today, would not be able to rest in a comfortable hammock to enjoy the beauties of Lord Byron's poems, the sublime scenes of Shakespeare, the famous parliamentary speeches of the Girondins or those of Gladstone or Bismark.

Take a look back to the past, reflect a bit on the situation of the colonizer in those times, and later, let it be said frankly if these attacks are just or unjust. The topographic system of this territory isolated it naturally from the large centers of knowledge and culture; its enormous deserts plagued by savages and dangers were a constant obstacle for the governments of Spain and Mexico to do something for the inhabitants of its borders, and nevertheless think of the memorable New Mexicans like the Archuletas, the Chavez, the Bacas, the Armijos, the Gallegos and Martinez, and you will see how false and calumnious these judgements are.

Today everything has changed: the savage does not rob or kill in the desert; the smoke of the country campfires has been substituted with that of locomotives, smelters and factories; the veins of steel of the railroad have put us in contact with the great centers of civilization, and in the formerly arid deserts are rising beautiful and modern towns which have all the comforts and advantages that in their laboratories our most illustrious inventors have known how to cull from the mysteries of progress. The marvels of Franklin, Tesla and Edison are familiar today to the native who lives in the capitals of New Mexico, who, like his countrymen, knows how to applaud and admire them.

But what has been the result of the metamorphosis of New Mexico? Unfortunately for our race, there has been no improvement whatsoever. The railroads killed the traffic of our old cart trains; our agricultural products cannot compete with those that come to us from Colorado and California, and our only present resource, our wools, cannot face the competition of those that are imported from Australia and Argentina. In education our people have gone ahead very little, since it is well known that the institutions of public schooling date from very few years back, owing their improvement, without any doubt, to the diligence of the intelligent Mr. Amado Chavez, first Superintendent of Public Instruction in New Mexico. One can see, then, that making a very cursory study of the past and present, one comes to the conclusion that the exaggerated American progress has hardly benefited at all our popular masses and it is urgent that the government pay attention to this that we in general outlines have tried to point out so that it may be seen how some more practical educational institutions might be set up that could give a better result to the children and youth of New Mexico; since it has been noticed by natives and foreigners alike that the Agriculture and Mining

schools are unnecessary. Let's hope that we who have sincerely sought the true progress of our race can someday, just as today we condemn the indifference of the government, be able to praise some way that may give to New Mexico a true *pléiade* of laborious artisans and knowledgeable skilled workers, the only hope for the salvation of our race which from day to day gets weaker; if this does not happen, like the former indigenous owners of this country, the descendants of today's New Mexicans will have also to emigrate to another land, leaving in the hands of strangers the tombs in which sleep those equally brave and honest colonizers who, in spite of their ignorance, know how to receive with open arms those who shortly after would become CORRESPONDENTS in order to heap insults upon them in their press and their books.

The second is from *La Voz del Pueblo*, Las Vegas, August 7, 1897.

In the view of the people of New Mexico, in the opinion of every man who possesses a heart and soul and in whose character there exists nobility, one does not judge a whole people to be bad because they are poor or because they are ignorant, especially when the blame for their ignorance rests with the government under whose protection they live. And the person or persons who make such judgements are themselves the best evidence of their own low character, of their own baseness.

For our part in New Mexico we have always admired the intelligence of our Anglo-American compatriots; we always give each one and all of them the support and respect they deserve because we do not blind ourselves with worry or with vanity. Hundreds of Anglo-American citizens still live today who have entered our land poor, discouraged, hungry and even ragged; we, inspired by the generosity that has been ours in New Mexico, extended them a cordial welcome, offering them the best place that our humble homes had; we offered them opportunity, even making them head of our public and private businesses; we gave them to understand with our behavior that we were not experts in the art of making money, but we were men who believed that good treatment of one man by another and the formality of his work and the sacred nature of friendship were worth more than money. They, carried by their irresistible characteristic, put their five senses to accumulating money; we said, enjoy it in good fortune, although it was to our own pecuniary disadvantage; but now in turn, many of them have cloaked themselves in the blackest ingratitude, recognizing us as inferior beings, as citizens useless to our government, of course always with the idea in view that money is God, is government, is everything, and we don't possess this God; but we, the people of New Mexico, although we may have been left generally without means and even rights for having been so docile in the past, although we don't know the art of the so rarified civilization in which only money is valued, although a large majority of us may not have the means to polish ourselves, we have left a proud satisfaction, and it is that our story proves that we showed our Anglo-American compatriots a pure heart and a generous hand when they needed it to the point of perishing. Now if they insist on wanting to scorn us, looking at us only with greedy eyes, recognizing us only as good subjects for exploitation, we will tell them without mental reservation, we still have

a heritage, and this is the gentility of men, the persistence in maintaining that there are many other virtues that are worth more than money: to disdain baseness though it may be cloaked in gold, and we rest with that satisfaction much more tranquil than the civilized gentlemen who accumulate millions using the legislatures and even the national Congress so that their ("trust") combination of infamies becomes fatter at the expense of ignorant ones like they consider us to be. . . ."

Both articles make the point that Mexican-Americans have much to be proud of in their history and culture, and that they have no cause to feel inferior to the easterners. Also, both authors emphasized that what Mexican-Americans lacked in education and material well-being was largely the fault of the United States government which failed to live up to its promises. Moreover, both authors attribute negative criticisms of New Mexico to a lack of understanding on the part of easterners of the past history and present realities of the territory and the people they so freely insulted. They saw Anglo-Americans in general as blinded in their cultural relations with Mexican-Americans by their pursuit of the "almighty dollar."

One aspect of the negative stereotype often found in the eastern press is the suggestion that Mexican-Americans were aliens, non-Americans.¹³ When the war with Cuba was declared in 1898 and President McKinley called for volunteers, many Mexican-Americans responded, ironically finding themselves fighting against their "mother country," Spain, and on the side of their "adopted country" which as yet did not consider them true sons. For most Mexican-Americans, there was no question of divided loyalties; they considered themselves Americans, cultural differences notwithstanding. One small article in the May 14, 1898, issue of *El Nuevo Mexicano* expressed this viewpoint; interestingly enough, it was written to chastise certain disruptive elements among local Spanish-speakers who apparently felt otherwise:

A Warning to Interested Parties

This is a very necessary warning. All citizens and those who reside in the country, whatever their nationality, race or blood ties may be, must remember that they are living under this government and enjoying its beneficent protection. In time of war it is often necessary to make examples. It is said that some people in this territory born elsewhere are those who are promoting the doctrine that the sympathies of the citizens of Mexican origin should be on

the side of Spain. This could be construed, in case of necessity, as a crime of treason and the punishment imposed would be very harsh if the authorities of the United States were to get involved in the matter. A warning to those who can read and want to learn is sufficient. Those to whom it applies would do well to avoid difficulties and not expose themselves to the indignation and anger of the many thousands of patriotic citizens that there are in New Mexico.

In addition to their loyalty, the bravery of Mexican-Americans was questioned. According to Robinson, "Of the words used by early American writers to describe Mexicans, one of the most frequent to appear is the word *cowardly*,"¹⁴ This accusation was particularly resented by Mexican-Americans when their sons were fighting voluntarily in the war of 1898. The following poem, one of several of a similar nature, appeared in *El Nuevo Mexicano* on May 28, 1898:

The Voice of the Hispano

<i>Muchas son las opiniones</i>	(Many are the opinions
<i>En contra del pueblo hispano,</i>	Against the Hispanic people,
<i>Y le acusan de traidor</i>	And they accuse them of betraying
<i>Al gobierno americano</i>	The American government.
<i>Haciendo un experimento,</i>	Making an experiment,
<i>Quedarán desengañados,</i>	They will be disillusioned,
<i>Que nuestros bravos nativos</i>	Our brave native men
<i>No rehusan ser soldados,</i>	Do not refuse to be soliders.
<i>No importa lo que se diga</i>	It matters not what is said
<i>Y difame de su fama,</i>	Or how our fame is insulted,
<i>Pero pelearán gustosos</i>	As they will fight with pleasure
<i>Por el águila americana,</i>	For the American eagle.
<i>A nuestro pueblo nativo</i>	They accuse our native people
<i>Le acusan de ser canalla,</i>	Of being rabble
<i>Pero no ha demostrado serlo,</i>	But they have not proven to be so
<i>En el campo de batalla. . . .</i>	On the battlefield.
<i>Como buenos compatriotas</i>	Like good countrymen
<i>Y fieles americanos,</i>	And faithful Americans
<i>Libraremos de ese yugo</i>	We will free from that yoke
<i>A los humildes cubanos. . . .</i>	The humble Cubans.)

Comparison of these sentiments with those more recently expressed regarding the Vietnam conflict make it apparent that the

Mexican-American has long suffered suspicions regarding his bravery and patriotism despite battlefield records to the contrary.¹⁵

Perhaps the most important aspect of the response by Mexican-Americans to negative stereotyping was the campaign launched in the Spanish-language press in the late nineteenth century to urge its readers to try to overcome the one major weakness which, in its opinion, had given rise to the negative image; the lack of a good education. Insisting that this weakness was as much the fault of years of negligence by the federal government as it was of the people themselves, the newspapers tried to build up Mexican-American morale and self-confidence while at the same time giving a frank appraisal of the obstacles at hand. Critics of Mexican-Americans had often cited their high illiteracy rate and lack of technological skills. Not taking into account the scarcity of educational opportunity in the early years of the territory, they attributed the low educational level of the masses to a general disregard for learning and an innate laziness.¹⁶ Suffering without doubt, Mexican-Americans were barred from equal participation in the economic, political and intellectual life of the territory by not being able to compete with others who were more educated. The enactment of a public school bill in 1891 made this topic even more timely, as the means to achieve the desired ends were now at least partially available.¹⁷

In contrast to the other two types of articles to which this study refers, these articles on education were directed almost exclusively to the Mexican-American public, not to the "outside world." A poem printed in *El Monitor* of Taos on July 2, 1891, stated the objective bluntly in these final verses:

*La educación busca presto
Ponla por mote en tu senda
Y verás cuan estupenda
Mostrará de manifiesta
Ser tuya la mejor prenda;
Haz tus hijos educar
Y aca les verás triunfar
Del yugo del servilismo;
Eso hace a todos lo mismo
Y al tirano hace temblar.*

(Seek out education quickly
Make it the motto of your life.
And you will see how stupendous
It will be shortly
To have the prize be yours;
Have your children be educated
And here you will see them triumph
Over the yoke of slavery;
This makes everyone equal
And causes the tyrant to tremble.)

A good education should be an equalizing social factor that brings with it freedom and progress.

One of the most respected newspapers of the time, *El Independiente* of Las Vegas, defined the duty of the press in this regard: ". . . It is the duty of the newspapers never to cease to inculcate in the people with its writings the overwhelming necessity that exists to make available a good education to our youth of both sexes." (September 1, 1894). The same newspaper published frequent articles in the 1890s relating to the various benefits which education would bring to Mexican-Americans. One particularly interesting article in the issue of April, 1895, called for someone to write a true history of New Mexico, adding that all histories written since 1846 "are reduced to exalting and referring the deeds of the conquerors without bothering at all with the events, vicissitudes, customs and intimate life of the true people of the Territory." What is needed, states the article, is someone capable of portraying "the steadfastness and courage of the people of the Spanish race," not just the Anglo-Saxon viewpoint.¹⁸ Without an educated populace, free of the inferiority complex bred by negative stereotyping, it added, no such histories would be forthcoming.¹⁹

Mexican-Americans in the late 1800s were very conscious of having "lost out" to Anglo competition in the business world. Not only were they unfamiliar with the latest technological advances, but they were also at a disadvantage in legal and financial dealings. Many newspaper articles of the period urged Mexican-Americans to acquire a practical education, and to learn trades essential to the industrial economy of the territory. The following excerpt from *El Nuevo Mundo* of June 12, 1897, squarely placed the burden of achievement and progress on the Mexican-American:

In previous eras, for reasons known to all, the means of education were more than difficult, impossible; but today, everything has changed: now it is not necessary to struggle with bands of roving Indians, a constant affliction of the civilization of other times. Our territory is full of schools and nursery schools in which our infants and youth are well educated, and if such is the case, even more censurable is the indifference of the old natives who want their

children to stay in a state of backwardness that can only cause shame to the average educated Hispanic American element.

It is essential that the Mexican people, and especially the poor, be convinced that there are thousands of means to earn an honorable living without having to turn to raising large or small herds of cattle, to wood cutting, and to endeavors which generally have to do with growing some cereals and grasses which are not sufficient to live on with decency, much less with relative comfort. Have the children and young people educate themselves well and you will see how the chisel of the carpenter, the anvil of the blacksmith, the loom of the weaver and the scissors of the tailor and many other noble jobs produce four times what is produced by the very hard and unproductive labors to which for years and years a large number of the poor people of New Mexico have been dedicated.

A frequent exhortation was directed at the need to imitate the Anglo's practical way of life; according to *La Voz del Pueblo*, February 15, 1896:

The Mexican is equal, if not superior, in intellect to the children of other races, but those of us who live in this Territory, on account of circumstances beyond our control, that is, on account of having been isolated from the centers of civilization, could not educate ourselves in times past; but now that we have the advantages at hand, we can supplement that deficiency. What is more, we are living next to the American, who due to circumstances is our brother, because we are protected by the same flag. Let's take then from him the knowledge which he has that is superior to ours and let's profit from it. This is the war we suggest to all New Mexicans: that they wrest from the Americans the practical knowledge he has of life, of business, just as he wrests from the bowels of the earth the precious metal.

The rhetoric of articles such as this one is clearly in line with the liberal philosophy of positivism which had developed a strong following among Mexican intellectuals in the late nineteenth century.²⁰ As interpreted in Mexico by such authors as Justo Sierra and Gavino Barrera, the philosophy of positivism was applied to educational reform with the objective of bringing about a new social order based on a practical and rational approach to life: "It

was thought that by means of a positivistic education a new type of man could eventually be created, free from all the defeats he had inherited from the colony ruled by Spain, a man with a great practical mind such as had made the United States and England the great leaders of modern civilization."²¹ To believe in the success of this philosophy required a kind of utopian faith in the power of education alone to transform society, and a certain blindness to socio-economic realities.²² In New Mexico, however, contrary to the *porfirista* society in Mexico, the obstacles which impeded the desired transformation were not primarily the lack of political and economic freedoms. Mexican-Americans were free to vote in their territory and to take part in a free enterprise system, assuming a degree of education sufficient to appraise them of their rights. The major obstacles faced by Mexican-Americans were racial bias and prejudice evident in negative stereotyping.

Some Mexican-Americans, not influenced by any sense of positivistic idealism, may have suspected this and may have consequently been skeptical about any "new order." The following excerpt from an article in *La Voz del Pueblo*, February 15, 1896, shows that doubts existed, even though journalists generally tried to dispel them:

Many of our people became discouraged and believe that although we may educate ourselves, it will always be the same; that is, that the Mexican, because he is Mexican will have to lose because he is hated by the American. This, in our views, is false and we will prove it. For this, we repeat again that we refer to the industrious American. He, if he is hiring, wants good service and it does not matter to him who renders it.

The consolation these assurances offered was still less than total acceptance of Mexican-Americans as equal citizens.

Nineteenth century negative stereotypes have been perpetuated in twentieth century anthropological and sociological texts which portray the Mexican-Americans as a single, passive group, trapped in a traditional culture from which only acculturation, supposedly, will free them. In the words of Octavio Romano, ". . . there has not been any significant change in views toward

Mexican-Americans for the past one hundred years,"²³ and no progress will be made until Mexican-Americans are seen as the complex people they are: "For, in truth, just as 'el puro mexicano' does not exist, neither does 'the pure Mexican-American,' despite massive efforts by social scientists to fabricate such a mythical being under the monolithic label of the 'Traditional Culture,' rather than the more realistic concept of multiple histories and philosophies."²⁴

Although it has not generally been known, the Spanish-language press in New Mexico at the end of the last century began combating the misconceptions which today's Chicano writers continue to denounce. Contrary to belief, Mexican-Americans have not been a "silent" minority. As one contemporary Chicano critic has correctly stated, ". . . society and especially social scientists have not heard the Mexican-American simply because they have not listened." As the voices of the past join those of the present, it will be harder and harder for any stereotypes to survive.

NOTES

1. Recent studies discussing these travelers and their writings which form the basis of the common negative stereotypes of Mexicans include: C. Robinson, *With the Ears of Strangers: The Mexican in American Literature* (Tucson, 1963); E. Simmen, ed., *The Chicano From Caricature to Self-Portrait* (New York, 1971); D. T. Leary, "Race and Regeneration" in Manuel P. Servín, ed., *The Mexican Americans: An Awakening Minority* (Beverly Hills, Calif., 1970), pp. 13-27; and R. Armando Ríos, "The Mexican in Fact, Fiction and Folklore" in O. Romano-V., ed., *Voices: Readings from El Grito 1967-71* (Berkeley 1971), pp. 59-73. See also Raymond A. Paredes, "The Mexican Image in American Travel Literature, 1831-1869," *New Mexico Historical Review*, 52 (January 1977): 5-29.

2. Robinson, *Ears*, p. 69.

3. Leary, "Race and Regeneration," pp. 13-14.

4. Robinson, *Ears*, p. 33.

5. David J. Weber, ed., *Foreigners in their Native Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican-Americans* (Albuquerque, 1973), p. 59.

6. Weber, *Foreigners*, p. 60.

7. In an interesting article, particularly pertinent to the present study, Gene M. Brack points out that, before the Mexican War, Mexican newspapers ex-

pressed awareness of the racist and expansionist attitudes of the United States and feared the conquest of Mexico itself if war was not declared. See Gene M. Brack, "Mexican Opinion, American Racism and the War of 1846," *Western Historical Quarterly*, (April 1970): 161-74.

8. Robinson, *Ears*, p. 33.

9. Philip D. Ortega, ed., *We Are Chicanos: An Anthology of Mexican-American Literature* (New York, 1973), p. xix.

10. Carolyn Zeleny, "Relations Between the Spanish-Americans and Anglo-Americans in New Mexico: A Study of Conflict and Accommodation in a Dual-Ethnic Situation," (Yale University: Ph.D. diss., 1944).

11. See Douglas A. McMurtrie, "The History of Early Printing in New Mexico, with Bibliography of Known Issues, 1834-1860," *New Mexico Historical Review*, 4 (October 1929): 372-410; McMurtrie, "Some Supplemental New Mexican Imprints (1850-1860)," *NMHR*, 7 (April 1932); Publications 1850-1953 (Albuquerque, 1954).

12. All translations are by the author.

13. A *Chicago Tribune* article of February 2, 1889, for example, referred to Mexican-Americans in the territories as "not American but 'Greaser,' persons ignorant of our laws, manners, customs, language, and institutions." See Robert W. Larson, *New Mexico's Quest for Statehood 1846-1912* (Albuquerque, 1968), p. 148.

14. Robinson, *Ears*, p. 42.

15. For example, see poetry by Luis Omar Salinas in A. Casteneda Shular, T. Ybarra-Frausto, and J. Sommers, eds., *Literatura Chicana* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1972), p. 43.

16. Robinson, *Ears*, p. 31.

17. Porter A. Stratton, *The Territorial Press of New Mexico 1834-1912* (Albuquerque, 1969), pp. 140-145.

18. The history of New Mexico by W. H. Davis is cited in the article as the Anglo prototype: W. H. Davis, *El Gringo, or New Mexico and Her People* (1854). It is this type of distortion of history which Octavio Romano censures in his recent article "The Anthropology and Sociology of the Mexican-Americans: the Distortion of Mexican-American History (A Review Essay)," in Romano-V., ed., *Voices*, pp. 26-39.

19. A history written by Frank de Thoma, *Historia Popular de Nuevo México Desde Su Descubrimiento Hasta La Actualidad* (New York, 1896), was based primarily on Bancroft's history. A series published by the Spanish-language paper, *La Opinión Pública*, in 1894 entitled *Nuevo México y Sus Hombres Ilustres* was written by two Mexican-Americans, P. García de la Lama and J. Escobar, but only advertisements for it survive. One issue of a later series by Escobar in Raton's *El Amigo del Pueblo* (January 8, 1896) is extant but is too brief to judge the merit of the entire series.

20. Among the editors who were recent emigrés were José Escobar, editor of *El Nuevo Mundo* and approximately a half dozen other papers of the period, and P. García de la Lama, editor of *La Opinión Pública*.

21. Leopoldo Zea, trans., *The Latin American Mind*, originally *Dos Etapas del Pensamiento en Hispanoamerica* (1949) by J. H. Abbott and L. Durham (Norman, Ok., 1963), p. 30.

22. Romano, "The Anthropology and Sociology of the Mexican-Americans" in Romano-V., ed., *Voices*, p. 54.

23. Octavio Romano, "The Historical and Intellectual Presence of Mexican-Americans" in Romano-V., ed., *Voices*, p. 173.

24. Deluvina Hernández, *Mexican-American Challenge To A Sacred Cow* (Los Angeles, 1970), p. 42.