

Los Desterrados: Hispanic Exiles in the United States, 19th & 20th Centuries

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This issue of *Camino Real*, brings together historians, literary scholars and a sociologist to explore the exilic experiences of Hispanic peoples in the United States. Many Spanish Americans faced insurmountable struggles in their nations of origin attempting to create distinct nationalities from fractured societies suffering economic inequality, political authoritarianism, and social division which resulted in forced departure and exile lives. Even many of those who immigrated to the United States hoping primarily to improve their economic conditions often adopted exile mindsets and goals —becoming exiles themselves. Whatever their motivations for leaving home, in the United States they participated in building communities reflecting their traditions and heritage. The idea of exile is complex and a much-studied topic, but no facile definition exists. For our purposes here, exile is an essentially political experience and refers to those who having left their countries of origin, whether as a result of political duress or because of economic need, lived their lives in some active form of oppositional relationship with their homeland.

Hispanic exiles appeared in the United States from the country's inception. During two centuries they resided in cities across the country. Not surprisingly, most exiles preferred coastal or border cities, or port-cities on major rivers, such as St. Louis. The main political motivation for exile in the nineteenth-century was resistance to colonial or foreign rule. As early as the Latin American wars of independence (1810-1824) Spanish American rebels gravitated to the United States hoping to obtain support for their independence struggles against Spain. Many seeking Mexican independence concentrated in New Orleans while others congregated in the northeastern cities. Cuban exiles used the United States as a base for most of the nineteenth-century, 1820s-1890s, as they agitated against Spanish colonial rule. Hispanic exiles also came to

the United States when their countries were invaded by foreign powers. Mexican exiles struggled to maintain the sovereignty of the Mexican Republic during the 1860s when French troops invaded Mexico and established a monarchy. Certainly, 19th Century exiles also fled dictatorships, notably those in Mexico and Venezuela, but dictatorships and civil wars proved main motivations for exile in the twentieth century. Mexican exiles sought to transform their nation during the Mexican Revolution in the early twentieth century. Spaniards opposed the Franco regime in Spain during the 1930s and later. Cubans agitated against Communist rule since the 1960s; Central American exiles engaged their homelands during wars in that region in the 1970s and 1980s; and South American exiles did the same during military dictatorships of the same era. Though foreign intervention and invasion did also prompt Spanish-Americans to seek exile in the United States in the twentieth century, overall foreign rule played a diminished role after the nineteenth century.

This collection of interdisciplinary essays provides an excellent representation of this rich exile history. They cover the length of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and explore aspects of the diverse ideological, political, economic, social, religious and cultural experiences of exile over the two centuries. Essays examine Mexicans, Cubans, Spaniards, Nicaraguans, Venezuelans, and even Haitians in cities like New Orleans, San Antonio, Los Angeles, Miami, Tampa, San Francisco, and especially New York, a city highlighted in five essays demonstrating that city's great allure to Hispanic exiles and their influence in turn.

At the heart of Hispanic exile experiences were political ideology and activism. Ideologically and socioeconomically diverse, exiles sought to influence politics and events in their countries of origin to which they imagined eventually returning under new circumstances. Hispanic exiles were Conservatives, Liberals, Masons, Monarchists, Republicans, Annexationists, Socialists, Anarchists, Communists, and Social Democrats. They were also Catholics and Protestants. These ideologies informed their activities as exiles and often gave rise to well-articulated worldviews that eventually influenced their nations of origin. Important 19th century Hispanic political thinkers and writers who resided in the United States and influenced their home countries to this day included the likes of Félix Varela, José María Hostos, and José Martí.

Cara Kinnally's essay explores the liberal ideas of exiled Mexican Lorenzo de Zavala, who signed the Texas Declaration of Independence in 1836. Kinnally's interpretation of De Zavala's *Viage a los Estados Unidos del Norte de América* (published in 1834) highlights his ideological commitment to liberal ideals and his critique of both Mexico and the United States for falling short especially in the areas of slavery

and racism. Written primarily for audiences in Mexico and perhaps the Hispanic world in general, De Zavala advised his compatriots to reform their countries along liberal lines. His writings are an example of the way many exiles framed their worldviews in broad ideological terms and not merely through personal grievance.

As with De Zavala, exiles sometimes lived and acted as individuals in their new settings, but most congregated in community with others of similar backgrounds and grievances. Significant exile centers often posed serious challenges to home governments, especially those communities with access to economic resources and receptive hosts. Several essays trace the development of exile communities but also illustrate starkly distinct experiences and trajectories. Essays reveal the heterogeneity of Hispanic exile community experiences in the United States and underscore the complicated cultural and identity transitions inherent in exile experiences.

The essays illustrate communities that formed around strong exile experiences and resisted assimilation as much as possible. Lisandro Pérez's examination of Cubans in New York during their homeland's Great War (also known as the Ten Years War) in the 1870s and Anita Casavantes Bradford's exploration of Cubans in Miami almost a century later speak to exile and endurance. In both cases, Cubans laid firm exile foundations and, despite considerable economic integration, sustained strong exile identities for several generations.

Others formed as exile communities but gradually integrated into the ethnic populations around them as conditions in the homeland and host country changed. Nancy A. Aguirre's essay reveals how Mexican exiles in San Antonio and Los Angeles gradually transitioned from exile to immigrant/ethnic identities in the early 1930s. Aguirre demonstrates how newspaper owner and editor Ignacio Lozano, an exile from Mexico in 1913, had to balance exile and ethnic concerns in his newspapers especially during the Great Depression when new deportation policies targeted Mexicans.

Ana Varela-Lago offers the reverse case: immigrants who become exiles. She studies Spanish economic immigrants who subsequently became exile activists in response to the devastating civil war and dictatorship in the homeland (1930-1970), thereby demonstrating that political opposition was not necessary as "push factor" or motivation for departure in order for exile identities and communities to develop in the United States. Already existing as immigrant communities before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, Spaniards in the United States influenced by Republican, Socialist, Anarchist and Communist ideas became exiles supporting the displaced government in Spain. In an ironic turn, Spanish immigrant communities living in relative ethnic isolation became politically active centers in support of the Republican

cause and more integrated into life in the United States than before. They became Americanized exiles who refused to return home as long as Franco's regime remained in power.

Vagaries of formation and duration notwithstanding, exile communities all consolidated their identities using internal political, social and cultural organizations and institutions that remained focused on the homeland and disseminated ongoing discourses designed to maintain awareness, even intense enthusiasm, for the cause. Teresa Van Hoy's essay examines the role of an important Mexican patriotic club in New York and others across the United States Southwest in mobilizing against the French and in support of President Benito Juárez during 1865. Varela-Lagos discusses the dozens of Spanish organizations founded to support the Republican cause in New York, Tampa, San Francisco and other places. Each of the essays offers some example of the internal workings of exile communities.

Perhaps the most influential exile institutions were newspapers and journals which played critical roles in transmitting political and ideological perspectives. From the earliest known exile newspapers, *La Gaceta de Texas* and *El Mexicano* (1813), in Natchitoches, Louisiana (on the Texas border), to dozens of papers published by Mexicans, Cubans, Chileans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Venezuelans, Spaniards, and others throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, these newspapers conveyed their ideas to audiences in the United States and abroad. They reflected radically differing views, from elitist conservative and mercantilist to working class discourses inspired by socialism, anarchism and communism. Some admired the United States and advocated greater American influence in the Hispanic world while others interpreted their host country as an aggressive, exploitative, and dangerous actor in hemispheric affairs. More mixed and nuanced interpretations of the United States also found their way into newspaper editorials.

Alberto Ameal Pérez's essay examines, *La Revista Ilustrada* (New York), a literary journal with an exile rationale. Venezuelan intellectual and writer, Nicanor Bolet Peraza, transformed what was originally a commercial newspaper in New York into an influential exile journal that not only allowed him to express his own political grievances about Venezuelan matters but gave voice to a large community of Latin Americans exiles in the city. As a literary enterprise, the journal provided a publication outlet in the United States to many talented Hispanic writers like Antonio and Francisco Sellen (Cubans), Antonio Pérez Bonalde (Venezuelan), and Lola Rodríguez de Tío (Puerto Rican) who might otherwise not have been read.

Newspapers in a more traditional sense, *La Prensa* (San Antonio) and *La Opinion* (Los Angeles) initially concerned themselves with Mexico. Their very existence and news about Mexico injected a sense of renewed consciousness in the majority Mexican American readership about matters in their place of cultural origin. But these newspapers also engaged the political, social and cultural realities of their local communities. Aguirre examines the challenges the two newspapers faced maintaining an exile identity during the Great Depression when political and economic developments required considerable caution and determination to find new priorities in order to survive.

Montse Feu provides a further example of journalistic exile expression in the form of humor. In the early 1960s, the exile newspaper *España Libre* (New York) regularly published anti-Franco political cartoons by humorist Sergio Aragonés that addressed corruption, political persecution, and working class solidarity and resistance in Spain. The essay explores the ways in which artwork and humor functioned to challenge the Franco regime's propagandistic discourses and self-proclaimed virtues.

Another important aspect of exile activity involved concrete action to influence and transform the homeland. This included strategies to influence United States public opinion and diplomacy, but also to further direct military action through acquisition of weapons for expeditionary forces. As Teresa Van Hoy demonstrates, Mexican exiles in New York under orders of President Juárez, worked to undermine the favorable public opinion being curried for Emperor Maximilian in the United States. These exiles also hoped to influence United States government policy to allow arming Juárez's troops on the border.

Lisandro Pérez's essay shows that Cubans in New York did the same in the 1870s, attempting to influence United States diplomatic policies in favor of the insurgents. They sought belligerency status for the Cuban insurrection while simultaneously sending armed expeditions and flagrantly violating United States neutrality laws. Similar activities by Spaniards who mobilized across United States to provide resources, arms and humanitarian aid in support of Republican forces in Spain are documented in Vargas' contribution. Women played a particularly important role in these activities and in educating their children in democratic values.

Relevant to this exile history is not only the exiles' actions and convictions, but also those of the host nation toward exiles. Anita Casavantes Bradford's essay speaks in particular to the important impact of a receiving nation's attitudes and policies toward exiles. She explores the important role of a Roman Catholic priest, Monsignor Bryan Walsh, in bridging conflict and aiding exiles adapt to life in the United States. This

essay offers an example of the dramatic positive impact on Walsh's advocacy first as a committed "Cold Warrior" in defense of Cubans, but also subsequently as an advocate for the "stranger and the poor" represented by other displaced Latin American and Caribbean peoples who did not enjoy the same welcome from the United States government. Aguirre's essay also treats this theme by showing how deportations of Mexicans during the Great Depression intimidated exile newspapers from expressing concern about the treatment of Mexican immigrants. Van Hoy's essay shows the U.S. policy of strict enforcement of neutrality as a major constraint in exiles' struggles to liberate Mexico.

As a whole, this collection of essays on the Hispanic exilic experience is an excellent contribution to what is mostly a neglected aspect of the Hispanic historical experience in the United States. The essays consider many of the important dimensions of exile experiences, highlighting similarities and differences across groups, and will hopefully inspire others to deepen this research.