

## REPORT ON RACE, PART 3

transnational as a consequence of circular migration and the ubiquity of contemporary communications technology—implode in the national territory as something foreign, and yet in their local relevance not so foreign after all. When the focus is on popular culture (in the sense of community experience and working-class expression) and on youth culture, this multidirectional cultural movement and impact comes most clearly into view, as does the mutual articulation between cultural remittances from the outside and some of the oppositional cultural experiences occurring within the national territory.

New and promising cultural processes do not necessarily translate easily into more directly political strategies and lines of analysis. Whatever the progressive implica-

tions that innovations in the cultural field may carry, they need not be initiated or informed by a resolute intention to foment social changes of a structural kind, or be directly aligned with activist social movements. What the resonant effects of cultural remittances do indicate, however, is that present-day struggles for change must be transnational in scope and vision, and at the same time sharply attuned to issues of cultural identity: what people call “home” and the ways that they identify themselves beyond the bounds of circumscribed national territories and traditions. As the historian of global diasporas Robin Cohen succinctly puts it, diaspora peoples have changed “from victims to challengers,” a transformation of social roles that contemporary political thinking about Latin America can ill afford to overlook.<sup>8</sup> ■

## Latinos in the Age of National (In)Security

by Roberto Lovato

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THE CHIAPANECAN INDIAN AND NICARAGUAN farm workers fled their bucolic but troubled rural homelands to harvest these fields carpeted with colorful tulips under the gray skies of northernmost Washington State. They make on average \$10,000 a year, have high rates of infant mortality and most won't live past 50. Yet, despite these conditions, they'll tell you they fare better than they did back home: there are no forests decimated by bombs; no blood-stained roads or other grisly reminders of wars left behind; most importantly, their children's future will surely be better.

And then, the white men in military uniforms arrive, bringing the traumas of war and

a struggle over identity to the farm workers of Skagit and Washburn counties.

In Washington State and across the country, Latinos are being besieged by two very different armies—with often counterintuitive agendas, at least rhetorically—that are profoundly influencing what it means to be brown in a United States where, by the year 2025, one in four Americans will call themselves “Latino.” The U.S. military is deploying thousands of recruiters in its efforts to conscript Latinos as the newest would-be heroes in the President's good war, even as conservative anti-immigrant groups swell their ranks by casting Latinos as the latest national security threat. “We're fighting a two-front battle out here,” says Rosalinda

Guillén, head of Comunidad a Comunidad, a community-based nonprofit that organizes and provides social services for farm workers in Washington State. “On one side we have the Minutemen, and at the same time, we’re trying to stop Army recruiters from taking our kids.”

Indeed, at town hall meetings from Arizona to New York and Washington, D.C., Minuteman leader Chris Simcox pushes for private citizens to form anti-immigrant patrols to plug up the holes left in the border component of the government’s larger national security matrix. Denouncing the farm workers and other Latinos as “immigrant terrorists” and “criminals,” the self-described “patriots” in camouflage have begun harvesting hatred among Washington’s white farmers. This September, the group formally announced the expansion of its operation to Washington and seven other states along the U.S.-Canadian border. Yet, ironically,

immigrant activists, border vigilantes, white supremacists and other, mostly white, groups in the United States. Originally conceived by rightwing Middle East historian, Bernard Lewis, the thesis was further developed and popularized by the powerful political-military scientist and author, Samuel P. Huntington, as a replacement for the more traditional political and economic divide of the Cold War. After penning his highly influential *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*—which provided the ideological framing for war in the post-Cold War period—Huntington, the former strategic planner of the Carter Administration’s National Security Council (NSC), followed in 2004 with *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America’s National Identity*. This recent book brings the “clash” vision home, presenting Latinos as “the single most immediate and most serious challenge to America’s traditional identity.”

Better than most, Huntington captures and plays to the national security zeitgeist currently propping up limited notions of U.S. identity. The underlying fears motivating anti-Latino and anti-immigrant politics like those of the Minuteman movement are well elucidated in Huntington’s book: “The most powerful stimulus to such white nativism will be the cultural and linguistic threats whites see from the expanding power of Latinos in U.S. society.” And in a chapter entitled “Assimilation,” Huntington makes explicit the nexus between perpetual war, military recruitment and the construction of national identity



Minuteman volunteers watch for undocumented immigrants near the U.S.-Mexico border in April 2005.

while Simcox and the Minutemen sow white fear amid the strawberry fields by portraying immigrant farm workers as Evil Others, Army and Marine recruiters have intensified enlistment drives targeting immigrant’s children for immediate service in the battlefields of Iraq.

What these tensions playing out in northern Washington share is that together they represent more than a battle over borders, whether domestic or foreign; they are also struggles over the very notion of what “Latino” is, and how Latinos fit into the idea of a nation constructed on violence, war and assimilation. The scenario reflects well the “Clash of Civilizations” ideology gripping government officials, academic elites, anti-

among Latino immigrants like the Washington farm workers: “Without a major war requiring substantial mobilization and lasting years ... contemporary immigrants will have neither the opportunity nor the need to affirm their identity with and their loyalty to America as earlier immigrants have done.” Having survived their own experiences of war in El Salvador, southern Mexico and Nicaragua, northern Washington’s Latinos are again confronted with war’s collateral effects.

Indeed, national security driven recruitment efforts targeting Latinos in the northwest and elsewhere reflect a cultural milieu in which Latino—and other—identities are being defined by conflict and fear. Huntington, a

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warrior-scholar with direct links to vast networks of political, military, academic and media power, understands better than most how to manipulate culture and race as a kind of psychological operation. Manufacturing various types of fear—including racial fear—is a standard “psy-ops” tactic that affects multiple audiences in multiple ways. For Latinos, then, paramilitarism, military recruitment, extreme poverty and racism combine to leave few alternatives to the binary, zero-sum cultural logic of Huntington, the Minutemen, recruiters and others who’ve made an industry out of national security.

**IN THE MORE GLOBALIZED TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY SEARCH** for post-Cold War enemies, yesterday’s communist sympathizer in the United States and Latin America has been supplanted by today’s terrorist threat. At a time when the Bush Administration seeks to establish firmer politico-military footing in the lives of Latinos throughout the hemisphere, the U.S. solidarity activist, the sub-

**Huntington makes explicit the nexus between perpetual war, military recruitment and the construction of national identity among Latino immigrants.**

versive unionist, the *guerrillero*, the activist nun and others of the anti-communist past are being replaced by an amalgam of threats magically united by their Latin extraction—and by their alleged links to terrorism in the national security present. Immigrants, drug traffickers, narco-guerrillas, gang members and other perceived transnational threats throughout the hemisphere are now intimately linked in the minds

and speeches of Minutemen, government officials and many others. U.S. policies toward Latin America regularly invoke the image of the “bad” Latino to connect the anti-terrorist dots from northern Washington to the Southern Cone.

Viewed through this global lens, the perceived need to control rural and inner-city youth, border crossers and Central American gang members is now politically coupled with the need to control a Latin America moving leftward—and further from U.S. control. No less a national security specialist than Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has—in one broad, unifying, national-security stroke—signaled the government’s willingness to fuse stereotypes of U.S. Latinos with refried stereotypes of Latin Americans. During a recent meeting of Latin American and Caribbean defense ministers,

Rumsfeld outlined his view of the “new” hemispheric threats: “The new threats of the twenty-first century recognize no borders. Terrorists, drug traffickers, hostage takers and criminal gangs form an anti-social combination that increasingly seeks to destabilize civil societies.” In this context, Rumsfeld’s switch from a “War on Terror” to a “global struggle against violent extremism” appears designed to extend the moral, legal and politico-military reach of the United States throughout the Latino Americas. Thus far, though, top officers of the U.S. military’s Southern Command and other Administration officials have failed to solidly merge the hemisphere into the larger anti-terrorist project of the other better-funded Command centers of the military.

But their efforts continue in earnest, and militarizing the U.S. Latino mind remains an essential part of the Pentagon’s designs if the children of Latino farm workers and other immigrants are to adopt an identity committed to doing Bush’s bidding in Iraq and beyond. Making distinctions is key to that strategy. Contrasted against police officers, Army and Marine effectives and other uniformed representatives of the post-9/11 “good,” transnational gangs, drug traffickers and border-crossing “illegal aliens” have become metaphors for all that is “bad” in the Latino diasporas. The molding of Latino and Latin American identity allows Bush Administration officials like clean-cut, good-brown-guy Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez to shape domestic anti-terrorist laws against gangsters that Fox News (and Fox News en Español) and police chiefs like Los Angeles’ William Bratton tell us are “terrorists.” In this sense, the front-page pictures and newscasts featuring the dark-skinned former gang member and alleged U.S. Al Qaeda operative Jose Padilla (the so-called “Dirty Bomber”) may preview the ultimate melding of “Latino” with “terrorist threat.” The recent killing of aging Puerto Rican independence fighter Filiberto Ojeda Ríos by federal agents is also indicative of this trend [See page 42]. Labeling Ojeda Ríos a “terrorist” and killing him in the name of national security contrasts strikingly with the treatment of convicted anti-Castro bomber Luis Posada Carriles, who is currently under consideration for asylum by the Bush Administration.

Similarly, the completely preposterous and unproven alleged connection between Salvadoran gangs and Al Qaeda carries the image of the gang to new, hemispheric levels of media and political hysteria. Reports (also unproven) I heard near the Arizona-Mexico border of “terrorists” moving into the United States among undocumented immigrants have a significance to many



Cpl. Sanick de la Cruz, 23, of the 1st Marine Division in Iraq, September 2005. Latinos made up 13 percent of new military recruits in 2004, up from 10.4 percent in 2000.

beyond Washington's farm workers and others without *papeles*. Images of border crossers, "gangster thugs" and any number of other stereotypes are also among the most popular representations of Latinos in the U.S. media. Newscasts, movies, "Cops" shows and other television programs (many of which are transmitted throughout the hemisphere) set the stage for new forms of Latino identity formation in times of perpetual anti-terrorist war.

**ALARMINGLY, IN THE NAME OF "FIGHTING TERRORISM"** and other evils, the militaries and more-militarized law enforcement agencies of the United States and Latin America are again working closely together. Cold War experience moves—and scares—critics of the announcement this June by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice of plans to create an International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in El Salvador that would train students from the region's police forces. Salvadoran critics are calling the ILEA a new "School of the Americas" for cops. U.S. Latino, especially bilingual, troops play fundamental roles in bridging and connect-

ing these military and national security cultures. Like their camouflaged peers in wartime El Salvador, many Latinos are echoing high-sounding slogans that sanctify war and killing by claiming to defend *Dios* (God), *Patria* (Homeland) and *Libertad* (Liberty). Yet, even couched in the religious rhetoric of civil defense, the brutish war cries of Bush, Rumsfeld, Huntington and the Minutemen have led many other Latinos to say "*Ya Basta!*" (Enough already!) to the entire national security project.

More and more U.S. Latinos are now exercising their preferential option against Empire. The anti-militaristic traditions of U.S.-born Latinos (especially Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans) are combining with the anti-*militarismo* traditions of more recent Latin American immigrants from such countries as El Salvador, the Dominican Republic and other sites of Cold War devastation. This new politico-cultural sensibility is taking hold among new Latinos throughout the country. Under the leadership of people like Mexican immigrant Fernando Suarez Del Solar and Chicano professor Jorge Mariscal, Latino groups are joining forces to discourage Latinos from joining the military. They are planning a nationwide Latino counter-recruitment summit in early 2006 and are reaching out to groups in Latin America as well.

Many among this country's largest "minority" are feeling the pressure to decide whether they are more black or white, whether they will fight the power or serve it. The cultural carpet-bombing of U.S. Latino life—media, schools, non-profit funding and more—by the numerous recruitment entities of the Pentagon has had a political blowback effect reflected in the growing numbers of Latinos, especially young Latinos, joining the ranks of the counter-recruitment movement. Latino parents, students and teachers are also opposing the recruiters and the school officials that promote militarism on campuses.

Until recently, the failure to recognize the psychological and cultural effects of this national security strategy and to confront it on its own terms had been Latinos' central strategic error in the domestic policy wars that vilify immigrants, destroy schools and disproportionately push larger and larger numbers of former students of crumbling education systems into prisons—and into the ranks of the dead and endangered in Iraq. Fortunately, many have decided that the time has come to meditate on, and lay siege upon, the nefarious workings of national security culture—as if we are, indeed, the very barbarians conjured by Bush, Rumsfeld and Huntington. ■