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Foreword

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Foreword

Edwin Meléndez, Ph.D.

Historians and social scientists view the mid-1960s, the years in which the Cold War was at its height, as an important turning point in American life. The United States was deploying forces all over the world to contain the proliferation of unfriendly regimes and establish political and economic hegemony over international markets. We opened full-scale war fronts in Southeast Asia and maintained low-intensity and high-support military operations in Central and South America. The government enacted liberal reforms in immigration policy to ease family reunification and increase the proportion of Third World immigrants to the United States as a sign of economic growth and democratic leanings. Just a few years into the 1970s, as many of these significant world events were gaining full force, a number of the traditional dependencies in the Caribbean and Mexico were undergoing structural changes in their economies and suffering profound dislocations in their labor markets.

We are just beginning to grasp the significance of these events in contemporary American history. One of the clearest legacies of the tumultuous 1960s is the significant change in the composition of the U.S. population. During the past three decades, we have witnessed a dramatic increase in Latino and Asian populations. Indeed, in many ways there is a historical convergence of race and ethnicity taking place in this country. The new immigrant populations are racially and ethnically mixed and, in many cases, politically or economically displaced from their country of origin by war or unemployment. They develop social networks which emulate the historical linkages that exist between American foreign and economic policies regarding their countries, and their presence and concentration throughout the United States speaks to the effects of such linkages. Specific Latino subgroups concentrate in various locations, such as Mexican-Americans in California, the Southwest, and the Midwest, Cubans in Florida and New Jersey, and Puerto Ricans in the Middle Atlantic states and the Northeast. So Latinos comprise diverse groups, each with a unique identity, but with a common language and cultural base.

Population dynamics offer infinite challenges and opportunities. By and large, the new immigrants, in varying degrees and contingent on their types of network and support, contribute directly to our economic development immediately on arrival. For example, Asian immigrants, particularly Koreans, can count on family and religious networks for financial backing as they establish themselves. Latinos, on the other hand, seek out community-based agencies and family support mechanisms that lead to

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employment. In many ways, immigrants represent skilled workers who provide needed hands in expanding industries and accept jobs that native workers are unwilling to perform: witness the numbers of service workers in the food and restaurant and cleaning industries. Population growth increases the demand for goods and services, stimulating long-term economic growth; in an increasingly global economy, immigrants provide key links for international trade and commerce.

However, in times of slow economic growth, immigrants often become scapegoats for nativist politicians and expedient tabloid material for the unscrupulous media. Significant backlash is occurring in California and Florida, where gubernatorial aspirations and the Haitian and Cuban refugee crises have unleashed the worst fears of citizens. Influenced by these events, the Commission on Immigration Reform has recommended, with the endorsement of President Clinton, reducing by one-third the number of legal immigrants allowed to enter the United States each year. The commission, chaired by former Democratic congresswoman Barbara Jordan, proposes to reduce the number of visas for workers and refugees and to eliminate preferences for family members. In addition, the Congress is considering recommendations by a special Task Force on Immigration Reform that is likely to produce even tighter controls on the level and composition of immigrants.

Proposition 187

Perhaps one of the most significant developments in recent history is the growing backlash of nativist sentiment against Latinos. In November 1994, California voters overwhelmingly supported Proposition 187: 62 percent of the electorate favored the so-called Save Our State Initiative. As law, if it survives several challenges filed in the courts, it will deny undocumented immigrants access to public schools and other public services such as medical care, training, and higher education. Of course, this is not the sole challenge to Latinos in recent years — we have to remember the wave of English-only campaigns in the Florida, California, Texas, and many other state legislatures and the battleground in which bilingual education survives. However, the importance of Proposition 187 goes well beyond the increasingly common scapegoating of immigrants, unfolding as one of the ugliest chapters of enduring prejudice in American history.

The logical argument of Proposition 187 is simple: undocumented immigrants take jobs and social resources from citizens. California governor Pete Wilson argued in his reelection campaign that undocumented immigrants cost the state more than \$2 billion a year and American workers thousands of jobs. Judging by the electoral support for both his candidacy and Proposition 187, the argument touched deep sentiments among the voters. However, in truth, the studies used to support such arguments are controversial. Most academic research questions both the magnitude of the cost and the assumptions behind the estimates.

According to a survey of experts conducted by the Tomás Rivera Center, the estimated cost of public services is exaggerated because the state taxes immigrants pay are often ignored.¹ In 1992 alone, as reported in an Urban Institute study, undocumented immigrants paid an estimated \$732 million to the state of California.² But perhaps as important, and contrary to conventional wisdom, most studies find that undocumented immigrants tend not to take advantage of public services because they fear being apprehended as well as encountering a hostile environment.³ Indeed, when their contributions to the public coffers from sales and income taxes are considered, immigrants give more

to public finances than they receive in public services.⁴ Other studies conclude that immigrants are less likely than natives of similar socioeconomic background to receive income transfers.⁵

Obviously, fear of apprehension discourages the undocumented population's use of public assistance. Hayes-Bautista indicates that California Latinos, in comparison with African-Americans or whites, are the least likely to apply for welfare. Moreover, he attributes to immigration a stabilizing effect on the Mexican-American family.⁶ Other studies also suggest that recent Mexican immigrants "tend to rely heavily on friendship and kinship networks for support."⁷ Recent immigrants often use the resources of these networks rather than seeking government services. In addition, De Freitas argues that the tightening of program regulations has made undocumented immigrants ineligible to benefit from most programs.⁸

Similarly, the issue of whether immigrants take jobs from native workers has received wide attention. Surveys of the literature conclude that immigrants are not interchangeable with natives in the workplace and that the newcomers' entry into local labor markets has had a negligible effect, if any, on natives' earnings and employment.⁹ In particular, these studies find little or no detrimental effect on other minorities' employment or wages. The major injury seems to be to the earnings of other Latino immigrants, although these effects are relatively small. Even increases in areas of high Latino concentration like Los Angeles (see Abel Valenzuela's article in this issue) causes limited displacement of native workers and, in fact, there is a large degree of complementarity between native and immigrant workers.

A reasonable explanation for such parallelism is that immigrants are employed in certain industries — labor-intensive manufacturing in Los Angeles and New York City, for example. This segmentation of Latino workers precludes competition with natives employed outside these niches. In his analysis of the New York City restaurant industry, Waldinger offers concrete examples of labor-market segmentation impeding competition between blacks and Latinos.¹⁰

Studies concerning patterns of regional and industrial incorporation of immigrants are also important in this regard. Latino immigrants tend to concentrate within a few standard metropolitan survey areas, where, through networks, they establish employment niches in certain industries. Karen Lado's article offers an example of such groups creating employer preference for Latinos in the Boston cleaning industry. The irony of Proposition 187 is that, in California, Latinos provide the majority of seasonal agricultural laborers for an industry that certainly profits most from a continuous supply of undocumented immigrants. And who can doubt that American consumers benefit from the low cost of California fruits and groceries?

Proposition 187 would be a bad policy even if immigrants did not contribute to the economic development of the region directly through higher consumption and taxes and indirectly by supplying needed labor in key industrial sectors. Denying educational opportunities to approximately 300,000 school-age children and the thousands of students enrolled in higher education will have a direct impact on the quality of the labor force, long-term poverty, and increased social conflict.¹¹ California educators argue that with an average classroom size of more than thirty, the loss of a few pupils per classroom will not lead to proposed savings for taxpayers. Except in a few areas of concentration, school district administrators will be able to cancel classes, lay off teachers, or outright close entire schools. However, the detrimental effects of slashing costs in areas of immigrant concentration will certainly go beyond the possible savings to taxpayers.

The social impact of pushing thousands of school-age children out on the streets will first be evident in increased gang violence and petty crimes and youngsters' malnutrition and deterioration in health. Marcello Medina reports that the cost for dropping out of the educational system for Hispanics results in "\$441,000 lost in life-term earnings over those of a typical high school graduate, and \$1,082,000 in lost earnings compared to a college graduate."¹² In the long term, we should expect dramatic increases in the persistently poor population and many other social dislocations associated with long-term poverty.

A most important spillover of anti-immigrant sentiment is the impact that the proposed legislation may have on citizens and legal residents of Latin American descent. In 1990, the U.S. General Accounting Office issued a report, *Immigrant Reform*, the most comprehensive study of discrimination against Latinos ever conducted.¹³ The authors used a variety of methods and assembled an impressive amount of data to assess whether the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 had adversely affected Latinos' employment opportunities. In a hiring audit conducted in Chicago and San Diego, pairs of low-skilled Anglo and Latino job seekers were sent to apply for jobs, advertised in local newspapers, which required only a high school diploma. Latinos were three times as likely as the closely matched Anglos to encounter job discrimination. In a separate study, the General Accounting Office conducted a survey based on a stratified sample of 6,317 employers nationwide to establish the link between discrimination against foreign-looking natives and IRCA. The employer group showed a widespread pattern of discrimination "across a variety of industries in all areas of the nation among employers of various sizes."¹⁴ There is little doubt that the widespread pattern of discrimination against Latinos was exacerbated by IRCA.

Similar widespread discrimination is likely to occur in California with the implementation of Proposition 187. Anecdotal data suggest that even though the proposition targets the denial of public services to undocumented immigrants, increased discrimination already exists against all Latinos in private and public sectors. Newspapers reported that shortly after the proposed legislation was embraced by the electorate, three girls were denied pizza in a restaurant, a woman alleged that she was denied services at a San Joaquin County office, and a fourteen-year-old boy said that Asian students told him to go "back across the border."¹⁵ These examples of heightened racial and ethnic conflict could extend to the whole nation in the near future.

Demographic Change and Xenophobia

To understand the overwhelming support for Proposition 187, it is necessary to assess demographic trends in California, which has become one of the most diverse states in the nation. In 1994, California's population was 56.3 percent white, 26.3 percent Latino, 9.4 percent Asian, and 7.4 percent African-American. However, according to a statewide exit poll conducted by the *Los Angeles Times*, 81 percent of California's electorate was white while only 8 percent were Latino, 5 percent were African-American, and 4 percent were Asian.¹⁶ Obviously, the wide margin of victory for the proposition reflects the fact that 63 percent of whites, the largest electoral bloc in the state, voted in favor of Proposition 187. The margin of victory was substantial across gender, age, income, education, and religious lines. It is significant to note that the majority of Democrats (64%) voted against the proposition, but both Republicans (78%) and indepen-

dents (62%) voted heavily in favor of it. One can only conclude that Governor Wilson's reelection, with 56 percent of the vote, was heavily influenced by his support of Proposition 187.

The exit poll also revealed a troublesome pattern for the Democratic Party coalition and for race relations in California. As one could have expected, Latinos voted overwhelmingly (77%) against the proposed legislation, but only about half the blacks and Asians voted against it. Thus, ethnic polarization is wider than just whites versus ethnic and racial minorities. Similarly, even in the agricultural Central Valley, where the region's economy is heavily dependent on seasonal immigrant labor, the proposition passed 69 to 39 percent. Only in the liberal district of the San Francisco Bay area did the electorate reject the initiative. All in all, the results of the election suggest that the white electorate is angry at the immigrant population. They have the votes while the majority of people of color are underage, lack citizenship, or simply do not vote.

The fear of rapid demographic change, notwithstanding popular opinions, has little historical support. Between 1981 and 1990, the number of immigrants in the United States, including those naturalized after IRCA, totaled 7.3 million and 0.6 percent of the population. Although this is a high figure by post-World War II standards, it is lower than the 8.8 million immigrants who entered between 1901 and 1910. Of greater significance is the fact that the proportion of immigrants in the total population was 3.1 percent in the 1980s in contrast to 10.4 percent in the 1900s.¹⁷ By comparison, the absolute numbers, the immigrant-to-the-total-population ratio, and the immigration rates of the past decade are low by historical standards. The significant difference remains in the racial composition of those two immigration waves.

Proposition 187 signals a deep sentiment that goes well beyond immigrants' rights and California. Similar to the tax revolts of the late 1970s and early 1980s, for example, Proposition 13 in California and Proposition 2¹/₂ in Massachusetts, groups have already organized in such disparate states as Florida, New York, and Arizona to pass Proposition 187-type laws.¹⁸ Nativist sentiments are fueled by large concentrations of new immigrants in these states. According to the Immigration and Naturalization Services, in 1993 there were about 3.5 million undocumented immigrants in the United States. About half were in California, but other states also had sizable numbers: New York, 449,000; Texas, 357,000; Florida, 322,000; Illinois, 176,000; and New Jersey, 116,000. Political and economic conditions in these states differ. Democratic governors tend to oppose any measure to limit immigration, and unemployment rates have not climbed as much as they have in California. Nonetheless, the successful English-only campaigns in Florida and the backlash on bilingual education in New York and Massachusetts suggest that there is fertile political ground for the replication of the California experience.

The implications of Proposition 187 are far reaching in another dimension. A *Los Angeles Times* article reported that the same group which launched the initiative for Proposition 187 is targeting affirmative action and financial aid to Mexico.¹⁹ This so-called California civil rights initiative proposes to end affirmative action as a policy tool to remedy discrimination. Although this initiative was the brainchild of two University of California at Berkeley professors, the grassroots nativist movement has fueled support for the new initiative by linking the immigration issue to affirmative action. They claim that affirmative action, which was designed to remedy discrimination against African-Americans, is being used incorrectly to benefit many other groups. Affirmative action is becoming a more pressing policy issue at the national level since the

Republican Party gained a majority in Congress. The convergence of immigration and affirmative action issues has tremendous political implications: the realignment of national politics is increasingly based on racial politics.

Attacks on the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and financial aid to Mexico also have far-reaching implications for American foreign policy and domestic politics. Most informed observers believe that NAFTA was necessary to forming a large trading bloc in the Americas. Competition in the new global economy with the European common trade market and the Pacific Ocean bloc led by Japan requires greater economic integration with strategic trading partners. Canada and Mexico were the first to join the trading bloc, but Chile, Brazil, and all other Latin American countries expect to enter the partnership within the next decade. Emigration from Latin America is expected to subside as trade liberalization promotes economic growth in the region. NAFTA was enacted by a bipartisan Congress but with the opposition of labor and environmental groups. The tension engendered by this legislation within the Democratic Party coalition is now aggravated by the racial politics of Proposition 187 and affirmative action.

There is a close relationship between the growing nativist and anti-civil rights sentiments, the dissolution of the liberal coalition around the Democratic Party, and the anger of the white electorate toward government. The primary factor underlying these issues is a stagnant U.S. standard of living. Targeting immigrants, minorities, and single mothers receiving financial assistance is easier than understanding how global competition, corporate restructuring, and new technologies have affected economic growth and income distribution during the past two decades. Secretary of Labor Robert Reich describes the American working class as an "anxious class," unable to understand how middle-class wages have stagnated for twenty years and looking for easy solutions to the problem.²⁰ Indeed, the isolationist sentiment can affect U.S. efforts to penetrate international markets as much as nativism can affect productivity in the domestic market. Understanding Latinos in a changing society is understanding some of the key issues in American politics, economics, and society. Despite the ideological debate drawing media and partisan political interest, numerous scholars are working on providing a more comprehensive view on the incorporation and contributions of Latinos to the United States.

Special Issue: Part I

This is the first of two parts of "Latinos in a Changing Society"; Part II is scheduled for Fall/Winter 1995 publication. The following articles provide new insights into several key areas of concern: immigration, employment and income, and political participation. Part II articles will address education, health, and identity and ethnicity.

Given the atmosphere of anger and suspicion toward immigrants, there is a pressing need for comprehensive information and analysis regarding the communities of immigrants and other minorities. The analysis and research provided here contribute to filling this need. The work depicts, for Latinos, immigrant and native, a different reality from the image portrayed by the proponents of the Save Our State initiatives that are surging throughout the country. These groups promote a portrait of undocumented immigrants as people who came to this country for the sole purpose of taking advantage of a generous welfare system. The authors of the articles attempt to reshape and redefine the

debates by critically analyzing the economic, institutional, social, and political contexts of changing demographics and increased immigration.

While it is true that stagnant wages have affected majority workers, unequal distribution of earnings and income have affected people of color disproportionately. Edwin Meléndez, Françoise Carré, and Evangelina Holvino provide an in-depth analysis of the barriers that confront Latinos in the workforce. The authors propose that the Latino labor force has been primarily influenced by the compositional shift of employment away from manufacturing, which has resulted in further concentration of Latinos in farming and service occupations, both of which entail low wages and few benefits. They propose that lack of language proficiency and lack of education are not the only reasons why Latinos are not represented in management and professional occupations. The findings note that the erosion of internal markets has had an adverse affect on promotions and internal career ladders. Firms are recruiting externally a greater of workers for positions that were once filled by employees who had been trained in house. This has impeded the advancement of many Latino workers. Such transformations in the structure of employment have far-reaching implications for long-term poverty among Latino populations.

One of the most common arguments about Latino poverty is that it is a transitory phenomenon. Linda Chavez, for instance, argues that most of the employment and income statistics are biased owing to the large number of immigrants among the Latino population.²¹ Immigrants, in time, will converge to average economic outcomes. But what if the economic conditions affecting Latinos are historically different from those affecting previous immigrants?

Ramón Borges-Méndez asserts that the origin and development of early European immigrant communities in Massachusetts can be traced to attempts by industrialists to create a reliable workforce for the expanding manufacturing industries. Although these groups did not enjoy high living standards and many faced exploitation and poor working conditions, the period of economic expansion and the institutions they created offered them enough economic and social stability from which the next generation could forge improved opportunities. Puerto Ricans and other Latinos came to Massachusetts during a time of economic contraction: the manufacturing base was declining and service-sector jobs offered relatively low wages. Under such conditions, Latinos, unlike previous immigrants, could not transfer economic mobility to future generations.

If, as suggested, adverse economic conditions affect Latinos, the question that follows is, How are the new immigrants adapting to these circumstances? It is well established in the literature that immigrants develop specific family and community links before coming to the United States. These so-called networks facilitate information and resources that allow not only travel, but employment opportunities. Luis Falcón's analysis of survey data found substantial use of networks as a strategy to find employment among Latinos. However, his findings indicate that taking advantage of networks has a negative effect on earnings. These findings could result from the fact that those who are most likely to turn to the networks are also the most disadvantaged educationally and economically.

Karen Lado's work documenting the experience of Central American workers in the Boston cleaning industry offers a detailed account of the institutional processes affecting Latinos and their adoption of social networks to secure employment. She found that

Central Americans, particularly Salvadoreans, use informal networks to secure work and that their employers benefit tremendously from this steady and reliable workforce. Because of the apparent benefits to employers, these networks will continue operating, ensuring a reliable supply of workers. The evidence regarding immigrants' adaptation in labor markets suggests that social networks become mechanisms that substitute for traditional sources of information and access to employment, such as labor unions. While these parallel institutions may provide entry opportunities into the labor market, they may also limit the opportunities for mobility out of the lowest cluster of occupations. Lado's findings indicate that the union did not respond to the needs of the workers and did not promote leadership among Latino laborers. Andrés Torres, however, proposes that when organized labor discovers that Latinos represent a growing sector in their membership and finds linkages to the community, both sides benefit from the relationship. In the long term, a union's success in organizing workers may depend precisely on understanding the issues motivating Latinos in the workplace and promoting their leadership in the organization.

Latino poverty is directly linked to such labor-market dynamics as industrial restructuring and discrimination, to the way institutions react to demographic change, and to immigrants' response to the new social environment. The work of Anna M. Santiago and Yolanda C. Padilla attributes persistent poverty to employment opportunities and work experience but also to educational opportunities and childhood poverty. To the extent that these conditions persist, unequal employment and social outcomes for Latinos are not a transitory but an enduring phenomenon.

The last section of this issue considers political participation. It should be apparent from the earlier discussion that concerns central to Latino political participation are redefining contemporary American politics. Immigration, international trade, and affirmative action are but a few of the issues that directly affect social policy formulation at the state and federal levels. These topics have divided the democratic coalition and reshaped presidential and local elections. Articles in this section address some of the most critical themes emerging in political participation literature.

Jorge Chapa considers whether the political attitudes and participation of Mexican-Americans constitute a step toward complete assimilation, as proposed by Milton Gordon and others. He contends that, in contrast to Julius Wilson's observed bifurcation of middle- and lower- or underclass black populations, Mexican-Americans with only a small middle class have not, for the most part, achieved educational or economic parity with Anglos. Mexican-Americans show clear indications of maintaining a separate community based on their ethnicity. Even though there are differences in electoral participation, different class groups generally maintain similar attitudes about such key ethnic-identity issues as bilingual education and discrimination. Chapa concludes that the "similarity in attitudes held by all Mexican-Americans [is] thought to reflect the fact that a large proportion of this population still face structured disadvantages that are at odds with any notion of assimilation."

A second article in this section uses the political participation of Puerto Ricans, the second-largest Latino-American-origin group after Mexican-Americans, to determine whether identity politics could lead to the improvement of socioeconomic status. If Chapa examines whether socioeconomic standing influences political attitudes and behavior, José Cruz, using Hartford, Connecticut, as a case study, reverses the question and asks whether political mobilization based on ethnic identity leads to public policies

that are more responsive to the concerns of Puerto Ricans. At a first approximation, the relative gains in political representation and access to the public policy process have not yielded any discernible gains in education, employment, economic development, and other socioeconomic status indicators. He cautions, however, that political participation and representation are critical for the formulation and implementation of public policies that target Puerto Rican needs. Cruz concludes that the "key challenge that Puerto Rican elected officials face is how to translate access into power in the context of small numbers, universalism in public policy, and slow growth."

Seth Racusen discusses the issue of Latino political representation from the point of view of structural barriers limiting electoral success. Using Massachusetts as a case study of a state with a growing but still relatively small Latino population, he posits that political underrepresentation results from many factors affecting Latino political demographics, such as low citizenship rates and dispersion across many electoral districts. Modified at-large electoral systems could provide significant opportunities for electing officials to most local legislative bodies, with the greatest gains for the state legislature. Furthermore, these alternative forms of representation are also beneficial to other minority groups, particularly in cities with large concentrations of more than one racial or ethnic minority. In Racusen's view, alternative electoral systems may become a vehicle to promote greater political alliances among Latinos, Asians, and African-Americans.

One of the greatest challenges to Latino researchers is to reexamine the conceptualization of political participation and its implicit gender bias. Mainstream studies of Latino political participation focus on leadership as derived from official positions in elected or appointed office or in formal organizations. Thus, people narrowly define leadership in terms of representation, ignoring other critical aspects of participation and, ultimately, the underlying forces that make viable such participation. Immigrant communities have developed multiple forms of political participation not only in recognizable political structures, but also in established parallel organizations and institutions of ethnic solidarity.

Carol Hardy-Fanta uses Massachusetts Latinas to document that not only are Latinas disproportionately elected to public office, but also that an expanded definition of political participation and leadership accommodates a recognition of women's contribution to community-based organizations and to the political mobilization of the community around key social issues. In her view, political leadership should focus more on interpersonal relationships and less on positional aspects. She concludes that "by acknowledging the contribution of Latina women as candidates and as community leaders, we can begin to examine and recognize the value of what Latina women do to empower Latino communities."

The research offered in this special issue represents a cross section of multiple efforts across disciplines attempting to provide a better understanding of the social context affecting Latino populations and their impact on society. In many ways we seem to be experiencing the downside of a cycle regarding the adaptation of new populations after a two-decade wave of heightened immigration. Nativist sentiments are evident in job markets, educational and service institutions, and political processes. For many observers, ethnic conflict is part of an assimilation or integration process that in time will reach a more promising stage of tolerance and understanding. Latinos' contributions to the economy will be acknowledged and new elected officials will voice and defend

their interests. For others, understanding how Latinos contribute to the landscape of America has not yet worked its way into their consciousness, partly because of their so-called invisibility between blacks and whites. The presence of Latinos is propitious in that their legacy will mark economic, social, and political changes into the next century. As Carlos Fuentes expressed it, America may find itself shifting toward "Latinoization" of its own borders.

It is in the above context that we should consider some of the cross-cutting themes presented by these authors. For once it is apparent that, in contrast to other periods of relatively high immigration, the fact that these new populations comprise people from Asia and Latin America represents a challenge to preconceived notions of how ethnic groups incorporate into economic, social, and public life. Race is an essential element of social life in the United States — there are no other industrialized countries, for instance, with a population share of racial and ethnic minorities similar to this country's. Undoubtedly, such diversity has been characterized in the United States mainly in terms of black and white. Yet the growing diversity of races and cultures challenges existing typologies of social problems and prescribed solutions. Old conceptual formulas lack explanatory power to produce strategies to cope with new realities.

Perhaps as important as the issue of race is the question of economic progress. Previous immigrant waves coincided with and responded to periods of rapid economic expansion. But the nature of industrial expansion and economic growth today is radically different from that at the turn of the century and the postwar expansions. Economic growth increases inequalities in income distribution and provides fewer advancement opportunities for low-skilled, young, and foreign-born workers. Limited economic opportunities, in turn, exacerbate nativist sentiments and racial conflict in job markets. To the extent that economic growth continues to produce a bifurcated pattern of employment opportunities, the conditions in which new immigrant populations filter into job markets become substantially different when compared with previous historical processes.

Another aspect that warrants special consideration is how institutions respond to the challenges posed by rapid population change. The reported research documents the extent to which job-market organizations, such as corporations and unions, institutions of higher education, and health delivery and political systems, are not responding adequately to these challenges. Would the educational system prove to be a social equalizer for other ethnic groups before them? Would Latinos' electoral victories and the emergence of a new democratic coalition precede access to public-sector jobs as it did for African-Americans? Would a new economic expansion provide favorable conditions for changing employers' views on Latinos' contribution in the workplace? Can the democratic coalition survive the challenge of racial politics and nativist sentiments? More than rhetorical, these are questions that may help us in assessing whether institutional responses to the new social realities perpetuate a subordinated position for Latinos rather than promoting incorporation and equal participation.

Evidently the process of incorporation and full participation in social institutions is going to be substantially different for Latinos from the historic experience of other ethnic groups. Latinos, who were part of the American landscape before Columbus arrived, work every day to develop their communities. Generations of Mexican-Americans are native to the Southwest, while Puerto Ricans travel freely between the island and the continent. And even though recent immigrants always speak of returning home, communities in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and many other urban and rural areas, attest to the expansion of Latino home bases. To the extent that they can foster their own visions of

change in the American society, Latinos will be the negotiators of the democratic ideals so treasured in the American Constitution. They may well be on their way to becoming the agents of change in fostering America's future. These experiences serve as the basis for understanding how Latinos participate in society, the structure of opportunity open to them, the ties to the country of origin, and the continuous renewal of ethnic communities through circular migration. The future research agenda for Latino scholars is likely to be shaped by the need to develop more appropriate conceptual frameworks to understand the uniqueness of the current historical period and the ways in which institutions could respond to these new challenges. The research presented in the following pages is but a modest steppingstone in reaching such ambitious goals. ♣

Notes

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