

bove, p. 184). As a cavalry officer in charge of Indian prisoners in the 1870s, he found that he could turn them into friends by putting them in uniform, cutting their hair, and subjecting them to white routines of military discipline. "In Indian civilization," he declared, "I am a Baptist, because I believe in immersing the Indians in our civilization and when we get them under holding them there until they are thoroughly soaked."<sup>93</sup> From 1879, as we have seen, as superintendent of what became the Carlisle Industrial School in Pennsylvania, he applied the methods to Indian children orphaned or seized in the course of Indian wars or, increasingly, surrendered by their families in order to be Americanized. In most respects the experiment was a failure. Few graduates of the school got the opportunity to play an unobstructed part in mainstream American life. Most returned to their reservations. Some took jobs with Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, aping the savagery Pratt had sought to fillet out of them. But Pratt inspired similar, variously, patchily successful programs in hundreds of other schools. There could be no more impressive endorsement of the integrationist agenda. Though the federal government revised and sometimes reversed it at intervals—notably in the 1930s and 1960s—distinctive indigenous cultures have withered in practice, almost to the point of extinction. Revivals of "tribal ways" seem contrived nowadays—often little more than costume reconstructions or sentimental pantomime. "Indian rights" today usually means the right to exploit gambling casinos, golf courses, and shopping malls.

The next big question for Hispanics in the United States, therefore, is whether they will assimilate as other minorities have in varying degrees, or whether a distinctive relationship with the rest of the country is available to them. That is also the question for the final part of this book.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## THE REPUBLIC OF HESPERUS

*The Remaking of the Hispanic United States,  
c. 1914–2012*

America has traditionally chosen to describe itself as an east-west country. I grew up on the east-west map of America, facing east. I no longer find myself so easily on that map.

—Richard Rodriguez

Brown: *The Last Discovery of America* (2002)

ONE OF THE PARAMEDICS LOOKED AT A SMASHED BODY THAT stuck to the hot cement on a street near the DC zoo. "He looks Hispanic," he said.

A female passerby, "clutching her purse to her chest," spoke next. "Maybe he's from Central America. . . . A lot of them live in this neighborhood. . . . You know, they come here fleeing the wars in their countries . . ."

"If he's not from El Salvador, he must be from Guatemala," agreed one of the paramedics. "Although now they're coming from all over: Bolivia, Peru, Colombia. We used to be the ones who invaded their

countries; now they invade ours. Soon Washington will look like Latin America."<sup>1</sup>

The scene, which occurred in a novel published just before the beginning of the present century, by Mario Bencastro, a *salvadoreño* resident of the United States, sums up what happened in the Hispanic story of the United States in the late twentieth century. The numbers of immigrants shot up. Their provenance diversified. Expectations grew—hopes for some, fears for others—that they would transform the culture of the country. The word “invasion” was double-edged, likening the Hispanic inflow to an unwelcome takeover yet conveying a sense of justice, complementing the invasions the United States had launched many times into Mexico, Central America, and Caribbean states. Other people’s perceptions of the newcomers remained racialized: formulated in terms of how they looked, or how DC or the whole United States might come to look as the immigrants’ numbers increased. The female character’s words captured the power and accuracy of the image of lands of Hispanic origin as violent and conflictive. Also apparent in Bencastro’s dialogue is the way people in the host country condensed all the arrivals, from many different places, in a single category, as Hispanic—an identity many of them barely felt, if at all, and some resisted.

Official forms at every stage of life invited or required one to opt for an ethnic descriptor. You could not choose to be *salvadoreño* or Cuban or Mexican or Nicaraguan. But the term “Hispanic” beckoned everyone who did not feel at home in other, even more generalized categories. I have always checked the “Hispanic” box when filling in forms, not chiefly because the epithet matches my own sense of identity, but rather out of sympathy and solidarity with others who do the same. Marilyn Espitia, a sociologist working in Texas, recently described her own experience of the identity options available:

During my elementary school years, my teachers annually took a head count of all the “Spanish” children in my class. Although the purpose of this exercise was unclear to me at the time, I knew to raise my hand to be included for the tally even though

my parents were from Colombia and I was born in the United States. Intuitively, I knew that the count consisted of all the Spanish-speaking children regardless of their birthplace. Later, in middle school, I noticed on my standardized test forms that I was no longer classified as Spanish, but, mysteriously, I had somehow become “Hispanic.” This new category apparently still included all the Spanish-speaking children regardless of their birthplace, but now, in addition, actual language capabilities in Spanish seemed not to be required. In high school, when I began using the label Hispanic as a self-referent, my college-educated brother quickly informed me that the politically correct term was now “Latino,” even though it appeared to represent the same people previously referred to under the old umbrella term, Hispanic. It wasn’t until my undergraduate years, when I began to meet other Colombian-origin Latinos, that my specific background came to the forefront for others and myself. Since then, it has remained in the forefront, even in California and Texas, where I have at different times been presumed to be Puerto Rican (because of my New York City origins) or Chicana. With Colombian pop-star crossover sensation Shakira currently recognizable in the U.S. mainstream, I finally see a glimmer of acknowledgment in others when I tell them I am Colombian American.<sup>2</sup>

Potentially, identity is like a layer cake. You can slice it where you like, and all the levels will appear. I find it relatively easy to combine my mixed native and adopted identities, and commit to all those I have been told I have. I can feel simultaneously Galician (the identity of all my paternal ancestors from time immemorial), Spanish (the nationality to which they belonged or came to belong), European (the transcendent identity co-workers in the European Union strive to achieve), and English (my mother’s nationality and the descriptor of the land of my upbringing). I also have an enormous emotional investment in the interests and welfare of the United States, where I work. Apart from giving me a remarkably dispassionate outlook during cer-

tain international and interregional soccer matches, the complexity of my identity has no obviously incapacitating effect. Can my fellow Hispanics in the United States be equally comfortable with their identities of origin, without missing out on feeling Hispanic or making a wholehearted commitment to belonging to the United States?

A sense of identity is never self-ascribed. You get it from the community that surrounds you. But where does the community get it from? Usually, it is imposed or projected from the outside, or arises from collective comparisons we and our fellows make with outsiders. Migrations often make people aware of fellow feeling they never previously knew they had. I recall a brilliant paper by a friend of mine, the Dutch historian Leonard Blussé, on Chinese migrant workers in eighteenth-century Borneo. Most of them never thought of themselves as Chinese until their Dutch employers referred to them as such. They came from various provinces and ethnic groups, spoke dissonant languages and, to one another, looked ill-assorted and strange. But they acquired from their hosts the habit of seeing themselves collectively. They transmitted it home in their letters.

In a similar way, migrants from the fragmented statelets of pre-Risorgimento Italy all became self-consciously Italian in America, whereas previously they would have designated themselves by descriptors relating to their home regions, as *romagnol*, or *toscano*, or *siciliano*, or *pugliese*, or whatever. The process works in reverse, too: no natives of the Americas called themselves indios or Indians or Native Americans, or thought they had any level of shared identity with natives of other local or tribal or linguistic communities than their own, until outsiders arrived to provide a point of comparison and a collective perception. A big question for Hispanics in the United States is: will they adopt and maintain a common identity and work for a shared future? Will they submerge the identities they bring with them in self-ascription to a "Hispanic" category (or some near-equivalent, such as that of "Latinos," which is currently favored by generators and receivers of academic jargon)? Will the United States become the republic of Hesperus?

In ancient Greek myth, Hesperus was a divine personification of

the Evening Star, whose daughters, the Hesperides, tended a fabulous land known by their name, toward the setting sun. One tradition represented Hesperus as a brother of Atlas, who bore the world on his shoulders. As a result of his brother's collaboration with Hercules, in a version of the myth popular in medieval and Renaissance Spain, Hesperus succeeded the hero as ruler of the Iberian peninsula at an uncertain date, which a consensus of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century authorities fixed as 1658 BC. Convolved reasoning led Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, the myth peddler who, as we saw in Chapter One, identified Florida as the location of the Fountain of Youth, to represent Hesperus as the ruler of a prefigured Spanish empire. His fabulous realm spanned both sides of the ancient Atlantic, and included the Indies—the name for the Americas current in Oviedo's day. "From true and authentic sources," Oviedo wrote in 1535,

we understand that the land of the Hesperides lies forty days' sail to the west of the isles of . . . Cape Verde. And just as in Spain and Italy . . . and Mauritania . . . there are places named after Hesperus, twelfth king of Spain, so the islands that are called the Hesperides . . . must undoubtedly be these Indies and must have been part of the dominions of Spain in the time of Hesperus. . . . And . . . it follows that 3,193 years ago to this day, Spain and her king, Hesperus, ruled these islands of the Indies of the Hesperides. And therefore, in conformity with this most ancient title, . . . God restored this dominion to Spain after so many centuries. And it appears that divine justice has restored this dominion to Spain, as it was formerly hers, so that it may remain hers forever.<sup>3</sup>

Oviedo's motive for this crazy claim was rational. He wanted to pretend that his sovereign's title to the Americas derived not from a contract with Christopher Columbus, or a grant from the pope, or any revocable human agency: it was God-given. The justice of Spain's conquests in the New World did not depend—the claim implied—on the assent of the inhabitants or treaties with other powers, but was rooted

in a basic principle of just war theory: a state's right to recover its own former territory, albeit after a supposed lapse of thousands of years. Of course, Oviedo was wrong at every stage of his argument. There never was a King Hesperus. He never ruled Spain. The Hesperides never existed. They did not correspond to the New World or any part of it. Even if the rest of the argument had rested on truth, it would not mean that God approved of anything that had happened. Nor was there any reason to suppose that Spain's power would last forever—as indeed it did not, although so far, most of the western hemisphere has remained in a Hispanic tradition in terms of its predominant language and religion. And Oviedo's prophecy might yet come true, in a sense, if the area of predominantly Hispanic culture expands to include the United States. In the continental Americas, that would leave only Brazil, the Guyanas, Belize, and Canada outside the reconstituted realm of Hesperus.

FOR MOST OF THE twentieth century, rehispanicization proceeded too slowly to make such a future imaginable, even though, from the 1890s until the 1960s, immigration restrictions in the United States worked broadly to Hispanics' advantage. The regulations and the prejudices of officials favored new arrivals from Europe—still the place of origin of three-quarters of immigrants into the United States as late as 1960. Asians and Africans were almost totally debarred. But temporary work, with the possibility of extending its privileges, was accessible to Latin Americans, and at times relatively openly so—albeit, as we have seen, at the cost of much hardship—to Mexicans. Cultural swing and game-changing legislation in the 1960s opened a new era.

It was the era of belief in multicultural solutions to the problems of plural societies. Rainbows filled skies. The White Australia policy dissolved. The civil rights movement transformed the United States. An almost unnoticed side effect was the modification of national quotas for immigrants in 1965, and the introduction of a system that, according to President Lyndon Johnson, "rewards each man on the basis of his merit."<sup>4</sup> The sponsors of the new law were Democrats Emanuel

Celler of New York and Philip Hart of Michigan, backed by Ted Kennedy. They intended only to obliterate the scandal of racial quotas, not to change the demographic profile of the country. The outcome, however, was to reverse the proportions of immigrants from Europe and the rest of the world. By 2000, Europeans accounted for only 15 percent of immigrants. The numbers, once negligible, arriving from Asia and—in the long term—Africa soared. Would-be migrants from within the Americas faced at first serious competition from visa seekers in those previously underrepresented areas; but in the longer term the new regime sluiced a brain drain for well-qualified candidates from countries that had previously supplied few migrants.

The results benefited those coming from everywhere except Mexico. The United States admitted nearly a million of them in the course of the 1960s—more than there had been in the country at the start of the decade. And decade by decade the arriving numbers increased. Overall, from 1971 until the end of the century, immigrant status was granted to 7.3 million arrivals from Asia, a little over 5 million from Mexico, and nearly 6 million from the rest of the Americas including the Caribbean but not counting Puerto Rico, whose people were US citizens. Immigrants accounted for nearly 60 percent of Hispanics in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, but the proportions diminished as their children and grandchildren multiplied. US-born Hispanics accounted for 55 percent of the total in 1990, 57 percent in 2000, over 60 percent in 2012.<sup>5</sup>

The effect was to shift the balance of the US population in favor of Hispanics and, among Hispanics, away from the previous absolute preponderance of Mexicans. Mexican numbers, however, received an unrecorded boost, perhaps doubling the totals, from the relatively large cohorts of undocumented workers who crossed the border. An increase in the number of undocumented migrants was an unforeseen consequence of the new legislation, since workers with poor qualifications were now condemned to a low place on the waiting list for visas.

In the shadow of the civil rights movement, Hispanic self-perception and self-presentation also began to change in the 1960s. The first activist was a disturbingly quixotic figure in the tradition

of American prophets. Reies López Tijerina was an outsider by self-exclusion. His career of elective conflict with the social mainstream began when he started a religious community of his own in Arizona, with a barely intelligible doctrine that mixed elements of evangelicalism and Islam. The revulsion and persecution he drew from his Anglo neighbors and the representatives of law and order aggravated his already acute sense of injustice. During long years in the late fifties and early sixties as a fugitive from suspiciously unconvincing charges, including an alleged attempt to spring his brother from jail, he launched a campaign to draw attention to the long-ago illegal seizure of Hispanics' land in New Mexico and Colorado in the aftermath of the Mexican War. He had alighted on a cause with two advantages: a sound basis in historical fact, and a large number of interested parties among the descendants of dispossessed landowners. In 1962 he launched a movement, popularly known as *La Alianza*, and a radio station. The protests, marches, cavalcades, and demonstrations he organized over the next few years provoked the authorities but attracted attention from other campaigners for minority rights. His attempt to make a citizens' arrest on a New Mexico district attorney who had banned one of his demonstrations ended with López Tijerina's imprisonment, the status of a martyr, and the embrace of Dr. Martin Luther King. Prison seems to have induced a spell of paranoia, and the level of his activism was much diminished on his release, but his case electrified Hispanic sympathies and helped inspire other, generally more effective movements.<sup>6</sup>

More impactful in Texas, perhaps, was the campaign waged by Democratic Party managers to mobilize Hispanic voters with a *Viva Kennedy!* campaign in the presidential election of 1960. Kennedy carried the state by the fingernail margin of 46,000 votes. The power of Hispanic voters suddenly became apparent. Crystal City, Texas, the self-proclaimed "spinach capital of the world," with a population of fewer than 10,000 people, became the focus for an unprecedented form of Mexican-American activism. People of Mexican origin or ancestry formed a big majority in the town, but Anglo gerrymandering had previously kept them out of municipal office. In 1963 a group

of them organized the vote and swept the board. The winners were radicals with trade-union links, and conservative opponents turned them out at the following elections, but Hispanics were never again excluded from the council or the electorate. The Crystal City experience inspired wider activism, and the town remained a tinderbox for Mexican-American politics.<sup>7</sup>

By then, the Vietnam War had begun to get nasty—vicious, unstoppable, corrupted with atrocities—alienating many young people in every constituency in the United States. It seemed tyrannous to serve a state committed to a war that was simultaneously stupid, unjust, and illegal. For Hispanic opponents of the war, the Democratic Party became an unworthy object of trust. Some Mexican-American activists, meanwhile, adopted the name "Chicanos" as a badge of identity that implied dissent, somewhat in the spirit of civil rights leaders, who would rather be "blacks" than known by some euphemism or morally neutral term.

César Chávez was the Chicanos' unlikely hero. He was born in 1927 on the smallholding his grandfather farmed in Yuma, Arizona. From early childhood he accumulated instances of injustice at Anglo hands. Swindled out of their farm and modest grocery store, his family espoused poverty as migrant farmworkers in California. "Maybe," Chávez later mused, "that is where the rebellion started."<sup>8</sup> At school, Anglo teachers and classmates victimized César for speaking Spanish. He was a third-generation US citizen but sat in segregated seating at the movies. Restaurants turned his family away. In the navy, anti-bohunk prejudice confined him to menial tasks. In 1952, when he was twenty-five years old, he met a life-transforming patron, the radical activist Fred Ross, who trained Chávez and many other young idealists to organize labor, mobilize voters, use the media, and challenge exploitative bosses and corrupt officials. Chávez was short, shy, quiet, and ill-educated, but he electrified audiences and attracted followers perhaps because of his convincing sincerity and unrelenting pursuit of justice. He communicated simply, factually, clearly, with reticence unadorned by rhetoric. When he set out to organize a farmworkers' union in 1962, the prevailing opinion was that his task was impossible:



every previous attempt had broken down between the bosses' power and the workers' fear. He built a following slowly, unspectacularly, without provoking agribusiness into repression until his organization achieved a critical mass. In 1965 he launched an apparently hopeless, overambitious campaign of attrition against grape producers for the right of collective bargaining: he enlisted interunion cooperation, founded a radio station to disseminate propaganda, launched mass marches, and won the applause of churches, the sympathy of most of the public, and the endorsement of politicians. After five years, the growers recognized the union.

The success of the farmworkers' organization Chávez founded was short-lived. He had garnered over 100,000 members by 1978, when his fame compelled the prosecuting authorities to release him after his arrest for defying antipicketing legislation in his native Arizona. But it is the tragedy of trade unions that they thrive on workers' poverty and degradation and wane when they improve their members' lives. The conservative turn of the 1980s represented a check for the labor movement throughout the developed world. The new glut after the 1986 Immigration Act cheapened labor. Chávez's union dwindled and his power waned. Even the term "Chicano" gradually fell out of favor. But Chávez had genuinely ignited communal self-awareness among Mexican Americans and inspired emulation in other Hispanics.

Among the evidence of a new mood of Hispanic self-assertion in the sixties were the high-school students' walk-outs that started in Los Angeles in 1968 and spread across the Southwest, demanding the inclusion of Hispanic history and culture in the syllabus and parity for Hispanics in student representation. Many universities responded to the demand for reformed curricula. In 1969 the Plan de Santa Bárbara emerged from a gathering of *chicanista* activists at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Essentially, it was a program for creating Chicano Studies courses in universities, but its rhetoric was more far-reaching. The plan proclaimed a "Chicano renaissance" and condemned "the socio-economic functions assigned to our community by Anglo-American society—as suppliers of cheap labor and dumping ground for the small-time capitalist entrepreneur," alleging that this

was why "the *barrio* and *colonia* remained exploited, impoverished, and marginal."<sup>9</sup> The program was potentially vexatious and despotic, demanding common assent from Chicano educators irrespective of whether their views had been heard. But it proved extremely powerful in addressing, not only for Chicanos, one of the cruelest problems that afflict Hispanics in the United States: the low status and prestige that accrues from underrepresentation in higher education and, in partial consequence, top jobs.

Meanwhile, a further breakthrough in political organization occurred with the launch of what the founder, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, called the Justice Crusade. He was an ex-professional boxer—an exemplar of the unappealing options available for Hispanics who sought a profession with a means of social ascent. He was genuinely indifferent to materialism, and borrowed a line from Spanish intellectuals of the early twentieth century who claimed that their country's economic failure, compared with the hard-nosed capitalism of some competitor nations, was evidence of spiritual superiority. In a poem written as if by the bandit-hero Joaquín Murrieta (see above, p. 166), "My parents lost the economic struggle," Gonzales admitted, "but triumphed in the battle for cultural survival." He denounced "gringo society" as suffering from "American social neurosis, sterilization of the soul, and a full belly." He called himself heir of both Cuauhtemoc and Cortés, celebrating a syncretic identity, simultaneously Spanish and indio. He hardly vacillated in taking to its logical conclusion the case for the restitution of land that López Tijerina had made. "This land," he said, referring explicitly to his home state of Colorado and implicitly to the whole hemisphere, "is ours."<sup>10</sup> In March 1969 he organized the first national get-together of Chicano activists in a "Youth Liberation Conference" in Denver. It produced a luridly over-written joint statement, called the Plan Espiritual de Aztlán: "in the spirit of a new people that is conscious not only of its proud historical heritage but also of the brutal 'gringo' invasion of our territories, we, the Chicano inhabitants and civilizers of the northern land of Aztlán from whence came our forefathers, reclaiming the land of their birth and consecrating the determination of our people of the sun, declare

that the call of our blood is our power, our responsibility, and our inevitable destiny."<sup>11</sup>

Remarkably, the Chicano movement pinned its credentials to the same myth that Gaspar Pérez de Villagrà had invoked, as we saw in Chapter Two, to justify the Spanish invasion of New Mexico nearly four hundred years before. The language of blood, race, nationalism, and *mission civilisatrice* that animated the document was already old-fashioned in its day and doomed to become politically incorrect or at best obsolete. But at the time it excited real commitment among thousands of enthusiasts to the program the plan outlined: seizing control of the ruling institutions of "our barrios, *campos*, pueblos, lands, our economy, our culture, and our political life." The formation of a Chicano political party, La Raza Unida, in May 1969 was among the results, with a flurry of local election gains to its credit in its brief spell of fluorescence in the early 1970s. Though the party did not last, it was influential in establishing networks of cooperation among Chicanos who remained in political life in the mainstream parties.

Although the Plan de Aztlán recognized "no capricious frontiers in this bronze continent," and Rodolfo Gonzales used "*mejicano, español, Latino, hispano, Chicano, or whatever I call myself*" as if there were no difference, the Chicano movement derived both its great strength and its greatest weakness from addressing and embracing Mexican Americans in an increasingly plural United States. The best hope for Hispanics to advance together lay in collaboration across traditional categories. None of the changes of the 1960s would have happened if Hispanics' numbers had not grown. Demographic buoyancy gave them clout in the marketplace and power in competitive recruitment environments in the worlds of trade unionism and higher education.

AFTER CHICANOS, THE SECOND biggest group of Hispanics defined by where they and their ancestors came from consisted of Puerto Ricans. Strictly speaking, Puerto Ricans are not immigrants, as all Puerto Ricans are born on US soil, and Congress extended US

citizenship to inhabitants of Puerto Rico in 1917, just in time to make them liable for service in World War I. But they joined a country where most people considered them, if they thought about them at all, as members of "an alien and inferior race."<sup>12</sup> The island's first US military governor reported that "the so-called white race have a decided color—a reddish brown not unlike the color of those persons in the US who have more or less Indian blood." Whitelaw Reid, a US delegate at the Paris conference at the end of World War I, feared the "degeneration" threatened by Puerto Rico's "mixed population, a little more than half colonial Spanish, the rest negro and half-breed, illiterate, alien in language, alien in ideas of right, interests and government." Puerto Ricans commonly encounter some of these prejudices to this day.<sup>13</sup>

The courts repeatedly restricted islanders' rights, openly acknowledging that the citizenship of Puerto Ricans was second-class, and excluded, for instance, the right to vote in federal elections and the right to be a candidate for the presidency. Among the most terrifying effects of racial prejudice was the repeated and systematic selection of Puerto Rican patients and prisoners to be human guinea pigs in medical experiments. Pedro Albizu Campos, the independence-movement leader who exposed the scandal in connection with cancer research in 1932, was probably himself the victim of experimental radiation exposure when he was in prison on faked charges more than thirty years later.

In 1922 the Supreme Court ruled that Puerto Ricans did not enjoy all the rights of citizens under the Constitution unless they were on the soil of a state of the union. This restriction continued to apply even after 1940, when legislation formally defined Puerto Rico as US soil—but not, of course, the soil of a state. In 2005, the *Puerto Rico Herald* pointed out that it was still the case that "in effect, a plane ticket can give to a Puerto Rican civil rights that the Congress has so far refused to grant to those who remain on the island."<sup>14</sup>

In 1921, in the first flush of the concession of nominal US citizenship, there were fewer than 12,000 Puerto Ricans in the whole of the continental United States. By the 1930s, there were over 50,000 in

New York City alone. Toward the end of the decade, a probably pseudonymous poet, claiming to be Colombian, described them in a long praise poem about New York, in which the city seemed magnificent, towering, glittering, but the lives of people in it were oppressed, burdened, and degraded. Puerto Rican women, "dark against the glimmer of the neon advertising, search Manhattan for the light of their star [ofuscadas por el llamativo anuncio luminoso, buscan por Manhattan la luz de su estrella]." <sup>15</sup> They sewed shirts for Jews, washed dishes in Broadway diners, made elevators work, shifted weights on the docks, painted lampshades in gloomy factories, kept going on marijuana. For Alfredo Ortiz Vargas, as the poet called himself, though perhaps not for the women, their lives were a national humiliation, a political sacrifice:

*And in their little defeats  
The condescending shadow  
Of a foreign flag  
Engulfs them forever.*<sup>16</sup>

*[Y la sombra indulgente  
de la extraña bandera,  
en sus pobres derrotas  
para siempre se hundieron.]*

The great leap in numbers came in the 1940s, when the Second World War and its aftermath boosted demand for labor. From nearly 70,000 at the start of the decade, Puerto Ricans on the mainland multiplied to over 300,000, concentrated overwhelmingly in New York City.<sup>17</sup> They enjoyed one advantage over fellow Hispanics from other places: citizenship made them hard to deport or expel or brand as "illegal." But they came below blacks and other Hispanics in every measure of prosperity, including average income, welfare dependence, school dropout rates, and standards of nutrition. As the poet Pedro Pietri recalled in *Puerto Rican Obituary* in 1973, "They worked ten days a week and were only paid for five."<sup>18</sup> They acquired the aura of

danger that surrounds every minority that becomes suddenly conspicuous as a result of increasing numbers. After World War II, when McCarthyite hysteria gripped the United States, the fact that politically radical Puerto Rican labor dominated many industries in New York invited persecution. Meanwhile, the island economy, previously monopolized by sugar, began to diversify; new opportunities should have reduced the amount of surplus labor, but population growth outstripped them and emigration increased. As Puerto Rico became the home of an urban society, internal migration pulled up peasants' roots and dissolved traditional constraints on migration.

Even for whole communities that transferred more or less en masse from Puerto Rico to Spanish Harlem or the South Bronx, New York was a poor fit. Pedro Juan Soto, "the classic delineation of a divided psyche,"<sup>19</sup> felt mocked for bad English in New York and bad Spanish in Puerto Rico. "Well what can you do?" he asked. "You shut your mouth and live in a no-man's land." This was perhaps a disingenuous claim, as he was a well-educated intellectual who became a university professor. Salvador Agrón had a rockier road to intellectual respectability via the violent street gangs that dominated other New Yorkers' image of their Puerto Rican fellow citizens in the 1950s. In his midteens he joined the Mau Maus, whose name, called after the Kenyan resistance movement against British colonialism, conveys a sense of the political airs the gangs sometimes gave themselves. In 1959 he stabbed to death two bystanders who were not even participants in gang war, evincing shocking insouciance at his trial but obtaining a reprieve because of his obvious immaturity. Prison made him. He learned to read and write, took a degree, discovered a talent for poetry, and reinvented himself as a political activist and freedom fighter. In 1998 he achieved a kind of posthumous apotheosis, glorified as the hero of a Broadway musical flop by the folksy rocker Paul Simon and Derek Walcott, a distinguished black English poet. It was not, after all, far to Broadway from El Barrio.

Piri Thomas could recall gangland with candor. Before publishing his autobiography in 1967 and becoming a famous writer, he escaped the trammels of the gangs and the drugs to devote himself to the reha-



bilitation of fellow addicts and the redemption of fellow gangsters. He was "a skinny, dark-face, curly-haired, intense Puerto-REE-can,"<sup>20</sup> half Puerto Rican, half Cuban, and mainly black, divided between shame at his crinkly hair and the greater shame he felt when he had it restyled and greased down to ape white looks. His mother remembered Puerto Rico through a romantic veil as "muy pobre, but happy," a lush, soft, sinuous, scented land full of flowers. The concrete-hard, right-angled reality that surrounded Piri in El Barrio stank and hurt. In turn, he romanticized gang warfare when he fictionalized it later, larding it with camaraderie, sharing, humor, and pathos in his story of "The Blue Wings and the Puerto Rican Knights," whose sidewalk braggadocio escalated into a shooting war. Pedro Pistolas, the crazy man of the gang, fell to a shotgun blast. "The steel pellets tore away most of Pedro's childlike face," but the author succumbed to slushy yet emotionally convincing sentiment. "Nobody would ever again turn his dreams into nightmares," Thomas wrote of the victim.<sup>21</sup> Sometimes, whole gangs self-reformed. The Young Lords, a Chicago street gang, mutated into a national political party militating among continental Puerto Ricans on behalf of the island's independence movement.

Despite discrimination and restricted opportunities, Puerto Ricans were bound to benefit from the booming US economy of the 1950s. In 1957, Leonard Bernstein's brilliant musical *West Side Story*, with Stephen Sondheim's ingenious lyrics, romanticized gang life and, when it transferred to the cinema in 1961, transformed perceptions of Puerto Ricans. In some ways, it captured the realities of the Puerto Rican dilemma, caught between attraction to promised prosperity and indignation at actual injustice. "Life is all right in America," sings a member of the girls' chorus, referring, in the loose usage that seems irremediable, to the United States. "If you're all white in America," reply the boys. The girls sing of credit, Cadillacs, and washing machines, the boys of money-grubbing, capitalism, and crime. The antiphony represents the dilemma. Like Corky Gonzales, the male characters sense the moral superiority of poverty.

Most things in the United States, however, rise and fall with the bottom line, and the rhythms of Puerto Rican migration followed

those of the economy. Whenever there was a downturn or slump—in 1963, for instance, or the 1970s—Puerto Ricans' thoughts turned homeward. As Anita in *West Side Story* said to her admirer when he was thinking of going back to San Juan, "I know a boat you can get on." According to the *New York Times* in 1978, Puerto Ricans were the first community in the United States collectively to give up on the American Dream,<sup>22</sup> but tension between materialism and spirituality has become a common topos of Hispanic rhetoric about the United States. Corky Gonzales voiced it. Sondheim caught its tone. The sociologists Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan took a snapshot of Puerto Ricans in their classic 1963 study of migrants in New York City.<sup>23</sup> Their picture was of a community condemned to poverty by bad health, poor education, low skill levels, a neglectful Church, feeble communal institutions, and "multi-problem families, afflicted simultaneously by a variety of miseries—a child who is a drug-addict, another who is delinquent, a father who is psychologically or physically unable to work, or perhaps is not there." The authors raised the possibility—only to doubt or dismiss it—that Puerto Ricans might ascend to the general population's levels of prosperity and security "by the same path that Italians took" forty years before. Increased political activism drew Glazer's and Moynihan's attention. For most of the 1970s, poor economic conditions held back all of the city's poor, among whom Puerto Ricans were disproportionately represented. Gang warfare returned in the early seventies, disciplined by bloodily enforced bans on addictive drugs, equipped with assault weapons instead of the zip guns, shotguns, and knives of the era Bernstein had romanticized.

In the last generation of the twentieth century and early in the twenty-first, however, the Puerto Rican profile in the continental United States changed. It became increasingly bourgeois, not only because of the enfeeblement of US manufacturing. Among new migrants there were so many teachers, nurses, and social workers that Puerto Rico itself suffered a shortage of workers in those occupations. Puerto Ricans spread beyond New York, Chicago, and their other traditional pockets of concentration. In Florida their numbers quadru-

pled from 1998 to 2000.<sup>24</sup> Since then the rate has slowed, but the total number has grown by about 18 percent to over 850,000. It has become easier for Puerto Ricans to dissolve or attenuate their difference as they have dispersed, and as their island has succumbed increasingly—more even than the rest of the world—to mainstream US cultural influences. Coca-Cola-diluted rum.

For the Puerto Rican historian Fernando Picó this was a matter for self-congratulation. "We have given up celebrating Candlemas with bonfires," he wrote, "[n]or do we eat *funche* (cornmeal) with the feast of St Peter and St Paul. . . . We no longer sow tobacco on the feast day of St Rose of Lima . . . nor do we sing *bomba* at Michaelmas. . . . Halloween has replaced the solemnities of the Feast of All Souls. . . . But along the way we have incorporated St Valentine, . . . graduation days."<sup>25</sup> I suspect Picó exaggerates the attenuation of traditional culture. The famous salsa duo Richie Ray and Bobby Cruz popularized Christmas *bomba*, a form of music derived from African rhythms, in New York in the 1980s, adding laments for Puerto Ricans' sufferings to the lyrics. Some Puerto Rican leaders—notably Herman Badillo, the first to serve in the US Congress, from 1970 to 1977—have demanded bigger sacrifices of culture, including the abandonment of Spanish, in the interests of absorption in the United States. But whatever the effects on Puerto Ricans' assimilability in the US mainstream, the innovations in migrant history of the last few decades have stimulated contact, collaboration, and fellow feeling with other Hispanics on the mainland.

CUBANS—THE NEXT BIGGEST HISPANIC group by country of origin—have been in some ways the hardest Hispanics to induce into a sense of shared destiny because of the distinctive trajectory of Cuba's history, compared with that of other Hispanic-American republics. Among the first Cubans in the United States, revolutionaries predominated. They came as refugees from the independence struggles of the second half of the nineteenth century—perhaps about 100,000 of them in all, mainly to work in the cigar industry exiles set up, with its

center in Tampa. The subsequent trickle of migrants became a flood from 1959, when Fidel Castro's revolution subverted the dominance of the rich and the bourgeois in Cuba. The more people the revolution victimized, the more migrants fled—nearly a quarter of a million by 1962, over a third of whom did white-collar jobs.<sup>26</sup> This fact immediately set Cubans apart from most other Hispanic communities, who were, for the most part, economic exiles with modest education. In September 1965, largely in order to be rid of troublesome opponents, Castro decreed that exiles could collect members of their families and take them to the United States without enduring sanctions. Nearly 300,000 people left the country while the window remained open, until April 1966.

In the second half of the decade, the Cuban profile and that of other Hispanic immigrants converged as the legislation of 1965 took effect. In the 1970s and 1980s, moreover, economic refugees predominated from Cuba, where government intransigence towards the market reforms that revitalized other economies prolonged the global economic crisis of the seventies. In April 1980 Castro again relaxed the regulations, after police volleys killed alarming numbers of dissidents who were seeking shelter in the Peruvian embassy in Havana. Something like 125,000 people, released as subversives from the obligations of Cuban citizenship, fled in boats across the strait to the United States. Reinaldo Arenas was one of them. "Before boarding the boats," he recalled, "we were sorted into categories and sent to empty warehouses: one for the insane, one for murderers and hard-core criminals, another for prostitutes and homosexuals, and one for the young men who were undercover agents of State Security to be infiltrated in the United States."<sup>27</sup>

During most of the remainder of the century, "boat people" undertook risks to life comparable to or greater than those of wetbacks who swam across the Rio Grande. In 1994 the coast guard arrested 38,000 would-be Cuban migrants at sea. After a spell of internment, they all found homes in the United States.

Shared experience with Mexicans and other migrants showed in the way Cuban literature of exile reflected the frustration and exclu-

sion of life in the US. Elías Miguel Muñoz, in his 1991 novel, *The Greatest Performance*, even expressed greater enthusiasm for the old colonial masters in Spain than for the new ones who oppressed him in Garden Shore, California, where his protagonist's Cuban family sought "the promised land. . . . But to me it became the vivid representation of hell." He wanted Spain, where "there were good-looking people who spoke pure Spanish and there was gorgeous music and crowded plazas" instead of "only cars, freeways and solitary houses" in empty streets.<sup>28</sup>

On the other hand, Cubans seem in some ways to have been less invested in—more alienated from—their homeland than counterparts in other migrant communities. They accounted, for instance, for 12 percent of US naturalizations during the seventies, at a time when Mexicans supplied only 6 percent of newly naturalized citizens.<sup>29</sup> In part this reflects the discriminatory nature of US legislation in favor of Cubans and in revulsion from Castro: since 1966, even nominally illegal Cuban immigrants have enjoyed the right to be fast-tracked to permanent resident status. Conflicting Cuban sentiments about the United States reflected divisions at home in a postrevolutionary society where the contending sides were never reconciled. The cause célèbre was that of five-year-old Elián González, whom fishermen rescued from the sea on Thanksgiving Day, 1999. They found him clinging to the inner tube of a tire off Fort Lauderdale, the survivor of the wreck of an aluminum boat full of poor migrants fleeing from Cuba. Most of the occupants drowned, including Elián's mother and the lover with whom she was fleeing not only, or perhaps primarily, from Cuba, but also from her husband.

The case was an unpleasant reminder that not all exiles were political refugees or seekers of economic opportunity in the land of the free. The political divisions among Cubans, however, clouded the moral issues. Elián boarded in Miami's Little Havana with relatives who contested court proceedings to return the boy to his father, and threatened, with support from the Cuban mayor of Miami's Dade County, where 700,000 Cuban voters lived, to defy the law if the courts found against them. One of Miami's most influential Cuban

journalists, Belkis Cuza Malé, declared, "Elián represents the salvation of a people, the slandered and unseen exile, the homeland in chains, and in the purest sense, our condition as human beings who find ourselves in another land."<sup>30</sup> Cuza Malé might, perhaps, be excused for this apparently disproportionate language: she had fled to the United States with her own little boy after she and her husband were imprisoned for criticizing Castro. Oddly, the case overturned the usual parameters of US politics. Normally, Republicans would want to chastise illegal immigrants and uphold parents' rights. But Florida's Republican legislators, Senator Connie Mack and Representative Bill McCollum, introduced a bill to thwart Elián's father's rights by making the boy a US citizen. Federal agents forestalled the attempt by forcibly removing Elián from his fosterers in April 2000 and handing him to his father, who took him back to Cuba a few months later, when legal proceedings reached the point of exhaustion.<sup>31</sup> Over the following ten years, Cubans arrived in the United States to make permanent homes there at the average rate of over 10,000 a year. Thereafter the numbers leapt as the Cuban regime relaxed its own restrictions, reaching nearly 40,000 a year. The privileges Cubans enjoy—accelerated access to Green Cards, Republican patronage, sufferance of "illegals"—helps, perhaps, to keep them distinct in the perceptions of other Hispanics.

THE FOURTH BIG COMMUNITY of Hispanics in the continental United States, after those of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans, is Dominican. The scale of Dominican immigration reflects the Dominican Republic's status as a quasi-colonial territory of the US empire for much of its history. In 1904 the US government took over management of the Dominican national debt, which had never been under control owing to the costs of the war for independence. US forces occupied and ran the country continuously from 1916 to 1924. The Trujillo dictatorship from 1930 to 1961 represented a reversion to nominal national sovereignty but relied increasingly on US support as the Cold War, from the late 1940s, and the Cuban revolution of 1959 made

right-wing regimes seem endearing to Washington. The dictator's death removed the emigration controls that Trujillo had regarded as essential to prevent a drain of talent to the United States. To some extent his fears were well grounded in history, as the relatively few emigrants who went to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were overwhelmingly well-to-do professionals who were fast-tracked through Ellis Island. In reality, however, the pattern of emigration after Trujillo's downfall hardly matched his expectations. Economic hardship, especially after the austerity plan of 1982 aimed to control the perennial budgetary deficit, became the main reason for people to leave. Unemployment stood officially at 30 percent in 1988. The Dominican Republic became a major exporter of people who, in contrast to the early emigrants, had modest educational attainments and accepted low rates of pay. Entrepreneurialism, however, was characteristic of the community. In 1991 an estimated 70 percent of New York City bodegas, or small Hispanic groceries, were in Dominican hands. This was a spectacular reversal of the historic balance, which, of course, was heavily weighted in favor of Puerto Rican owners. New York was by then the second most populous city in the Dominican world. Generation by generation, moreover, Dominicans registered distinctive patterns of social ascent. Their second generations have produced, typically, twice as many professionals as their parents.<sup>33</sup>

Some of those professionals—certainly the best known—are baseball players. Baseball is the imperial game of the United States, spread by empire as surely as cricket was spread by the Raj. It appeared in some places ahead of US power. Spanish authorities banned it in Cuba in the 1880s because the take at the gate went to finance freedom fighters. It appeared in Japan in the 1920s. In Venezuela the game has seeped into popularity beyond the reach of US imperialism. But wherever it is played on a large scale outside the US, Yankees either introduced it or reinforced it. Today baseball is more popular and exerts more influence in Cuba and the Dominican Republic than in the United States, mobilizing relatively more fans, colonizing more column inches. "They took their baseball seriously in the Dominican Republic," reported Juan Marichal, the famously fast-armed pitcher

for the Giants. "They still do."<sup>33</sup> The Dominican baseball commentator Pedro Julio Santana told the historian Rob Ruck that US colonialists "have not given us anything else that in my opinion is of any value except baseball. And here baseball is king." To be a baseball star is the commonest boyhood ambition in the Dominican Republic.<sup>34</sup>

If Puerto Ricans were equivocal about their home island, and Cubans tended to recall it with hostility, Dominicans were outstandingly adept in forging transnational links that kept their US neighborhoods in close touch with those of what still seemed like home. The sociologist Peggy Levitt has described the links that bind Miraflores, near the southwest coast of the island, with the Jamaica Plain district of Boston, Massachusetts, which, despite its name, has little in common with the Caribbean except for the 25 percent or so of the population who now come from the Dominican Republic, Cuba, or Puerto Rico. By 1994, 65 percent of homes in Miraflores had relatives in Boston, especially in Jamaica Plain, where people from that one hometown monopolized several streets. Forty percent of the households in Miraflores relied on remittances from Boston for at least 75 percent of their income. The ebb and flow of influence was constant. In Miraflores, T-shirts with names of Boston businesses abounded, "even though they often do not know what these words or logos mean." Anyone visiting Miraflores would quickly become familiar with Cremora, juice made from Tang, SpaghettiOs, and Frosted Flakes, and with park benches inscribed with the names of migrants who made good in Boston. Conversely, Dominicans in Boston brought aspects of a Dominican look and lifestyle with them, decorating their fridges with magnets that had fruit motifs, adorning their shelves with plastic animals, and hanging ornamental curtains around their doorframes.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, a stay-at-home relative of migrants from the Dominican Republic told Levitt how materialism corrupted emigrants from his hometown of Miraflores. "Life in the U.S.," he admitted, "teaches them many good things but they also learn some bad things. . . . People come back more individualistic, more materialistic. They think that 'things' are everything rather than service, respect, or duty. They are more committed to themselves than they are to the

community.”<sup>36</sup> Not everyone wants to go “home.” *In the Heights* by Lin-Manuel Miranda was a musical that went from a student production at Wesleyan University in 1999 to Broadway in 2005, full of characters hobbled by poverty, conflicted by race, and rejected by the Anglo world. The plot hovered between options of returning to the Dominican Republic and staying to try to make it in New York. The doyenne of the barrio, Abuela Claudia, died planning to use her lottery winnings to take the whole community home, but the youngsters decided their home was in the United States. They knew no other. The generations edge away from the old homeland to the new.

Nonetheless, Dominicans and Hispanic immigrants generally are exceptionally zealous in staying in touch with home. Most migrants from other parts of the world do not make frequent journeys home or send anything like as much money to the families they leave behind. In valuing their roots, too, Dominicans are typical of fellow Hispanics. A recent opinion survey organized by Harvard’s Kennedy School put at 83 percent the proportion of Hispanics who rate the preservation of their cultures of origin as important. Nearly 70 percent of those who marry choose partners from their country of birth.<sup>37</sup>

THE DIVERSIFICATION OF HISPANIC immigration has brought increasing numbers from other communities. Central Americans, mainly *salvadoreños*, numbered little more than 330,000 in 1980. They had quadrupled by the end of the century and supported their families back home with \$3.5 billion in annual remittances.<sup>38</sup> South America supplied the United States with well over half a million immigrants in the 1990s. Recently the variety of Central and South American countries that filed amicus briefs in court proceedings against fastidious state immigration laws in the United States shows the range of communities interested in the welfare of their emigrants. In 2011 Bolivia, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru, and even Paraguay, which of all Latin American countries has fewest of its citizens in the United States, filed separate, nearly identical motions to join Mexico’s against Arizona’s restrictions.

Not only is the provenance of Hispanics in the United States becoming more diverse, but migrants are spread ever more widely across the country.<sup>39</sup> The patches are far more extensive today than ever before as a result of the freedom of migration within the United States. The name of Chicago’s Pilsen neighborhood betrays its past, but now the old monuments with inscriptions in Czech or Slovak are interspersed on streets teeming with mariachi bands and lined with Mexican restaurants. There are over 10,000 restaurants in Chicago, every one of which has at least one Mexican worker in the kitchen.<sup>40</sup> Hartford, Connecticut, was once the capital of Yankeedom. Now, in a city of more than 110,000 people, there are over 47,000 Hispanics. Most are Puerto Ricans—the city has had two mayors of Puerto Rican background in a row—but there are also 25,000 Peruvian families in Connecticut.<sup>41</sup> In two counties in eastern Washington State, Hispanics now form a majority of the population. In nearby Yakima County, 45 percent of the population is Hispanic according to the census. In these places the phenomenon has been sudden, as numbers of immigrants have hurtled upward in response to job opportunities, and, in contrast to the situation in Hartford, political representation has not caught up in the ten counties where they are the highest percentage of the population. Of 1,891 local elected offices in those counties—from city councils to cemetery-district boards—only 78 were held by Latinos as of December 2009, and Yakima has no Hispanic representatives on the City Council.<sup>42</sup>

The number of US states from which substantial remittances now reach Latin American countries demonstrates vividly the widening distribution of the Hispanic population. “Twenty years ago,” according to Sergio Bendixen, a Miami pollster who surveyed some 2,500 immigrants in 2006, “the money was coming from four or five states; now it’s coming from every corner of the country.” Bendixen’s investigation, commissioned by the Inter-American Development Bank, found that 1.2 percent of the residents of Pennsylvania were born in Latin America, as were 0.7 percent of those of Ohio and 2 percent of the population of Indiana. Transfers from Indiana approached \$400 million. Those from Pennsylvania exceeded \$500 million. Ohio pro-



duced well over \$200 million in remittances. "These were states," the report observed, "with virtually no Latino immigrants five years ago."<sup>43</sup> He left West Virginia and Montana out of his inquiry on the grounds that they contained too few Hispanics to make the exercise worthwhile. Two years later, however, those states were yielding, respectively, over \$10 million and some \$5 million.

After a spectacular rise—by more than half as much again from 2004 to 2006—the total remit stabilized at around \$45 billion as a result of the failing economy in 2008, and declined as recovery faltered. But the trend toward an ever more widely dispersed Hispanic population across the United States has continued. Indeed, economic difficulties, forcing workers to look ever farther afield for work, has probably stimulated the trend. Mexicans moved in substantial numbers, for instance, from familiar Illinois to previously little-known Pennsylvania in 2006. "Somebody who is already here hears about a new plant opening and goes there," Jeffrey S. Passel, a demographer at the Pew Hispanic Institute, told the *New York Times*. "After a while, the word gets back to Mexico, and the migrant stream is no longer from California to a meatpacking plant in Iowa. It's Mexico to a plant in Iowa."<sup>44</sup> The reconstruction of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina provides an example of how immigrant populations coalesce around jobs. In New Orleans, by 2006, Hispanic workers accounted for half the reconstruction force, with 54 percent of them working in the United States illegally. Remittances to Latin America from Louisiana topped \$200 million in 2006, a 240 percent increase since 2004.

THE MULTIPLICATION OF MIGRANTS' destinations has converted Hispanics into a national minority, rather as the Great Migration out of the rural South made blacks significant nationally. I suspect—though evidence is lacking—that, by spreading Hispanics more thinly among non-Hispanic communities, it has also stimulated the development of pan-Hispanic feeling. At the same time, diffusion probably increases pressure on Hispanics to assimilate—that is, forgo their own culture in order to be more like their non-Hispanic neighbors.

Which trend will predominate? If Hispanics are to function as a cohesive minority and collaborate with one another in the conservation of culture, the key areas of resistance to erosion will be those they traditionally share or are currently acquiring. Latino music, for instance, is a new kind of pan-Hispanic culture, where formerly there was Mexican or Cuban or Puerto Rican music, or that of other national and local traditions. But music is unlikely to sustain a common sense of identity, precisely because its appeal is so wide. It is Latino, not Hispanic, and owes major debts to Brazil and non-Hispanic parts of the Caribbean. It has rapidly transcended any particular constituency and is now part of the global popular culture that carries a US brand in the world at large.

In the long term there is little chance that Hispanics will reunite enduringly around common political interests, because those interests are limited. Cubans tend to have a stake in the anti-Castrista Republican agenda many of them share. Mexicans, whose economic success rate in the United States is relatively low, have a strong interest in the labor and tax policies of the Democrats. Many Hispanic communities are divided between values-driven politics, which inclines them towards the Republicans' rhetoric of the family, and interest-driven commitments to the more radical social policies of the Democrats. Allegiances are volatile and unpredictable. In the 2012 presidential election immigration policy was like a noose, drawing Hispanics tightly together because the Republican Party—with a presidential candidate widely suspected of liberal sympathies—had to work to get out the xenophobic voters who form part of the party's core. The Republicans espoused self-destructive nativist rhetoric. They are not likely to make the same mistake again (see above, p. xix).

For the future of the Hispanic United States, the most promising common cultural traditions Hispanics share are religious and linguistic. Problems beset both. Take religion first. The Catholic tradition might be expected to form a focus of identity for Hispanics, and the Church to provide both a forum of exchange and a forge of power. César Chávez appreciated that "it is not just our right to appeal to the Church to use its power effectively for the poor, it is our duty to

do so. . . . We ask for its presence with us, beside us, as Christ among us."<sup>45</sup> Visiting New York in 1996, John Paul II told his congregation that he "also loves the sons and daughters of the Church who speak Spanish. Many of you have been born here or have lived here for a long time. Others are more recent arrivals. But you all bear the mark of your cultural heritage, deeply rooted in the Catholic tradition. Keep alive that faith and culture."<sup>46</sup> In some ways the Church does function as a guardian of Hispanic identity and tradition. Generically Hispanic styles of worship cram congregations from all parts of Hispanic America into the same spaces for Mass.<sup>47</sup> Gringo Catholics have adapted to some of the traditions Hispanic Catholics have brought with them, wearing white for first communion, displaying Our Lady of Guadalupe in the sanctuary. Anthony Stevens-Arroyo, one of the foremost specialists in the devotions of Hispanic migrants in the United States, insists on the importance of common features of their religious culture:

The expression of religious belief covers every niche in Latino society, from the churchgoers singing in processions on Good Friday or gathering families for Sunday school to the Latino pugilists who bless themselves with the sign of the cross before a boxing match and the gang members who have religious images tattooed on their arms and chests. . . . Our homes have crosses over the bed and altars with candles and holy pictures or estampillas are found in ceremonial niches, especially in the poorest homes. Latinos revere the unadorned elements of nature by placing earth, rocks, and plants within these sacred spaces. Concern for sexuality and success often find expression in rituals derived from African religions or from beliefs in reincarnation and spiritism.<sup>48</sup>

The power of the Church to influence Hispanic life, however, is slight, partly because of the very diversity of forms of popular religion that differentiate communities of worship from different places of origin. The Church, moreover, has been extremely bad at retaining the

allegiance of Latin Americans, whether in their home countries or the United States. Secular culture has enfeebled that allegiance. Protestant evangelization often usurps it. Only 65 percent of US Hispanics called themselves Catholic in 1990, less than 60 percent by 2001,<sup>49</sup> though according to 2012 statistics the percentage has recovered a couple of points meanwhile.<sup>50</sup> In any case, the US Church has always been rife with the heresy Pope Leo XIII called Americanism—assigning priority to the projection of a distinctive image of Catholicism for the United States to accommodate WASP prejudices and forestall know-nothing hatred. The hierarchy has long been divided over the extent to which the Church should encourage Hispanic religious autonomy. The most glaring conflict occurred at Christmas Mass in Los Angeles in 1969. Chicano activists, who had celebrated Mass in Spanish on the steps outside the stark, machinelike, concrete volumes of St. Basil's Church in the densely Catholic Wilshire district of Los Angeles, were locked out of the English-language Mass that followed at the high altar. Those who got in were forced out, while riot police emerged from the cardinal's palace "wearing helmets, bearing shields, and swinging billy clubs." Cardinal McIntyre blamed the demonstrators as resembling "the rabble as they stood at the foot of the cross, shouting, 'Crucify him!'" A week later, the visiting Puerto Rican archbishop Antulio Parrilla Bonilla celebrated Mass in Spanish with victims in the open air within sight of the cathedral.<sup>51</sup> Even in Spanish-speaking communities in the nineteenth century, the hierarchy had a penchant for appointing French priests. The native Spanish-speaking priesthood is proportionately underrepresented to this day.

THE SPANISH LANGUAGE LOOKS, at first sight, like a more probable unifying force than the Church. Command of Spanish can be prestigious, even sexy. One of Eusebio Chacón's fictional protagonists is a Don Juan who abuses his knowledge of the literature of Spain to ensnare the admiration of a victim of his seduction. When I stayed in a club in Chicago, waiters gathered around my table for the pleasure of hearing my Castilian way of talking. It is common for me—because

I speak the English of England—to have difficulty getting my speech across to interlocutors in the United States. When I switch to Spanish, however, Spanish-speakers understand me wherever they come from. This, I suppose, is a sign that Spanish-speakers genuinely do form a community, disposed to make the effort to understand forms of the language that are unfamiliar. The former slogan of the television station Univisión—"Unidos por un sólo idioma," united by a single language—looks convincing from a distance, especially to those who do not speak Spanish, and perceive only the solidity and size of the world's hispanophone community.

When you look up close, you see how that community, like "global English," is riven by differences of dialect and problems of mutual intelligibility. Univisión's commercial needs, in any case, have proved stronger than its crusading vocation, and the station is unwatchable for anyone intelligent or educated. The *telenovelas* that provide pabulum for its viewers do encourage people to see into one another's home countries, but the similarities the series disclose are so crass, banal, tawdry, and morally dodgy that it could only inspire revulsion in someone of normal sensibilities.

Those who expect Spanish to survive in the United States and even to establish itself as the second language of a bilingual nation have to confront the fact that no linguistic minority has retained its own language throughout a process of integration in the country. Ortiz Vargas noticed in Puerto Rico in the 1930s how women who lived almost entirely isolated in their own linguistic communities responded to the tug of the anglophone world:

*They corrupted their speech  
With the bizarre jargon  
Of a tongue that was foreign  
And that no one could teach.*

*[Corrompieron su lengua  
con la mezcla bizarra  
de la lengua extranjera  
que jamás aprendieron.]*

Persuaded by the establishment's prejudices, Spanish-speakers, uneducated in the literature of their own language, think that they must privilege English in order to acquire prestige or trigger success. A famous, anonymous satire, *Jíbaro en Nueva York*, recorded in the 1960s, recounts a subway meeting with an old friend from the highlands of Puerto Rico, who answered Spanish questions in broken English. His friend persevered but:

*He still didn't want  
To admit he was hispano.  
I asked, "How's your hermano?"  
He said, "Oye esto, brother,  
I love my father and mother,  
Just like a real americano."<sup>52</sup>*

*[Aún por eso no quería  
declararse que era hispano.  
Le pregunté por su hermano  
Y me dijo, "Oye esto, brother,  
I love my father and mother  
igual que un americano."]*

Piri Thomas, whose dialogues in his stories about Puerto Rican life in New York have the macaronic quality of the fiction of Junot Díaz (see above, p. xxviii), has a poignant dialogue between two lovesick teenagers: Juanita has just arrived from Puerto Rico and wants to transform herself into "Jenny" but has difficulty understanding the rapid English of George, the immigrants' son from the apartment downstairs. He realizes her Spanish is "without fault, unlike many Puerto Ricans born in the States who mixed their English and Spanish together" but cannot speak it well himself. "In a way," he tells the women who live upstairs, "you are teaching me about my heritage. Not enough of us kids born here know what Puerto Rico is about."<sup>53</sup> Some of the interviewees whose transcripts the sociologist Oscar Martínez published in 1994 had the same attitudes. Juan Hinojosa was a student whose parents, both native Spanish-speakers, spoke only English

to him because his mother "determined that her children would lead middle-class lives." His fellow student, Daniel Fisher, rejected his mother's attempts to teach him her native Spanish "because I wanted to Americanize" but came to regret his self-alienation from his roots. Greg Rocha, whose parents spoke to him only in English to spare him the discrimination they felt they had suffered, thought he was "returning home" when he visited Mexico, but his inability to communicate left him feeling "a stranger in a foreign country."<sup>54</sup> In one of his popular Mambo Mouth videos, the entertainer John Leguizamo portrays an incarcerated Mexican in the United States, who tries to talk Spanish to a cop of Dominican origin outside his cell. The cop declines to reply. The prisoner calls him a "coconut—white inside, brown outside." Realizing that his problem is that speaking Spanish is derogating, he tries to talk his way out of jail by pretending to be successively Swedish, Irish, Israeli, and Japanese.

Yet the strength of emotional commitment to Spanish may triumph over the inconstancy of linguistic renegades. To understand how deeply Spanish-speakers can feel about the survival of their language, one has to appreciate the depth of persecution they and their ancestors suffered for the sake of Spanish. In 1914, for instance, shortly after the admission of New Mexico as a state of the Union, some school boards banned instruction in Spanish. The ruling was contrary to the amiable *modus vivendi*, which, as we saw in Chapter Five (above, p. 191), Agnes Cleaveland described in the previous generation, as well as to the state constitution, which guaranteed Spanish-speakers' rights to the use of their language. In November 1914 a versifier in the *Revista de Taos* appealed to legislators to enforce protection. His case anticipated every device of argument and rhetoric since deployed to justify Spanish in the United States: cultural sentimentalism, human rights, the facts of history, the international usefulness of a Spanish-speaking community, and the richness of the literary legacy open to users of the tongue.

*Know that my native tongue,  
That I sucked at my mother's breast,*

*Spoken in Spain and long  
Famous, is now wrung  
From the land, proscribed, oppressed.*

*[Sabed que el idioma natal  
Que en los pechos he mamado  
El idioma celebrado  
Que se habla en la España actual  
Es proscrito y desterrado.]*

Spanish, the author pointed out, was the language of Cervantes, Lope, Calderón, Isabel la Católica, more than twenty nations, and "the original settlers of this land."<sup>55</sup> In 1934 a similar outrage occurred in Puerto Rico, where the US military government tried to impose English as the sole medium of instruction in schools. The poet Tomás Gares responded by asking whether his fellow Puerto Ricans would surrender their language along with "our all, like slaves, . . . our sacred freedom, tradition, customs, . . . and our human dignity."

*The language that my grandparents used,  
That as children we learned for bedside oration,  
Must endure forever in this, my nation,  
Never corrupted, never confused.<sup>56</sup>*

*[Mas . . . el idioma aquel de mis abuelos  
Aprendido de niños al rezar . . .  
Ese idioma en mi Patria será eterno  
Nunca, nunca le habremos de cambiar.]*

The children persecuted for using Spanish in New Mexico and Puerto Rico were not immigrants in anglophone territory: they were native users of Spanish in parts of the United States where it was the long-standing official language. Immigrants suffered in their own way. Stories of being bullied or beaten for speaking Spanish in school have become a topos of Hispanic autobiography. Gloria Anzaldúa's mem-



oir of her Texan childhood, published in 1987, is the locus classicus. Speaking Spanish at recess merited "three licks on the knuckles with a sharp ruler. . . . If you want to be American," her teacher told her, "speak American. If you don't like it, go back to Mexico where you belong."<sup>57</sup> César Chávez told a similar story about himself. So did Richard Rodriguez, a conservative opponent of affirmative action, who in his *Hunger for Memory*, published in 1981, focuses on an episode in his childhood when his teachers asked his parents—ostensibly for the sake of their child's social and economic advancement—not to speak Spanish at home.

In an attempt to frustrate Spanish, most states of the Union have legislated for the exclusive official use of English. It is not clear what this means, or whether it would override a defendant's right, for instance, to hear accusations and proffer defense in a language he or she dominates to perfection. People hostile to the use of Spanish have treated such laws as invitations to abuse. In one instance in Colorado, an elementary-school bus driver stopped children from speaking Spanish on their way to school. In 2004 in Scottsdale, Arizona, a teacher who slapped students for speaking Spanish in class claimed to be implementing English immersion policies. In Kansas City in 2005 school authorities suspended a student for speaking Spanish in a hallway, explaining, "This is not the first time we have [asked] Zach and others to not speak Spanish at school."<sup>58</sup>

Bilingual education has not worked because it has not been properly tried. Under present protocols, the effect is to mire economically deprived children in monoglot stagnation. Because they tend to be the poorest and most educationally deprived of Hispanics in the United States, fewer than 50 percent of Mexican immigrants speak fluent English. "They start below other Hispanics," a leading authority tells us, "and never catch up."<sup>59</sup> Their children start school with little exposure to English. They are either condemned to enduring a disadvantage in competition with anglophone peers, or to nominally bilingual education—a term unimaginatively interpreted in the United States to mean teaching Anglos in English and Hispanics in Spanish. In a genuinely bilingual system, both language communities would benefit

from instruction in each other's language, and school time divided equally between Spanish and English would be supplemented by subtitled television and e-entertainment that would encourage people to perfect their command of their second language.

The Netherlands and some Nordic countries have made English their own second language without even having native English-speaking communities. For the United States, the fact that a large number of native Spanish-speakers is at hand to help anglophones learn Spanish is a precious resource, which ought to be celebrated and encouraged. A bilingual United States would benefit not only from the cultural enrichment and life enhancement that command of more than one language brings to everyone who knows the pleasure and privilege of it, but would also better equip the country for the ineluctable political and economic future, immersed in hemispheric circles of trade and cooperation. It would also be popular. Opinion soundings show that just about every Hispanic parent in the country wants English to be a medium of instruction in schools, and that 87 percent of non-Hispanic whites and 88 percent of African-American parents want their children to know Spanish.<sup>60</sup> To make real bilingualism happen, people who speak only one language have to overcome their fear of the other. In the United States the task is hard because the country happened to absorb vast numbers of immigrants during a brief period when linguistic nationalism dominated the world. The false assumption that national unity depends on the enforcement of linguistic conformity is an unfortunate legacy. Most other countries have gotten over it. The fact—which I declare on my faith as a historian—is that, typically, enduring and successful states have had more than one language and have been better and more robust in consequence.

~~FEAR OF HISPANICS GOES beyond fear of the need to learn a second language. For some well-educated but imperfectly rational people, it arises from cultural defensiveness: investment in the notion (which is false) that culture has essential, inalienable characteristics; the belief (which, as we shall see in the next chapter, is invalid) that the culture~~