

Clockwise from top left:
 Admiral David Farragut aboard the USS Hartford, c 1860s (The Photographic History of The Civil War); Company C, 2nd Platoon, 65th Infantry Regiment, "The Borinqueneers," South Korea, 1952 (US Army); 1st LT Baldomero Lopez, USMC, scaling the seawall during the Inchon Landing, South Korea, 1950. Minutes after this photo was taken, Lopez sacrificed his life to save his men and was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor (USMC); The seven Medina brothers, known as the "Fighting Medinas," fought in WWII. They came from Texas, Puerto Rico, and New York (US Department of Defense); Marine Corps Hispanic Heritage month poster (USMC)



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Fighting on Two Fronts: Latinos in the Military

Lorena Oropeza

Culturally, Latinos come from places that have long valued a tradition of military service. Historically, Latinos first entered the United States in significant numbers through war, first in 1848 in a war against Mexico and then in 1898 at the conclusion of the Spanish-American War. Politically, most Latinos by conquest soon shifted their allegiance to the U.S., a pattern that has prevailed among successive generations of immigrants from Cuba, Mexico, and, more recently, the countries of Central America. Racially, Latinos trace their ancestry to Europe, the Americas, and Africa and, consequently, have long struggled to be recognized as the equals of whites in the U.S. For all these reasons, Latinos have not only taken tremendous pride in their record of military service, they have also adroitly used their status as soldiers and veterans to advance the equal treatment and integration of Latinos within U.S. society.

At the heart of the modern Latino experience has been the quest for first-class citizenship. Within this broader framework, military service provides unassailable proof that Latinos are Americans who have been proud to serve, fight, and die for their country, the U.S. Thus, advocates of Latino equality often note that Latinos have fought in every U.S. conflict from the American Revolution to the current conflict in Afghanistan. They also point to the significant number of Medals of Honor bestowed upon this group (44 at last count) as well as numerous other honors.¹ Although dissenting voices among Latinos have appeared on occasion, ethnic leaders over the years have fashioned a civil rights strategy that blends equal parts ethnic pride and patriotism. With each U.S. military engagement, Latino civil rights activists

have insisted that wartime sacrifice merits peacetime equality. Although this civil rights strategy reached its apotheosis during the World War II era among Mexican Americans, it continues to echo today.

In 2012, even the briefest Internet search reveals an extraordinary number of books, documentaries, and websites devoted to tallying Latino military service. Testimony to how “Hispanic Americans have contributed gallantly

***As immigrants and as citizens,
Latinos have served the
United States in the military
proudly for generations
and continue to do so today.***

to the defense of our Nation,” in the words of one early publication, together these accounts send the powerful message that Latinos should be recognized as genuine American heroes.² The message matters

because of the stubborn misperception, also easy to find on the web in 2012, that Latinos comprise a largely immigrant population fraught with divided loyalties.³ In fact, according to the 2010 census, Latinos were 62 percent native-born.⁴ More important, over the years, countless immigrant Latinos have fought for their adopted country, often in the hope of obtaining U.S. citizenship.

The quest for inclusion based upon military service, moreover, affects more than just fighting men. Entire families have taken pride in their relatives’ wartime contributions while mourning their absences and casualties. These family members, moreover, have expected fairer treatment on the basis of a loved one’s wartime sacrifices. Furthermore, although a civil rights strategy focused on soldiers and sailors is massively gendered, Latinas have likewise contributed to war efforts since at least World War II. During that war, they served as nurses, administrative personnel, and as members of such auxiliary forces as the Army’s

WACS (Women Army Corps), and the Navy's WAVES (Women Accepted for Voluntary Service). That tradition of service continued in subsequent conflicts, while more recently, Latina enlistment in the armed services has outstripped that of Latinos!⁵ Just as their male counterparts have for so many years, Latinas today recognize military service as a vehicle of assimilation and of economic advancement. Eager to move from the margins to the mainstream, they too have turned toward the armed services.

Ultimately, a civil rights impulse frames the very topic "Latinos in the military." Given the relative recent vintage of the term "Latino," for example, any survey of Latinos in the military is at least in part a project of looking backward before the term existed. For that reason, the first "Latinos" to fight for American war aims were not ethnic minorities within the U.S. but colonial subjects of Spain. Even more telling, is how broadly most of these surveys define "Latino." Historically, people whose families originally come from Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Cuba have comprised the largest cohorts of Latinos. The topic "Latinos in the military," however, prompts mention of the exploits of those whose forebearers hailed not only from Latin America, but also from the Canary Islands west of Africa, the island of Minorca off the coast of Spain, as well as directly from the Iberian Peninsula, including Portugal!⁶ From a civil rights perspective, however, such chronological and geographical inclusivity makes sense. A Latino definitional umbrella stretched as wide as possible neatly maximizes the number of Latino heroes and, implicitly, strengthens the argument that all Latinos are deserving of first-class citizenship.

Moreover, the case can be made (and often has been) that Spanish-speaking and Spanish-surnamed military men drew from a shared cultural heritage that placed a high value on military service and on battlefield courage. Certainly, the earliest Latino military hero, Don Bernardo de Gálvez y Madrid, the Spanish governor of Louisiana, earned accolades on exactly these grounds. Even before Spain declared war on its imperial rival in 1779, Gálvez, a native of the Spanish province of Málaga, had demonstrated his personal sympathy to the goals of the American independence by preventing British smuggling through the port of New Orleans but looking the other way as American shipments of arms and supplies traveled up the Mississippi. Once officially at war, Gálvez raised a multiracial, multiethnic army that included troops from Mexico, Cuba, and Puerto

Rico. These troops dislodged British forces from forts along the Mississippi River and then east all the way to Pensacola, Florida, in an unrelentingly successful military campaign. At a time when the British were blockading Atlantic sea ports, the campaign kept open critical supply lines through the Caribbean. The final sea and land battle at Pensacola, then the capital of British Florida, also allowed Gálvez to display his

intrepid nature. For daring to breach the entrance to Pensacola Bay at a time when other Spanish commanders were more hesitant, Gálvez received permission from the Spanish king to emblazon the words, "*Yo solo* (I alone)," on his family coat of arms.⁷

In a naval career that stretched from the War of 1812 to the Civil War, Admiral David Glasgow Farragut earned a similar daring reputation. The son of a Minorcan sea merchant who



Bernardo Gálvez y Madrid
(Museo de los Gálvez)

had settled in South Carolina just in time to join the fight for American independence, the younger Farragut joined the U.S. Navy at the age of nine. At the age of 12, he brought a captured British ship to port. More training and assignments in the Caribbean followed. By 1854, Farragut was in California, apparently using both English and Spanish to establish Mare Island Navy Yard in the northern portion of the state. Despite being southern-born and raised, he remained loyal to the Union when the Civil War erupted the following decade. During the Battle of Mobile Bay, Farragut famously urged Union ships forward in waters infested with mines (called torpedoes at the time). Navy lore attributes to him the saying, “Damn the torpedoes. Full speed ahead!” As a result of his tremendous service, he became the navy’s first Rear Admiral, first Vice Admiral, and, finally, first Admiral, all ranks created especially for him. While Farragut’s Hispanic heritage was more attenuated than Gálvez’s, he remained proud of it, making it a point to visit Spain and its Mediterranean islands on a goodwill tour before he died.⁸



*Admiral David Farragut, c. 1860s
(Photographic History of The Civil War)*

Neither Gálvez nor Farragut, however, understood their actions as working within a civil rights tradition, much less saw themselves as members of a marginalized minority. Nineteenth-century Tejanos (Mexican Texans) who fought for Texas independence did. As one of their number, Juan Nepomuceno Seguín, famously lamented, he had become “a foreigner in my own land.” After gaining independence in 1821, the young Mexican republic had welcomed American immigration to Texas in the hopes of spurring economic development. By the mid-1830s, these American immigrants not only outnumbered Tejanos ten to one but many wished to break free from Mexican rule.

Some Tejanos like Seguín shared their opposition to the Mexican government. Seven of them joined the roughly 200 rebels who had gathered in a former San Antonio mission turned military barracks called the Alamo. Here they decided to take a stand against the Mexican Army, vowing to defend the Alamo with their lives if necessary. Seguín, who had been sent on a daring but ultimately futile mission to gather reinforcements, was one of the few to escape the massacre.⁹

Although not strictly an American conflict, the Texas fight for independence marked the first time that Latinos sought equal treatment based upon military service. All told, dozens of Tejanos fought alongside Sam Houston and Stephen Austin, but these Tejanos soon found out that Texans did not remember them whenever they remembered the Alamo. Instead, in the wake of the war, people of Mexican descent in Texas encountered severe prejudice, land encroachment, and economic dispossession. Unwilling to accept such erasure and ill treatment, Tejanos veterans continually petitioned for redress. As late as 1875, for example, a group of Tejanos wrote a letter to the state comptroller asking him to provide them with pensions just like the pensions that other veterans of the independence struggle had routinely received. Although appeals such as this one usually fell upon deaf ears, a century later the same tactic would be employed to advance equality across the Southwest.¹⁰

Events in Texas, moreover, directly influenced the outbreak of war between the U.S. and Mexico 10 years later. In 1846, Mexico encompassed the present-day states of New Mexico, Arizona, and California, as well as parts of Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming. Mexico also still

claimed Texas although Texans disagreed. After the U.S. annexed Texas as a state in 1845, relations between the two nations quickly soured. The following year, President James K. Polk formally asked for a declaration of war, and by March of 1847 American servicemen were marching toward Mexico City from the gulf port of Veracruz. Relatively little fighting took place, however, along Mexico's northern frontier. Expecting an American victory, the estimated 100,000 Mexicans in what was soon to become the American Southwest mostly felt a sense of loss and vulnerability. After centuries of Spanish-speaking rule, the region was about to be annexed by the U.S. Among those who took up arms, however, a few fought on the *American* side. In southern California, for example, support for U.S. annexation ran so high that two sons of prominent families joined the U.S. cavalry and engaged in a skirmish outside of San Diego against other Mexican citizens.¹¹

Given the scarcity of the fighting up north, however, far more significant than any individual battlefield appearances was the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo that ended the war. At the time, U.S. courts recognized only whites as citizens. The treaty, by holding out the promise of U.S. citizenship to the Mexican population in the ceded territory, implied that Mexicans were legally "white." The social reality, of course, was quite different. In 1848, Mexicans were a despised and twice-defeated enemy. Given the prevailing racial ideologies at the time, Mexicans were also deemed inferior because they were racially mixed, a blend of European, indigenous, and African people.¹² Nevertheless, as "whites," Mexican Americans always served in regular units of the U.S. Armed Forces. With the impor-

tant exception of dark-skinned Puerto Ricans, the same privilege awaited other Latinos. On the battlefield at least, U.S. society tended to deem Mexican Americans and most other Latinos as equals. Not surprisingly, Latinos were later to build upon this slender privilege to push for equality in other arenas of their lives.

More immediately, the Civil War proved how closely Latinos identified with the broader American culture, both North and South, which surrounded them. In fact, from Texas to California, Latinos fought valiantly for both the Confederate and Union armies. The efforts of Spanish-speaking *Nuevo Mexicanos*, however, stand out for permanently stymieing Confederate plans to control the entire Southwest. One

estimate is that *Nuevo Mexicanos* accounted for as many as 2,500 of the 3,800 New Mexicans volunteers who joined the Union Army of the West.¹³ Although rarely professionally trained, many of these Spanish-speakers hailed from isolated, rural areas, where they had spent years on horseback protecting their home villages from

Native American incursions. Both familiarity with the terrain and tested fighting skills proved useful in the grueling Battle of Glorieta Pass when Spanish-speaking New Mexicans helped crush Confederate supply lines in northern New Mexico Territory. Afterward, however, at least some Spanish-speakers nursed the disappointment that, rather than be rewarded for their efforts, they endured an onslaught of unscrupulous speculators and tententious court decisions that together separated them from most of their land-holdings.¹⁴ Although the memory of land loss lingered, this population continued to serve the U.S. with great valor in the wars that followed.



*Glorietta Pass Battlefield [Mexican-American War]
Pecos National Historical Park, New Mexico
(Kathleen Madigan, National Park Service, 2008)*

A key indicator of that valor originated during the Civil War. In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln established the Medal of Honor as the nation's highest recognition for extraordinary military service. During the conflict, three Latinos were bestowed this honor – the first three of the present total of 44. A reminder that the U.S. has long been a haven for immigrants, the three were Joseph H. De Castro, a Boston-born man most probably of Canary Island heritage, Philip Bazaar, a Chilean immigrant who had settled in Massachusetts, and John Ortega, a Spanish immigrant who had found a new home in Pennsylvania.¹⁵ Again, none of these individuals necessarily saw themselves as representing a larger group of immigrants or Spanish-speakers, much less as soldiers in a broader fight for equality, but post-facto, their heroic actions definitely added more luster to the history of Latinos in the military service.



First Company of native Puerto Ricans enlisted in the American Colonial Army, 1899 (US Army)

During the Civil War, Americans also applied the label “Spanish” to untold numbers of Puerto Ricans and Cubans because both islands were still part of the Spanish empire in the Americas. Cuban and Puerto Rican *independistas* spent the next several decades fighting through word and deed to change that status. In 1868, Puerto Ricans launched an armed insurrection, issuing *El Grito de Lares* calling for immediate independence. That same year, the Ten Years’ War broke out in Cuba, followed by the Little War (1879-1880), both conflicts aimed at breaking free from Spain. Working within the U.S., the great Cuban patriot José Martí rallied support for independence among the émigré community and the broader American public. In 1895, Cubans launched another major war for independence. American entry into that war three years later ensured the de-

feat of the Spanish and marked the evolution of the U.S. from a continental to a global empire. Despite their demonstrated willingness to die for freedom, however, the war failed to fulfill the independence aspirations of most Cubans and Puerto Ricans.

In Cuba, Americans and Cubans faced the same enemy, but mostly fought separately. While some Americans recognized the strides that poorly-equipped guerrilla soldiers had accomplished against regular Spanish troops, other Americans quickly formed a negative view of Cuban soldiers, especially Afro-Cuban ones,

labeling them “dirty,” “a wretched mongrel lot,” and “worthless.”¹⁶ Despite negative views about Cuban fighters, U.S. policy makers recognized the strategic value of the island. At war’s end, the U.S. gained a naval base at Guantánamo and, until 1934, reserved the right to intervene in the island’s foreign and commercial affairs. The close relationship established between the two countries

after 1898, moreover, is one reason that thousands of Cuban exiles fled to the U.S. after another revolution hit the island in 1959.

For strategic reasons, the U.S. decided to maintain direct control over Puerto Rico. Like Cuba, Puerto Rico had served as a military outpost for Spain. Thus, soldiering had been an integral part of the island’s colonial history for centuries. The status of Puerto Rico as a territory of the U.S., however, complicated the relationship between military service and equal rights. On the one hand, arriving Americans immediately offered men on the island the opportunity to receive military training under U.S. auspices. More than 400 men soon formed the “Porto Rican Provisional Regiment of the Infantry.”¹⁷

On the other hand, Americans saw no immediate reason to offer Puerto Ricans U.S. citizenship. In 1899, even a sympathetic American considered the island's population "simple-minded," "indolent," and overly fond of "wine, women, and music and dancing." The U.S. instead established an intense program of Americanization for the island, of which military training was but one aspect, as a necessary precursor to citizenship. Not until March 1917, did Congress, through the Jones Act, make Puerto Ricans citizens of the U.S. The same act also made more than 236,000 Puerto Ricans immediately eligible for conscription. The following month, the U.S. entered World War I.¹⁸

Ever since, critics of U.S. policy have found the timing of the Jones Act suspicious, implicitly suggesting that the U.S. government's ulterior motive in granting citizenship to Puerto Ricans was to increase the number of available fighting men on the eve of war. To the dismay of many islanders, however, nothing could have been further from the truth. Puerto Ricans eagerly registered for the draft, trained on the island, and, ultimately, 18,000 served in the war. As former colonial subjects of Spain, who now inhabited a territory of the U.S., Puerto Ricans paid special attention to President Woodrow Wilson's call for self-determination for all nations. Whether they favored statehood or independence or something in between, many Puerto Ricans hoped that serving in the U.S. military might be a way to advance their political objectives. At the same time, to the most impoverished rural peasants, the island *jibaros*, military service was probably of greater economic than political significance: it meant three square meals a day and a pair of shoes. While the Army found boots that fit the extra-wide feet of men who had walked barefoot their entire lives, Puerto Rican political aspirations were largely disappointed. Early on, military officials decided that islanders, like African Americans on the mainland, were best fit for service duties only, such as kitchen pa-

trol or being a member of a labor battalion. Although members of the Porto Rican Regiment were sent to guard the Panama Canal, an important task, no islander saw combat in World War I.¹⁹

Consequently, the only Puerto Ricans who fought in France during World War I were those who had earlier migrated to the mainland. They experienced a segregated army. Even before the war, U.S. military officials at Camp Las Casas, the main training facility on the island, had routinely divided Puerto Rican soldiers upon inspection into the categories of "black" and "white." Once the U.S. entered World War I, officials on the mainland followed suit, allowing light-skinned Puerto Ricans to join regular units while shunting dark-skinned Puerto Ricans to all-African American units. While their status as whites makes retrieving information about Puerto Ricans who served in regular units difficult, more is known about the fate of Afro-Puerto Ricans, especially those soldiers who ended up fighting – and playing – with the 369th Infantry Regiment from Harlem. The 369th was one of the few African American units that experienced combat during the war. Fighting for 191 days without losing a single soldier as a prisoner or an inch of ground, the regiment earned the nickname the Harlem Hell Fighters and each regimental soldier was awarded the Croix de Guerre from an appreciative French government. The regiment was also famous for introducing jazz music to Europe. Perhaps hearing of the Puerto Ricans' alleged affection for music and song, the bandleader of the 369th regimental band had traveled to the island to recruit talented musicians just before the unit shipped out.²⁰

While proud of their contributions overall, for some Puerto Ricans, the biggest, and most bitter, lesson of World War I was the American tradition of racial segregation rooted in white supremacist thinking. A significant minority of Mexican Americans in Texas, however, saw the war as an excellent opportunity to overturn

that ugly tradition. They did so against tremendous odds. The years preceding World War I coincided with a fierce and widespread backlash against Mexican immigration as an estimated million people fled the political and economic upheaval of the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917. Worse, the violence of the revolution spilled over the border several times, compounding anti-Mexican sentiment. Then, in 1917, news of the Zimmermann Telegram deeply shocked many Americans. The German diplomatic dispatch proposed a Mexican-German alliance based in part upon German support of Mexican re-annexation of the U.S. Southwest. Although Mexico immediately rejected the proposal as preposterous, in Texas, the telegram prompted U.S. authorities to start spying on Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans. More than ever before, Americans were convinced that people of Mexican descent were not only foreign but also politically suspect. Under these circumstances, many Americans viewed what they termed the “Mexican exodus” as the ultimate proof of ethnic group disloyalty and cowardice. During the war, many immigrants (and some American-born Tejanos) headed south across the border rather than risk conscription. Still inclined to identify with the Mexican nation-state than the American one, these men believed that World War I was not their fight.²¹

Precisely to counter such sentiments, the U.S. instituted a program to assimilate immigrants into the military called the Camp Gordon Plan. At the time, the U.S. immigrant population, not just from Mexico but from Europe and Asia as well, was approaching 12 percent of the total population, a record high. The U.S. Army grew concerned that so many immigrant soldiers might weaken combat-readiness. At the most

basic level, immigrants did not necessarily speak English nor have an understanding of U.S. war aims. Implemented at training facilities across the country, the Camp Gordon Plan called for temporarily dividing non-English speakers by language group and offering them specialized training programs in order to boost morale and enhance unity. For about 600 Mexicans and Mexican Americans, therefore, a first stop before France was Camp Cody outside of Deming, New Mexico, where Spanish-speaking officers taught soldiers enough English language skills to become “valuable fighting units.” Hundreds of other Latino soldiers, immigrants and citizens alike, took similar classes elsewhere. Although the “white” status of all Mexican-origin soldiers again makes determining the exact number that served in World War

I difficult, estimates number in the thousands and even and tens of thousands.²²

Despite the Mexican exodus, therefore, the war produced its share of Latino heroes. Among those Mexican immigrants who did serve, for example, Marcelino Serna stood out for single-

handedly capturing 24 German soldiers *after* a German bullet had grazed his head. Perhaps even more impressive, Serna prevented another American soldier from summarily executing all the captives in the heat of the moment. Another hero was the American David Barkley, a native of Laredo, Texas. Anti-Mexican prejudice ran so high at the time that Barkley, enlisting at the age of 17, did his utmost to conceal from the army that his mother was a Tejana. Dying in France after a dangerous spy mission that called upon him to cross an icy river, Barkley did such a thorough job of concealing his Mexican roots that not until 1989 was he recognized as one of the first Mexican American recipients of the Medal of Honor for his ultimate sacrifice that day.²³

***“We know that this so-called
“Camp Gordon Plan” is the
one which will add thousands
and thousands of virile,
efficient soldiers to our
armies on the battle lines”***

*Capt. Edward R. Padgett, The Infantry Journal,
October 1918*

After answering President Wilson's call to make the world safe for democracy, moreover, a number of Tejanos returned home eager to make Texas more democratic and safe for Mexican Americans. A first step, they were convinced, was to use their war record as proof of their commitment to the U.S. "Our sacrifice in battle is the ultimate act of protest against a determined group of petty citizens who have never been able to rid themselves of racial prejudice against our people," declared José de la Luz Saenz, a schoolteacher from Dittlinger, Texas. For his part, Manuel C. Gonzales of San Antonio wondered whether Mexican Americans after the war would be accepted as citizens as they had been accepted as citizens after the war would be accepted as citizens as they had been accepted as citizens. "In a time of peace are the good people of our country to receive us as Americans," he asked, "or are we to step back into the role of "an alien" until another war is had?" To ensure the former alternative, in 1929 Gonzales, Saenz, and many other World War I veterans helped found the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) to battle segregation directed against Mexican Americans. Today it remains the largest Latino civil rights advocacy group nationally.²⁴

LULAC's glory years in toppling segregation in the courts, however, had to await the advent of another war and a demographic switch from majority immigrant to majority native-born. By 1940, people of Mexican descent in the U.S. were twice as likely to have been born and raised in the States than not. Often the children of immigrants who had entered in previous decades, they strongly identified with the country of their birth. The result was massive Mexican American participation in World War II, the most recent estimate being that some

500,000 Mexican Americans served in the conflict.²⁵ For many, a novel sensation of belonging accompanied the experience. Private Armando Flores of Corpus Christi, Texas, for example, fondly recalled being rebuked for putting his hands in his pockets on a cold day during basic training. "American soldiers stand at attention," a lieutenant told him, "They never keep their hands in their pockets." Years later, Flores still marveled at the significance of the occasion in his estimation: "Nobody had ever called me an American before!"²⁶

The massive mobilization effort that the war required, moreover, ensured widespread participation from non-combatants. Countless Latinas joined the Army's WACS, the Navy's WAVES, or similar all-female auxiliary units associated with the U.S. Air Force. Just 19, Maria Sally Salazar of Laredo, Texas, for example, was so eager to join the Army's Women Army Corps that she borrowed her sister's birth certificate so that she

could pass for 21, the minimum age requirement for women. After basic training, she spent 18 months in the Philippine jungle working out of an administrative building but also tending the wounded when needed.²⁷ In addition, thousands of Mexican American men and women found jobs in defense industries, an opportunity that was almost denied them because anti-Mexican prejudice remained so high. Although President Franklin Roosevelt had issued an executive order in 1941 banning discrimination in defense industry hiring, the war's seemingly ceaseless demand for labor soon proved more effective in trouncing employer reluctance to hire Latino workers. The upshot was that wartime sacrifice was often a family affair. The Sanchez family, transplanted from Bernalillo,



Puerto Rican Army nurses, 296th Station Hospital, Camp Tortuguero, Vega Baja, Puerto Rico, 1945 (US Army)

New Mexico to Southern California before the war, is a case in point. Of ten grown siblings, three sisters each became a “Rosita the River,” while all five brothers served: two as army soldiers, one as an army medic, one as a Seabee, that is, a member of U.S. Navy Construction Battalion, and the eldest, who turned 50 during the war, as a civil defense air-raid warden. The family’s participation was so extensive that members remember waiting to hear of one brother’s fate during the Battle of the Bulge just after hearing another brother had died in combat in the Philippines.²⁸

With good reason, Mexican Americans took tremendous pride in their combat record during World War II. Thus, a tiny two-block lane in Silvis, Illinois, originally settled by Mexican immigrant railroad workers, earned the nickname “Hero Street” for sending an amazing 45 sons off to war. Sent to the Philippines because of their ability to use Spanish to communicate with their Filipino allies, many New Mexicans meanwhile experienced the horrors of the Bataan death march. Pinpointing ethnicity by looking at Spanish-surnames in addition to birthplace makes clear, moreover, that at least 11 Mexican Americans received the Medal of Honor during the conflict. Among them was Joseph P. Martínez, the child of immigrants and a Colorado beet harvester before the war. For leading a dangerous, but strategically critical, charge up a snow-covered mountain on the Aleutian Island of Attu, Martínez received that honor posthumously, the first draftee to do so. Many ethnic group members attributed their willingness to serve, and to serve so courageously to their unique cultural inheritance, one rooted in both Iberian and indigenous warrior societies. As

Medal of Honor recipient Silvestre Herrera explained his decision to enter a minefield and single-handedly attack an enemy stronghold in France, a decision that cost him both feet in an explosion, “I am a Mexican-American and we have a tradition. We’re supposed to be men, not sissies.”²⁹

Not surprisingly, after the war, Mexican Americans found continued inequality deeply ironic and increasingly intolerable. In recognition of Herrera’s heroism, for example, the governor of Arizona decided to name August 14, 1945 Silvestre Herrera Day.³⁰ Unfortunately, in advance of that date the governor also had to order Phoenix businesses to take down signs that read, “No Mexican Trade Wanted.” Similarly, at war’s end, the owner of the Oasis Café in the

town of Richmond, Texas, made clear that he only served an Anglo American clientele. When told to leave, however, Macario Garcia, another Medal of Honor recipient, refused to do so and instead got into a scuffle with the café owner. Although local city officials charged Garcia with aggravated assault, nationally he won in the court of public opinion, especially after the radio celebrity Walter Winchell decried the injustice of the incident on his program. Especially after fighting

a fascist dictatorship that championed an ideology of racial supremacy, the idea that wartime sacrifice merited peacetime equality resonated with more Americans than ever.³¹

By far the most famous instance of ill treatment directed at a Mexican American World War II veteran was the case of Private Felix Longoria of Three Rivers, Texas. It also contributed to the success of another civil rights organization dedicated to addressing Mexican



*Hector Garcia, founder, American G.I. Forum
(Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi)*

American concerns. Four years after his combat death in the Philippines in 1945, Longoria's remains were shipped to the U.S. The local funeral home, however, refused a request by his widow, Beatrice, to use the funeral home's chapel for a wake in his honor. As the funeral home director explained then, "We just never made it a practice to let them [Mexican Americans] use the chapel and we don't want to start now." He was correct. Across the Southwest, segregation against Mexican Americans endured less as a matter of law than as a matter of social custom. Yet what had been common practice before the war was no longer acceptable to Mexican Americans or to their Anglo American allies.³²

A Corpus Christi physician, Hector P. Garcia, led the charge to address the injustice. Garcia, who had served as a medic in Europe during the war, had upon his return to the States formed an organization called the American G.I. Forum to secure equal treatment for Mexican American veterans at Veteran Administration hospitals. Receiving a call from a Beatrice's sister to intervene in the dispute with the funeral home, Garcia called the funeral director himself to ask him to reconsider. He was quickly rebuffed. To Garcia, the irony of enforcing segregation even in the case of dead soldier amounted to a "direct contradiction of those principles for which this American soldier made the supreme sacrifice." Immediately, Garcia sent notes of protest to news media outlets, elected politicians, and high government officials. In response, Lyndon B. Johnson, then the junior senator from Texas, graciously arranged for Longoria to be buried at Arlington National Cemetery. For Garcia, however, his work on the civil rights front had just begun. The Longoria incident propelled the American G.I. Forum to the front lines of the fight for Mexican American equality. Joining with LULAC, the Forum throughout the 1950s vigo-

***"Vengo a decirle adiós
a los muchachos
porque pronto me voy
para la guerra..."***

"La Despedida" by Pedro Flores

rously challenged segregation directed against Mexican Americans. So successful were the two organizations that the most overt manifestations of this practice as it was aimed at Mexican Americans substantially diminished by the end of the decade. Thus, a civil rights strategy born after World War I reached fruition after World War II.³³

Unfortunately, the experience of Puerto Ricans during World War II also echoed their experience during the previous global conflict. Once again, Puerto Ricans on the island eagerly registered for the draft or volunteered in the dual hope of contributing to the war effort and along the way helping their island through an infusion of defense dollars and technical training.³⁴ Once again, military officials limited those hopes. Although the classic bolero *La Despedida* has its origins in the World War II era because so many soldiers left the island during those years, the military preferred to keep islanders in security and service roles. Charged mainly with hemispheric defense, members of the 65th Infantry Regiment (formerly the island's provisional regiment) were stationed as far away as the Galapagos Islands and again in the Panama Canal Zone, where some soldiers became subjects in army medical experiments about the effects of mustard gas.³⁵ Army researchers concluded that Puerto Ricans burnt and blistered just like "whites." Finally, near the end of the war, a few island soldiers experienced combat directly. After being deployed to North Africa and Italy to guard supply lines, they came under assault from German forces in Europe. Meanwhile, about 200 Puerto Rican women contributed to the war effort by joining the WACS or WAVES. They received training in the States, and, unfortunately, in some cases experienced discrimination, before returning to Puerto Rico.³⁶

On the mainland, Puerto Ricans found ways to contribute, too. Puerto Ricans who served in

the regular army units (versus service-oriented African American ones) likewise experienced combat. In addition, Puerto Ricans participated in D-Day and were at the Battle of the Bulge. In some cases, a single family sent sons to war from both the island and the continental U.S. Although many Americans families saw multiple sons go off to war, the stereotype of big, Catholic families certainly held true in the case of the “Fighting Medinas,” who were seven brothers from a single Puerto Rican family divided between the island and Brooklyn, all of who served. Stateside, U.S. officials tapped Puerto Rican aviators for a special assignment: training African American pilots who became the Tuskegee Airmen of World War II. Whether chosen to train black men or to be subjects of army medical tests, Puerto Ricans found that the military’s continued preoccupation with racial difference framed their experiences during World War II.³⁷

Not until the Korean War did Puerto Ricans have the chance to prove themselves in battle in significant numbers. Following the surprise outbreak of war on the Korean peninsula in June 1950, the sudden and urgent need for manpower propelled the 65th Regiment to the front lines where they engaged in some of the most heated fighting of the entire war. Although the armed forces had been desegregated in 1948 by presidential order, the 65th Regiment, comprised entirely of islanders, remained an all-Puerto Rican unit. Proud of their service, they soon adopted the nickname the Borinqueneers, a name that was both a tribute to the island’s original indigenous name, Boriquen, and possibly as well a nod to Puerto Rico’s pirate past and the time of the buccaneers. Thrust in the thick of a war that featured a

dramatically shifting front line across a rugged, mountainous terrain, these island soldiers also slogged through mud and snow as they faced both North Korean and Chinese enemy soldiers. By the end of 1951, the 65th Infantry Regiment had been in battle for 460 days, suffered 1,535 battle casualties and taken 2,133 enemy prisoners, meaning it had fought more days, lost fewer men, and taken more prisoners than comparable regiments on the front line. Little wonder that General Douglas MacArthur, who until April 1951 was in charge of military operations in Korea, said that the 65th “was showing magnificent ability and courage in field operations.”³⁸ A later study by the Office of the Governor of Puerto Rico also concluded that Puerto Ricans suffered disproportionate casualty rates as a result of the tremendous role played by the 65th.³⁹



Company C, 65th Regiment (The Borinqueneers), Korea (US Army)

For Puerto Rican politicians on the island, moreover, the Puerto Rican soldier exemplified the new working relationship they hoped to see between the island and the mainland. The 65th Regiment was both wholly Puerto Rican but also completely partnered to

the U.S. Increasingly, Puerto Ricans had settled on a middle road between independence and statehood: they looked for maximum autonomy within the U.S. orbit. Thus, just as Mexican Americans used their military service to push for civil rights at home, Puerto Ricans used the demonstrated patriotism of the island’s young men to ameliorate the colonial relationship between the island and the U.S. In the wake of World War II, islanders had received the right to elect their own governor. During the Korean conflict, U.S. officials decriminalized both the Puerto Rican flag and the Puerto Rican anthem for the first time since 1898. Shortly afterward,

Puerto Rico officially became a Commonwealth of the U.S., a status between independence and statehood.⁴⁰

These steps toward autonomy occurred despite a controversial court-martial of Puerto Rican soldiers. In the fall of 1952, soldiers with the 65th stood accused of twice disobeying orders, failing to attack a hill in one incident and refusing to cross a river in another. In short order, 200 were arrested; of this group 94 were court-martialed and found guilty. Yet the Army quickly overturned these verdicts and granted the soldiers clemency. In doing so, the Army recognized one major obstacle the 65th Infantry faced by 1952: most of its soldiers were Spanish speaking with limited English skills while most of the officers were monolingual English. Originally, the regiment had boasted an entire contingent of fully bilingual Puerto Rican NCOs (non-commissioned officers directly in charge of the enlisted men). These men had been rotated out, as had many veteran soldiers.⁴¹ Defenders of the regiment, moreover, saw a broader pattern of prejudice at work in the harsh decisions of the commanding officers. Given the broader significance of the 65th as a symbol of Puerto Rican pride and long-denied equality, some accounts of this regiment understandably fail to mention the court-martial at all. Inconveniently for civil rights activists, the full story of the 65th suggested that Latino patriotism had limits.

Mexican Americans made that point clear during the Vietnam War. While thousands of ethnic group members had looked upon Korea as a necessary Cold War conflict and yet another opportunity to serve their country, some came

to a different conclusion regarding Vietnam. A few individual Mexican American young men decided *against* serving in the conflict and thousands more, men and women alike, demonstrated against the war. In fact, until 2006 and nationwide demonstrations on behalf of immigrants' rights, the largest Latino demonstration ever had been an anti-war protest march that occurred on August 29, 1970 in Los Angeles. Organized by the National Chicano Moratorium Committee Against the War in Vietnam, Chicano anti-war activists kept the civil rights strategy cemented in World War II but employed it with a twist. While veterans in the post-World War II era had asked for equality premised on their military service, anti-war Chicanos asked why they should continue to

serve in the face of continued inequality. They pointed to evidence of disproportionate casualty rates: a 1967 Ford Foundation study that suggested that although Mexican Americans comprised just 13.8 percent of the Southwest's population, they comprised 19.4 percent of all casualties. Anti-war Chicanos blamed the era's draft system, which originally had provided auto-

matic deferments for colleges students at a time when roughly half of the Mexican-origin population lacked even an eighth grade education.⁴² Ironically, even as Chicano anti-war activists criticized the country, their protest was arguably a sign of assimilation. Just as the rest of the nation was deeply divided about the war in Vietnam, so too were Mexican Americans.

Even more telling in terms of the intersection between ethnic politics and military service, Mexican American anti-war demonstrators always constituted a minority within a minority. Notably, the first Vietnam demonstrations



*Mexican-American Marines in Vietnam, ca. 1970-1972
(Marine Corps Archives & Special Collections)*

among Mexican Americans were American G.I. Forum-sponsored marches in support of the war in 1965 and 1966 in Los Angeles and Austin, respectively.⁴³ Among Mexican Americans, support for the war stemmed in part from an unwillingness to depart from military or political tradition. During the Cold War, moreover, steady jobs at the dozens of military bases and other facilities that dotted the western landscape offered many Mexican Americans entry into the middle class. San Antonio alone, for example, was once home to four Air Force bases as well as the Army's Fort Sam Houston.⁴⁴ For these workers, economic as well as political interests inclined them toward supporting U.S. foreign policy. In the end, however, thousands of Mexican Americans served in the Vietnam War for the same reason they had served in previous wars: because their country called them.

Indeed, some had looked to the military for a sense of inclusion even before the U.S. intervened militarily in Southeast Asia. Everett Alvarez was one. Wanting to be part of a "Hispanic tradition," he viewed his Navy uniform as a refuge for him from boyhood memories of anti-Mexican discrimination and rejection. Trained as a Navy pilot, Alvarez took part in retaliatory raids after reports of an attack by North Vietnamese forces upon American ships in the Gulf of Tonkin. Shot down in August 1964, Alvarez spent the next eight and a half years as a prisoner of war but never once questioned his mission or American war aims.⁴⁵ For his part, Roy P. Benavidez used the radio call sign "Tango Mike Mike," short for "That Mean Mexican," in tribute to his hardscrabble youth marked by poverty and segregation. Joining the National Guard as a teen during the Korean conflict and the U.S. Army shortly after that, Benavidez proved his mettle on the battlefield. A Medal of Honor recipient for his actions during the Vietnam conflict, Benavidez kept eight wounded men alive for six hours as they waited for medical evacuation. He did so despite heavy enemy

fire and being wounded dozens of times himself. Notably, Benavidez always described his fighting spirit as a family legacy. Yaqui Indian on his mother's side, on his father's, the family tree included Placido Benavides, one of the Tejanos who fought for Texas Independence in 1836.⁴⁶

Latinos from Puerto Rico – and Cuba – participated in the Vietnam conflict as well. Adding credence to the familiar complaint that Latino military contributions are too often overlooked, much information about these servicemen has not yet been published in book form but is only traceable via the Internet. During the conflict, servicemen of Puerto Rican descent were awarded four Medals of Honor, each one posthumously. The count increased to four only after researchers realized that Humbert Roque Versace, a West Point graduate like his Italian-American father, was also of Puerto Rican descent on his mother's side. Executed by his North Vietnamese captors in 1965, he became the first POW ever awarded the Medal of Honor, an honor granted to him because of his extraordinary bravery and inspirational leadership in the face of torture designed to break his spirit.⁴⁷ Equally impressive was the service record of a survivor of the conflict. The island-born Jorge Otero Barreto, an army sergeant, participated in 200 combat missions and was bestowed 38 military citations along the way. That record made him the most decorated Puerto Rican soldier ever and one of the most decorated soldiers of the entire Vietnam conflict.⁴⁸

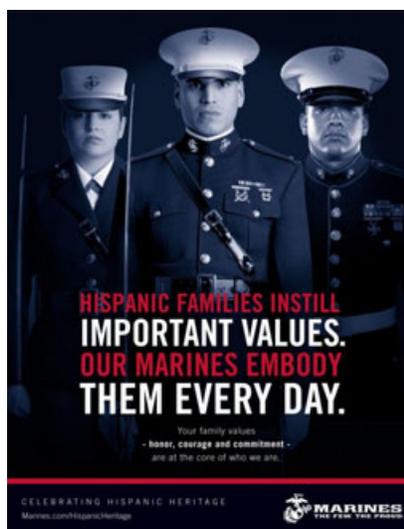
In addition, Cuban immigrants who had recently arrived in the U.S. eagerly volunteered to serve in a war against a communist enemy. First arriving in the U.S. in sizeable numbers during the latter half of the 19th century, Cubans had participated in every American war since at least the Civil War. After the 1959 revolution on the island, however, anti-communist Cubans fled their homeland by the hundreds of

thousands. Many of these young men jumped at the chance to fight communism as part of the U.S. Armed Forces. Prominent among them was Felix Sosa-Camejo, who left Cuba in 1960 when he was just 20 and participated in the failed Bay of Pigs invasion to overthrow Fidel Castro the following year. Ransomed by John F. Kennedy, Bay of Pig survivors were offered the chance to join the U.S. Army in 1963 and Sosa-Camejo immediately did so. He served a tour of duty in Vietnam and then volunteered for another, before losing his life during the Tet Offensive in 1968. During his tragically abbreviated military career, Sosa-Camejo was awarded a dozen military citations.⁴⁹

Cuban migration that started during the 1960s was only part of a larger trend. The post-Vietnam War era coincided with tremendous immigration from Latin America, a phenomenon that renewed and magnified the connection between military service and the quest for inclusion. Immigration combined with natural increase, moreover, accounted for the skyrocketing Latino population overall. Between 2000 and 2010 alone, the Latino population grew 43 percent, or more than four times the nation's 9.7 percent growth rate. The decade of the 1980s also saw for the first time significant numbers of immigrants from Central America who were fleeing the war, violence, and economic upheaval of their home countries. Although in 2010 the three largest cohorts within the U.S. Latino population still traced their ancestry to Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Cuba (accounting for 63 percent, 9.2 percent and 3.5 percent of the total respectively), Central Americans as a group accounted for nearly 8 percent of the total U.S. Latino population and those who ori-

gins go back to El Salvador accounted for 3.3 percent. Within the U.S. today, Salvadoran Americans constitute almost as large a group as Cuban Americans.⁵⁰

Despite substantial progress on the civil rights front since the 1960s, moreover, for these new immigrants the relationship between military service and citizenship remained as pertinent as ever. As they looked for a place to belong, to excel, and to earn a living, serving in the U.S. Armed Forces remained a viable option. The recent war in Iraq underscored that point. Early news reports noted that among the initial casualties in Iraq were four Marines from California who were not U.S. citizens: José Gutiérrez, a Guatemalan immigrant, and José Ángel Garibay, Francisco Martínez Flores, and Jesus A. Suarez del Solar, all born in Mexico.⁵¹ In response, the U.S. Congress made these and other non-citizens soldiers eligible for citizenship if their next of kin wished to have their fallen relative naturalized posthumously.⁵² Of the four fallen soldiers mentioned above, all but Suarez became U.S. citizens after their death.



*Hispanic Heritage Month poster, 2010
(US Marine Corps)*

Looking toward the future, the armed forces realize that given the country's demographics, successful recruitment for all branches of the military depends upon the successful recruitment of Latinos. In fact, one of the greatest champions of the long history of Latinos in the U.S. military is the Department of Defense. A sustained recruitment campaign aimed at Latinos has yielded impressive results. In 2003, the Latinos were underrepresented as compared to their percentage of the population in every branch of the military with the notable exception of the Marine Corps. Even then, the discrepancy disappeared when

controlled for citizenship status and educational obtainment.⁵³ Today, Latinos are over-represented in the Navy and their representation has greatly increased in every other branch of the military. In addition, an increasing number of Latinas are finding the military a route to economic security and educational opportunity. Military planners note, however, that more work needs to be done to achieve parity in terms of rank. When the focus narrows to the officer ranks, marked under-representation still prevails in every branch of the military service although the best (if still low) representation for Hispanic officers occurs again in the Marine Corps.⁵⁴ While non-citizens are eligible to become enlisted men and women, only U.S. citizens can become officers.

As part of its outreach efforts, the Department of Defense has devoted increased attention to tracking the ethnicity of service personnel and their citizenship status. These studies make clear two important points that should be obvious but are often lost in the debate that surrounds immigration. First, reflecting the population overall, the vast majority of Latinos and Latinas serving in the U.S. Armed Forces are native-born. Second, non-citizens make up a tiny minority of the overall armed forces population: 1.4 percent in 2010.⁵⁵ Many immigrants evidently become citizens *before* joining the military, but thousands more have become citizens while in the military. In the wake of 9/11, President George W. Bush streamlined the naturalization process for non-citizens soldiers as long as they were legal residents. Today non-citizen servicemen and servicewomen can now start naturalization proceedings after serving a single day. Furthermore, although technically enlistment is only

an option for legal residents, the latest legislation includes a provision allowing undocumented U.S. residents serving in the armed forces an opportunity to gain citizenship.⁵⁶ As it proceeds with its recruitment campaigns, the military recognizes that non-citizens, whatever their status, “represent a valuable pool for enlisted recruiting.” In 2011, Hispanics accounted for 31.5 percent of all non-citizen recruits.⁵⁷

Ultimately, whether the U.S. is the land of one’s birth or one’s adopted homeland, a new generation of Latinos continues to enter the military service. According to a 2009 academic article

entitled, “The Army’s Hispanic Future,” moreover, the number one reason Latinos join the army is: “to serve my country.”⁵⁸ Although he chose to join the Marines, Rafael Peralta exemplified that sentiment. A native of Mexico, Peralta excitedly enlisted the same day that he received his green card and became a U.S. citizen after joining the military. In 2004, the day before engaging in operations in Fallujah, Iraq, he wrote a letter to his younger brother, Ricardo, telling him, “Bro, be proud of me . . . and be proud to be an American.” The next day, Peralta, 25, died after absorb-

ing the impact of an exploding grenade with his body, an action that saved the lives of five fellow Marines. Six years later, to honor his brother, Ricardo Peralta also joined the Marines.⁵⁹

To be certain, the story of Latino military service is neither unique nor without its limitations. After all, Americans of all backgrounds have proved themselves to be great patriots and capable of battlefield heroics. On the civil rights front, other minorities have drawn similar linkages between military service and the



Olga Custodio, the first Latina U.S. military fighter pilot, exiting a T-38 Talon (U.S. Air Force)

desire for equal rights. During World War II, for example, African Americans demanded a “double victory,” one against the forces of fascism abroad and the forces of segregation at home, while Japanese Americans joined the 442nd to prove their loyalty to the U.S. and escape the injustice of the internment camps.⁶⁰ Equally important, a story that emphasizes Latino patriotism, honor, and duty, is necessarily also a story that bypasses those pieces of the past that do not fit the narrative. By definition, the topic “Latinos in the military” is *not* about those Latinos who have questioned U.S. foreign policy or war aims. The standard narrative leaves no room for voices of dissent or even for those voices expressing conflicting emotions about the cost of war, such as the voice of Fernando Suarez, the father of a Jesus Suarez del Solar, the fallen Marine. After his son’s death, the elder Suarez was both intensely proud of his “Aztec Warrior,” and a bitter opponent to the war in Iraq. Although his son was offered posthumous citizenship, a heartbroken and angry Fernando Suarez had zero interest in accepting this symbolic gesture on his son’s behalf.⁶¹

Yet many more Latinos have viewed military service as a route toward meaningful inclusion within a society that in years past had a hard time viewing them as real Americans. More than a hundred years ago, for example, the *New York Times* worried about the loyalties of Spanish-speaking people in New Mexico during the Spanish-American War. Without a shred of evidence, the newspaper labeled Nuevo Mexicanos “disaffected and semi-traitorous citizens” and accused them of being “deeply hostile to American ideas and American policies.”⁶² The most frequent response on the part of Latinos to such hostility had been literally to fight as members of the U.S. armed forces.

Ultimately, whether the U.S. is the land of one’s birth or one’s adopted homeland, a new generation of Latinos continues to enter the military service.

Since World War I, and especially since World War II, Latinos have strategically upheld their military service to battle against racial discrimination and against the legacy of colonialism. To their credit, progress on the civil rights front matched their service overseas. Today, moreover, their long and commendable record of military service also stands as a powerful response to critics concerned about high rates of Latino immigration and supposedly low rates of Latino assimilation. In the end, a tradition of focusing upon military service as a means of furthering a more just society for all endures because it is founded on an essential truth about Latinos in the military: as immigrants and as citizens, Latinos have served the U.S. in the military proudly for generations and continue to do so today.

Endnotes

- ¹ Wikipedia keeps a running count, as do many other websites.
- ² *Hispanics in America's Defense* (Washington DC: Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Manpower and Personnel Policy, 1990), 3.
- ³ Academics have made similar arguments, most notably the late Samuel P. Huntington in *Who Are We?: The Challenges to American National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004).
- ⁴ Mark Hugo Lopez and Paul Taylor, *Latinos and the 2010 Census: The Foreign Born are More Positive* (Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, 2010), at www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/121.pdf, accessed August 21, 2012.
- ⁵ Sandra Lilley, "More Latinas are Enlisting than Latinos," *NBCLatino.com*, at <http://nbclatino.tumblr.com/post/14642123469/more-latinas-are-enlisting-in-the-military-than-latinos>, accessed August 21, 2012. For a snapshot of the original 2011 Pew Research Center report that indicates this trend, see Eileen Patten and Kim Parker, *Women in the U.S. Military: Growing Share, Distinctive Profile* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2011), at <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/12/22/women-in-the-u-s-military-growing-share-distinctive-profile/2/#a-snapshot-of-active-duty-women>, accessed August 21, 2012. A pdf of the full report is available on the same web page.
- ⁶ Often listed among the 44 Medal of Honor recipients, for example, is the California-born Harold Gonsalves (anglicized from the Portuguese Gonçalves) who died in Okinawa in 1945, sacrificing his life to save his fellow Marines.
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- ⁸ Farragut's son, Loyall, wrote the most extensive overview of his father's life, *The Life of David Glasgow Farragut* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1879). A focus on Farragut's naval career can be found in the more contemporary work by James P. Duffy, *Lincoln's Admiral: The Civil War Campaigns of David Farragut* (New York: Wiley, 1997). For a debate about Farragut's Hispanic background, see Raoul Lowery Contreras, *Jalapeño Chiles, Mexican Americans, and Other Hot Stuff* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2003), 24-25, 42-44. A 2010 U.S. Navy pamphlet, *Hispanics in the U.S. Navy* (Washington, DC: Navy Diversity Directorate, Chief of Naval Personnel, 2010), claims that Farragut used both English and Spanish on the job. The pdf can be found online as well at www.history.navy.mil/diversity/brochures/HispanicsInUSN_Final.pdf, accessed August 21, 2012.
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- ¹⁰ McDonald, 290-292. Also see Timothy M. Matovina, *The Alamo Remembered: Tejano Accounts and Perspectives* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 31-37.
- ¹¹ William E. Smythe, *History of San Diego, 1542-1908* (San Diego, CA: History Co., 1908), 163, at <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/books/smythe/index.htm>, accessed August 21, 2012.
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- ¹³ For the numbers of Nuevo Mexicano volunteers as well as a general overview, see National Park Service, *Hispanics and the Civil War: From Battlefield to Homefront* (Washington, DC: Department of the Interior, 2011). It is available for purchase at <http://www.eparks.com/store/product/93205/Hispanics-and-the-Civil-War%3A-From-Battlefield-to-Homefront/>.
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- ¹⁵ Biographical information on each recipient is available in Robert Montemayor and Henry Mendoza, *Right Before Our Eyes: Latinos Past, Present and Future* (Tempe, AZ: Scholargy Publishing, 2004), 52-53. The entire third chapter, "An Untold Story of Duty and Honor: Latinos in the Military," exemplifies the civil rights strategy of articulating a plea for inclusion based upon military service.
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- ¹⁷ United States War Department, *Annual Report of the Secretary of War, Vol. I, Part 3* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901), 125.
- ¹⁸ Ruth Glasser, *My Music Is My Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and New York Communities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 53; and S.S. Harvey, "Americanizing Puerto Rico," *New York Times*, February 22, 1899, 4.
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- ²⁴ Rámirez, 28, 121, 123-125.
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- ²⁹ Lorena Oropeza, *¡Raza Sí, Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism during the Viet Nam War Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 25-27.
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- ⁴⁸ Otero's story has mostly been captured in news reports, including Univision.com at <http://archivo.univision.com/content/content.jhtml?cid=1688017>.
- ⁴⁹ Bloggers and politicians mention Camejo-Sosa's service. One of the fullest accounts of his life can be found in a document that accompanied a letter that Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen presented to President Bush requesting that Camejo-Sosa be awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously. Both the letter and the summary can be found online at <http://www.cavavets.org/Felix%20Sosa%20Cameo.pdf>, accessed August 21, 2012.
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