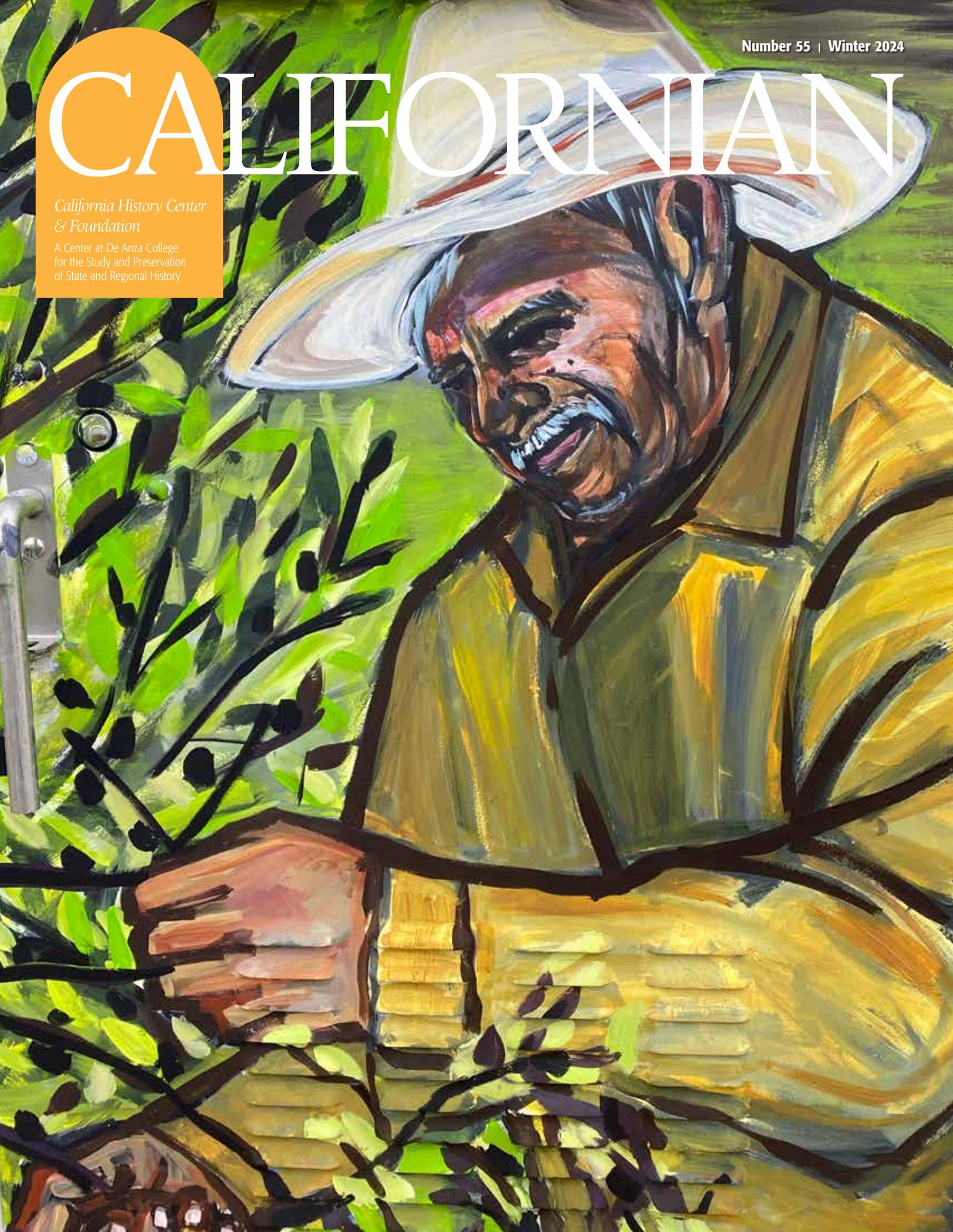


Number 55 | Winter 2024

CALIFORNIAN

*California History Center
& Foundation*

A Center at De Anza College
for the Study and Preservation
of State and Regional History





A Taste of History: Cultivating the Arts and Humanities

Saturday, March 23, 2024 | 4-7 p.m.

Visual & Performing Arts Center, De Anza College

- Proceeds from A Taste of History support after-school art classes for at-risk youth, and De Anza student multimedia projects that preserve and share our local history.
- Musician Diana Gameros will perform original and Mexican classic songs that tell stories of family, migration, identity, and home. She'll sing and play guitar and piano accompanied by Patrick Wolff on clarinet and saxophone.
- Artist and poet Meesha Goldberg will share stories about the importance of the arts and humanities, drawing from personal and community experiences as a Korean American farmer and activist.
- View the Euphrat Museum of Art exhibit, "Sacred Terrain," which explores the beauty and healing powers of plants and the natural world and our need to honor and protect both.
- Guests can enjoy delicious snacks, desserts and wines from local producers.
- Afterwards, walk together to California History Center through De Anza's historical corridor of unique plants and animals to view "All My Relations," a multi-media art exhibit of animal rescue work.

Tickets: \$150 per person; sponsorship rates available

To Register, go to: <https://www.deanza.edu/tasteofhistory/>



Calendar

Winter Quarter

JANUARY

- 8 **First day of Winter Quarter**
- 15 **Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday** — no classes, offices closed

FEBRUARY

- 16-19 **Presidents' Holiday** — no classes, offices closed
- 18 **44th Annual Day of Remembrance**; San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin Annex; San Jose Japantown; 5:30–7:00pm
- 29 **All My Relations** — panel presentation; CHC; 1:00–2:30pm

MARCH

- 23 **A Taste of History: Cultivating the Arts and Humanities**; VPAC; 4:00-7:00
- 29 **Last day of Winter Quarter**

APRIL 1–5 SPRING BREAK

Spring Quarter

APRIL

- 8 **First Day of Spring Quarter**

MAY

- 22 **Ethnic Studies Summit** — CHC
- 23 **Lecture Series Event** — *Inclusive Dialogues: A Panel Discussion on Race, Gender, and the Journey to Equality*; CHC; 3:00–5:30pm
- 25-27 **Memorial Day Weekend** — no classes, offices closed

JUNE

- 19 **Juneteenth Holiday** — no classes, offices closed
- 28 **Last day of Spring Quarter**
- 29 **Graduation 2024**



California History Center & Foundation
A Center for the Study of State and Regional History
De Anza College

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www.DeAnza.edu/CaliffHistory

Trianon Building Hours: Tuesday through Thursday 10:00am–4:00pm

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Cover images by artist Yolanda Guerra.

Front cover: *Detail of In the Neighborhood Olives and Walnuts.*

Back cover: *In the Neighborhood Olives and Walnuts.*

Director's Report



Lori Clinchard

NEH Grant: "Voices of Silicon Valley"

I'm happy to share that California History Center has just been awarded a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to support our oral history work. The project being funded is titled *Voices of Silicon Valley: Using Heritage Discourse to Counteract Placelessness and Build Belonging*. With the support of this \$150,000 grant, we are initiating a multi-track project to increase access to the CHC's existing oral histories, while also creating new oral histories, digital stories, and an educational walking tour.

Voices of Silicon Valley will be rolled out in three tracks over a three-year period. In Track 1, with the help of trained student interns, we will complete the assessment, cataloging, transcription, and digitization of over 400 existing oral histories housed in our collection. We will also update and re-

organize the website to facilitate access to these holdings. In Track 2, we will develop curriculum for existing courses by revising and expanding existing workshops on accessing, teaching, reframing, and creating oral histories. And, in Track 3, we will partner with faculty, staff, and community liaisons, to produce and share institutional histories of local marginalized communi-

ties. While remaining attentive to the dangers of romanticizing the past, heritage discourse can serve as a powerful means for re-rooting ourselves in the actual, physical spaces we live in and fostering a sense of respect and responsibility for all life within a geographic region.

Voices of Silicon Valley will accomplish its goals in 3 tracks between February 2024–February 2027:

Track 1 – Making Archives Accessible: CHC's Director, staff, and trained student interns will complete the assessment, transcription, and cataloging of existing oral histories, and update CHC's website to better advertise the collections to make them more visible and accessible. CHC's oral histories of agriculture, viticulture, and the tech industry have been utilized in texts devoted to local histories, national curriculum, and the PBS docuseries, Huell Howser's *California's Gold*.

Track 2 – Building Capacity: CHC's Director, in partnership with faculty, and staff will: 1) revise and expand existing

workshops on accessing, teaching, reframing, and creating oral histories; 2) develop additional workshops on digital storytelling as a historical and identity-building genre; and 3) incorporate the workshops as part of new interactive and experiential curriculum within existing courses and program.

Track 3 – Raising Campus & Community Voices: CHC's Director, in partnership with faculty, staff, and local organization Voice of Witness, will collaborate in the production, promotion, and presentation of three institutional histories of marginalized communities at the College: 1) "Asian American Story-Telling in the Santa Clara Valley," 2) "The Pride Project," and 3) "Spaces of Belonging."

1. "Asian American Story-Telling in the Santa Clara Valley": Led by project co-directors Mae Lee and Chesa Caparas, this project will: 1) collect and curate stories of Asian American experiences in the Santa Clara Valley; 2) work to revise the College's Asian American and Asian Studies (AAAS) website where, along with CHC's website, these stories will be published; and 3) develop a historical walking tour that builds off the successful augmented reality walking tour and community art project, "The Hidden Histories of San Jose Japantown," created by community liaison and CHC Executive Director Emeritus, Tom Izu. The stories will be woven from two narrative threads: oral histories on the formation and development of AAAS at the College (from 1970 to the present) and contemporary stories of Asian American communities in the Santa Clara Valley. Throughout the period of funding (February of 2024 through February of 2025), students will complement these efforts by collecting contemporary AAAS stories through a variety of class assignments in collaboration with partnering faculty and student interns in the AAAS department.

2. "The Pride Project": This project will share the stories of decades-long LGBTQ+ organizing at the College, which has recently resulted in the opening of the Pride Center in Fall of 2022, and the stories of current

continued on page 8

With the support of this \$150,000 grant, we are initiating a multi-track project to increase access to the CHC's existing oral histories...

Audrey Edna Butcher Civil Liberties Education Initiative



Donald K. Tamaki

Donald K. Tamaki: Korematsu Day Keynote Remarks

In observance of Fred Korematsu Day in California, many gathered in San Jose Japantown on January 27, 2024 at a panel discussion sponsored by community organizations, including the Filipino America Bar Association which provided CE credits for participation. Korematsu, the first Asian American to have a state day designated in his honor, made history when he resisted the forced removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans during WWII and took his case to the U.S. Supreme Court (Korematsu v. United States.) One of the panelists, Don Tamaki, Esq., as part of the Korematsu's Coram Nobis legal team, helped get his conviction vacated in 1983, and Tamaki also recently served as a distinguished member of the California Reparations Task Force.

“Equal rights,
fair play,
justice, are all
like the air:
we all have it,
or none of us
has it. That is
the truth of it”

— Maya
Angelou

Seven years ago to the day, on January 27, 2017, then-President Trump signed the first of three executive orders banning travel from Muslim-majority nations.

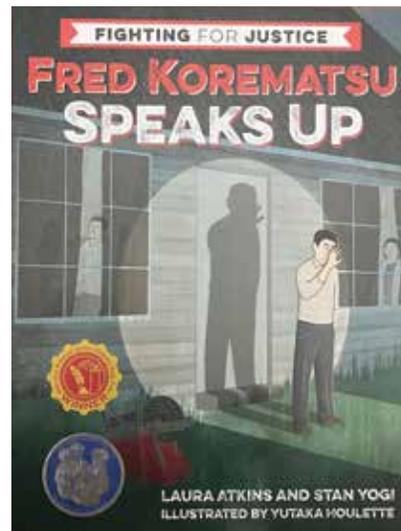
Travelers having nothing to do with terrorism were literally caught mid-air. U.S. residents were stranded abroad, some separated from their families for years. Thousands of validly issued visas were canceled and people holding them were prevented from boarding planes or denied entry on arrival, including refugees running for their lives from terrorism who already had undergone a stringent 18-month vetting process. Chaos reigned at the nation's airports.

The government claimed that the ban was necessary for national security, but opponents said this was the bigoted “Muslim Ban” that Trump, the candidate, had promised on just about every whistle stop on the campaign trail.

Fast forward to January 6, 2021. The Capitol was defiled—5 people died—25,000 troops were deployed to protect the peaceful transfer of power, and state houses across the country were hardened against potential attack.

Unlike any other time in our nation's history literally millions believe the presidential election was stolen despite no evidence of that. One hundred and forty-seven House members pandered to this fantasy by voting to overturn the election.

With the executive and legislative branches bending to the will of a demagogue — if it weren't for the judicial branch and a handful of White House aides and state leaders resisting enormous pressure from their own party to



Published by
Heyday, 2017.

overturn a valid election—the nation would be in a very different place today (think pre-war Germany—Munich—this is how dictators get started).

So, I don't have to tell you that we are living at a time when demagoguery is surging. It's happening in America, but demagogues worldwide have used the same playbook since time immemorial. The playbook's core elements? (1) appeal to prejudice; (2) fear monger and scapegoat; and (3) engage in conspiracy theories and “alternative facts.”

When demagoguery takes root and “alternative facts” hold sway over the real ones, history tells us that society can descend into a very dark place wherein facts don't matter, the law doesn't matter, and the constitution doesn't matter.

How did we get here? Well we've seen this movie before. We can learn a lot from history. The rounding up of almost 120,000 Japanese Americans—70,000 of them American citizens by birth—also occurred at a time when neither the facts nor the constitution mattered.

On February 19, 1942 as leaders like Earl Warren—then an ambitious attorney general running for governor—stoked the racism of a fearful public, and President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, authorizing General John L. Dewitt to do the mass removal.

Fred Korematsu refused to comply. Alienated from his parents—in love with an Italian American girl, and regarding himself as 100% American being born in Oakland,

Metaphorically speaking—for my father—the [UC Berkeley] diploma was the promise of America. But the mailing tube—encircling and constraining that promise, addressed to a horse stall, reeking of manure—was his reality.

California—Fred decided to evade the law. On May 30th, 1942—while waiting to meet his girlfriend on a street—he was arrested, and 4 months later he was tried and convicted. He appealed.

In defending against Fred’s legal challenge, the Army claimed that Japanese Americans were spies and saboteurs despite the fact that for the entire duration of the war not a single Japanese American was ever charged with espionage, let alone tried and convicted, so the burden fell on General DeWitt to issue a “Final Report” to prove that what he did was justified.

There was only one problem: it was entirely made up and the government knew it at the time.

My parents have long passed—along with most of the 120,000 Japanese Americans who were incarcerated, so—allow me—to be their voice.

When Japanese Americans were forced out of their homes, my father was about to graduate from UC Berkeley. But because he had been taken away, Berkeley scrolled up his diploma in a mailing tube and addressed it to him at “Tanforan Assembly Center, Barrack 80, Apt 5, San Bruno.”

Do you know what “Barrack 80, Apt 5” was? It was a horse stall. The government surrounded Tanforan Race Track in San Bruno—now a shopping center—with barbed wire and machine gun towers and forced 8,000 Bay Area Japanese Americans at gunpoint into this temporary prison, while 10 concentration camps were being built from California to Arkansas.

Metaphorically speaking—for my father—the diploma was the promise of America. But the mailing tube—encircling and constraining that promise, addressed to a horse stall, reeking of manure—was his reality.

As Japanese Americans pondered their fate, Fred Korematsu was convicted, not of espionage, but for the “crime” of merely being Japanese American. Two years later, in 1944, his case landed before the Supreme Court.

Solicitor General Charles Fahy exhorted the Court not to second-guess the judgment of the military—that incarcerating these Americans was necessary for the nation’s safety.

But instead of asking questions and demanding proof of wrongdoing, the majority of justices essentially reasoned...”if a military commander tells us that mass incar-

ceration makes the nation safer, we believe him.”

To Fred’s shock, he lost—the Court holding that without charges, evidence, or trial, an entire racial population could be locked up. That landmark decision has been long remembered as a civil liberties disaster.

Decades passed. My parents rarely talked about their bitter experience, until one day in 1982, I showed them secret, wartime intelligence reports and memos that had been accidentally discovered by researchers Peter Irons and Aiko Yoshinaga Hertzig. These documents had been boxed up—and misfiled—in the Commerce Department, and forgotten for almost 40 years.

These official reports revealed a scandal of epic proportions. As Department of Justice lawyers prepared the government’s defense against Korematsu’s Supreme Court challenge, they called up these intelligence reports from the Navy, the FBI, and the FCC—expecting to find evidence of spying that would corroborate DeWitt’s claims.

To their surprise, they found the opposite—these official reports categorically admitted that Japanese Americans had done no wrong—that there was no reason for the mass removal—and that the Army was engaging in “intentional falsehoods.”

Caught in an ethical dilemma, alarmed Justice Department lawyers turned into whistleblowers, writing memos urging the Solicitor General and Assistant Attorney General that they had a duty to disclose these official reports and not to lie to or mislead the Supreme Court.

They were ignored. This exonerating evidence was suppressed and altered, and one crucial report was even ordered burned. The Solicitor General stood behind the fabricated assertions in DeWitt’s Final Report with full knowledge that every intelligence agency had debunked its claims.

Thirty-seven years later, our legal team argued that a fraud on the U.S. Supreme Court had been perpetrated by the government, and in 1983—in a San Francisco courtroom—packed with camp survivors, a Federal Court ruled that the government had lied and falsified evidence, and threw out Korematsu’s criminal conviction for refusing to be locked-up. This ruling boosted our 20-year movement for reparations.

Over the years, I’ve wondered how anti-Japanese Ameri-

can racism could be so overpowering as to lead all three branches of government —each designed to be a check and balance against the excesses of the other— to so thoroughly fail to uphold democratic principles.

Before serving on the California Reparations Task Force—delving into the institution of slavery and its aftermath— I used to view what happened to Japanese Americans as a standalone example of anti-Asian hate.

Now I view the incarceration of Japanese Americans as merely a subchapter in a racial pathology that began long before the first Asian American arrived on this country's shores.

While there is no equivalence between 4 years in a concentration camp and 400 years of oppression, the state's history is rife with instances of how what began as anti-Black animus so easily morphed to target other people of color, too.

Let me explain. George Floyd was murdered on May 25, 2020, triggering the largest protests in U.S. history calling for a racial reckoning. Four months later, the Legislature passed AB 3121, creating the Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans. The purpose of the Task Force was to: (1) document the harm over the last 400 years; (2) recommend ways to educate the public of our findings; and (3) develop reparations proposals.

On June 29, 2023 —after 2 years of intense work—the Task Force convened its last hearing to present its exhaustive, scholarly, monumental 1,100-page Final Report to the Legislature— drawing a through line from the harm of 246 years of slavery— 90 years of Jim Crow and racial terror—and decades more of continuing discrimination resulting in today's outcomes which are at once shocking, but sadly, not surprising.

From the nation's birth, the Constitution protected slavery. Half of the nation's pre-Civil War presidents were enslavers while in office and more than 1,800 members of Congress once enslaved Black people.

California entered the Union in 1850 as a non-slave state, but since it was not a crime to keep someone enslaved, enslavers entered the State and brought their human property with them.

By 1852, state legislators passed Fugitive Slave Laws and prohibited “Black, Mulatto or Indian” people from testifying in court against Whites. 2 years later, the California Supreme

Court decided that this law applied to Chinese Americans too. The result: murder, arson, robbery, theft could be perpetrated against these groups with impunity.

The Civil War ended slavery in 1865—but about 5 minutes after Robert E. Lee surrendered, the South was determined to reinstate laws and ways as close to slavery as possible. And no wonder. For 246 years, one of the largest and most profitable enslaved labor economies in the world had operated.

By 1867, California Democrats rose to power by promising white voters that they would oppose any laws—making Black, Native or Chinese people—equal to them.

In California's early days, there were few Black people in the state—so hate groups mainly terrorized Native and Chinese communities. 352 lynchings occurred between 1850 and 1935 including eight Black Californians—but mostly persons of Native, Chinese, and Mexican descent. In the midst of this hyper-hatred of African Americans, it was as if to say, “no Black people to target?” “No problem...Other people of color will do.”

By 1882, Congress passed the first travel ban—the Chinese Exclusion Act. Into this ultra- racist era—Japanese immigrants came to California. A slew of anti-Asian legislation followed, including California's Alien Land Laws—prohibiting Japanese immigrants from owning most kinds of real property.

By the 1920s, white supremacist groups flourished in the west with sizeable Ku Klux Klan chapters in San Francisco, Oakland, Los Angeles, Anaheim, Riverside, Fresno, and San Jose.

So, in 1942, when Bay Area Japanese Americans were herded into the horse stalls at Tanforan Race Track—they didn't miss the irony—that the racetrack's restrooms and drinking fountains were segregated by signs reading, “White” and “Colored” — indicative of how deeply Jim Crow had infected California, and how anti-Black policies so easily shifted to make the incarceration of Japanese Americans so normal as to be beyond question.

But while the racial animus against Asian Americans ebbed and flowed, the targeting of Black people remained constant.

Whether through redlining of the 1930s through the

In California's early days, there were few Black people in the state—so hate groups mainly terrorized Native and Chinese communities.

With respect to housing and education, America is as segregated today as it was in the 1940s...

1970s segregating America, or cutting Black people out of huge transfers of wealth such as the federal government's issuance of home loans between 1934 and 1962 of \$120B—enabling millions to enter the middle-class—but 98% of whom were White. Or that by the 1940s, 80% of the homes in Los Angeles had deed restrictions barring Black families—or the practice of zoning Black neighborhoods as “industrial” regardless of their residential character—thereby enabling polluting industries to locate there—lowering African American property values—while enhancing the value of white neighborhoods—Or the construction of freeways, subways, commercial, and upscale residential developments, stadiums and parks, which vastly increased productivity and wealth for entire regions—but were mainly routed through Black neighborhoods. Between 1949 and 1973, there were 2,532 eminent domain projects in 992 cities, resulting in a million people being displaced—two-thirds of whom were African American.

With respect to housing and education, America is as segregated today as it was in the 1940s—the wholesale exclusion of African Americans from equal education—employment—the benefits of the New Deal—federally insured home loans—the ability to live in the suburbs—and other opportunities has resulted in White households having 9 times more assets than Black households—Black people having shorter life expectancies than the rest of the population, and as of 2021 in San Francisco, Black infant mortality was 5 times that of white babies; and huge disparities that persist in homelessness, policing, and criminal justice, and in almost all other aspects of American life.

Today—you don't have to convince Japanese American groups to support reparations for African Americans. Why? Let me answer that by juxtaposing two—seemingly unrelated historical events.

In 1943, 63-year-old James Wakasa was confined at Topaz concentration camp in Utah along with Fred Korematsu, my mother and father, and about 10,000 other Americans.

One evening, Wakasa took a stroll along the camp's barbed wire fence line. From 300 yards away a sentry atop a guard tower took aim and fired—the bullet striking Wakasa in the chest—and killing him. No inquest was held and the guard was exonerated after claiming Wakasa was trying to escape.

Two years later, in 1945, O'Day Short, his wife Helen, seven-year-old Carol Ann, and nine-year-old Barry, moved into the house they built in Fontana. Sheriffs warned Short—they should go back to their Black neighborhood. His real estate agent advised: “...vigilantes had a meeting last night and if I were you, I'd get my family outta here.”

Two weeks later, an explosion engulfed the house. Neighbors saw Helen try to beat down the flames consuming her children. All family members died. The San Bernardino County D.A. decided it was an accident. The California Attorney General concluded that no evidence of vigilante activity in Fontana could be found.

Other than the fact that these events occurred within just 2 years of each other, what ties them together?

The answer is that the hate resulting in the deaths of James Wakasa and the O'Dell Short Family has its origins in the racism that propped up the institution of slavery and its aftermath.

Slavery has existed for thousands of years, but it was only in the past 400 to 500 years that white Europeans developed a type of enslavement—based on skin color—that was permanent, inheritable, and multi-generational, and upheld by a culture of white superiority.

Once the culture of 1619 used race to dehumanize people to the level of pigs and goats—in the words of Martin Luther King—“thing-a-fying” them, then the most heinous crimes against humanity could follow without a second thought.

Following the end of slavery, this cultural norm, valuing White lives above all others morphed into forms of hate that put a target on the backs of not just African Americans, but other people of color, including James Wakasa.

Simply put— if you can “thing-a-fy” Black people, then demonizing any other disfavored-group-du-jour is easy. Slavery begat the cultural foundation of America's racial hierarchy of

White people on top, Black and Native People on the bottom, and everybody else, in between.

And as long as the racial pathology that originated in 1619 remains un-reckoned, the racial hierarchy that it spawned will numbingly recycle.

We need only look at recent history to know this is true:

when Asian Americans were blamed for the “Chinese Virus,” when Mexicans were called “drug dealers and rapists,” when Muslims were labeled as “terrorists”; when white supremacists declared that Jews are poised to “replace” them; when LGBTQ people were demonized; when one more African American—among countless others—was killed during an encounter with law enforcement—and it barely evoked a shrug, because it is so normal.

As we remember—the image of confederate flag-toting insurrectionists—smashing their way into the Capitol—and harkening back to a racial order that should have ended with the Civil War, we realize much is at stake in 2024.

No—our response to this recycling pathology cannot be a shrug. This time we need to trace it back whence it originated and repair the cascading harms that flowed from 1619—and era to era—thereafter.

For Americans who are not Black, but from time to time who have found themselves in the cross-hairs—People of

Color, religious minorities, women, immigrants, the disabled.

LGBTQ folks—we understand that we owe a debt. The Black Civil Rights Movement at an enormous sacrifice to those who led it, broke through the doors of exclusion and everybody else walked through them.

We pay this debt back by teaching the nation that each time the country has owned-up to its wrongs, repaired them, become more inclusive, and more faithful to its ideals— it has become stronger, better, and a more perfect union.

In my travels with Fred Korematsu to do speaking engagements like this one, he always closed his remarks by saying:

“Don’t be afraid to speak up.”

So, let’s not be afraid to speak up. Let’s speak up. Our voices are more important now, than ever.

Thank you.

**Final report of the Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans for the California State Legislature: <https://oag.ca.gov/ab3121/report>*

Director’s Report *continued from page 4*

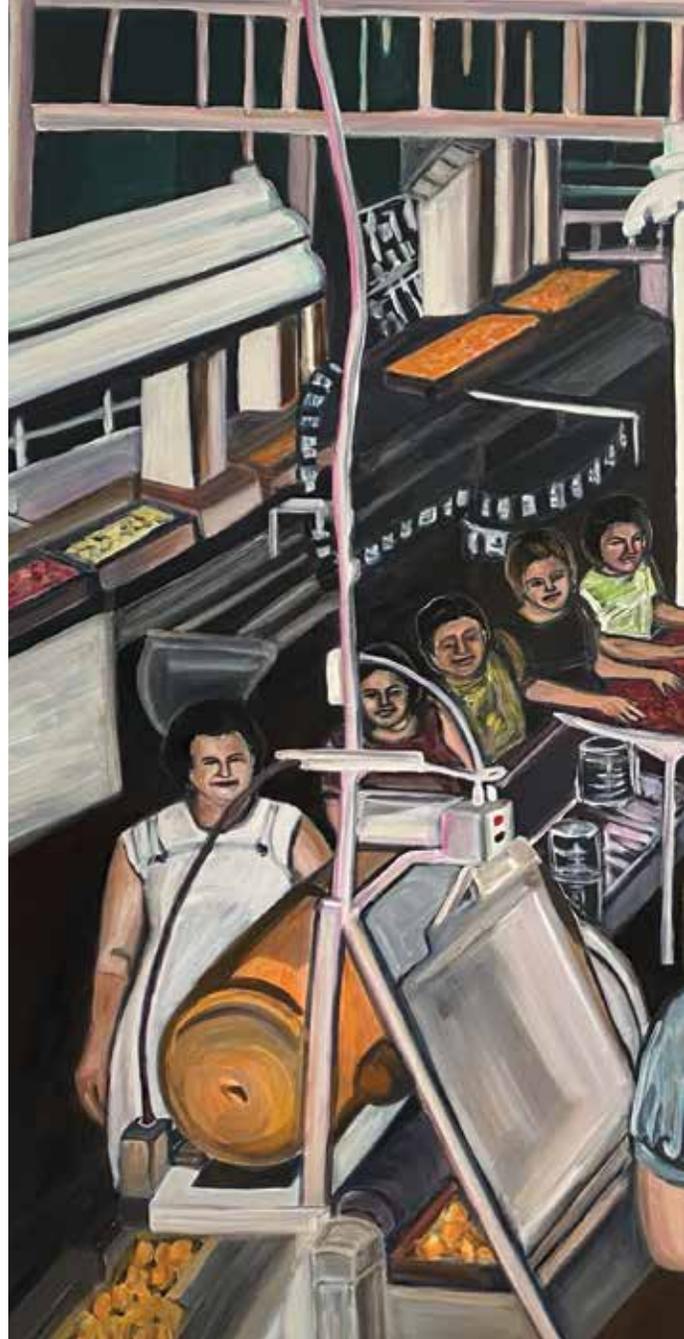
students who benefit from this space. The project coordinator and Pride Center Director, Jamie Pelusi, along with trained student interns, will conduct a series of oral history interviews chronicling the organizing work around LGBTQ+ issues at the College. In addition, the Pride Center Director will begin digital storytelling circles to capture students’ diverse experiences. This project will span 2 years between the Winters of 2025 and 2027.

- 3. “Spaces of Belonging”:** This project is an intervention into the way we think about history, moving away from a static perception towards history as a process of intergenerational exchange, social justice, and cultural awareness, and will span 2 years between February of 2025 and February of 2027. Project coordinators Steve Nava and Tom Izu will guide students as they conduct oral histories that bridge generational and ethnic differences. Students will seek interviews with elder

leaders within Silicon Valley’s Asian, Black, LatinX and other communities, including LGBTQ+ cultural change agents.

We hope and expect the impact of *Voices of Silicon Valley* to be significant, long-lasting, and useful to historians within Silicon Valley, California, and the nation. We imagine the impact to be even more important for the College and community. Our intention, with this production of oral histories and digital storytelling, is to add to the authentic identity of the campus and to foster identity and belonging among marginalized student populations. With this grant, we have real support in revitalizing the mission of the California History Center: to educate and engage people in the study of California, its history, its institutions, and the experience of its people so that they may understand and appreciate, as well as participate effectively in addressing, California’s current and future issues. We are grateful for the support and we encourage the College and surrounding community to engage with us as a site of learning and of belonging.

The Mexican Colonias in the Santa Clara Valley



Struggling to Survive During the Great Depression

The third
in a 3-part
series by
Gregorio
Mora-Torres

The Great Depression of the 1930s impacted ethnic Mexicans differently and to different degrees. Those descendants of local Californios fared better because most had permanent jobs and more skills. They also had social and family networks that they could rely on. Ethnic Mexicans that came from elsewhere but had resided in the Santa Clara Valley for some time also survived better because they had moved away from agriculture and were employed in jobs that gave them greater economic security. Some worked in the service sector, owned small businesses, or engaged in construction—a few found employment in the canneries. However, most recent ethnic Mexican migrants struggled

with employment, hunger, housing, and endemic poverty.

Local authorities and the Anglo American population generally attempted to ignore ethnic Mexicans. They deliberately sought to limit their contact with ethnic Mexicans unless it was work-related. White Americans realized that Mexicans were vital to the overall prosperity of agriculture and the Valley's economic engine, but they were unwilling to empathize with the Mexicans' plight. Hence, they cared little to know if Mexican outsiders were adjusting to the Valley; they also showed little interest in addressing their social problems, such as isolation and alienation, alcoholism, hunger, inadequate housing, poor education, and family conflicts. For most



"Fruit Cocktail," by artist Yolanda Guerra.

Anglo-Americans—authorities or common folk—the ethnic Mexicans were solely responsible for their sufferings and low status in life. They blamed Mexicans, who, in their thinking, most definitely possessed inferior genes and an inferior culture, for not wanting to better themselves. Anglo Americans believed that the problems that ethnic Mexicans faced could not be resolved until they assimilated into the dominant white American society and acculturated into that culture. Along the way, Anglo Americans instituted a system of structural racism which kept ethnic Mexicans from climbing the economic ladder and entering all facets of American life.

Surviving the Great Depression

Like most lower-class Americans, the Mexicans of Santa Clara Valley experienced harsh times during the Great Depression. Most Mexican families struggled to secure jobs, food, and lodg-

ing. While the locally born Mexicans suffered, they had an easier time dealing with the ravages of the depression than the Mexican nationals or those from other parts of the United States. Ethnic Mexican migrants had a more difficult time overcoming the economic or psychological obstacles brought forth by the financial crisis or the experience of being away from their homelands, friends, and relatives. On the other hand, locally born Mexicans also suffered the same economic setbacks, but most retained jobs or received support from their extended families. Although challenging, their lives would be much more comfortable than those of ethnic Mexicans coming from the outside.

The 1940 San Jose City Directory showed that many local Mexicans had secured employment before World War II.¹ It listed 216 laborers, and they performed a variety of jobs. It is likely that these laborers, most of whom were of Mexican ancestry, were the ones who felt most of the ravages of the depression.² It indicated that the town's local Mexican population had a wide range of occupations. These largely U.S.-born Mexicans were fortunate to find employment as clerks, drivers, mechanics, roofers, cement masons, restaurant workers, and stenographers—all considered respectable jobs. Although the number of local Mexicans in these jobs was low, these Mexicans were aware of the importance of entering the economy's emerging fields. Some Mexican women found employment as telephone operators, teachers, social workers, sales clerks, stenographers, and nurses. The men worked as electricians, mechanics, construction workers, cement masons, cooks, roofers, and machinists. Other Mexicans landed jobs in the canneries and related industries, which previously kept them out; a few began to hold jobs as warehousemen or box-makers. Nonetheless, it was still nearly impossible for most Mexicans to find employment in the canneries.

In the 1930s, there were numerous canneries in the Santa Clara Valley, and they varied in size. Glenna Matthews notes that some canneries were relatively small operations.³ For example, the Garden City Canning Company only hired 197 workers at the peak of the summer season. Other larger canneries include Cal Pak (better known as Del Monte), Libby, and Richmond Chase.⁴ Richmond Chase hired 2,073 workers at peak season in 1934. Undoubtedly, by the 1930s, the canneries were the biggest employers in the Valley. Even though canneries provided workers with some income, the low sala-

¹ 1940 San Jose Directory.

² 1940 San Jose Directory.

³ Glenna Matthews, "The Fruit Workers of Santa Clara Valley: Alternative Paths to Union Organization during the 1930s." *Pacific Historical Review* 54, No.1 (1985): pg. 53.

⁴ *Ibid.*



"Unions and Friendships," by artist Yolanda Guerra.

Despite the interethnic tensions among cannery workers, they agreed to create a union to represent their interests.

ries compelled them to take borders in their homes to make ends meet. Adult or married children often had no choice but to live in their parents' homes.⁵

Mexicans sought employment in the canneries despite low wages because they offered more economic stability than working in agriculture. However, getting a job in a cannery was not easy for Mexicans since the already established workforce deliberately sought to keep them out. Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish workers, who regarded Mexicans as their social inferiors, also saw them as their economic competitors. They consciously worked to keep Mexicans out of the canneries or the packing houses by encouraging cannery administrators to favor their kind when hiring new workers. They also interceded with employment personnel to hire family members, friends, and acquaintances. In her study of Chicano cannery workers in Santa Clara Valley, Patricia Zavella wrote about the inter-ethnic rivalry for jobs. One of Zavella's informants, Jesus Valenzuela, stated that during the Great Depression, "the canneries were controlled by the Italians and the Portuguese," so he had to lie about his Mexican ethnicity and claim kinship with another worker [non-Mexican] to get hired.⁶ Another of Zavella's Mexican American informants also mentioned that the Italian work-

ers favored their own. Zavella quotes her informant:

When my mom started working [in canneries], it was the Mexicans against the Italians. See, there are professional cannery workers who know how to steal. Theirs is a way in which, playing with the machines, one can mark three cans. The Italians were giving them [their friends] the cans. But right away, they pick the Mexicans' cans to check. We all knew because when you work on the line, you know who is working.⁷

Italian and Portuguese opposition to having Mexicans in canneries only temporarily slowed their entry into the industry. Gradually, more Mexicans were able to penetrate it. Take the example of Lucio Bernabe. Bernabe, a Mexican national who came to the United States in

1916, began to work at Sutter Packing Company in Palo Alto in 1936. He was a hard worker who managed to work double shifts; he worked "clean up" in the maintenance department during the night and in the loading docks during the day.⁸

Despite the interethnic tensions among cannery workers, they agreed to create a union to represent their interests. By 1937, cannery union members up and down the state realized the need to form a national union of cannery and agricultural workers. Seemingly, Santa Clara Valley cannery union officers played prominent roles in building a national organization. On November 5, 1937, the San Jose Mercury Herald reported a meeting planned in Sacramento, California, to lay out the national union's plans. Delegates from Santa Clara, Alameda, Sacramento, Yuba, San Francisco, Sutter, Fresno, Monterey counties, and the towns—Rio Vista, Stockton, Modesto, and Salinas—attended the meeting. The delegates would represent over 60,000 workers.⁹ Lucio Bernabe was one of the Mexican workers that were actively involved in organizing cannery workers. Seemingly, Bernabe had earlier been active in the union organizing drives of cannery workers by the Cannery and Agricultural Workers' Industrial Union (CAWIU).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Patricia Zavella, *Women's Work and Chicano Families: Cannery Workers in the Santa Clara Valley*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pg. 43.

⁷ Ibid, pg. 113.

⁸ San Jose Mercury News, Obituary, July 28, 2002.

⁹ San Jose Mercury Herald, November 5, 1937, "Cannery, Farm Workers Plan National Union."

There is no doubt that Bernabe witnessed the various CAWIU strikes that took place between 1930 and 1933. Bernabe also participated in the famous 1934 International Longshore and Warehouse Union Strike that covered the United States Pacific Coast.¹⁰ In the late 1930s and 1940s, he collaborated with another well-known labor organizer, Bert Corona, to build the Mexican component of a United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA) cannery union movement across California.

Lucio Bernabe was not only concerned with cannery workers; as a Mexican immigrant, he was deeply concerned with the individuals battered by the Great Depression. Hence, Bernabe helped create programs to feed the hungry or help people find employment.¹¹ Yet, his work and that of others were insufficient to support the impoverished Mexicans residing in the Valley. By the mid-1930s, despite the continuing strains of the Great Depression, more Mexicans began to pour into the Santa Clara Valley by the hundreds. Most of them found work in the vast fields or orchards covering it. Without secure jobs, however, these migrants lived in dire poverty in unauthorized labor camps. The local authorities often reacted harshly against these migrants and evicted them from their temporary homes by citing local health code violations. In July 1934, the San Jose Mercury Herald ran a story that indicated that sheriff deputies and the county health officer had evicted five Mexican families from the Acosta Ranch on Almaden Road.¹² The authorities also visited another “problem camp” on Tenth and Rosa Streets and ordered the owners to make sanitary improvements to bring the camp into compliance with health codes.¹³ These codes permitted single families to set up camps whenever they were not trespassing; nonetheless, camps with more than one family had to comply with more strenuous health regulations, which required running water, showers, and other sanitary facilities.¹⁴

Migrant families lived in filth and misery, yet local health officials blamed them for living in abject poverty. The Valley’s established residents preferred to ignore the poor Mexican migrants and only noticed them when tragedies happened.

Then, instead of trying to understand the migrants’ plight, they ridiculed and belittled them. In October 1936, Mercury Herald writer Dan Cavanagh reported that a five-week-old Mexican baby had died in Mountain View. The writer had determined that the baby had died because its sixteen-year-old mother, who had “low intelligence,” forgot to feed it.¹⁵ When the Santa Clara County Welfare Department officer investigated the conditions that led to the baby’s death, she found “flies, filthy dirty clothing, and sacks everywhere.” He also insisted that the living quarters of hillbillies and sharecroppers in the southern states would appear spotless as a hospital room compared to the huts of the Mexican migrant workers in Santa Clara County.¹⁶

According to Cavanagh, the county welfare officials were shocked to find fifteen to twenty-five individuals living in a single room at the baby’s home. The house residents regarded themselves as a “single-family” even though county records showed they had different last names—Cenicero, Garza, Lara, and Larios.¹⁷ The writer also discovered that County Welfare Department staff had contacted this family in Gilroy a few months earlier. As in their Mountain View home, the family lived in a one-room shack in Gilroy. Fulfilling its obligation, the department provided the family with groceries, milk, flour, clothes, and visits from public health nurses in Gilroy. After it moved to Mountain View, the department continued providing the same services to the family. County Welfare officials believed that only two dozen families were in the same dire predicament as the Mountain View family.¹⁸ These migrant families were from Southern California and had come to work in the Valley for the summer. Certainly, Santa Clara County officials were pleased to learn that the families expected to return to Southern California before Christmas.

The head of the County Welfare Department believed that the Mexican migrant workers felt comfortable living in impoverished conditions. The director, Laura Fitinghoff, noted that these Mexican families were accustomed to living in deplorable surroundings in Mexico and would do the same in Santa Clara County.¹⁹ Not surprisingly, county officials wanted to rid themselves of these desperate migrants, but the momentum to repatriate them to Mexico dissipated. Cavanagh, the newspa-

Migrant families lived in filth and misery, yet local health officials blamed them for living in abject poverty.

¹⁰ San Jose Mercury Herald, Obituary, July 28, 2002. Bernabe has a remarkable history that needs to be researched much more deeply. He became a committed unionist and was involved in numerous strikes from the 1930s into the 1960s. In the 1940s, the U.S. Government targeted Bernabe, as other Mexican unionists, for deportation to their homeland. With the help of the National Lawyers Guild, he managed to successfully fight off the government’s order to repatriate him. Even in the 1970s, Bernabe was still collaborating with union dissenters who wanted to democratize the Teamster-controlled Cannery Workers Union in the Santa Clara Valley.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² San Jose Mercury Herald, July 10, 1934, “Five Families of Mexicans Evicted from Ranch Camp.”

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ San Jose Mercury Herald, July 10, 1934.

¹⁵ San Jose Mercury Herald, October 18, 1936, Dan Cavanagh, “Baby’s Death from Starvation Bares Squalid Mexican Hovel.”

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid. Obviously, the newspaper writer and welfare workers knew so little of Mexican culture that they were completely unaware of the Mexicans’ preference for using more than one surname and the cultural norm that often called for including relatives and friends into the family.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Most European Americans and local authorities did not understand the Mexican migrants or their problems. They were unaware of the deep loneliness of single men living in the numerous desolate labor camps across the Valley.

per writer, observed that immigration officials would not deport them because their children were United States citizens. The immigration officials believed it would be inhumane to separate migrant parents from their children. County Welfare Director Fitinghoff stated that since the migrants could not be sent back to their homeland, all county departments would work together to provide better housing.

Director Fitinghoff noted that moving migrant families from their substandard housing would not be an easy task. She claimed that the Welfare Department did not possess the authority to physically move them out of their squalid quarters into cleaner and larger places, except when they threatened the community's health. Director Fitinghoff's ignorance of Mexicans and their culture was so great that she blamed them for their destitute condition. She genuinely believed this family would resist moving into more comfortable quarters, preferring to stay in squalid housing. She also claimed that some Mexican migrants were so lazy and ignorant that they would refuse to accept food donations.²⁰ The Welfare Department director was so naïve of Mexicans that she was unaware they had their unique cuisine and were unfamiliar with American foods. Fitinghoff, obviously reflecting her middle-class Victorian upbringing, also suggested that there was something immoral about the Mexicans' living arrangements; she depicted them as having no regard for privacy and being sexually promiscuous. Finally, she felt that Mexicans—in their ignorance—did not seek medical attention because of their fear of doctors and hospitals.

The Loneliness of the Mexican Outsiders

Most European Americans and local authorities did not understand the Mexican migrants or their problems. They were unaware of the deep loneliness of single men living in the numerous desolate labor camps across the Valley. Neither could white Americans understand the isolation and helplessness felt by the Mexican migrant families. They also could not understand why Mexicans turned to alcohol after a hard day working in the fields or would spend their hard-earned money on the weekend drinking binges with bunkmates, friends, and, frequently, on their own. Sometimes, heavy drinking would lead to automobile accidents and even tragedies.

In 1934, a driver struck an unidentified Mexican, about sixty years old, one mile south of the San Jose city limits.²¹ The Mercury Herald reported that the victim, who died instantly,

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ San Jose Mercury Herald, December 17, 1934, "Mexican Waving Gun Struck Down, Killed."

had been staggering down Monterey Highway intoxicated and holding a 38-caliber gun. The old man had two pennies and a locker key in his pockets. Similarly, Carlos Larez, a fifty-year-old prune picker, who had been drinking for two days, leaped or ran in front of a moving car. Being alone in the Santa Clara Valley, a funeral home took on the dead man's burial arrangements.²²

Mexicans also were frequently arrested for driving automobiles while intoxicated. For instance, a twenty-one-year-old, Joe Garcia, was arrested when police found two one-pint whiskey bottles in his car. Garcia was released when friends secured the fifty dollars needed for bail.²³ Notably, at that time, it was common for individuals, regardless of racial background, to drive while drinking alcoholic beverages. The Mercury Herald reported that by September 1936, Santa Clara County had experienced over sixty deaths from auto accidents and 560 injuries.²⁴ The statistics appeared relatively high, particularly considering that in the 1930s, the County was still largely rural and with a small population.

There is no doubt that Mexicans often resorted to drinking alcohol to relieve their isolation and loneliness resulting from being newcomers to the region. A small number resorted to drastic measures. In 1936, Alcadio Espitia, a Mexican laborer, who resided on the William Curtner Ranch in Milpitas, was found dead on the nearby hillsides. He had slashed his throat from ear to ear.²⁵ Espitia's bunkmates—Frank Leon and Jose Guzman—told authorities that Espitia had been drinking steadily for over a week. As it turned out, Espitia had attempted suicide earlier when he had thrown himself in front of a moving car but escaped a severe injury.²⁶ Mexicans also ran into many problems that led to contact with the police.

Mexicans Outsiders, Petty Crimes, and Liquor Trafficking

Local police agencies throughout the Valley dealt with petty crimes involving Mexicans. The local police departments received complaints from Mexicans that bunkmates in labor camps had stolen from them. For example, police took Salvador Gutierrez into custody after Ubaldo Olmeda accused him of theft. Olmeda told the cops that Gutierrez stole a watch

²² San Jose Mercury Herald, September 2, 1936.

²³ San Jose Mercury Herald, November 3, 1930, "Joe Garcia Arrested in Liquor Charge."

²⁴ San Jose Mercury Herald, September 2, 1936.

²⁵ San Jose Mercury Herald, May 14, 1936, "Body of Suicide Found in Hillside."

²⁶ It is likely that Espitia could have been suffering from mental problems. Once, he had gone to the Sheriff's Office complaining that he was hearing a woman screaming for help. However, when the deputies investigated, they found no one. Espitia's fellow workers also reported that a week before his death, he had complained of intense headaches and that he was muttering constantly.

from the ranch; the latter admitted the robbery to Captain John Guerin and claimed that he had sold it at a local pawn shop for twenty dollars.²⁷ Petty theft rings made up of Mexicans also circulated the Valley. Angelo Rocha, S. Herrera, and J.A. Desa [probably de Hesa] pleaded guilty to possessing stolen rings and watches they took from San Jose houses.²⁸ On November 30, 1930, the police charged Benito Ramos, Henry Alviso, Jesus Alvarado, Frank Garcia, and Antonio Valenzuela with being involved in a wave of burglaries.²⁹ In January 1931, the courts found the group guilty of stealing several thousands of dollars' worth of jewelry and clothes.

Mexicans were also involved in minor offenses. The courts sentenced Joaquin Santos, a Coyote ranch laborer, to spend sixty days in the county jail and placed on probation for a year for stealing a steer.³⁰ When Vicente Zubia needed money to get married, he wrote an extortion letter to his employer—the Southern Pacific Railroad—demanding \$1,000. Zubia, however, was caught when the company required all employees at its Coyote Camp to provide writing samples. Zubia, a resident at the camp, gave a writing sample that matched the extortion letter.³¹

Mexicans, too, were involved in felonies. One of the areas of significant concern for local police agencies was the production, transportation, and sale of alcoholic products, which had become illegal with the passage of the 18th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Like many other immigrant groups, many Mexican community members could not understand the puritanical traditions of Anglo American Protestants and continued to consume alcohol. Hence, some Mexicans became involved in trafficking alcoholic beverages to meet the demand of their communities. Mexican traffickers traveled to the Mexican border for more than a decade to bring back the Santa Clara Valley's valuable liquor. The Mercury Herald gave ample coverage to police actions to cut down on illicit yet highly profitable alcohol-based activities. In 1930, patrolmen Ray Blackmore and James Morton arrested Louis Rangle (most likely Luis Rangel) for liquor's illegal possession.³² When San Jose police raided Alberta Moreno's home, they arrested her for possessing a small quantity of hard liquor and beer.

Nonetheless, the police had to drop the charges against Miss Moreno when they could not prove that she was selling

alcohol.³³ Manuel Miranda was not so lucky. In January 1932, Superior Court Judge R.R. Syer found Miranda guilty of illegal possession of liquor still. He had been arrested by Sunnyvale police when they raided his home and found the liquor still could produce four gallons daily. Police also seized half a gallon of whiskey and 150 gallons of wine.³⁴

Most of the Mexicans involved in the underground liquor trade usually acted on their own. However, Mexican neighborhood residents did engage in organized bootlegging. Some residents complained to the local police agencies but were unwilling to do anything. Most likely, authorities were quite willing to allow liquor sales in the impoverished neighborhoods so long as bootleggers understood that they could not conduct their business in the more respectable parts of the towns. The police's unwillingness to stamp out bootlegging in the more impoverished areas of San Jose convinced the San Jose Mercury Herald that it had to publicize liquor's rampant sale in the "Little Tijuana" neighborhood just west of downtown. Although the neighborhood's name suggested that its residents were Mexicans, they more likely lived in a multiethnic community inhabited by poor Mexicans and whites, particularly Italian-Americans. Ostensibly, some of the newspaper's readers were offended by the story and wrote to challenge its veracity. The Mercury Herald published the testimonies of two former residents of "Little Tijuana."

A Santa Clara College student whose family fled "Little Tijuana" provided the first testimony. Unwilling to be identified, the newspaper respected the student's request to withhold his name and address.

I read in the news that the Mercury Herald has lied about the conditions in Little Tijuana. I know the Mercury Herald has told the truth because I had lived with my family on Dupont Street for about nine years.

*There were several bootlegging places on Dupont Street. One of these, a sporting house and bootlegging joint, was next door to us. This was the place kept by Hazel Burns at 257 Dupont St. People used to go to the house next door and come out drunk. There would be several drunken men on the street almost any night when I come home.*³⁵

The college student said he would telephone the Sheriff's office to investigate the matter, but it ignored his calls. When

Most of the Mexicans involved in the underground liquor trade usually acted on their own. However, Mexican neighborhood residents did engage in organized bootlegging.

²⁷ San Jose Mercury Herald, March 22, 1930.

²⁸ San Jose Mercury Herald, August 13, 1930, "Trio Plead Guilty to Petty Theft."

²⁹ San Jose Mercury Herald, November 21, 1930.

³⁰ San Jose Mercury, January 9, 1932, "Steer Thief to Spend 60 Days in Jail."

³¹ San Jose Mercury Herald, September 2, 1936.

³² San Jose Mercury Herald, October 13, 1930.

³³ San Jose Mercury Herald, February 19, 1931, "Alberta Moreno Rum Possession Charge Dropped."

³⁴ San Jose Mercury Herald, January 9, 1932, "Miranda Arraigned on Still Charge."

³⁵ San Jose Mercury Herald, August 1, 1930, "Student Says Mercury Told the Truth about Tijuana Vice."

In addition to being the “red light district” of town, “Little Tijuana” could also be a violent place.

the family stubbornly persisted in calling the Sheriff’s office to take steps to end the illegal activities, it told family members that the “Sheriff wasn’t in.”³⁶

One week later, the Mercury Herald printed another letter by another young man who lived in “Little Tijuana” and noted that the neighborhood’s dangerous conditions had driven his family away. As with the first young man, the newspaper chose to withhold the second’s name. He stated that drunken men were lingering about Dupont Street every night and that he feared for his sisters’ safety. He wrote: “I have three sisters, all of them in their teens. It got so it was impossible for them to come to town in the evening unless either my father or I accompanied them.”³⁷ The second writer claimed that he had complained twice to the Sheriff about the conditions on Dupont Street, but that the Sheriff had said that he could not do anything without evidence. The writer, moreover, claimed that he had offered to get proof for the Sheriff but that he had responded that only deputized individuals could do so. The Sheriff had seemingly told him he had no time to deputize him.³⁸ Because the neighborhood was in the poorest part of town, undoubtedly, the Sheriff felt no desire to end the consumption of liquor in places where “respectable” citizens considered it acceptable.

In addition to being the “red light district” of town, “Little Tijuana” could also be a violent place. At times, bloodshed resulted from wars for drug and liquor traffic control. Being a snitch could get someone in real trouble. On March 17, 1933, a well-known San Francisco mobster, Joe Spinoza, was found with a bullet in his lung.³⁹ Spinoza was not only a bootlegger, but he had also built a reputation as a hijacker of liquor and narcotics. Spinoza also had links to Eddie Quinones, San Francisco’s most sought criminal. Spinoza claimed that a group of men shot him during the trip to Los Angeles while hauling thirty-five gallons of alcohol from San Francisco. On the outskirts of San Jose, the four men rode alongside his truck and ordered him to stop, and they shot at him while trying to flee them. Sheriff Emig, however, did not place much faith in the Spinoza story. Emig thought his attackers shot him for being a “squealer” since he had informed the police of Eddie Quinones’ return to San Francisco, which led to the latter’s arrest. Spinoza had also provided information to police on the whereabouts of other criminals. Finally, the passage of

the 21st Amendment in December 1933 ended Prohibition, decriminalizing liquor consumption. Still, the illicit transportation and sale of narcotics did not die out in the Valley’s Mexican communities.

Mexicans and Narcotics Trafficking

The Valley’s Mexican communities did not escape the trafficking and consumption of narcotics. Although some residents of larger cities like San Francisco and Los Angeles commonly used opium and morphine, their consumption was rare in the smaller and more rural communities around the state. Nonetheless, by the 1930s, as the smaller cities and towns began to attract more people, the use of these drugs went up. Even tiny Watsonville started experiencing problems with drug peddlers and drug users. In 1930, for example, Watsonville police arrested Soledad Arrias, 24, and her lover Wong Hoo, who was 49 years old. The couple, both drug users, were charged with possessing large quantities of opium and morphine. The police were also investigating if others were involved with the couple in selling these drugs.⁴⁰

As in the case of Watsonville, Santa Clara County police agencies began to make more arrests of individuals trafficking illicit drugs. Although Mexicans were likely to consume other drugs, marijuana was their preferred choice. While many indigenous groups had long smoked marijuana, a native plant of Mexico, for religious purposes, Mexicans relied on marijuana for medicinal and social uses for generations. Mexicans had always regarded the marijuana plant as having medicinal properties but were also aware of its hallucinogenic effects. As more Mexicans poured into the Santa Clara Valley, they brought the plant and introduced it to the rest of the population. Even in the 1920s, local police agencies knew little about marijuana. In August 1930, however, the San Jose Chief of Police ordered a raid on a house located on North Market, leading to the arrest of three Mexicans—C. Romo, M. Alcalde, and B. Ramos. However, the police did not press any charges against them because they were trying to identify the drug. Moreover, the police were trying to determine whether the law prohibited its possession.⁴¹ However, there was little doubt that what the police had confiscated was marijuana. A few days after their arrest, Romo and Alcalde were charged with possession of “marajuana” and ordered held for trial.⁴² As people in Mexico had been doing for hundreds of years, Mexican immigrants smoked marijuana all over the Valley—

³⁶ Ibid. Dupont Street was located on the western edge of San Jose, and it crossed San Carlos Street. At one time Dupont Street was inhabited by Italians but as “Little Tijuana” suggests it was being taken over by ethnic Mexicans.

³⁷ San Jose Mercury Herald, August 7, 1930, “Another Family Had Moved to Escape Uncurbed Vice Area.”

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ San Jose Mercury Herald, March 17, 1933, “Hijacker Shot in Little Tijuana.” Spinoza was not only a bootlegger, but he had a reputation for hijacking liquor and narcotics.

⁴⁰ San Jose Mercury Herald, July 16, 1930, “Mexican Girl, Chinese Lover Held as Vagrants.”

⁴¹ San Jose Mercury Herald, August 10, 1930, “Mexican Laborer Trio Nabbed in Drug Raid.”

⁴² San Jose Mercury Herald, August 13, 1930, “Mexican Held as Marajuana [sic] Owner.”

in urban places and labor camps. Mexicans were trafficking marijuana in the communities adjacent to Santa Clara Valley. The police arrested Pedro Ruiz in nearby Watsonville for selling it to his clients; he sold each cigarette for twenty-five cents. The business was undoubtedly profitable enough that Ruiz posted the \$ 200 cash bail required for his release.⁴³

Mexicans were possibly the principal distributors and sellers of marijuana in the Santa Clara Valley. The Delgado family, for example, was well-known by the police for selling it. In 1937, the family received lots of notoriety when Frank Delgado killed Bernardo Soliz as he left the courtroom after a jury acquitted him of killing Frank's brother, Cirilo. The San Jose Mercury Herald reported that the Delgado family, including Nellie, the widow of Cirilo, had a history of trafficking in marijuana. The newspaper claimed that Nellie was popularly known as the "Marihuana Queen." In May 1937, the courts paroled after having served more than three months for possession of marijuana, which the newspaper designated as Mexican "Loco" weed.⁴⁴

After police investigated the Soliz assassination, they charged Nellie Delgado as an accomplice.⁴⁵ The police accused her of giving her brother-in-law the gun that killed Soliz. In March 1938, Mrs. Delgado was found guilty and received a life prison term. Nonetheless, Nellie had money to hire three competent attorneys to defend her. They filed an appeal on her conviction, charging misconduct by the district attorney, errors during the trial, and mistakes by the presiding judge in instructing the jury.⁴⁶ Mrs. Delgado's lead attorney asked for a new trial. By December 1938, she won a re-trial scheduled for April of the following year.⁴⁷ In her second trial, probably after negotiating with the District Attorney, Nellie Delgado pleaded guilty to manslaughter and accepted a year sentence in county jail. In December 1939, the Mercury Herald reported the release of Mrs. Delgado after serving only four months of her sentence. With money, Nellie Delgado had successfully hired good lawyers who saved her from spending her life in prison.⁴⁸ Most Mexicans in the Santa Clara Valley would not be as fortunate when dealing with the courts.

Mexicans and Violence: Victims and Culprits

Many Mexicans in the Santa Clara Valley often had to deal with violence. They had to confront several types of violence, some-

times endangering their lives. Violence against them sometimes originated from Anglo American racists, other times during encounters with the police, and still other times, during conflicts with fellow Mexicans. It was challenging to know the extent of crimes that Anglo Americans committed against Mexicans. These crimes, however, were quite common. In 1931, John Bornemann, fifty years old, was arrested for killing Romulo Mora, a twenty-four-year-old Mexican farmhand. Bornemann claimed self-defense in taking Mora's life. Bornemann told police that he had been lying in bed when Mora attacked him; he shot Mora with a pistol he kept under his pillow.⁴⁹

Undoubtedly, racism was behind the physical attacks of other Mexicans. In Watsonville, Constable G.R. Cano arrested Hugh Baer and three others for driving as close as they could to Jose Franco, who was walking across a bridge on the Pajaro River. After several missed attempts, Baer's car hit Franco and spun him around.⁵⁰ Baer apologized to an injured Franco as he lay on the ground before driving away. Constable Cano took Franco to the county hospital, where the medical staff determined he had a broken leg. The humane treatment that Cano gave Franco was less common than the physical encounters between police and Mexicans. Ricardo Gutierrez, for instance, was arrested by Officer George Mestressat, who charged him with intent to commit murder and resisting arrest. The encounter between the two was triggered when Officer Mestressat concluded that Gutierrez was loitering and twice ordered him to leave the vicinity of West Santa Clara Street. Gutierrez believed he had nothing illegal and became irritated with Mestressat's orders to leave. Gutierrez took a fruit knife from his pocket and lunged at the officer. Mestressat reacted by pulling his gun and firing it over Gutierrez's head; only then did the officer subdue him.⁵¹

It was more common to see Mexicans using physical violence amongst themselves than against individuals of other ethnicities. Many factors caused these violent clashes. Throughout the 1930s, the San Jose Mercury Herald, for example, reported an epidemic of fistfights and stabbings among individuals in the San Francisco Bay Area's Mexican Colonias. In three days alone during the summer of 1930, seventeen arrests had been made for fighting, which resulted in injuries to the participants in San Francisco. The police were unsure what was causing these fights but suspected that the stress of long periods of unemployment triggered the vio-

Many Mexicans in the Santa Clara Valley often had to deal with violence. They had to confront several types of violence, sometimes endangering their lives.

⁴³ San Jose Mercury Herald, March 10, 1931, "Mexican Held on Marijuana Sales."

⁴⁴ San Jose Mercury Herald, December 9, 1937, "Delgado Family has Notorious Crime Record." The newspaper also reported that Nellie had been charged with prostitution and bootlegging. Nellie, however, denied both charges.

⁴⁵ San Jose Mercury Herald, December 10, 1937.

⁴⁶ San Jose Mercury Herald, March 5, 1938, "Nellie Delgado Denied Retrial, Sent to Prison."

⁴⁷ San Jose Mercury Herald, December 10, 1938, "Nellie Delgado Re-Trial Set for Next April."

⁴⁸ San Jose Mercury Herald, December 19, 1939.

⁴⁹ San Jose Mercury Herald, August 22, 1931, "Rancher Held for Salinas Murder."

⁵⁰ San Jose Mercury Herald, July 1, 1931.

⁵¹ San Jose Mercury Herald, July 2, 1935, "Officer is Attacked by Mexican Loiterer".

Most of the fights in which Mexicans were involved were with members of the same ethnic group.

lence.⁵² It is difficult to know why four Mexicans vandalized a sandwich shop in Mountain View; however, they likely became angry by racist comments uttered by the shop's personnel, who also disrespected them when serving them. The Mercury Herald printed a story on August 3, 1930, that recounted how the four Mexicans had entered the shop and ordered food. After being served, the Mexicans started hurling their plates, cups, and coffee all over the shop. The Mexicans refused to calm down when the police arrived and instead engaged the three officers in a "spirited fight" before being subdued.⁵³ The courts processed their case very hastily. Soon after their arrest, the four Mexicans appeared before a justice of the peace, who quickly found them guilty of disturbing the peace. Attesting to their finances, they chose the latter when the judge gave the four Mexicans a choice between paying a twenty-five-dollar fine or a twenty-day sentence in the county jail.

Mexicans sometimes endangered themselves while in the streets, especially when seeking relaxation. Steven Gutierrez and his brother Narciso, both railroad workers, were attacked by ten men while walking near the old railroad depot in San Jose. Steven suffered deep cuts on his head, chest, and face during the fight, while his brother received blows to the head.⁵⁴ When the police investigated the incident, they found no trace of the thugs.

Most of the fights in which Mexicans were involved were with members of the same ethnic group. These fights often occurred in bars, labor camps, and work sites. Sometimes, heavy drinking sparked confrontations. In Rio Vista, for example, Manuel Sinez, who was too drunk, shot and wounded four immigrants from Mexico. Ostensibly, he got angry with his fellow countrymen after they refused to allow him to drink with them.⁵⁵ In another incident, Judge Grandin H. Miller found Telesforo McGovert guilty of injuring his neighbor, Merle Santiago, with a double-bladed ax.⁵⁶ The attack resulted from a quarrel over repairing a fence separating their properties. Finally, a fellow Mexican left Roberto Medina mortally wounded after an altercation in Spreckels.⁵⁷ In another case, Sheriff Carl Abbott arrested Manuel Olguin, who oversaw a bunkhouse at the Spreckels sugar factory. The fight started when Olguin ordered Medina to remove his belongings after quitting and withdrawing his pay. Several hours earlier, the two had met on the street near the Spreckels train depot, and

Olguin drew his revolver and shot Medina without warning. The Sheriff believed that Olguin shot Medina in cold blood.⁵⁸ The previous night, Olguin had discharged several shots at two Mexicans loitering around the sugar factory's bunkhouse. The Sheriff felt that Olguin was too impressed with his sense of self-importance and his power as the bunkhouse's overseer.

Mexicans, Domestic Violence, and Other Family Matters

Courting women could also lead men into trouble. In 1930, police arrested three men in the killing of Carlos Osorio. A fight broke out between the men when they gathered with some women at Osorio's house. The group was drinking when a dispute broke out after two of them offered to take the women to a West Santa Clara Street dance hall. During the drive, the fight started, and one of the other two men fatally stabbed Osorio.⁵⁹ Jealousy also led Manuel Ordundo to murder Faustino Morales and Jose Rios. The three individuals were boarders in the house of Ramona Hernandez. As it turned out, Ordundo was madly in love with Ramona Hernandez.⁶⁰ When Ordundo observed that Morales and Rios, at different times, were courting Ms. Hernandez, he killed them. Ordundo murdered Morales in December 1929 and took Rios's life in March 1930.

Love quarrels led to individuals getting injured seriously or even killed. Juan Gonzalez severely wounded Louis Espinoza.⁶¹ Espinoza, a railroad laborer for the Southern Pacific Co., was separated from Mary, his wife, for about ten months. Mrs. Espinoza told the police that her husband's extreme jealousy had caused their separation. Because her husband had permission to visit his children twice a month, one night, they began to argue, and she, fearing that he might cause her bodily harm, rushed out of the house to call the police. When she returned, she saw Juan Gonzalez, another Southern Pacific employee and one of her boarders, taking her husband out of the house. By this time, Gonzalez had seriously injured the husband and was taking him to the hospital. In a fit of jealousy, Gonzalez claimed that as he entered the house, Mr. Espinoza attacked him and, in self-defense, shot him with a gun he had just purchased for \$2.50.⁶² The following day, the Mercury Herald stated that the police were holding Gonzalez in the county jail with charges pending until it determined the extent of Espinoza's injuries.⁶³ In the meantime, Mrs. Espinoza

⁵² San Jose Mercury Herald, July 6, 1930, "Mexicans in SF Battle over Jobs."

⁵³ San Jose Mercury Herald, August 3, 1930, "Restaurant Riot."

⁵⁴ San Jose Mercury Herald, June 26, 1936, "Man's Face cut in Street Attack."

⁵⁵ San Jose Mercury Herald, October 4, 1934, "Mexican, Drink Crazy, Shoots 4."

⁵⁶ San Jose Mercury Herald, April 13, 1938, "Laborer Batters Neighbor with Axe."

⁵⁷ San Jose Mercury Herald, August 1, 1930, "Mexican Shoots Laborer in Cold Blood."

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ San Jose Mercury Herald, September 1, 1930.

⁶⁰ San Jose Mercury Herald, March 30, 1930.

⁶¹ San Jose Mercury Herald, March 17, 1930.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ San Jose Mercury Herald, March 18, 1930.

denied that Gonzalez was the cause of her husband's jealousy. She also maintained that she did not know how her husband got wounded since she had been out of the house when the encounter occurred.⁶⁴ In another incident, domestic problems probably caused Modesto Sanchez to commit suicide in 1943. After leaving a note behind, which the Mercury Herald writer ignorantly claimed was written "in Mexican," Modesto shot himself in the head and died when the ambulance arrived.⁶⁵

Although most Mexican women were fervent Catholics who believed in the sanctity of marriage, some chose to end them due to beatings or abandonment. On occasion, they filed petitions for divorce. In 1930, Mamie Garcia filed a complaint in the superior court against her husband. Mamie said she had fled her home because she feared for her life. Mamie claimed that her husband had physically assaulted her and that once, he had fired a gun at her. She also noted that her husband had consistently failed to give her sufficient money to support herself and their two young children.⁶⁶ Emily Torres also filed battery charges against her husband. In Torres' case, the Justice of the Peace, Chester W. Moore, concluded that there was sufficient evidence against the husband and found him guilty. In response, Angelo Torres, the husband, submitted a countersuit for divorce, claiming that she had been unfaithful.⁶⁷ There were other cases. Claiming to be frequently beaten by her husband, Violet Lopez also filed divorce papers against him, alleging that she had not received monetary support for herself and their one-year-old son. She claimed she had no choice but to rely on the charity of friends for food or clothing.⁶⁸ In contrast, Lucille Gonzalez began divorce proceedings against Francisco Gonzalez, a doctor, for abandoning her and two minor children. Mrs. Gonzalez asked for custody of the two children and a \$100 monthly alimony payment as part of the divorce settlement.⁶⁹

Even stable families could face unexpected disruptions resulting from taking in boarders to earn additional income or help single men. It was common for single men to seek out Mexican families to save money on rent or have someone cook for them and wash their clothes. Occasionally, the boarders

"Repatriation" 1930s: Once the Great Depression began, President Herbert Hoover ordered his Secretary of Labor William Doak to find ways to cut down on federal government expenses while creating jobs for the rising numbers of unemployed workers. The US government collaborated with state, county, and city governments to find ways to compel Mexican immigrants to return to Mexico. The US government also used the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to launch raids in the Mexican Colonias across the country; at the same time, it called on radio stations and newspapers to promote the idea that Mexican immigrants would be better off in their homeland. Between 1930 and 1940, US government estimates suggest possibly more than 300,000 Mexicans and Mexican Americans were either deported or left the United States. Chicano historians think that this number is too low and believe that it could be between 500,000 and 1,000,000, including thousands born in the United States. Keep in mind that many of those deported were US citizens. California lost about 100,000 Mexican residents, including 50,000 from Los Angeles County. It is hard to estimate how many Mexican residents left Santa Clara County. However, there is evidence that county officials were cooperating with federal authorities by threatening local Mexicans that their social benefits would be denied if they did not leave the county.

had love affairs with their landlord's wives or daughters. It was common for the boarders to fall for their landlord's under-aged daughters. Many boarders found relations with underage girls proper since most hailed from the Mexican countryside, where it was common to marry at thirteen or fourteen years old. It is quite probable that the boarders were unaware that it was illegal in California to seduce or engage in sexual relations with girls under eighteen. Hence, H. de Vargas, 30 years old, was confused when he was arrested at a local movie theater when someone complained that he was annoying young girls.⁷⁰ The police arrested other Mexican men on more grievous charges.

In 1930, for instance, the parents of thirteen-year-old Elvita Lopez asked authorities for assistance locating her. The parents discovered that she had left with Salvador Sanchez, age 26, who had been a boarder at the Lopez home.⁷¹ However, the San Jose police did not have to investigate her disappearance much since a San Francisco newspaper printed a filing for a marriage certificate in Oakland by the girl and Sanchez. There were other similar stories. In 1930, the police arrested Thomas Villegas when they found him at a rooming house in San Jose with a fourteen-year-old Mexican girl from Alvarado, a nearby town.

In some cases, Mexican parents shared the same beliefs that their underage daughters were ready to marry or cohabitate with older males. Mexican parents, however, were not necessarily willing to accept their daughters' relationships with men outside of their racial group; they notably did not consent to their daughters having romantic relations with Filipino or other Asian men. Friendships or acquaintanceships could

⁶⁴ San Jose Mercury Herald, June 5, 1930, "Alien Gun Wielder Guilty of Felony." It appears that Juan Gonzalez was not charged with wounding Louis Espinoza, who eventually recovered. Yet, a jury found Juan Gonzalez guilty of having a concealed firearm, which as an alien, made it a felony. Gonzalez's attorney gave notice that he would appeal his client's conviction since it would send him to prison.

⁶⁵ San Jose Mercury Herald, September 5, 1934, "Mexican Laborer Commits Suicide." As a reflection of the times, the newspaper reporters not only have the tendency to misspell Spanish names but of calling the Spanish language that some of their subjects spoke "Mexican." They also had the bad practice of changing Spanish first names into English.

⁶⁶ San Jose Mercury Herald, July 4, 1930, "Woman Shot at by Mate Asks for Divorce."

⁶⁷ San Jose Mercury Herald, October 3, 1930, "Man Found Guilty in Battery Charge."

⁶⁸ San Jose Mercury Herald, January 19, 1932, "Wife 'Often Beaten' Sues for Divorce."

⁶⁹ San Jose Mercury Herald, January 5, 1932, "Deserted Mother of Two Asks Divorce."

⁷⁰ San Jose Mercury Herald, December 8, 1930, "Man is Arrested for Annoying Girls."

⁷¹ San Jose Mercury Herald, August 2, 1930, "Vanished Local Girl Gets License to Wed."

continued on page 22

At the Center

RECENT EVENTS

2nd Annual Sip & Paint

Community members, faculty, staff, and students were welcomed into California History Center on Dec. 7, 2023, for an evening of music, art, wine, food and fun. Salinas based artist Nacho Moya was an engaging and talented art teacher, guiding participants to paint a winter scene. The variety of ways each person approached the same instructions was fascinating to see. Local South Bay DJ Joseph Miclette worked seamlessly with Moya to create a musical environment that uplifted everyone's mood and kept the energy high for all on a cold winter evening. Delicious Italian food from Maggiano's was served along with wine and sodas. We wish to give a big and heartfelt thanks to those who donated, renewed their membership, or joined as new members of the CHC Foundation.

Participants each created their own version of a winter scene with a tree, red bird, snow, and the moon.



Senior administrative assistant of the Social Sciences and Humanities Division, Leslie Nguyen, joined in, along with her daughter Mykala. Supportive CHCF board member, Cecile Vaughters-Johnson can be seen one table back, working on her painting.



Huge thanks to DJ Joseph Miclette and artist Nacho Moya for creating a wonderfully festive and enjoyable space.

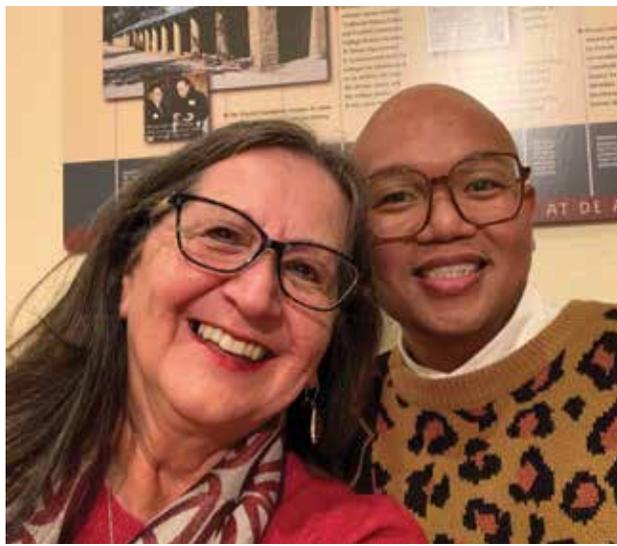


De Anza College psychology instructor Derrick Felton and Pride Center Director Jamie Pelusi were among those enjoying the event.

De Anza College President Lloyd Holmes came to offer his support to California History Center, and to share his views on the importance of arts and humanities.



Retired history instructor and current CHCF board member David Howard-Pitney was a cheerful presence.



The CHC Foundation is grateful for the strong support of SSH Dean Elvin Ramos and recently retired De Anza Dean of Equity and Engagement, Alicia Cortez.

“All My Relations”

Panel Presentation + Q&A + Exhibit

The “All My Relations” Panel Presentation, plus Q&A and Exhibit, was held at California History Center on Thursday, Feb. 29, 1:00pm–2:30pm. Participants heard from volunteers Jodi-Sato King and JP Novic from Northern California animal rehabilitation and rescue organizations, while Zoe Novic served as moderator. Panelists provided testimony regarding the ethical questions and consequences raised by our current relationship with the other animals. Foothill College Humanities Dept. Chair Mona Rawal was also present to offer philosophical perspective on the issues being raised. Before and after the event, people enjoyed the “All My Relations” exhibit, with photographs and oral history excerpts.


“ALL MY RELATIONS”
Panel Presentation
plus Q&A and Exhibit




- Experiences of staff & volunteers from animal rehabilitation & rescue organizations
- Testimony on ethical questions raised by our relationship w/animals

Feb. 29th, 2024, 1:00-2:30pm
at California History Center
 21250 Stevens Creek Blvd, Cupertino, CA 95014

DeAnza College

The Mexican Colonias in the Santa Clara Valley *continued from page 19*

“Cuñado” meanings: Formally, a *cuñado* is someone’s brother-in-law. However, it can also mean a potential and even a prospective brother-in-law. In the 1930s, many Filipino and single Mexican males were searching for Mexican women as spouses and would try to befriend the women’s brothers. Often, these attempts could result in fights because, to the Mexican men, the word being used in this way was offensive. For Filipino men, Mexican women often represented the ideal mates because they had many things in common—both were Catholic, they spoke Spanish, and there was some commonality in foods. Because US policy prohibited the immigration of Filipinas to the US mainland all the way into the 1940s, Filipino men sought out Mexican women as their only chance to get married and have children. It is hard to know, but it is possible that several thousands of Filipino men married Mexican women during this period.

rapidly sour between Filipino and Mexican men when the former began calling the latter **cuñados**. Calling someone a *cuñado* led to fistfights or bar brawls because the Mexican men understood well that the Filipino men were looking for Mexican female companions. The Filipinos’ desire to meet the Mexicanos’ sisters undoubtedly insulted their sense of honor.⁷² Nonetheless, quite a few Filipino men managed to win over Mexican women and their male kin. In the Santa Clara Valley, as in the rest of California, Filipino men met and married Mexican women, leading to the rise of many Filipino/Mexican children. What drew Filipinos and Mexicans together was the similarity of cultures. Both groups tended to speak

Spanish, were Catholic, and had some similarities in foods.

Conclusion

Ethnic Mexicans—locally born or outsiders—experienced hardship and much suffering in the Santa Clara Valley during the Great Depression. Yet, their strong work ethic, resiliency, and spirit for struggle allowed them to overcome their plight. They did so without much help from white Americans, who preferred to blame them for their living conditions. While some ethnic Mexicans left for their homeland or were repatriated, most persisted in achieving their goal of making the San-

⁷² The United States government policy from 1900 to 1945 was to limit the immigration from the Philippines to just males as a way of controlling the flow of Filipinos to the US mainland. This meant that for decades, Filipino women were scarce in the United States, and it forced the men living in the United States to go back to the Philippines if they wanted to get married and raise a family. Yet, thousands of Filipino men who stayed in the US and remained single for the rest of their lives. Interestingly, thousands of other Filipinos ended up marrying Mexican women and occasionally black and white women.

ta Clara Valley their permanent home. They continued being cyclical migrants until finally sinking roots in the Valley. By the start of the 1940s, a growing number of ethnic Mexicans settled throughout the Valley and, in some places, established new **Colonias**. The San Jose Downtown **Colonia** underwent the most population and physical space growth. The Mexican **Colonias** would thrive for several decades, and its residents gradually adjusted to life in the Valley. However, Anglo-Americans continued criticizing them for only achieving partial assimilation while insisting on preserving their connections to Mexico and Mexican culture.



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ABOUT THE ARTIST — Yolanda Guerra, whose artwork appears in this article and on our covers, is a California native who came from parents who were migrant farm laborers from Texas who traveled picking cotton and seasonal crops throughout the US. She is third-generation Chicana. In San Jose, her parents worked in the canneries. Her mother worked for Del Monte and her father, as a machinist, made ladders and pallets that were used for the local orchards and canneries. “When my parents came home from work, they smelled of the earth; one of wood dust and the other of peaches.” Her parents undoubtedly passed down the sensibility of hard work and tactile skills that encouraged her to value creating at a young age. Guerra earned her BFA in painting from San José State University in 1994. As a mixed media artist specializing in painting, textiles and woodblock printing, her culture and upbringing have been the major influential factors in her art practice, as she shares with us here: “My work speaks of social injustices, human activism, women’s rights and my Chicana culture. I am moved to create works that give voice to things that might be overlooked. I create pieces that are intersectional to my life experiences and healing the generational assimilation trauma from my culture and family. I strive to create an endurance of hope and give a voice to the voiceless.”



CHCF



**Membership donations can be made at:
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Thank you for considering initiating or renewing your annual membership with De Anza College's California History Center Foundation. The Center offers public exhibits, special events, lectures and workshops. The Center's Stocklmeir Library & Archives features a collection of materials on California history and Santa Clara Valley's development. The CHC Foundation is a 501 (c) (3) registered non-profit agency.

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