A Dangerous Experiment: The Lynching of Rafael Benavides

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Our masked men marched into the San Juan County Hospital in the remote northern New Mexican town of Farmington at 11:15 on the morning of Friday, 16 November 1928. The men seized one of the patients, a Mexican sheepherder named Rafael Benavides, and bundled him into the back of a pickup truck. A second truck carrying six other men sped along with the kidnappers' vehicle to an abandoned farm two miles north of town. There, they forced their victim to stand on the back of one of the trucks as they tied a rope around his neck and fastened it to a locust tree. When the driver accelerated the vehicle forward, Benavides's dangling body snapped his neck. Less than twenty-four hours earlier, thirty-nine-year-old Benavides had been admitted to the hospital with a serious gunshot wound. The injury was inflicted when he attempted to escape a sheriff's posse pursuing him for an assault upon a local farmer's wife. According to the physicians who treated him, Benavides had only hours to live. In their words, the lynching "probably saved the criminal a good deal of suffering."
This article places the Benavides lynching both in the context of lynching in New Mexico and within the broader framework of the decline and end of mob violence against Mexicans in the Southwest. The lynching of Mexicans was a common occurrence in the southwestern United States, but patterns of mob violence differed dramatically from region to region. Lynching in New Mexico contrasted sharply with mob violence in nearby states such as Texas, California, and Arizona. This article emphasizes three particular factors in the decline of lynching in New Mexico: the growth of institutionalized legal systems, a change in public opinion, and diplomatic protests from a Mexican government seeking to protect its citizens on American soil.

In many respects, the lynching of Rafael Benavides conforms to the broader pattern of mob violence in the United States. The men responsible for his murder openly disobeyed the law and acted with approval from elements of the community. Moreover, the court never punished any member of the lynch mob. A grand jury investigation of the lynching did occur on 4 December 1928. Judge Reed Holloman issued a stern instruction to the jurors to set an example so “that this community will not in the future be disgraced in the eyes of the state and the United States as it recently was.” Although more than fifty witnesses were called to testify, the jury failed to indict a single member of the mob. As the Farmington Times Hustler observed, the authorities had “run against a rock wall” in their efforts to secure a successful conviction. Although the lynching in Farmington seemed typical of mob violence, it had a distinctive influence on the shift of public opinion against lynching.

The Benavides case is pivotal in the history of violence against Mexicans in the United States. Historian Robert Tórrez believes that Benavides was the last Mexican lynched in the state of New Mexico. Historian F. Arturo Rosales, one of the foremost experts on anti-Mexican violence argues that Benavides was the last Mexican lynched in the entire United States. Although it is impossible to validate these claims with absolute certainty, Benavides was probably the last Mexican lynched with the support of the local community. The Benavides lynching, therefore, represents an important turning point in the history of anti-Mexican violence in the United States.

Mob violence against Mexicans was widespread in the Southwest after the U.S-Mexico War. Hostile perpetrators often committed violent acts with the implicit support of law officers and, in many instances, with their direct
participation. In the Farmington case, masked intruders seized Benavides in a public place and hanged him in broad daylight. The men responsible for the crime never faced prosecution, despite the fact that their identities were well known. Although the pattern of mob violence common in New Mexico during the preceding eight decades changed after the Benavides lynching, Mexicans continued to live with the danger of mob violence after 1928. These later attacks, however, took place surreptitiously rather than in the open and the mob received more public censure than support.6

Settlers appeared in Farmington—located 150 miles northwest of Santa Fe and 20 miles south of the Colorado border—as early as 1876, but another twenty-five years passed before the community became an incorporated town. Ranching and agriculture were the foundations of the local economy. Most Nuevomexicano ranchers grazed sheep and the majority of New Mexican Anglos raised cattle.7 Local farmers of both ethnic groups sold their produce to mining camps across the border in Colorado. Limited commercial and industrial development restricted population growth. By 1910 there were only 785 people in the town. Although the discovery of oil in the area during the interwar era caused the hurried purchase of land by oil companies, Farmington's population still had not boomed by the late 1920s. By 1930 the entire population of San Juan County was only 14,701.8 Rafael Benavides's savage execution happened in this small and relatively remote community.

Little is known of Benavides's life. He was born in Salazar, New Mexico, in 1889. He had no formal education, and his inability to read or write restricted him to the life of a manual laborer. Although both a husband and father, he appears to have been estranged from his family, which resided across the border in Mancos, Colorado, at the time of his death. When asked whether she wanted his body returned for committal, his wife's only words were "bury him."9

Contemporary newspaper reports established in some detail the circumstances surrounding the lynching. Two nights before his death, a drunken Benavides broke into the home of a Mexican family in Aztec and attempted to assault a young girl; the screams of her sister scared him off. Benavides then incited a brawl when he tried to force entry into another house. Eventually he made his way to the ranch of a prominent Anglo farmer, George Lewis, who was away on a hunting trip, but his wife was asleep at home. Awaken by Benavides, Mrs. Lewis challenged him with a shotgun, only to discover it was empty. Benavides physically assaulted the farmer's wife and then carried her to a remote hillside, where he left her naked and uncon-
scious. The sixty-year-old woman sustained injuries—including boot marks from Benavides’s furious kicks—to her face and chest. When she regained consciousness some hours later, she staggered to the nearest house. Authorities were soon on Benavides’s trail. Sheriff George Blancett assembled a posse that pursued Benavides to the loft of an abandoned house near the Colorado border. When Benavides refused an order to surrender, the posse fired a series of shots into the house, one of which struck the fugitive in the abdomen. Benavides was then arrested and hurried to the hospital in Farmington.

Informed that Benavides would not recover from his wound, Blancett withdrew the armed guard from the hospital. The masked men who abducted Benavides faced no resistance. According to one rumor, Benavides struggled forcefully by “striking and biting his kidnappers.” In fear and rage, he allegedly pushed one of his assailants out of the truck that carried him toward his death. This story may account for the bruise above one of Benavides’s eyes, where the butt of a revolver struck him. It seems improbable that a dying man enervated by a powerful sedative summoned up the physical energy to topple a captor.

The haunting image of Benavides captured by a local photographer shows the dead man suspended from a tree limb, his head bowed to his chest and his hands tied behind his back. That lifeless body held broad implications for New Mexico and the United States.

The Benavides case fits in the historical context of mob violence in New Mexico. Our research suggests that, between 1848 and 1928, at least fifty-four Nuevomexicanos met their deaths at the hands of lynching mobs. During the same time period, we calculate that at least 597 persons of Mexican origin or descent were lynched in the entire Southwest. Identifying and counting victims of lynching mobs is an inexact science at best. Our list of lynching victims is imperfect but the data we compiled is consistent with our understanding of lynching. Undoubtedly, some victims of mob violence do not appear in our data. Certain cases that we do include may not merit inclusion in the eyes of others. In compiling the data, we have followed the lead of most scholars of mob violence and adopted the definition of lynching established by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People: a retributive act of murder for which those responsible claim to act in the interests of justice, tradition, or community order. In addition, we have erred on the side of caution and sought to confirm each case with specific facts such as name, date, and place of death. Lynching, more than a crude response to individual injury, is a manifestation of subtle, complex forces swirling through a society.
The changing dimensions of mob violence in New Mexico were part of the framework of racial and ethnic relations in the state, and, in particular, they reveal the process of cultural and political accommodation between the state’s Anglo and Nuevomexicano elites. Anglos initially settled in New Mexico in small numbers. As late as 1900, there were only 50,000 Anglos in the territory, compared to 125,000 Nuevomexicanos. As a result, many early Anglo pioneers intermarried with the Nuevomexicano population. By 1870, 90 percent of the married Anglo men in Las Cruces had Nuevomexicano wives; 83 percent in Mesilla; and 78 percent in Doña Ana. This cultural interaction muted racial and ethnic tensions between the two peoples. The overwhelming size of the Nuevomexicano population also constrained Anglos from assuming hegemony over the political system. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Anglos effectively disfranchised Mexicans in many areas of the Southwest. In contrast, the Nuevomexicano elite wielded political power on a scale unparalleled in any other part of the southwestern states and territories. Although Anglos attained control of the New Mexico territorial legislature in 1886, Nuevomexicanos continued to hold elected offices at all levels of government. As late as 1909, Nuevomexicanos constituted eleven of the twenty-one representatives in the New Mexico House. Four Nuevomexicanos also served as territorial or state governor in the years prior to Benavides’s murder: Donaciano Vigil (1847–1848), Miguel Otero (1897–1906), Ezequiel Cabeza de Baca (1917–1919), and Octaviano Larrazolo (1919–1920). A similar arrangement of “racial power sharing” operated in the criminal justice system. Anglos monopolized the most eminent positions within the legal hierarchy but Nuevomexicanos controlled important elected offices such as county sheriff. The active participation of Nuevomexicanos in the political and legal systems collared Anglo power and promoted racial and ethnic cooperation over conflict. As Charles Montgomery affirms, Anglos and Nuevomexicanos were “locked in a precarious balance of power, a sometimes cooperative though always suspicious relationship that redounded to all levels of New Mexico society.”

The campaign for New Mexico statehood, which succeeded in 1912, also reinforced the ties between the Anglo and Nuevomexicano elites. U.S. Congressional opposition to statehood had rested on the racist assumption that only a White majority population could be entrusted with the responsibility of self-government. One pamphlet distributed in Santa Fe argued that the “Territory should not be admitted as a State because the majority of its inhabitants” were “catholic” and a “mixture of peons and Indians” and,
therefore, “a people unworthy to live in the great American Republic.” The Nuevomexicano elite attempted to establish a White racial identity and the attendant political privileges by calling themselves “Spanish Americans,” a label intended to invoke a sense of common European heritage with Anglos. The Anglo elite supported Nuevomexicano’s claim to whiteness, for it improved the possibility of securing statehood. In this and other respects, the elites shared common class and political interests that transcended ethnic antagonism.

The cultural, political, and economic interaction between Anglo and Nuevomexicano elites shaped the pattern of mob violence in New Mexico. In the southern states, the primary motivation for mob violence against African Americans was racial prejudice. Southern Whites used terror and intimidation to consolidate their control of the region. In contrast, lynching in New Mexico cut across racial and ethnic lines. Lynching protected the economic interests of the propertied classes, both Anglo and Nuevomexicano. The Nuevomexicano elite consciously distinguished itself from the majority Mexican population and was prepared to orchestrate acts of mob violence to defend its socially and economically privileged status. In 1893, for instance, authorities arrested Cecilio Lucero, member of a notorious gang, in Las Vegas for the murder of a ranch hand who had caught him stealing sheep. Members of the community seized Lucero from his prison cell and hanged him. According to the Las Vegas Daily Optic, the “mob was said to number 1000 with 900 being Hispanic.” Although Mexican mobs lynched Mexicans in other parts of the Southwest, such intraethnic violence was far more common in New Mexico than anywhere else.

There were nonetheless clear constraints on the extralegal force commanded by the Nuevomexicano elite. The power-sharing relationship between Anglos and Nuevomexicanos at the top level did not evenly replicate throughout New Mexico. In certain areas, English-speaking and Spanish-speaking elites joined forces to eliminate horse and cattle thieves, regardless of their race or ethnicity. In other areas, competition over grazing rights often broke down into ethnic conflict between Nuevomexicano shepherders and Anglo cattlemen. The disparity between the sizes of the two populations further complicated relations. In those areas of the territory where Anglos were a minority, they had to reach some level of accommodation with the Nuevomexicano population. In regions where Anglo settlers outnumbered Nuevomexicanos, reaching such an understanding was less important.
One region of intense Anglo-Mexican conflict was southeastern New Mexico, commonly known as “Little Texas” for the large influx of Anglo settlers who migrated from Texas in the post–Civil War era. Competition for economic resources created a bitter ethnic rivalry in newer areas of Anglo colonization. Texas cattlemen ruthlessly forced Nuevomexicano sheepherders from the land. Nuevomexicano retaliation fueled further Anglo aggression, which began a vicious cycle of violent retribution. In areas, such as “Little Texas,” with pronounced ethnic hostility, vigilantism could easily degenerate into random racial warfare.²⁰

The Horrell War most clearly illustrates the course of racial hostility in New Mexico. The Horrells were ranchers who settled in New Mexico after fleeing Texas, where they had killed four officers of the pro-Republican State Police. They wasted little time getting into trouble in New Mexico. Driven by the desire to avenge the murder of one of their family members, the Horrells took arbitrary action against the entire Nuevomexicano community. On 20 December 1873, the Horrells murdered four Nuevomexicanos at a dance in Lincoln. Later that month, they lynched five Nuevomexicano freighters fifteen miles west of Roswell. The Horrells also intercepted and killed Severanio Apodaca as he transported a load of grain to a local mill. In all of these cases, the ethnic identity of the victims appeared to be the only reason the Horrells killed them.²¹

Mob violence against Nuevomexicanos reached its pinnacle during the range wars of the 1870s and 1880s. The indiscriminate violence of the Horrells, the battle over grazing rights, and the traditional acts of vigilantism against alleged horse and cattle thieves created a barbarous environment. In August 1884, reporting that a band of Mexican horse thieves was active in the local area, the *Raton Comet* stated: “Immediate flight is their only chance for safety, as their speedy extermination has been decided upon by a set of resolute, determined men, who have suffered by their depredations.”²² Although the fate of this particular set of horse thieves is uncertain, the “speedy extermination” of Mexicans became common practice. In July 1889, for instance, Mexican cattle thieves shot dead a deputy sheriff in Socorro County as he attempted to arrest them. The suspects were apprehended and imprisoned the suspects in an empty house. On the night of 21 July, a band of cattlemen stormed the house, shot the inmates and then hanged them.²³ The conflict over grazing rights between Anglos and Nuevomexicanos and the more general impulse to punish criminals combined to produce an era of violence. During the 1870s and 1880s, mobs lynched at least forty-three Nuevomexicanos.
The area of New Mexico where Rafael Benavides lived lay outside the influence of tempering Anglo and Nuevomexicano interaction. The demographic balance had clearly swung in favor of Anglos by the 1920s. Benavides lived in a community that socially, economically, and politically marginalized Nuevomexicanos. A system of de facto segregation curtailed social interaction among Anglos and Nuevomexicanos. Physical separation created a psychological distance between the two peoples. In the absence of any power-sharing relationship, Anglos came to regard Nuevomexicanos as a distinct and inferior racial other.

Oral tradition suggests that extralegal groups lynched several Nuevomexicanos in northwestern New Mexico in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but the surviving written records verify only one case: the 1882 hanging of Guadalupe Archuleta at Bloomfield, a settlement located just a few miles from Farmington. Archuleta, according to his defenders, was performing his duties as Justice of the Peace when he shot and killed an Anglo. The retaliatory shooting and lynching of Archuleta further divided the town into Nuevomexicano and Anglo camps. Archuleta's killing no doubt intensified the division created by the ongoing conflict between the two groups over grazing rights. The lynching occurred at a pivotal moment in this conflict. According to historian Frances Leon Swadesh, Archuleta's lynching "effectively silenced all Hispano challenge to Anglo strong-arm tactics along the San Juan." Memories of these early conflicts stayed fresh and ethnic tension between the two groups persisted well into the twentieth century. For instance, only four years before the Benavides lynching, the Farmington Times Hustler printed the call of one local citizen for the "organization of the whole state into active divisions of the KKK."

It is difficult to imagine a situation any more dangerous than the one in which Rafael Benavides found himself. Benavides's position as an illiterate mestizo laborer afforded him little social protection from the violent prejudice of Anglos. Anglos may have tolerated the Nuevomexicano elite, who claimed a pure European ancestry, but they perceived lower-class Mexicans as a degenerate mongrel race that embodied the worst characteristics of its Indian and Spanish ancestors. Anglos feared the alleged moral depravity of the mestizo class and sought to protect themselves through the brutal enforcement of racial boundaries. The murder of an Anglo woman in particular incited mob vengeance. On 5 May 1893, seventy men stormed the jail in Los Lunas and seized three Nuevomexicanos arrested for the murder of two Anglo women. The three suspects—Victorio Aragon, Antonio Garcia, and Antonio Martinez—were all hanged.
Benavides, a member of the despised mestizo class, committed the one offense most liable to arouse the violent retribution of Anglos. Although he did not murder Mrs. Lewis, his lynching was the result of the impulse of Anglo men to protect their wives and daughters from physical assault by what they believed to be morally degenerate Mexicans. Anglos perceived any assault upon a White woman as an implicit rape; no actual evidence indicated Benavides attempted to sexually assault Mrs. Lewis. Had there been even the intimation that such an offense occurred, the press would almost certainly have reported it. Newspaper accounts of lynchings often contained salacious details of the sexual crime committed by the victim. No evidence of this “folk pornography” appeared in press reports of the Benavides case, even after Farmington came under intense attack for permitting the mob violence. Nonetheless, the lynching contained an important element of ritual. A photograph of Benavides’s corpse shows that the lynchers tied his bed gown above his waist to expose his genitals, a deliberate act of public humiliation that also symbolically reasserted Anglo male supremacy.

Despite the dramatic outburst of ethnic violence in Farmington, Rafael Benavides was the last Nuevomexicano lynched in New Mexico. The following discussion explores why Benavides’s murder was such a turning point. Anti-lynching forces were at work in New Mexico long before 1928, and Benavides’s murder did not convince everyone in the state that lynching was wrong and should be abandoned. However, the Farmington mobs’ extralegal act decisively tipped the balance of public opinion toward the enforcement of due process and legal solutions to problems of social disorder and away from informal methods of control such as vigilantism and mob violence. The result was that, after 1928, would-be lynchers would no longer have the tacit or public support of the majority of their fellow citizens. This new dynamic mattered. Potential lynchers could no longer count on escaping arrest; they would have to hide their identities and guard the location of their planned murder. Ethnic and racial violence was clearly still possible after the lynching of Rafael Benavides, but lynchers previously protected by a widespread belief in “rough justice” now found themselves dangerously isolated from majority opinion.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the New Mexico press uniformly supported mob violence against Nuevomexicanos. Newspapers commonly restricted their reports of lynching to a factual recounting of events; the absence of editorial opinion was an implicit endorsement
of mob action. On occasion, the press also expressed outspoken support. An editorial in an 1881 edition of the Santa Fe Democrat argued that the failures of the legal system justified mob violence. The piece ran under the title “Let There Be More Hanging, And Less Sniveling.” In 1889 the Socorro Chieftain commented on a lynching in Kelly, New Mexico: “Horse thieves will be found scarce around Kelly and Magdalena after this. That juniper tree of justice out there is a court that grants no appeals.” The newspaper gave no information on who committed the killings but speculated that the two Mexicans “came to their death by pulling their necks too hard against a rope.” In January 1890 vigilantes in the mining community of Georgetown seized a Mexican “desperado” from sheriff’s officers and hanged him. The Silver City Enterprise published an editorial that openly encouraged such acts of spontaneous retribution. According to the paper, the courts had failed to protect innocent citizens from the incursions of Mexican outlaws, and the lynching was a legitimate act of self-defense intended to discourage further criminal outrages: “It is high time that the citizens should awake to the importance of putting a stop to this promiscuous shooting. Let a few judicial hangings occur, and the shooter will give this county the go-by.”

Occasional, muted condemnations of lynching in New Mexico date back to the nineteenth century. Even these negative editorials, so guarded in their criticism, make clear that public support for vigilantism and lynching was prevalent throughout the state. For example, in 1876, after reporting that “Judge Lynch had evidently been around last night,” the Albuquerque Review commented, “We cannot but deprecate this action, yet taking all things into consideration, the parties concerned were not so much to blame.” The Santa Fe New Mexican espoused similar logic in 1881. In January authorities in Albuquerque arrested three Nuevomexicanos accused of the murder of Col. Charles Potter. On the night of January 31, a mob estimated at two hundred seized the suspects from the county jail and hanged them. The editor of the New Mexican began by stating that “lynching in general is to be condemned” but went on to defend the actions of local vigilantes. He believed that “in cases such as the cowardly and dastardly murder of Colonel Potter it is very doubtful whether justice can be too swiftly meted out.” The editor then encouraged similar action to purge the community of other dangerous criminals: “The sooner such a fate does overtake them[,] the better will it be.”

Press support of vigilantism reflected and reinforced broader community approval of lynch-mob activity. The Socorro Committee of Safety, “com-
posed of the reputable Americans of the town including in its membership, bankers, clergymen, merchants, ranchmen, miners, lawyers, doctors, and all others interested in the enforcement of law and order,” executed at least two Nuevomexicanos in the 1880s and had, according to one observer, “the tacit endorsement of the highest territorial officials.” As a witness to the lynching of a Nuevomexicano in Las Vegas observed, many townspeople “viewed the actions of the Vigilantes as meet and proper.”

To deter official inquiry, local citizens often enforced a conspiracy of silence. In 1953, Marietta Wetherill recalled her attempt forty years earlier to report two Nuevomexicano corpses, still hanging from ropes, that she saw on the road to Cuba, New Mexico. Locals told Wetherill that, if she was smart, she would not report the lynching and that “she shouldn’t know anything about it either.” When she returned to the spot of the hanging four hours later, the bodies were gone. Wetherill concluded that “hanging wasn’t a hard matter to do apparently at all.” The silence surrounding the lynching in Cuba and others like it effectively stymied legal investigation. Local authorities, even when in possession of specific information, usually made only the most cursory attempts to secure the arrest and imprisonment of vigilante leaders. Only once was anyone prosecuted for the mob murder of a Nuevomexicano. In August 1877, O. P. McMains stood trial for the lynching of Cruz Vega in Colfax County. The case was eventually thrown out for lack of evidence.

Some individuals also emphatically endorsed the actions of the mob. According to a letter published in the Farmington Times Hustler, the men who abducted and murdered Benavides performed a “noble and patriotic service” by protecting the community from further criminal incursions. The Durango Herald-Democrat was more blunt: “The degenerate Mexican got exactly what was coming to him.” Newspapers such as the Herald-Democrat made much of the fact that Benavides was a convicted felon. On 5 September 1914, he had been sentenced to a term of five to seven years in the New Mexico State Penitentiary for raping a ten-year-old New mexicana. Prison had apparently failed to reform him; he drunkenly assaulted the innocent Mrs. Lewis and left her for dead. The failure of the penal system forced the people of Farmington to take preventive action against Benavides. As the Rio Grande Farmer concluded, “He will commit no more crimes.” The lynching of Benavides, supporters believed, would also serve as a salutary lesson to other potential offenders. In the words of
1914 MUGSHOT OF RAFAEL BENAVIDES
(Courtesy New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, New Mexico Department of Corrections Records, Accession No. 1970-006, Inmate No. 3384.)
the Mancos Times-Tribune, “a more pronounced means of instilling fear into the hearts of the criminal class was never resorted to.”

The content of such editorials reflected community consensus and likely helped muffle opposition to lynching.

A thorough analysis of press reaction to the Benavides lynching reveals that the public support of lynching had collapsed by 1928. Newspapers throughout the southern and western states had attempted for decades to exonerate the actions of lynch mobs by emphasizing the alleged failure of the courts to protect innocent people from dangerously violent criminals. Remarkably, many newspapers, despite their assumption of Benavides’s guilt, denounced his lynching as unjustified. The shift in the Santa Fe New Mexican is a potent illustration of this sea change in popular opinion. As noted above, decades earlier the paper enthusiastically endorsed the lynching of three Nuevomexicanos for murder. Yet, in 1928 it led press reaction in an impassioned denunciation of mob violence. In a widely reprinted editorial, the paper condemned lynching as “a dangerous experiment” that claimed innocent victims, and demanded a “thorough and searching investigation” into Benavides’s death. The New Mexican also articulated the influence of Progressive politics on public discourse about law and order.

The Progressive publisher of the New Mexican, Bronson M. Cutting, had moved to Santa Fe from Long Island, New York, in 1910. As a former chairman of the board of commissioners of the New Mexico State Penitentiary, Cutting had a clear interest in promoting the criminal justice system over the lawless tactics of the lynch mob. In 1927 Cutting had also been appointed as a Republican to the U. S. Senate following the death of the incumbent, Andrieus A. Jones. A year later, he won election in his own right. As a high political officer, Cutting had to protect the national image of his adopted state, and he already had a reputation for actively promoting the political rights of Nuevomexicanos. Cutting’s concerns informed the denunciation of the Benavides lynching in the columns of the New Mexican.

Since U.S. expansion into the Southwest in the 1830s and 1840s, Mexicans had confronted the lynching and murder of other Mexicans. In Texas and California, where mob violence was more endemic than in New Mexico, Mexicans rose up in violent retaliation against their Anglo oppressors. The men who embodied this spirit of armed resistance have become folkloric heroes: Joaquín Murrieta, Juan Cortina, and Tiburcio Vásquez. Anglos refused to distinguish between general lawlessness and legitimate acts of resistance, and indiscriminately labelled any challenge to their legal and political
power as “banditry.” Although some of these outlaws did engage in indiscriminate acts of robbery and violence, others pursued an explicitly political agenda. Scholars commonly describe these self-conscious Mexican outlaws as “social bandits.” The Texas outlaw Juan Cortina epitomized the distinction between banditry and political resistance. Between 1859 and 1873 Cortina led a small army of outlaws against the U.S. military. Anglos considered Cortina to be a dangerously violent criminal, but he proclaimed that his purpose was to punish Anglos who murdered Mexicans and then escaped prosecution by the U.S. legal system, which protected Whites and discriminated against Hispanics. “There are to be found criminals covered with frightful crimes,” roared Cortina, “to these monsters indulgence is shown, because they are not of our race, which is unworthy, as they say, to belong to the human species.” The contrast between New Mexico and other southwestern states emphasizes a distinct regional variation in the pattern of response to mob violence against Mexicans.

New Mexico, like Texas and other parts of the Borderlands, had a history of Mexican resistance and self-defense. In New Mexico, however, insurgents did not direct their ire at Anglo mobs. After the Taos Rebellion of 1846, the most dramatic display of armed opposition to Anglo oppression in the state was Las Gorras Blancas, or The White Caps. By the late 1880s, Nuevomexicano farmers and ranchers in San Miguel County faced financial ruin as a result of the fenced enclosure of formerly communal lands. Las Gorras Blancas were a band of masked nightriders who resisted confiscation of pasture lands by tearing down fences, burning barns and haystacks, and destroying livestock. Las Gorras Blancas was a class and an ethnic movement; they raided both Anglo and Nuevomexicano property owners. A handbill distributed by the riders in March 1890 declared, “Our purpose is to protect the rights and interests of the people in general and especially of the helpless classes.” However, Nuevomexicanos do not appear to have utilized similar tactics in the struggle against ethnic violence, although they did mobilize in collective protest against general ethnic prejudice. According to Phillip Gonzales, between the late 1880s and early 1930s, Nuevomexicanos organized “mass meetings of indignation” on twenty-six separate occasions. Yet none was directed against lynching. In New Mexico at least, neither vigorous protests by the Nuevomexicano elite nor acts of armed resistance account for the demise of lynch law.

The institutionalization of a formal legal system had greater impact on public opinion than did public protests by Nuevomexicanos. The Benavides
incident appeared to belie the transition of the southwestern states from a volatile frontier society to a more stable social order. During the early decades of western settlement, many observers believed that vigilantism fulfilled a vital function on the frontier. In the absence of a fully functional legal system, the preservation of public order became the responsibility of community-minded citizens. Although unsanctioned by law, vigilance committees acted impartially and in the interest of the common good. As Ray Abrahams observes, contemporary accounts portrayed lynch law "in positive terms as fundamentally the cool-headed response of public-spirited citizens to an emergency in which life and property had become dangerously insecure." 48

The historical record does not support this uncritical acceptance of vigilante committees. Far from acting in the interests of law and order, Anglo vigilantes lynched Nuevomexicanos in deliberate defiance of the authorities. Such brazenness was especially evident in those areas where Anglos did not control the legal system. The actions of the Socorro Committee of Safety offered a telling example. In March 1881, three members of a wealthy Nuevomexicano family murdered an Anglo who had insulted them. Skeptical that the Nuevomexicano sheriff would confront prominent members of his own community, Anglos independently organized a Committee of Safety. The Committee seized one of the suspects, Onofrio Baca, from an arresting officer and hanged him. Some months later, the Committee lynched another Nuevomexicano for rape. The following day investigators uncovered further evidence that established the innocence of the alleged rapist. 49 An assessment of New Mexico vigilantism by Montague Stevens reveals the irony of mob violence: "Well, these cattlemen got together and made an association of Vigilantes. That part was all right but the trouble was that most of the Vigilantes were the worst thieves of the lot." 50

The perception emerging at the turn of the century was that New Mexico no longer needed vigilantes. By the late 1920s, the establishment of an institutionalized legal system throughout the southwestern states undermined the legitimacy of frontier justice. An analysis of San Juan County court records between 1887 and 1928 demonstrates that the civil authorities routinely secured the indictment and conviction of serious criminal offenders. 51 The ethnic identity of the convicted felon may have played a part in the sentencing policy of the court, with Nuevomexicanos receiving particularly harsh prison terms. The minimum sentence the court imposed on a Nuevomexicano convicted of rape was two to three years; the maximum
sentence was life. By contrast, the only Anglo convicted of the offense received a one-year sentence. Nuevomexicanos convicted of murder also received severe prison terms. The court incarcerated Donaciano Aguilar for ninety-nine years in 1909, and Edumenio Meastas for fifty to sixty years in 1927. Historian Arturo Rosales argues that, after 1910, the use of the death penalty in New Mexico became more explicitly racial than in the past. The disproportionate number of Nuevomexicanos executed during these years demonstrates that state authorities had, to a certain extent, supplanted the role of the lynch mob.

With the indisputable evidence that Rafael Benavides assaulted Mrs. Lewis, the Anglo citizens of Farmington should have been confident of his conviction by a court of law. Indeed, the Santa Fe New Mexican declared that the actions of the mob had served no legitimate purpose: “In raw frontier communities where law was not yet established, Vigilantes were sometimes necessary. It is a question for San Juan county to decide as to whether she holds herself as a raw, lawless, frontier district.” Although most New Mexican newspapers accepted that Benavides was guilty of perpetrating a serious criminal offense, guilt, in their opinion, did not absolve the actions of the lynch mob. In the words of the Alamogordo News, Benavides was a “miserable wretch” who had committed an almost unspeakable crime. Officers had already arrested him and a court of law would have convicted him had he lived. Other newspapers expressed a similar sentiment that the barbarity of Benavides’s crime did not justify the savagery of the mob. According to the Farmington Times Hustler, Benavides was a “beast man,” the “perpetrator of the most revolting crime ever committed in the county.”
Even so, he had civil rights that entitled him to a trial under the due process of law. Lynch mobs, "however well-intentioned, are dangerous means for dispensing justice and when less well-intentioned are a most dangerous menace to life, liberty and property."56

After New Mexico achieved statehood in 1912, the increased power of the state and the growing stability of the legal system also acted as a deterrent to potential vigilantes. The state was now more capable of protecting prisoners threatened by lynching mobs, and vigilantes also had reason to be cautious about the newly strengthened legal system. If judges and juries resolved to eradicate lynching, the courts would have been much more effective in doing so than in New Mexico's territorial period.

Given the efficacy of the legal system and the increased power of the state, why had a band of outlaws resorted to vigilante violence? The lynching of Benavides seemed to be an aberration, an unwelcome reversion to an era when citizens ignored due legal process for informal community justice. The press acknowledged that racism had been the principal factor for the regression. Prior to the Benavides attack, every one of the Nuevomexicanos convicted of a capital offense in San Juan County had committed their crime against members of their own ethnic community. So long as the ethnic population assailed only itself, Anglos seemed to respect the justice system. However, when a Nuevomexicano committed a criminal outrage against an Anglo, it inflamed violent ethnic prejudice. The Santa Fe New Mexican astutely recognized this double standard. Had he survived his bullet wound, authorities would have successfully tried and convicted Benavides. Those men who dispensed frontier justice in Farmington could claim to have upheld the law; the mob that murdered Benavides undermined it.57

Many New Mexicans were likely uncomfortable with the racism in the lynching of Benavides, but the shifting national perception of lynching in the interwar era made the episode even more troubling to them. The phenomenon of mob violence was in irreversible decline throughout the United States by the 1920s. According to Tuskegee Institute, lynching during the peak decade of the 1890s claimed the lives of 1,540 people. By the 1920s, the figure fell to 315, a decline of about 80 percent in a single generation.58 A number of forces shaped a new political climate less tolerant of the violent lawlessness of the mob. News reports of European atrocities in World War I caused a reconsideration of racial violence in America. The Red Summer of 1919 also intensified fears that mobs threatened the United States' own
democratic order. These events gave added political impetus to the anti-lynching campaigns of civil rights organizations. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People launched an unrelenting political offensive against lynching in 1910. Nine years later, the Commission on Interracial Cooperation mounted a regional campaign to mobilize southern liberal opposition to mob violence. The increasing political outcry encouraged Missouri representative Leonidas C. Dyer to introduce a federal antilynching bill to Congress in 1921. Although a southern filibuster in the Senate defeated the bill, the debate and publicity stirred further popular outrage against lynch mobs. The federal government responded by becoming more active in the arrest and prosecution of mob members than it had been previously.

The Benavides lynching therefore threatened to place New Mexico beyond the pale of national opinion. Newspapers across the country reported the incident. This unwelcome publicity tarnished the reputation of New Mexico and threatened to associate the state with the violent racial intolerance ascribed to the southern states. New Mexico newspapers branded the lynching an act of barbarism that disgraced the people of New Mexico before the rest of the nation. According to the New Mexico State Tribune, "The good name not only of the county but of New Mexico is at issue."

Political pressures from outside the United States also explain the critical reaction to the case. The signatories' ink on the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had barely dried before the Mexican government received reports of the violent mistreatment of its citizens, both former and current, within the United States. The diplomatic protests of the Mexican government had a powerful cumulative impact upon the course of mob violence. U.S. federal authorities initially insisted that they had no legal authority to intervene in the internal affairs of individual states. By the last decade of the nineteenth century, however, Mexican demands for justice proved too persistent to ignore. In unrelated incidents during the fall of 1895, Anglo mobs lynched two Mexican citizens, Louis Moreno and Florentine Suaste. Confronted by furious Mexican protests, the U.S. government paid a two-thousand-dollar indemnity to the families of both victims. Mexican authorities continued during the interwar era to place unrelenting pressure on the U.S. State Department.

Three episodes in the ten years before the lynching of Rafael Benavides illustrate how the forceful diplomacy of the Mexican government helped foster official intolerance of mob violence. On 13 September 1919, vigilan-
tes in Pueblo, Colorado, lynched two men for the murder of a local police officer. The victims, Salvador Ortez and José Gonzales, were both Mexican citizens. The Mexican Embassy in Washington, D.C., immediately instructed local consul A. J. Ortiz to launch an investigation. Ortiz was unable to identify the mob leaders, but he did establish that the dead men were entirely innocent.

Although the Mexican government routinely investigated the murder of Mexican nationals in the United States, the degree of Mexican protest often fluctuated according to the political situation inside Mexico and its political relationship with the United States. In 1919 diplomatic tensions with the United States energized Mexico's interest in crimes committed against its citizens in the United States. Mexico understood that pursuing the Pueblo lynching case would cause the American government acute embarrassment. The State Department had recently imposed increased pressure on the administration of Mexican president Venustiano Carranza to protect American citizens in Mexico. The failure of U.S. authorities to defend Mexicans from American mobs implied a blatant double standard. The Houston Post concurred with Mexican officials that the United States was in no position to claim the moral high ground in its diplomatic disputes with Mexico: “After the stern warnings our government has sent to Mexico against further outrages on our citizens, it is going to be humiliating in the extreme for our government to receive similar complaints from the Mexican government making charges against our people who have claimed to be so much higher in the scale of civilization.”

Mexican diplomatic protest pressured the federal government to take remedial action against lynch mobs. On 11 November 1922, a mob in Weslaco, Texas, lynched a suspected murderer named Elias Zarate. Racial tension spread rapidly through the local region. Within hours, an armed mob marched through the streets of Breckenridge in an attempt to scare Mexicans out of town. Mexican ambassador Manuel Tellez issued the State Department a demand for the protection of Mexicans. At the recommendation of Sec. State Charles Evans Hughes, Gov. Pat Neff of Texas sent a detachment of Rangers to guard against any further violence. The crisis soon passed.

In 1926 Mexican diplomatic challenge culminated in the arrest and conviction of Sheriff Raymond Teller. Teller and his fellow law officers had been implicated in the lynching of four Mexicans in Raymondsville, Texas. According to the sheriff, he arrested the Mexicans for the murder of two of
his officers. Teller was taking the suspects from jail into the countryside to search for their cache of arms when vigilantes ambushed them. The prisoners perished in the ensuing gunfight. Yet according to other testimony, Teller and his officers tortured and then shot the Mexicans. For decades the State Department had invariably taken the reports of local law officers at face value in its investigations of the murders of Mexicans. Repeatedly failing to identify those responsible for the lynchings, those reports concluded vaguely that the victims had met their deaths at the hands of persons unknown. The Teller case demonstrated a new determination to avoid diplomatic tensions with Mexico over the lynching of its citizens on American soil. Not only did the State Department reject the conclusions of the sheriff’s report, but federal pressure on Texas authorities was also critical to ensuring that the state legal system tried, convicted, and eventually sentenced Teller and his fellow officers to prison.68

New Mexican newspapermen and community leaders had paid attention to the events in Texas and Colorado. The remonstrations made by Mexican authorities to secure the arrest and prosecution of those responsible for the lynching of Rafael Benavides were likely no surprise to journalists and local leaders. When Ambassador Téllez undertook an investigation into the incident, Asst. Dist. Attny. George Bruington immediately announced his intention to determine the nationality of the dead man. Benavides told the nurse who treated him, Bruington informed the press, that his father was an African American. Several newspapers embraced the story. The Santa Fe New Mexican described Benavides as “a Negro Mexican half-breed.”69 Although pure speculation on the part of the assistant district attorney, this announcement might have been an attempt to attribute the criminal misconduct of Benavides to his “blackness.” The insinuation of a racial hierarchy that elevated Mexicans above African Americans may also have been a means of defusing diplomatic tension; Ambassador Téllez eventually abandoned his investigation. Although the racial identity of his father was indeterminate, Bruington conclusively established that Benavides was a citizen of the United States. The publicity generated by the Mexican protest affected state authorities and local conscience. An editorial in the Farmington Times Hustler reflected the popular determination to prevent any further outbreaks of mob violence: “It will take San Juan County a long time to live down the bad name received by this lawless act. The outside world will long remember the lynching but will forget the terrible crime that caused it.”70
Protest of the lynching of Rafael Benavides by the Mexican government and condemnation of the episode by local and state newspapers and community leaders were steps important in the evolution of New Mexican attitudes toward vigilantism and extralegal violence. But the newspapermen and diplomats who criticized Benavides’s lynching did not change attitudes toward lynching in New Mexico by themselves. Rather, those critics of lynching successfully prevented future unsanctioned hangings by helping New Mexicans internalize the values they upheld. The attitudes of New Mexico residents, like those of many U.S. citizens toward lynching, underwent a slow, gradual transformation. In the nineteenth century most New Mexicans supported lynching as a “necessary evil” resulting from the frontier conditions of the territory and the weakness of its law enforcement and courts. As those systems improved, however, attitudes toward lynching evolved. By the twentieth century, more New Mexicans had come to believe that the formal legal system, which emphasized the right to due process, should mete out justice instead of the ruthless vigilantes.

The lynching of Rafael Benavides did not reinvigorate an old tradition in New Mexico. Instead, it forced New Mexicans to evaluate their views on lynching and vigilantism. The arguments and criticisms generated on the Benavides lynching, both inside and outside New Mexico, helped New Mexicans understand why they became so uncomfortable with extralegal violence. In the end, the lynching of Rafael Benavides confirmed and accelerated a change in attitude that had been taking place over the previous quarter century. Benavides’s murder tipped the balance of public opinion in favor of those opposed to mob violence and thus it became the last lynching of its kind.

Notes

2. Historians use words such as lynching, vigilantism, and rioting to describe and analyze mob violence. Distinguishing between these different forms of violence, both in the writing of historians and in the historical record itself, is difficult. The key characteristics that distinguish one type of mob violence from another are the level of community approval and the degree of premeditation and deliberation that precede the killing. Historians see vigilantes as organized and controlled. Vigilantes usually choose their victims for some alleged crime or specific violation of the moral order. They also enjoy significant, if not universal, community approval and support. Historians place rioters, whose acts of violence are generally condemned by the community and whose victims are likely to be chosen indiscriminately, at the opposite extreme.


7. When referring to the southwestern states we use the term Mexican to describe all persons of Mexican origin or descent. We use the term Nuevomexicano when referring expressly to the Mexican population of New Mexico. This term has been chosen over the other alternatives for its parallel compatibility with specific terms, such as Californios and Tejanos, for Mexicans in other states such as California and Texas.


9. Inmate no. 3384, New Mexico Department of Corrections Records, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe [hereafter NMSRCA]; and *El Paso Times*, 18 November 1928, p. 24.

10. The events surrounding the shooting and arrest of Rafael Benavides were widely reported in the press. See *Farmington (N. Mex.) Times Hustler*, 16 November 1928, p. 1, and 23 November 1928, p. 1; *Albuquerque Journal*, 16 November 1928, p. 1; *Aztec (N. Mex.) Independent*, 16 November 1928, p. 1; *Roswell (N. Mex.) Morning Dispatch*, 16 November 1928, p. 1; *Roswell (N. Mex.) Daily Record*, 16 November 1928, p. 1; *El Paso Times*, 17 November 1928, p. 3; *La Prensa (San Antonio, Tex.)*, 17 November 1928, p. 1; *Las Vegas (N. Mex.) Daily Optic*, 17 November 1928, p. 1; *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 17 November 1928, p. 1; *Raton (N. Mex.) Daily Range*, 17 November 1928, p. 1, and 20 November 1928, p. 1; *Alamogordo (N. Mex.) News*, 22 November 1928, p. 2; *Santa Rosa (N. Mex.) News*, 23 November 1928, p. 4; and *Roy (N. Mex.) Record*, 24 November 1928, p. 1.


13. For a fuller discussion of the statistics presented here, see William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, “The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin or Descent in the United States, 1848-1928,” *Journal of Social History* 37 (winter 2003): 411-38. Our data distinguish between lynchings that received explicit public support and lynchings whose level of community approval is unknown. Twenty-four of our fifty-four New Mexican cases exhibit widespread popular endorsement. Although we have failed to identify clear public approval in thirty of the cases, public outcry was not strong enough to convict even one member of any mob. Most lynching victims in New Mexico—forty-three of fifty-four, or 80 percent—were individuals targeted by mobs for specific offenses or alleged crimes. During the 1870s in particular, mobs sought revenge against any Nuevomexicanos whom they could find and killed dozens of Spanish speakers indiscriminately. We have included eleven victims of such violence in our statistics. One recent overview of lynching and mob violence for the territorial period is Nancy Gonzalez, “Untold Stories of Murder and Lynching in Territorial New Mexico” (master’s thesis, University of New Mexico, 2003).

14. Some of these lynching victims were naturalized American citizens while others were Mexican nationals residing in the United States. We could not always determine the citizenship of a particular individual. The use of the word *lynching* has changed over time. Early in the twentieth century, lynching and vigilantism were nearly synonymous. Neither word applied to a mob killing unless it exhibited both widespread community support and a certain level of discrimination on the part of the mob. During the twentieth century, the definition of lynching slowly changed to embrace almost any conceivable form of mob violence. Those who calculated lynching statistics were no longer bound to prove community approval. For further insight to the shifting classification of lynching, see Christopher Waldrep, “War of Words: The Controversy over the Definition of Lynching, 1899-1940,” *Journal of Southern History* 66 (February 2000): 75-100; and Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch: Extralegal Violence and Punishment in America* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).


19. In February 1885, a mob of men led by Cresensio Lucero lynched Jose Trujillo Gallegos in San Miguel County. Gallegos allegedly had murdered his own family. In 1893, a mob of Nuevomexicanos hanged Ireneo Gonzalez for attempted murder in Cebolleta. Santa Fe New Mexican Review, 23 February 1889, p. 4. El Nuevo Mexicano (Santa Fe, N. Mex.), 11 February 1893; Albuquerque Democrat, 7 February 1893, p. 1; and Santa Fe New Mexican, 7 February 1893.


21. Santa Fe New Mexican, 2 January 1874; Fulton, History of the Lincoln County War, 21–24; Mullin, A Chronology of the Lincoln County War, 21; Rasch, “The Horrell War,” 228; and Buffington, Old Lincoln County Pioneer Stories, 1–3.

22. Raton (N. Mex.) Comet, 10 August 1884, p. 4.

23. Santa Fe New Mexican, 25 July 1889, p. 1. See also Fulton, History of the Lincoln County War, 29, 66; and Mullin, Chronology of the Lincoln County War, 12–13.


25. Benavides may have known about the lynching of Guadalupe Archuleta. Nuevomexicanos in the area who remembered the incident might have warned Benavides that Guadalupe Archuleta killed John Blancett. A leader of the lynch mob that killed Archuleta was also a Blancett. On the eve of Benavides’s crime, the sheriff of San Juan County was George Blancett.

26. Farmington (N. Mex.) Times Hustler, 13 and 20 February 1924, quoted in Robert W. Duke, San Juan County Roars in the ’20s: San Juan County, New Mexico Politics from Inception to 1926 (Flora Vista, N. Mex.: San Juan County Historical Society, 2000).

27. Santa Fe New Mexican, 6 May 1893, p. 1; and El Boletin Popular (Santa Fe, N. Mex.), 11 May 1893, p. 4.


31. Socorro (N. Mex.) Chieftain, 27 July 1889.
32. Silver City (N. Mex.) Enterprise, quoted in Santa Fe New Mexican, 9 January 1890, p. 4.
34. Santa Fe New Mexican, 30 January 1881, p. 1, and 1 February 1881, pp. 1 and 4. The three men lynched by the mob were Miguel Barrera, Escolastico Perea, and California Joe.
37. Marietta Wetherill, Oral Interview, MSS 123 BC, Pioneer Foundations Oral History Collection, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque [hereafter PFOH-CSWR].
39. Farmington (N. Mex.) Times Hustler, 30 November 1928, p. 16; Durango (Colo.) Herald-Democrat editorial republished in Santa Fe New Mexican, 26 November 1928, p. 4; and Farmington (N. Mex.) Times Hustler, 7 December 1928, p. 6.
40. Inmate no. 3384, Record Book of Convicts, Department of Corrections, Penitentiary of New Mexico, NMSRCA.
41. Rio Grande (Las Cruces, N. Mex.) Farmer editorial republished in the Santa Fe New Mexican, 27 November 1928, p. 4; and Mancos (Colo.) Times-Tribune editorial republished in Farmington (N. Mex.) Times Hustler, 30 November 1928, p. 16.
43. This influential concept was initially conceived by Eric Hobsbawm in his book Bandits (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969).


50. Montague Stevens, tape 351, reel 5, PFOH-CSWR.

51. These observations are based upon a systematic study of the San Juan County civil and criminal record books for the years 1887 to 1928. See Criminal Docket No. 1, San Juan County District Court, NMSRCA; and Criminal Docket No. 2, San Juan County District Court, San Juan County Courthouse, Aztec, New Mexico [hereafter all references to San Juan County Court Criminal Dockets will include case number, case name, date, and docket number (CD)].

52. Case no. 379: *State of New Mexico v. Teodoro Martinez* (1914), CD No. 1; and Case no. 150: *Territory of New Mexico v. Prudencio Trujillo* (1904), CD No. 2.


55. F. Arturo Rosales, *Pobre Raza! Violence, Justice, and Mobilization among México Lindo Immigrants, 1900–1936* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 141. Retired New Mexico state historian Robert Tórtorez notes that Spanish speakers were not executed in disproportionate numbers during the territorial period. He does qualify
that Mexican nationals were more likely to be put to death than Anglos or Spanish-speaking citizens of the United States in this period. Robert Tórrez to William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, 31 December 2002.


57. Santa Fe New Mexican, 27 November 1928, p. 4.


61. Newspapers outside New Mexico that reported the lynching included the Montgomery (Ala.) Advertiser, 17 November 1928; New York Evening Post, 17 November 1928; Atlanta Constitution, 18 November 1928; and Norfolk (Va.) Journal and Guide, 24 November 1928.

62. New Mexico State Tribune, quoted in Farmington (N. Mex.) Times Hustler, 30 November 1928, p. 16.


64. Des Moines Capital, 14 September 1919; Delaware Herald, 15 September 1919; New York Call, 15 September 1919; and New York Sun, 15 September 1919, Clipping Files, 1919, Lynching Records, Archives of Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, Alabama [hereafter ATU].

65. New York Times, 16 September 1919; and Denver Post, 20 September 1919, ATU.

66. Houston Post, 18 September 1919. An editorial in the New York Globe of 16 September 1919, ATU, also noted the apparent hypocrisy of U.S. diplomatic protest: “When two Americans are killed in Mexico, even though it be in a section of the country remote from any city and notoriously infested with bandits, a roar for intervention goes up throughout this country. When two Mexicans are killed in a civilized American city by a mob it is regrettable, to be sure; but, after all, they look somewhat like Negroes, and everyone knows what we do with the latter.”

67. El Heraldo de Mexico (Los Angeles), 17 November 1922, pp. 1, 3, 4, and 18 November 1922, p. 1.

68. Untitled newspaper clipping, 10 January, 1927, Oliver Douglas Weeks Collection, Rare Books and Manuscript Unit, Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin; Undated newspaper clippings, George O. Coalson
Collection, South Texas Archives, Texas A&M, Kingsville; Houston Chronicle, 11–13 January 1927; La Prensa (San Antonio, Tex.), 26 January 1927, p. 1; and El Cronista del Valle (Brownsville, Tex.), 9–11, 15, 18 September 1926, and 16, 22, 27 January 1927.

69. Santa Fe New Mexican, 22 November 1928, p. 6; and Roswell (N. Mex.) Morning Dispatch, 16 November 1928, p. 1.

70. Farmington (N. Mex.) Times Hustler, 23 November 1928, p. 7.