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Class, Race and Chicano Oppression



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CLASS, RACE, AND CHICANO OPPRESSION

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THIS DISCUSSION will attempt to develop an interpretation of Chicano history that deals directly with the nature and structural basis of Chicano oppression. I make no pretensions to this analysis being based on original historical research, or being in any way definitive or exhaustive. My main concern here is to develop a Marxian interpretation of Chicano history and in doing so develop a class analysis that can more meaningfully interpret the colonial experience of racial minorities in the United States. A second and equally important concern is to provide a larger theme or perspective to the Chicano experience. All too often the history of the Chicano has not been

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seen as an integral part of the larger forces that have been at work in the shaping of our modern world. This discussion views aspects of our history in a larger context, as part of the historical reality that has spelled the similar oppression of colonized people throughout the world.

RACIAL AND CLASS domination form the principal basis of Chicano oppression. I will attempt to trace historically the development of both racial and class oppression in North America as it has affected Chicanos and our historical forefathers in Mexico. I will show that in the history of the colonization that has affected the Chicano people, class exploitation has taken on a very definite racial form. The racism and racial oppression faced by colonized people has been more than just part of an "ideological superstructure," for it has a very real structural basis in the organization of production.

Underlying this analysis will be a criticism of those Marxian theorists and political groups that attempt to explain racism and racial oppression purely in terms of false consciousness. This current in Marxian theory has viewed racism simply and primarily as an ideology that the ruling class has used to divide the working class and to deflect attention away from the contradiction between capital and labor and onto racial minorities (i.e., racism is not only a divide-and-conquer mechanism but also a diversionary tactic).

While it is clear that racism does serve these functions, it has a structural component that must be analyzed as well. It is precisely this material basis of racism—which is grounded in the organization of production—that has been most often overlooked. The result of this has been to minimize the importance of race itself being a central form of oppression and a central organizing principle of the class system. By treating racism primarily as false consciousness, the tendency has been to reduce racism to merely a manifestation of class rule that will disappear automatically when the capitalist class is overthrown. In its more extreme form, this tendency in Marxian theory ends up treating race and racism as epiphenomena. (This can be seen in some discussions of the plight of racial minorities that are carried on within the language of "the national question.")

In the colonial situation in Mexico, and in capitalist societies like the United States that have a history of colonial expansion *within* the continent, the class system has taken a marked racial form, and racial oppression has been mediated through the organization of class relations. In these societies class relations have given substance to and concretized racial domination.

In the United States, this class domination of racial minorities has shaped and conditioned their history of social oppression. In order to maintain the subordinate position of racial minorities within the class structure, an entire system of social control and political and cultural domination, as well as racial ideology, was developed. The effect of this "ideological superstructure" was not only to justify racial domination but also to maintain this subordination of racial minorities within the lowest strata of the working class.

Historical Roots of Chicano Oppression

SINCE ITS INCEPTION at the turn of the sixteenth century, European colonization has spelled the domination of people of color throughout the world. Everywhere Western Europeans or North Americans have ventured they have sought colonial super-profits through either new markets, new investment outlets, new territories and raw materials, or an exploitable supply of cheap labor. The net result of this colonial expansion and conquest has meant that the economic and social life of the colonized was to be totally disrupted and reorganized to fill the needs of European capitalism.

As these areas of the non-Western world fell into European hands similar historical processes were at play. (1) In all cases the economic factor was primary—colonization was initiated by the need of the European or North American metropolis to expand economically and to bring within its web of domination the land, resources, and market potentials of the dependent colony. (2) This metropolitan economic and territorial expansion was also to spell the total disorganization of traditional life in the colony and the transformation of the indigenous masses into colonized work forces. In nearly every instance those colonized were non-European people of color. (3) To rationalize and maintain what was to become a racially

defined class system of exploitation, there gradually developed an elaborate system of racial and, in some cases, religious ideology. Race was not only to provide the central source of ideological justification of the colonial situation, but it also became the central factor upon which classes in colonial society were to develop outwardly and take their form. (4) Accompanying and playing an integral role in the maintenance of this racial domination, European cultural chauvinism was to ravage indigenous cultures, values, and traditions. Culture was ultimately to serve as a vehicle or channel through which colonial domination was secured. (5) Finally, to consolidate control of the colonial situation, political and social institutions were erected to maintain the relations of power and privilege that lay at the heart of the colonial situation.

THE CONQUEST of the non-Western world by the nation-states of Western Europe was set in motion with the early colonial ventures of the Iberian axis—Spain and Portugal. In 1493 the non-Western world was divided symbolically between Spain and Portugal through a series of papal bulls. Rectified a year later to give Portugal ownership of Brazil, the Treaty of Tordesillas further delineated the partition of the “new world”: the west went to Spain and the east to Portugal. By the close of the fifteenth century the two Iberian powers had already made their mark on the “new world.” The Americas had been “discovered” and the turn of the century was to signal a further escalation in the early European scramble for colonial possessions throughout the world.

It was the Iberians then, and particularly the Spanish, who became the initial European promoters of conquest and procurers of an early mercantile empire. They inherited an advanced Islamic technology, particularly pertaining to oceanic navigation, and were able to mobilize all the moral energies of their people through the nearly eight centuries of struggle for emancipation from the Moors. By 1521 the Spanish were already establishing control over the large area of what is now central Mexico. It was in this early establishment of colonial domination over the indigenous people of “New Spain” that the roots of European colonial relations were set within the North American context. Spurred on by their search for pre-

cious metals and intoxicated with a "salvationist-mercantile" zeal, the Spanish intrusion and colonization of Mexico not only helped mark the dawning of Europe's colonial domination of the Americas but more specifically it spelled the beginning of what is now over 450 years of European domination of the Indio-mestizo in North America.

With the establishment of these early colonial relations, we see the beginning of a class system of domination that was to manifest itself largely in racial terms. Racial oppression and racism began to develop fully as contact and subjugation of colonized people intensified. In this sense then, racism and racial oppression are not forms of domination that have been with us since time immemorial nor are they merely the by-products of a later capitalist development. Racism arose with the development of the European colonization of the non-Western world and during the beginning phase of world capitalism—the period of primitive accumulation of capital. While there are vestiges of ethnocentrism and racial-cultural chauvinism in earlier epochs, it was not until the rise of European colonization that we see the wholesale racial domination of a group of people and the promulgation and elaboration of racial ideology.¹ In earlier empires, for example, racial factors were not nearly as important in making distinctions between people as was culture (in the Hellenic empire), estates (in the Alexandrian period), or citizenship (in the Roman Empire). Racial antagonism and racial exploitation that we know today was largely unknown in these earlier empires. It was in fact possible for ethnically diverse people to integrate and assimilate into the higher strata of these societies.

With the world penetration of early European colonization we mark a period in history where race was largely used by one people (Europeans) to distinguish themselves from an oppress all others (non-Europeans). With the European conquest of the "new world" racial oppression and racism became an intrinsic part of the social order of modern society. Since racial differences were the most obvious distinguishing factor between the European colonizer and the colonized, they soon became the basis upon which economic exploitation and the social organization of colonial society were to take shape.

To justify this racially based class exploitation, the colonizing

Europeans developed an elaborate system of racial—and in the case of Spain also religious—ideology that was used to dehumanize the colonized people and characterize them as an “inferior” and “savage” breed of people. Relegated to the lower levels of humanity, the sole purpose in the life of the colonized was to serve the interests of the colonizer and his economic system. In Spain, for example, a debate continued throughout the sixteenth century on the question of whether or not the Indio in “New Spain” had a soul or was simply a beast or half-beast. In the colony, “the Indians were represented as lazy, filthy pagans, of bestial morals, no better than dogs, and fit only for slavery, in which state alone there might be some hope of instructing and converting them to Christianity.”²

After the conquest of Mexico the Spanish organized colonial life by a system of racial hierarchy. The various forms of social, political, and above all economic relations in the colony were all to be circumscribed within a framework of European racial domination. According to Magnus Mörner, “This colonial reality was characterized . . . by the dichotomy between conquerors and conquered, masters and servants or slaves. . . . People were classified in accordance with the color of their skin, with the white masters occupying the highest stratum. Theoretically, each group that could be racially defined would constitute a social stratum of its own.”³

While there were actually a great number of identifiable racially mixed groupings of people that were to develop in the colony, the five major *castas* that came to characterize the social positions in colonial Mexico can be outlined as follows (ranked in descending order): (1) peninsular Spanish; (2) criollos; (3) mestizos; (4) mulattos, zambos, and free Negroes; (5) Indios.⁴

While the organization of the colonial economy was to produce well-defined social classes, the divisions between its social classes came to correspond closely to the racial differentiations that miscegenation was to produce in the colony. The size and relative position of each of these major groups was, of course, subject to some change as the colonial period progressed. Like the social organization of the society, the organization and division of its labor system came to be defined largely in terms

of race. "The peninsulars then appear as the bureaucrats and merchants par excellence, the criollos as the large landowners, the mestizos as the artisans, shopkeepers, and tenants, the mulattoes as urban manual workers, and finally, the Indians as community peasants and manpower for different kinds of heavy, unskilled labor."⁵ Thus, racial differences were not only used in making social distinctions and in delineating certain social groups, but they were also used in the very organization of the economic structure of colonial society. The racial realities of the colonial situation in Mexico had a material basis in the organization of the social relations of production in the colony.

As the colonial period progressed, different systems of forced labor were contrived to safeguard the economic privileges of the Spanish ruling class. In examining the economic and social structures that were erected in colonial Mexico, one economist notes the changes in these forms of Indian-based labor:

The early period was marked by the enslavement of the Indian which lasted from 1521 to 1533. This was followed by the *encomienda*—a system under which the Indian was obliged to provide labor or tribute to the encomendero. After a short time the labor *encomienda* was eliminated (although in colonial Chile it persisted for a long time and was impossible to extirpate). Between 1545 and 1548, there was a great epidemic which reduced the available labor supply at a time when the discovery of silver increased the demand for laborers. As a result of the increased need for labor and the diminished supply, the *encomienda* system was increasingly altered until it became what was called *la catequil*. (In Peru it was called *la mita*; the system was never established in Chile because it did not suit Chilean needs.) It lasted until about 1603, but after 1580 it was no longer the dominant method of utilization of labor. The predominance of the latifundium or hacienda, which increased after 1580, began as the result of another epidemic which further reduced the available labor supply and consequently production in the mines as well. . . . The modes of production which were employed and then replaced in Mexico . . . and the resulting transformation in the class structure responded to

changes in the colony's ability to serve metropolitan needs.⁶

For the Indio-mestizo (largely the blood line of the Chicanos), the legacy of this colonial hegemony left its mark not only in central Mexico but also in the northern regions of the Spanish empire. In the aftermath of Spanish domination this system of social and economic relations characterized by racial domination was carried over and developed in regions of what later became the southwestern United States. In what is now New Mexico, for example, there developed a "semi-feudal" set of social relations that were in one case to be distinguished by the dichotomy between the *patrón* and the *peón*. Here, a ruling class of a few wealthy families came to wield tight control over the internal affairs of the colonized area. Primarily of Spanish criollo origin, the *patrones* were joined in their control by Spanish aristocrats, officials, and the Church hierarchy. Subservient to this hispanic class were the *peones*—primarily mestizos and Indios. The economic relations of this village life were organized to benefit the light-skinned European and deprive the Indio and mestizo.⁷

Similarly, colonial California had a racial-class society based on the mission and later on the ranchos. Though not totally parallel to the social structures that developed in other territories, class stratification in California was again marked by the predominance of a small Spanish criollo class—the so-called "gente de razón." This aristocratic landowning class, like the *patrones* in New Mexico, controlled the lives of the mestizos and Indios in the colonial territory. After the secularization of the missions, this ruling elite was estimated to comprise no more than forty-six landowners, who retained a tight-fisted control over the affairs of California.⁸

SPANISH CONTROL of Mexico lasted about three hundred years, from the conquest in the early sixteenth century to the Mexican Independence in 1821. Though Spain had become an early European colonial power, by the time of the Mexican conquest it was well on its way to becoming economically subservient to England and to a lesser extent to Holland, France, and northern Italy; despite the creation and control of an

overseas empire in the sixteenth century, Spain had by 1700 become a secondary power in Europe.⁹

While Spain still had a foothold in Central and North America, by 1800 the Russians were approaching Spain's territory in California, the greater Mississippi-Louisiana territory was in French hands, and the English on the east coast were steadily pushing their way westward and down into Spanish Florida.

The rise and expansion of capitalism marked a new period in the history of western imperialism. In earlier periods, economic exploitation of colonized peoples was largely based on tribute and plunder. In the new period, the labor of conquered colonial peoples became an integral factor in the development of the metropolitan economy.¹⁰ To further the accumulation of capital in the metropolitan countries, it became necessary to destroy the traditional social and economic organization in the colonies and to transform the colonized into a work force that could be used to exploit effectively the natural resources that the metropolitan countries needed. The economic development of the capitalist metropolis was to be based directly on the continued exploitation and underdevelopment of the colony; the colony was to be totally transformed into an appendage of the metropolis.

Through its expansion and the conquest of the "new world," and its creation of the conditions and global framework in which the expansion of modern capitalism could eventually take place, Spain contributed to the development of industrial capitalism. By providing a crucial source of capital accumulation for England, Holland, and France, Spain played an important role in Europe's rupture with feudalism and the development of a capitalist mode of production. By being the first to harness and use the technological developments of the day, Spanish colonial domination was a transition from the early world empires of tribute and plunder to the empires maturing as industrial capitalist centers of power.

The economic, social, and political structures erected by Spain and Portugal in the Americas represented a special form of semi-feudal colonialism. Manfred Kossok has characterized the context in which Iberian colonization took place:

Spain and Portugal "exported" to America a feudalism

in decline, which on the European side was increasingly distorted by the growth of capitalism. However, developed capitalism was concentrated in northwestern Europe (Netherlands and England) and, as a result, there took place a re-feudalization of the original regions of early capitalism. Spain and Portugal were thus forced out into the periphery of capitalism at the decisive moment when the "true" history of primary accumulation was beginning with the burgeoning of merchant capital. The functional interdependence of capitalism and colonialism in the period of primary accumulation was distorted in a very special way in the case of Spain and Portugal. They served only as channels through which colonial profits flowed into rising capitalist countries. The part of the colonial riches that remained on the Iberian peninsula was, as a rule, not realized capitalistically but became feudal hoarding, and thus did not contribute to the disintegration of the feudal order. It was significant for Latin America that some rudimentary elements of capitalism were preserved in the metropolis, whereas no viable roots of autonomous capitalist development appeared in the colonies until the end of the eighteenth century.¹¹

Deprived of developing an indigenous industrial infrastructure, Spain was then to fall outside of the center of capitalist development and play a transitional and intermediary role in its development. Spain's failure to develop into a mature capitalist nation was largely due to the destruction of its crafts industry with the expulsion of the Moslems, the suppression of its nascent merchant stratum with the expulsion of the Jews, and, most importantly, its subordination to the already developing capitalist centers.¹²

The "primitive accumulation" of capital that Spain was partially to provide for Western Europe historically conditioned the gradual development of capitalism and the world market economy.¹³ Without the massive plunder of the Americas by Spain, and the eventual redirection of this wealth to England, Holland, and France, the growth of large-scale capitalist manufacture and industry would have been delayed. This massive accumulation of capital was therefore a crucial prerequisite for the development of Western European capitalism, as Robert Allen notes:

Internationally the emergence of capitalism resulted in the concentration of capital in a small part of the world—western Europe and, later, North America. The early colonial plunder of the non-European world provided a global base for the accumulation of capital in Europe. These accumulations made industrial and cultural development possible. The development of the steam engine, heavy industry, shipbuilding, manufacturing and many modern financial institutions were all financed directly or indirectly by the slave trade and other forms of colonial exploitation. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to suggest that the Industrial Revolution, which enabled Europe and North America to leap far ahead of the rest of the world in material welfare, would have been delayed by several centuries if not for the capital yielded by colonialism.¹⁴

In a similar vein, Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* also stress the extent to which this early colonization figured in the development of the bourgeois epoch in Western Europe:

The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie. The East-Indian and Chinese markets, the colonization of America, trade with the colonies, the increase in the means of exchange and in commodities generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry, an impulse never before known, and thereby, to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a rapid development.

The feudal system of industry, under which industrial production was monopolized by closed guilds, now no longer sufficed for the growing wants of the new markets. The manufacturing system took its place. The guild-masters were pushed to one side by the manufacturing middle class; divisions of labor between the different corporate guilds vanished in the face of division of labor in each single workshop.

Meantime the markets kept ever growing, the demand ever rising. Even manufacture no longer sufficed. Thereupon, steam and machinery revolutionized industrial production. The place of manufacture was taken by the giant, Modern Industry, the place of the industrial middle class, by industrial millionaires, the leaders of whole industrial armies, the modern bourgeois.¹⁵

This development of the bourgeois epoch, then, was in no small way aided by the accumulation of capital that the early colonial plunder of the Americas was to provide. Racism was integral to this process. Starting with the early colonization by the Iberians and intensifying with developing capitalist colonization, racial oppression and domination became a leading force in shaping capitalist exploitation.

The Development of United States Capitalism and Mexico

WITH THE RISE OF ENGLAND as the leading imperial power and the emergence of the United States as an imperial power in its own right, the second major phase of the European colonization of Mexico was to begin. Having secured its own national independence in its revolutionary war with England, the United States began its own imperialist thrust. The United States first expanded across the North American continent, then overseas. After "Northern capitalists and Southern planters joined hands in 1776 to win independence from England," the United States moved its national boundaries toward the Pacific.¹⁶ It was inevitable that the "rising American empire" would soon direct its expansionist drive toward the new republic of Mexico. Having won independence in 1821, after three centuries of Spanish domination, Mexico was by mid-century wrought with internal political and economic turmoil. The new republic was unprepared to deal with the imperialist foray that the United States was to unleash in the usurpation of Texas in the 1830s and in the Mexican-American War that was to follow.

These North American aggressions on Mexico must be understood in the context of the rise and expansion of American capitalism. The American empire dates back to the years 1843-57—the period of the "take-off" stage of the American economy.¹⁷ This period, preceding the Mexican-American War and concluding just before the war for Southern independence, marked a dramatic shift of political power in the United States from the southern planters to the northern and eastern industrialists and financiers.¹⁸ This gradual predominance of industrial capital over the slave economy of the South was to lay the foundations for the development of mature monopoly capitalism in the United States. As we shall see, the war with

Mexico and the usurpation of one-half of Mexico's territory was a crucial component of that development.

The development and expansion of industrial capital in the United States necessitated the expansion and conquest of new territories.¹⁹ By acquiring these lands, American capitalists gained access to raw materials needed for industrialization and to strategic locations (such as the ports on the California coast) from which to branch out into further searches for raw materials and new markets.²⁰

There were at least six stages in this development of American westward expansion. Alonso Aguilar has outlined this expansion and absorption of new territories as follows:

1. In 1803, Louisiana was purchased from France, which lost Haiti at the same time; the expansionist designs of France in America thereby suffered a severe blow. The United States paid the ridiculous sum of \$15 million for the vast territory of almost one million square miles.

2. The second step was taken in 1819. After repeated border incidents and long drawn out negotiations, Spain ceded her possessions east of the Mississippi and renounced her right to Oregon. As a result, the United States acquired the territory of Florida (38,700 square miles) for \$5 million.

3. In 1846, it was Oregon's turn. The joint occupation by England and the United States ended under pressure from the latter and an agreement was reached whereby the United States added another 286,500 square miles to its already enormous territory, an area which today comprises the states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and parts of Wyoming and Montana.

4. In the same year war began against Mexico, a frankly unjust war which completely exposed the aggressiveness of United States policy and the violent character of its territorial expansion.

5. As a result of the aggression against Mexico, the United States first acquired Texas and shortly after, in 1848, another large slice of territory. Altogether, the United States incorporated some 945,000 square miles—a vast area which today includes the states of Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, California, Nevada, Utah and part of Wyoming. After appropriating these lands, to which it had no right whatsoever, the United States paid \$26.8

million for them—as though this made the annexation legal.

6. Finally, in 1853, through the Gadsden Purchase, the United States acquired another small strip of border land of some 45,000 square miles in the Mesilla Valley for the absurd sum of \$10 million.

To sum up, in the course of half a century, the United States increased its territory tenfold—not including Alaska. This is to say, nearly 2.3 million square miles were acquired by various means for the “reasonable” price of a little over \$50 million.²¹

Once continental expansion was complete, American capitalists shifted their search for new markets and sources of raw materials on to overseas areas. American overseas investment began spiraling and “by the 1870s the staggering rise in exports changed the historically unfavorable balance of American trade to a favorable balance which would last at least through the first half of the twentieth century. . . . By 1893 American trade exceeded that of every country in the world except England.”²² By this time, the United States had already asserted itself as a principal participant in the world capitalist market, and the groundwork had been laid for becoming the undisputed leader of the world imperialist system by the end of World War II.

No small part of this tremendous boom in American economic development during the last half of the nineteenth century was based on its exploitation of Mexican land, labor, and natural resources. This continued rape of Mexico was to provide for the United States what one American newspaper termed an “almost virgin outlet for extension of the market of our overproducing civilization.”²³

After the absorption of one-half of Mexico’s territory, Secretary of State James G. Blaine would “neatly summarize one of the themes of the new empire by officially informing Mexico that the United States desired no more land; it only wanted to use its labor and ‘large accumulation of capital, for which its own vast resources fail to give full scope,’ to exploit Mexico’s ‘scarcely developed resources.’ Americans invested in Mexican railroads, mining operations, and petroleum development.

United States trade with Mexico had been \$7,000,000 in 1860. It doubled to \$15,000,000 in 1880, doubled again to \$36,000,000 in 1890, and nearly doubled again to \$63,000,000 in 1900.”²⁴

The annexation and exploitation of the natural resources of the Southwest and the imperialist exploitation of Mexico after the war were, then, part and parcel of the rise of the American empire and its development of monopoly capitalism.

The “Internal Colonization” of the Chicano

THE COLONIZATION OF THE Indio-mestizo in the Southwest originated in a classic colonial conquest, but it did not follow the “classic” colonial form, in which the exploitative relationship is generally carried out between the metropolis and a spatially separated colony. Having soon become a numerical minority on their own land, and having had that land “annexed” to the American metropolis, Mexicanos found themselves members of an “internal colony.”²⁵ The colonization of the Mexicano unfolded *within* the political boundaries of the metropolitan nation.

What is crucial in defining the colonial situation of Mexicanos within the United States was their use as a super-exploitable labor force. Unlike white wage-labor and like colonized laborers elsewhere, Chicanos were confined largely to employment sectors like agriculture and mining, and were often hired out by owners on a seasonal basis or were bound to contractors and used as gang laborers. Unlike white immigrants who worked within sectors of the economy based on free labor, Chicanos formed a sub-proletariat within the labor force of the United States.²⁶ This peonage-like status as contracted or gang laborers was justified by a view of Chicanos as an inferior mongrel race. Historically, this sub-proletarianization of Mexican labor played an important part in the development and stabilization of American capitalism.

First of all, the use of Mexican labor greatly helped transform the Southwest from a relatively underdeveloped area into an agricultural oasis. This development of agriculture in the West would not have been possible nor profitable without the super-exploitation of Mexican labor. Agriculture in the West,

like cotton in the slave South, greatly contributed to the capital accumulation that made the transformation of these areas possible.

Testifying before congressional committees in the 'twenties, the principal employers of Mexican labor in the Southwest presented facts and figures showing that Mexicans had been a vital factor in the development of agricultural and industrial enterprises valued at \$5,000,000,000. Starting with a scant production in 1900, the Southwest was by 1929 producing between 300,000 and 500,000 carloads of vegetables, fruits, and truck crops—forty per cent of the nation's supply of these products. Most of this development took place in less than two decades and was directly based on the use of Mexican labor which constituted from sixty-five to eighty-five per cent of the common labor used in the production of these crops.²⁷

Second, the use of Chicano labor and technical skills provided for the development of the mining and railroad industry. Both of these sectors were crucial components of the "mineral-transport-communications" infrastructural base needed for future industrialization and modernization of the area. Chicano labor was used extensively both in the maintenance of the railroads at the turn of the century and in the development of mining in the Southwest. "From 1900 to 1940 Mexican workers constituted sixty percent of the common labor in the mines and from sixty to ninety percent of the section and extra gangs employed on eighteen western railroads."²⁸ By helping lay the foundation upon which the later industrial development of this region was built, Chicano labor played a central role in the development and spread of capitalism in the Southwest.

Third, as a largely mobile and seasonal work force, Chicano labor was used as an integral part of the "reserve army of labor." In times of intense labor needs Mexicanos have been actively recruited into the Southwest to work in agriculture, mining, the livestock industry, or the railroads (circa 1900-1940). Displaced by the Mexican Revolution at the turn of the century and by the intense United States foreign investment that hastened the break-up of traditional social and economic life in Mexico, thousands of Mexicanos became a highly exploitable work force that the American economy was able to

draw upon. In times of economic and social crisis, the United States has been able to deport, repatriate, or simply disemploy this surplus labor with relative ease. In the depression years, for example, it is estimated by both Mexican and United States government officials that well over 415,000 Mexicanos were "repatriated" back to Mexico.²⁹ These wholesale deportations had no criminal offenses as a basis for cause; rather they were justified on the basis of "illegal entry." Similarly, during the economic downturn of the 1950s we witnessed the second major deportation of unwanted Mexican labor under the auspices of "Operation Wetback" (sic). From as far away as Chicago, St. Louis, and Kansas City, hundreds of thousands of Mexican workers were sent back to Mexico. This rising tide of deportations began to swell from 69,111 in 1945 to a high point of 1,108,000 in 1954.³⁰ From the mid-forties to the mid-fifties, the mass deportation of Mexican workers expelled no fewer than *four million*.

Today, we see a continuation of these same exploitative relationships and a reaffirmation of the use of the policy of widespread deportation of undocumented workers. As a result, the Chicano people have the dubious distinction of far outnumbering any other racial or ethnic minority in the number of forced repatriations or deportations from the territorial United States. Chicano labor has served as a "reserve army of labor" *par excellence*.

Finally, we have acted as "shock absorbers" for the class contradictions of society, i.e., any social or economic crisis that this society produces is generally felt most strongly and "absorbed" by third-world people within the United States.³¹ As part of this community, the Chicano feels the force of the contradictions produced within this society. The class contradictions that Marx described as being endemic to this capitalist mode of production have largely manifested themselves as racial contradictions. The weight of social oppression and class contradictions of monopoly capitalism has fallen on the backs of people of color.

As the United States has developed industrially and as labor needs have increased and diversified, the American labor force has become increasingly segmented. Historically, as well as today, the racial form that the class structure in the United

States has taken has been largely brought about through the occupational placement of racial and ethnic groups within the working class. Commenting on the role that race and colonized racial minorities have played in the organization of production in the United States, Robert Blauner has observed:

What has not been understood is the fact that racial realities have a material basis. They are built into the economic structure as well as the culture of all colonial societies, including those capitalist nations which developed out of conquest and imported African slaves to meet labor needs. . . . From the very beginning race has been central to the social relations of production in America. The right to own property, the right not to become property, and the distribution of labor were all essentially matters of color. Southern slavery was a system of production based on race. But not only in the ante-bellum South, elsewhere and after, the racial principle continued to organize the structure of the labor force and the distribution of property. The free laborers, the factory proletariat, was largely recruited from white ethnic groups, whereas people of color (Mexicans, Asians, to a lesser degree Indians, and of course, Blacks) were employed in various unfree labor situations. The ethnic labor principle appears to be a universal element of the colonial situation and this is why race and racism are not simply aspects of cultural "superstructure," but cut through the entire social structure of colonial societies.³²

By "*concentrating people of color in the most unskilled jobs, the least advanced sectors of the economy, and the most industrially backward regions of the nation,*"³³ the material basis of racism and racial oppression has become structurally incorporated into the organization of labor-systems in this society, and more concretely into the relation that workers (white and nonwhite) have to the means of production. In this society, the social relations of production have been largely cast in racial and ethnic terms. The racism and racial oppression that developed in the United States have been much more than a ploy on the part of the bourgeoisie to "divide the working class," for the real basis of racial contradictions is grounded in the different positions that white and nonwhite workers have held in the production process in the United States.

Chicano Labor after 1940

UNTIL 1940, Chicanos and other racial minorities were largely used in precapitalist employment sectors outside of urban, industrial centers. We were principally used as a super-exploitable semifree labor force. After 1940, Chicanos and other racial minorities came increasingly to occupy the lowest parts of the working class. During and after World War II, the needs of defense industry combined with the introduction of technological innovations in agriculture caused the large-scale migration of Chicanos from the rural areas of the Southwest. For Chicanos, this movement into areas of urban industrial production did not bring with it the opportunity for social mobility that had been open to immigrant ethnic minorities in an earlier period. As the new colored migrant began to take over blue-collar jobs in the working class proper, the white sector of the working class increasingly moved into higher-paid white-collar and "new working class" jobs. The upgrading of racial minorities within the working class was to a great extent made possible through the automation of their old jobs and by entry into areas of production left open by the occupational upgrading of white workers. One social scientist has described this process in the following way:

During and after the Second World War blacks and browns from the rural backwaters of the South and Mexico came by the millions to northern and western industrial cities. But the era of increasing absorption of unskilled and semi-skilled labor into the industrial system, and thereby into the mainstream of class society, was rapidly drawing to a close. Blacks and browns were relegated to employment in the most technologically backward or labor-intensive sectors (menial services, construction labor, corporate agriculture) and to unemployment, the squalor of ghetto life, and welfare handouts. Today, the black, Chicano, and Puerto Rican colonies remain indispensable sources of cheap labor for the technologically backward and labor-intensive sectors. They also provide a servant class to relieve the affluent of the chores of ordinary living and to enhance their status and feeling of superiority. For the highly technological corporate and the rapidly expanding public sectors which require high skill levels, however, the minorities have become superfluous labor.³⁴

These observations are confirmed when one examines the changes that have occurred in the placement of Chicanos in the occupational hierarchy. An examination of U.S. Census materials on Chicano occupational distribution shows that in the thirty-year period from 1930 to 1960, male Chicano workers moved from unskilled labor classifications (laborer and farm labor) into the operative and crafts area of production. Nearly 65 per cent of male Chicano workers in 1930 were employed in unskilled, manual laboring jobs. By 1960, this proportion had declined to 32 per cent while Chicano employment in the operative and crafts group rose from 16 per cent to 41 per cent (see Table 1). The decline in the use of Chicano labor as a largely unskilled cheap labor force was accompanied by the

TABLE 1: OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION AND RELATIVE CONCENTRATION OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN MEN IN THE SOUTHWEST, 1930-60

Occupation	Percent distribution			Relative concentration*		
	1930	1950†	1960†	1930	1950	1960
Professional and technical	0.9	2.2	4.1	0.18	0.25	0.33
Managers and proprietors	2.8	4.4	4.6	.28	.35	.36
Sales	2.4	‡ 6.5	3.6	.29	‡ .48	.47
Clerical	1.0		4.8	.18		.69
Craft	6.8	13.1	16.7	.47	.67	.81
Operative	9.1	19.0	24.1	.92	1.16	1.35
Service	4.0	6.3	7.5	.68	.98	1.15
Laborer	28.2	18.7	15.2	2.50	2.22	2.12
Farm managers	9.8	5.1	2.4	.59	.65	.61
Farm labor	35.1	24.7	16.8	2.62	3.87	4.16

* The figures for these columns were obtained by dividing the proportion of Mexican-American men employed in each occupation for the years given by the corresponding proportion of all men in that occupation. Thus, the figure of 0.33 for the professional group in 1960 indicates that the fraction of Mexican-American employment which was in this category in 1960 was just one-third as large as the fraction for the total population.

† Computed on a base which omitted employed persons who did not report an occupation.

‡ The 1950 Census of Population combined the sales and clerical occupations into one category for the purpose of reporting occupations of persons with Spanish surname.

Source: Census of Population: 1930, 1950, 1960 (U.S. Bureau of the Census), as compiled by Walter Fogel, **Mexican-Americans in Southwest Labor Markets** (Los Angeles: University of California, Mexican-American Study Project, 1967).

steady rise in our being used as semi-skilled and low-skilled urban workers. Table 1 indicates a steady rise in the relative concentration of male Chicano workers in the crafts and operative occupations. While there has been a proportional increase of the Chicano labor force in these areas, many Chicano workers remain as farm and urban-based manual laborers.

More recent figures from March 1973 show a continued increase in Chicano workers in the crafts and operatives area, from 16.7 per cent and 24.1 per cent of the total male Chicano work force in 1960 to 20.0 per cent and 28.4 per cent respectively in 1973.³⁶ There has also been a recent increase in Chicanos employed as service workers (from 7.5 per cent in 1960 to 12.0 per cent in 1973). The other side of this increase is the dramatic decline in the proportion of Chicanos employed as farm workers (from 16.8 per cent in 1960 to 8.4 per cent in 1973). This trend is largely the result of the rapid automation of agriculture.

By 1973 over 83 per cent of Chicano males were in the non-white-collar areas of production (i.e., blue-collar, farm workers, and service workers occupations). This is to be contrasted with the 59.7 per cent figure for the total United States male employment in these areas for the same year. This of course means that over 40 per cent of the male labor force in the United States was employed in white-collar jobs compared to only 16.7 per cent of Chicano males (see Table 2).

To make matters worse, one writer has recently noted that while Chicano employment in the crafts and operatives occupations has risen, these are two areas in which aggregate employment significance has actually *declined*.³⁷ "Far from being able to take advantage of the changing structure of employment opportunities Chicanos seem to have increased their labor market handicaps by moving into occupations which face declining demand. By 1970, as a result of these adjustments [in the location of changing employment opportunities] fully 57.5 per cent of all Anglos were employed in expanding occupational groups but for Chicanos this figure was only 20.8 per cent."³⁸

Thus, this shift in the composition of Chicano labor from a rural, unskilled labor force to the urban, blue-collar working class has not brought with it true social mobility nor a mean-

ingful improvement in the condition of the Chicano people. Despite these changes in our areas of employment, Chicanos remain at the bottom of the working class, and in occupations that provide no real opportunity for group advancement. Moreover, the median income of Chicanos in the Southwest remains three-quarters that of their Anglo counterparts.³⁹ Even within the same occupations, Chicano workers earn less than Anglos.⁴⁰

The position that Chicano workers occupy in the working class is clearly reflected in the income received by Chicano men and women. Table 3 shows that in 1972 over 75 per cent of Chicana wage earners had an income of less than \$4,000. In fact, nearly 50 per cent earned less than \$2,000 for the entire year. Chicano workers on the other hand were largely concentrated in the \$3,000 to \$7,000 income bracket. Nearly 40 per

**TABLE 2: TOTAL EMPLOYED MEN 16 YEARS AND OVER
BY MAJOR OCCUPATION AND TOTAL MEXICAN ORIGIN
FOR THE UNITED STATES: MARCH 1973**

(Numbers in thousands)

Occupation	Total men, 16 years old and over	Total Mexican origin
Total employed	50,890	1,303
Percent	100	100
White-collar workers:		
Professional and technical	13.6	4.8
Managers and administrators, except farm	13.6	5.3
Sales	6.2	2.5
Clerical	6.8	4.1
Blue-collar workers:		
Craftsmen and kindred workers	20.9	20.0
Operatives, including transportation	18.9	28.4
Laborers, except farm	7.1	14.0
Farm workers:		
Farmers and farm managers	3.0	0.4
Farm laborers and foremen	1.6	8.4
Service workers:		
Services workers, except private household workers	8.2	12.0
Private household workers	—	0.1

— Represents zero or rounds to zero.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, **Current Population Reports**, P-20, No. 26: **Persons of Spanish Origin in the United States: March 1973**. Adapted from Table H.

cent of all Chicano workers were in this income range with our median individual income amounting to \$5,489.

White workers, on the other hand, remained predominantly located in areas of production that enable them to benefit from changes in the occupational hierarchy. The implication here, of course, is that racism has in fact helped to maintain the subordination of Chicanos within the lowest level of the working class. Racism in the United States has not only provided benefits to the capitalist class but it has also provided real material advantages for the white working class. Along with providing important social and psychological benefits for Anglos, racism in the labor market has provided a modicum of security and advantages in employment for white workers. Racism is in this sense more than just a trick used to "divide the working class" or a form of "false consciousness" imposed on white workers. Racism in the United States does in fact reflect the privileged position that some white workers have held over racial minorities within the working class.

Historically, changes in the form of this super-exploitation of racial minorities have caused shifts in the type of racial

**TABLE 3: INCOME IN 1972, CHICANO MEN AND WOMEN
16 YEARS OLD AND OVER, FOR THE UNITED STATES: MARCH 1973**

Income	Male	Female
Total persons, 16 years old and over (thousands)	1,741	1,812
Persons with income (thousands)	1,604	1,029
Percent	100.0	100.0
\$1 to \$999 or loss	9.2	26.7
\$1,000 to \$1,999	7.6	21.8
\$2,000 to \$2,999	8.2	14.7
\$3,000 to \$3,999	10.5	12.1
\$4,000 to \$4,999	10.2	9.3
\$5,000 to \$6,999	17.1	9.3
\$7,000 to \$7,999	7.5	2.8
\$8,000 to \$9,999	12.2	1.7
\$10,000 to \$14,999	13.7	1.0
\$15,000 to \$24,999	2.7	0.1
\$25,000 and over	0.3	—
Median income of persons with income	\$5,489	\$2,105

— Represents zero or rounds to zero.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports*, P-20, No. 264: *Persons of Spanish Origin in the United States: March 1973*. Adapted from Table 11.

ideology that is used to justify and maintain their subordinate position.⁴¹ Using Frantz Fanon's classic insight into the nature of racism we see how racial ideology has coincided and changed with shifts in this racial exploitation.

The complexity of the means of production, the evolution of economic relations inevitably involving the evolution of ideologies, unbalance the system. Vulgar racism in its biological form corresponds to the period of crude exploitation of man's arms and legs. The perfecting of the means of production inevitably brings about the camouflage of techniques by which man is exploited, hence of the forms of racism.⁴²

While as a group we toiled primarily with our hands, the type of racial oppression and exploitation we faced was physical in nature and forms of racism we confronted were based on biological premises. This is the period in which Chicanos labored primarily as captives of agricultural production and as exploited laborers in all facets of mining, the railroads, and the livestock industry.

In the period when the economy caused a large shift in the Chicano population from the fields into the cities, racial ideologies shifted from a biological to a cultural basis.⁴³ As social contact between Anglos and Chicanos increased with this movement into the urban setting, Chicano "biological abnormalities" were increasingly replaced with "cultural" explanations for our backwardness. The reasons used to justify racist practices and poor living conditions were no longer merely that Chicanos had inherited "low-grade" biological traits but that our culture was "backward" or "traditional" and we were "culturally deprived."⁴⁴

Today, as the state has come to play an increasing role in dealing with racial minorities, racism is increasingly mediated by the state institutions—the educational system, the legal system, and the welfare system. Racism and racial exploitation are steadily being transformed from a biological racial ideology used to justify the widespread exploitation of colonial labor to an institutionally-mediated cultural ideology used to justify the subordination of Chicanos within the blue-collar working class.

From this it becomes clear that Chicano oppression in the

United States has not been simply the outgrowth of a "culture conflict" between Anglos and Chicanos, nor merely the result of a vicious racist ideology.⁴⁵ Rather, the many forms of social, political, and cultural oppression Chicanos have faced have ultimately been shaped by the material conditions of our labor. The racial oppression of the Chicano, and of other racial minorities, has largely stemmed from the place we occupy within the working class and from the fact that class exploitation in the United States has taken on a racial form. To do away with the class basis of this racial oppression, however, will not automatically ensure that racism will altogether disappear. For racial minorities, the end to class exploitation is not a panacea but merely an essential precondition for our true liberation and self-determination.

If meaningful political alliances between oppressed peoples are to take place then the left must face the fact that large sectors of the white working class do receive very real short-term benefits from racism. The question of how to convince these workers that they share overriding long-term interests with *all* sectors of the working class cannot be squarely faced if racism continues to be seen as merely a form of "false consciousness."

What is needed now is an honest appraisal of the many ways in which the working class has become segmented and divided. An assessment of racial minorities within the working class is but one step in this direction. It is only when oppressed peoples begin to seek out the commonalities—as well as differences—in their oppression that we can hope to build those political alliances that will be both meaningful and ultimately effective.

NOTES

1. Oliver C. Cox, *Caste, Class, and Race* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972). See especially the chapter entitled "Race Relations—Its Meaning, Beginning, and Progress," pp. 321–52.
2. Francis Augustus McNutt, *Bartholomew De Las Casas* (New York: 1909), as cited by Cox, *Caste, Class, and Race*, p. 334.
3. Magnus Mörner, *Race Mixture in the History of Latin America* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1967), p. 54.
4. For a similar ranking of the *castas* in Mexico see Mörner, *Race Mixture*, p. 60, and Pierre L. Van den Berghe, *Race and Racism* (New York:

John Wiley & Sons, 1967), pp. 42-58. This racial mixture in colonial Mexico was the result of miscegenation between the Spanish conquistadors, black slaves, and the indigenous Indian population. The mulatto (Spanish-black), zambo (black-Indian), and mestizo (Indian-Spanish) *castas* were the offspring of the racial mixing among these groups. Criollos were persons of Spanish descent born in the colony.

5. Mörner, *Race Mixture*, p. 61.

6. André Gunder Frank, *Lumpenbourgeoisie: Lumpendevlopment* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972), pp. 26-27.

7. Matt S. Meir and Feliciano Rivera, *The Chicanos: A History of Mexican Americans* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1972), p. 51.

8. Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 10.

9. For an excellent discussion of the economic forces that were at work in this transference of power in Europe see Stanley and Barbara Stein, *The Colonial Heritage of Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), *passim*.

10. See James O'Connor's discussion of the difference between mercantile exploitation and nineteenth-century imperialism in "The Meaning of Economic Imperialism," in K. T. Fann and Donald C. Hodges, eds., *Readings in U.S. Imperialism* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1971).

11. Manfred Kossock, "Common Aspects and Distinctive Features in Colonial Latin America," *Science & Society*, vol. 37, no. 1 (Spring 1973), pp. 14-15.

12. Darcy Ribeiro, *The Americas and Civilization* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1972), pp. 53-58.

13. As Robert Allen has put it: "Mercantile capitalist accumulations were rapidly acquired in western Europe because (1) the geographical location of many European countries gave them the opportunity to develop maritime and river navigation and trade at an early date, and (2) such trade paradoxically was stimulated by Europe's relative lack of economic development and paucity of highly valued natural resources. Thus, European traders journeyed to the tropics in search of spices, tea, ivory, indigo, etc.; to Asia seeking high quality cloth, ornaments, pottery, etc.; and finally engaged in vicious plundering of gold, silver and precious stones from many parts of the world. In short, Europe's location at the cross-roads of trade routes between more economically developed civilizations and/or countries more highly endowed with natural resources, stimulated an explosive advance of trade and capitalist accumulation by European merchants. At the same time, the requirements of long-range navigation and trade fostered rapid development of scientific knowledge and weapons technology that enabled Europe to begin the colonial plunder and subjugation of other areas." Allen, "Black Liberation and World Revolution: An Historical Synthesis," *The Black Scholar*, February 1972, p. 8.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

15. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1972), pp. 31-32.

16. For a critical examination of this early period of American history

see the essays by Jesse Lemisch, "The American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up," and Staughton Lynd, "Beyond Beard," both in Barton J. Bernstein, ed., *Towards a New Past* (New York: Random House, 1969). Also see Richard Van Alstyne, *The Rising American Empire* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1960), and William Appleman Williams, *The Contours of American History* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966).

17. See especially Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion 1860-1898* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1963). Also see Douglas North, *The Economic Growth of the United States 1790-1860* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966); Charles A. and Mary R. Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization* (New York, 1927); and Van Alstyne, *The Rising American Empire*.

18. LaFeber, *The New Empire*, p. 6. Also see Eugene Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery* (New York: Random House, 1965), and "Marxian Interpretation of the Slave South," in Eugene D. Genovese, *In Red and Black* (New York: Random House, 1972), and in Bernstein, *Towards a New Past*.

19. See Harry Magdoff, *The Age of Imperialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969), pp. 27-66; and David Horowitz, *Empire and Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 29-50.

20. For a discussion of this "expansionist thesis" and other views that have been given for the outbreak of the Mexican-American War see the brief collection of arguments in Ramón E. Ruiz, ed., *The Mexican War: Was It Manifest Destiny?* (New York, 1963), and in Josephina Vasquez de Knauth, *Mexicanos y Norteamericanos ante la Guerra de 47* (Mexico, D.F.: SepSetentas 19, 1972). Also see the impressive discussion by Juan Gómez in "Toward a Perspective on Chicano History," *Aztlán*, vol. 2, no. 2 (Fall 1971).

21. Alonso Aguilar, *Pan-Americanism: From Monroe to the Present* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968), pp. 32-34.

22. LaFeber, *The New Empire*, p. 18.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52. For an excellent discussion of the Porfiriato and the Mexican Revolution see James D. Cockcroft, "Social and Economic Structure of the Porfiriato: Mexico, 1877-1911," in James D. Cockcroft, André Gunder Frank, and Dale L. Johnson, eds., *Dependence and Underdevelopment: Latin America's Political Economy* (New York: Doubleday, 1972).

25. For discussions of the view that the Chicano is a colonized people see Tomás Almaguer, "Towards the Study of Chicano Colonialism," *Aztlán*, vol. 2, no. 1 (Spring 1971); Mario Barrera, Carlos Muñoz, and Charles Ornelas, "The Barrio as Internal Colony," in Harlan Hahn, ed., *Urban Politics and People: Urban Affairs Annual Reviews*, vol. 6, 1972; and Guillermo Flores, "Internal Colonialism and Racial Minorities in the U.S.: An Overview," in Frank Bonilla and Robert Girling, eds., *Structures of Dependency* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1973).

26. See Robert Blauner, *Racial Oppression in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972). The discussion here relies heavily on Blauner's chapter on "Colonized and Immigrant Minorities."

27. Carey McWilliams, *North from Mexico* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1966), pp. 185-86.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), p. 126.
30. Ernesto Galarza, *Merchants of Labor* (Charlotte, N.C.: McNally & Lofton, 1964), p. 59.
31. This discussion is primarily based on a lecture given by Robert Allen, "The Illusions of Progress," University of California, Berkeley, 30 November 1973.
32. Robert Blauner, "Marxist Theory, Nationalism, and Colonialism," unpublished manuscript (emphasis in original).
33. Robert Blauner, *Racial Oppression*, p. 62.
34. Dale Johnson, "On Oppressed Classes," in Cockcroft, Frank, and Johnson, eds., *Dependence and Underdevelopment*, p. 286.
35. Walter Fogel, "Job Gains of Mexican-American Men," Institute of Industrial Relations reprint no. 192 (University of California, Los Angeles, 1968), p. 23.
36. The figures cited below, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from Table 2.
37. Tim D. Kane, "Structural Change and Chicano Employment in the Southwest, 1950-70: Some Preliminary Observations," *Aztlán: Chicano Journal of the Social Sciences and Arts*, vol. 4, no. 2 (Fall 1973), p. 391.
38. *Ibid.*
39. Paul M. Ryscavage and Earl F. Mellor, "The Economic Situation of Spanish Americans," *Monthly Labor Review*, vol. 96, no. 4 (April 1973), p. 6.
40. *Ibid.*
41. This point is made by both Guillermo Flores, "Race and Culture in the Internal Colony," and by Jeffrey Prager, "White Racial Privilege and Social Change: An Examination of Theories of Racism," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, vol. 17, 1972-73.
42. Frantz Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 35.
43. This relationship between ideological superstructure and economic relations has been largely overlooked by many Chicanos who have done critical reviews of social science literature. Beginning with Octavio Romano's "The Sociology and Anthropology of the Mexican-Americans" and continuing through the recent misguided effort by Ray Padilla, "A Critique of Pittian History" (both in Romano's second edition of *Voices*, a Quinto Sol book, 1973), the relationship between ideology and the material relations in which it is rooted has not been critically examined. This oversight has led many to criticize the social sciences for the wrong reasons. Rather than engage in a discussion with Anglo counterparts and criticize their representation of the Chicano as "bad social science" based on ethnocentrism, faulty methodology, etc.), it must be understood that this work done by traditional Anglo social science is really "good" sociology or anthropology. That is, the work we have berated

for the past five years has not really been bad social science; rather it has done exactly what it has always been meant to do: distort history, mystify reality, and create a racial ideology that can be used to rationalize and justify the oppression of the Chicanos. Until we leave the defensive position of criticizing the social sciences, and for the wrong reasons no less, we run the risk of only adding to Anglo social science's mystification of reality. Anglo social science has, after all, never been objective (an assumption we sometimes overlook in our "objective" critique) but instead has always been an ideological tool.

44. A careful reading of reviews of social science literature in the periods in which the Chicano was most extensively used as a "field hand" in agriculture, mining, or the railroads reveals that the social sciences primarily drew upon and spun biologically based racial ideology. As Nick Vaca has noted in his study of the portrayal of the Chicano in the social sciences, "In 1925 the House Immigration Committee published a report by Robert Foester, then a Princeton economist, in which he made the point that over 90 percent of the Latin American population was racially inferior to Anglo-American stock and asked for limitation of Latin American immigration. At about the same time Harry Laughlin, the eugenicist who served as biological expert to the House Committee from 1921 to 1924, testified to the same effect on the qualities of the Mexican immigrant, 'Stating that race should be the basic standard for judging immigrants, Laughlin urged that Western Hemisphere immigration be restricted to whites.' Representative Box of Texas, another strong supporter of restriction of Mexican immigration, reported that Mexican immigrants were '. . . illiterate, unclean, peonized masses who stemmed from a mixture of Mediterranean-blooded Spanish peasants with low-grade Indians who did not fight to extinction but submitted and multiplied as serfs.'" Vaca, "The Mexican-American in the Social Sciences 1912-1970: Part 1, 1912-1935," *El Grito*, Spring 1970, p. 10.

45. A recent example of the facile contention that the origin of the war with Mexico and of Chicano oppression is merely the result of a "culture conflict" can be seen in the following quote from Feliciano Rivera: "The Mexican War was merely an incident in a malignant conflict of cultures that arose some years before and survived long after the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Within the framework of this ancient conflict it is possible to discover the roots of the conflict that permeates the relationship between Anglo and Mexican American [sic]." Meir and Rivera, *The Chicanos*, p. 72. Rivera's placing the source of Anglo-Chicano conflict on the spirits of the past (or as he puts it, on the "ancient conflict") does little to clarify this historic relationship. His simple-minded mystification of historical reality only serves to obfuscate, and distract attention from, the political and economic dimensions that were involved in the conquest. Also see Nick Vaca, "The Mexican-American in the Social Sciences," pp. 3-5.

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