Carrigan, William D., and Clive Webb. 2017. *Forgotten dead: mob violence against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928*.

Introduction

IN JANUARY 2000, the doors opened on a new exhibit of photographs at the Roth Horowitz Gallery in New York City. As visitors surveyed the show, they viewed the disquieting images of lynching victims. Many photographs captured dead corpses hanging from trees, bridges, and telephone poles. Some showed mutilated or burned bodies. A number of photographs included the crowds—filled with men, women, and children posing for the camera lens—that attended these killings. A few of the exhibit images were actually picture postcards sold as souvenirs by entrepreneurial photographers. For most visitors touring the exhibit, the images were shocking and disturbing, revealing a troubling chapter in American history. Widely acclaimed, the exhibit was later toured, and its photographs would be published in James Allen's *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*.

The exhibit and the book, however, obscured as well as enlightened. Even for those visitors strong enough to gaze upon every image, one of the most important stories in the history of lynching in the United States was missing. The vast majority of images on display were quite rightly those of African Americans, the group that suffered more than any other at the hands of lynch mobs in the United States. Yet the exhibit failed to include any Mexican victims of lynching. Although there were numerous images of white, or Anglo, victims as well as photographs of a Jewish victim and an artifact related to a Chinese victim, none of the fifty-four images or items displayed in the exhibit (and the ninety-eight plates later published in *Without Sanctuary*) captured an image of a Mexican lynching victim.

From the California Gold Rush to the last recorded instance of a Mexican lynched in public in 1928, vigilantes hanged, burned, and shot thousands of persons of Mexican descent in the United States. The scale of mob violence against Mexicans is staggering, far exceeding the violence exacted on any other immigrant group and comparable, at least on a per capita basis, to the mob violence suffered by African Americans. Yet

despite its importance and pervasiveness, mob violence against Mexicans has never been fully studied. More than almost all other victims of lynching, Mexican victims have been the "forgotten dead."

This book is, in part, an attempt to figure out who these men and women were. Where, when, by whom, and why were they lynched? What did their deaths mean? What was the scale and significance of mob violence against Mexicans? How did their fellow Mexicans respond to these killings and how did they attempt to protect themselves from similar acts of mob violence?

But this book is about more than the lynching victims. It is also about the deeper question hinted at in the title. Why were their deaths forgotten by so many? For those who did not forget, why didn't they, or why couldn't they, share their memories with others so that the lynched would not be so forgotten? In short, the book is about both the actual mob violence that claimed the lives of so many persons of Mexican descent in the United States and the reactions by Mexicans, whites, and blacks—at the time and over the past one hundred and fifty years—to that violence.

The study of Mexican victims of vigilantism presents some startling new perspectives on patterns of mob violence. The lynching of blacks and its significant place in American history is not undermined or lessened but instead revealed in a new way when compared to the lynching of Mexicans. The similarities and the differences between mob violence against these two minority groups illuminate larger questions of racial and ethnic conflict in American history.

To give just one example, the study of anti-Mexican mob violence sheds new light on the relative cultural distance between whites and blacks. Most studies of the lynching of African Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries portray whites and blacks as alien from one another. Historian Joel Williamson famously wrote that the era of lynching in the American South coincided with "the crystallization of a separate and viable black culture."[1] Yet, when compared to Mexicans, the gulf between blacks and whites in the South seems less vast. Despite the violent brutality that characterized the American South, by the mid-nineteenth century both blacks and whites shared a common cultural connection in their language, religion, folkways, and food. By contrast, Mexicans spoke a different language and practiced a different religion than the vast majority of Anglo settlers in the West. This created a sense among whites that Mexicans were strange and alien, fueling suspicion and mistrust.

The contrasting legal cultures of the United States and Mexico were equally significant in distancing Anglos from Mexicans. Mexico, a country long under European colonial rule and subsequently under dictatorship, based its system of jurisprudence on the Napoleonic code. By contrast, the United States, the first colony in the New World to secure its independence, boasted a federal legal system immersed in notions of popular sovereignty and shaped by English common law traditions. Although whites often restricted access to the courts, African Americans had a long history of successfully utilizing the legal system to push for freedom, beginning with freedom suits during the American Revolution and continuing through Dred Scott and into the twentieth century with the great lawsuits of the Civil Rights Movement. Comparatively, Mexicans were at a much greater legal disadvantage than blacks. This was true especially for those Mexicans who were not citizens but mere residents with limited legal rights in the United States, but it was also the case for many of those Mexicans who became American citizens.

These comparisons help place the African American experience in context and suggest fertile lines for new research. Such comparisons do not detract from the heroism of African American activists, who were terribly disadvantaged in their struggle for equal rights, but it does help explain why different groups took different approaches to the problems besetting racial and ethnic minorities in the United States. For example, if a comparison with Mexicans reveals a relative advantage for African Americans with regard to the American judicial system, that same comparison demonstrates that Mexicans possessed different resources unavailable to blacks in the United States. Despite the advantages of the Northern states and Canada for enslaved runaways and postbellum black migrants, African Americans had no easily accessible refuge in the New World. Mexicans could, and did, flee across the border from Anglo oppression. While Mexico, with its widespread poverty and often neglectful government, was no Eden, it was "home" to Mexicans in the United States, not only for those born there but even to the many ethnic Mexicans born or naturalized in the United States. Perhaps more importantly, Mexicans in the United States could urge diplomats from their native country to intervene in cases of mob violence against Mexican nationals in the United States.

Mexican resistance to mob violence is one of the central stories of this book, and it is a narrative that sometimes parallels but often diverges from the experience of African American antilynching activists. The pages that follow highlight acts of heroic resistance by a number of individuals

whose names are largely unknown. They include José T. Canales, the state representative whose protests led to a public investigation into the actions of the Texas Rangers, a group long regarded by Mexicans as an instrument of racial oppression and terror. For his efforts, Representative Canales was stalked and threatened with death. In dramatically publicizing mob violence against Mexicans, Canales served a role similar to that of African American activist Ida B. Wells in her crusade against the lynching of African Americans. Opponents threatened to kill both of them for their efforts to expose lynching and end mob violence. Yet, Canales possessed direct access to political power that was denied Wells, a significant difference that helps explain their tactical choices.

Even less well-known than Canales are diplomats such as Manuel Téllez, Ignacio Mariscal, Manuel de Zamacona, and especially Matías Romero, who tirelessly petitioned the State Department in Washington to protect the rights of Mexican nationals in the United States. Other activists include courageous journalists such as Carlos I. Velasco, Nicasio Idar, Francisco P. Ramírez, and Praxedis G. Guerrero, who editorialized against the brutal mistreatment of their people.

This study stretches over eight decades, beginning in 1848, the year that the United States won the US-Mexican War, secured the contested annexation of Texas, and forced Mexico to sign the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. This treaty transferred to the United States a half million acres of land in what is today the American Southwest. Under the terms of the treaty, the residents of this territory became US citizens, thus introducing into the United States a large number of persons of Mexican descent. Mob violence does not, of course, follow political turning points such as this one. There are examples of Americans who, prior to 1848, exacted mob justice against Mexicans in Texas or along the border. And the first confirmed case of mob violence against a Mexican after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo did not take place until 1849. Nevertheless, 1848 marked the American government's extension of citizenship rights to Mexicans in the expanded American West and is a logical starting date.

The end point is 1928, the year that a mob lynched Rafael Benavides in Farmington, New Mexico. Benavides's hanging was the last known case in which a mob publicly executed a Mexican in the United States. Although violence against Mexicans continued for decades after 1928, Benavides's death was the last of its kind and a turning point in the history of mob violence against Mexicans. Extralegal executions of Mexicans after 1928 have become shrouded in secrecy and were never carried out in public

without fear of legal punishment. Benavides's murderers were known and continued to live in the community for some time afterward without fear of arrest. Subsequent murderers of Mexicans were not so bold and took greater precautions or faced legal action.

In 1999, an episode typical of this new, more mysterious type of violence took place in a remote part of New Mexico. A maintenance worker discovered the decomposing corpse of a man chained to an electric pole near Deming. A preliminary examination suggested that the man had been dead for one or two months and that he was not immediately executed but subjected to a slow, tortuous death.[2] The reasons for the killing are as elusive as his murderers. Was he killed by drug lords or as part of a hate crime? With such deaths, historians simply have too little information to place them in any kind of comparison with public lynchings that took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For these reasons, the book concludes the systematic study of anti-Mexican mob violence in 1928 and includes more recent materials primarily when it relates to the memory of that earlier violence.

Between 1848 and 1928, mobs killed an unknown number of Mexicans. Conservative estimates place the number in the thousands. This study is not, however, based upon a collection of estimates but instead utilizes a set of data compiling cases of actual individuals murdered by mobs. This inventory, incomplete to be sure, contains data on 547 victims and can be found in the appendix.

Some historians suggest foregoing the compiling of any systematic data out of concern for how such numbers will be perceived by a public that reifies statistics. Readers might conclude that this list of victims somehow equals the actual number of Mexicans killed by mobs in the United States, when in fact they are a fraction of the actual number of Mexicans lynched, a total that will never be known because it is impossible to recover the names and dates and places of all those killed by mobs.[3]

Despite the difficulties of parsing all of the cases of mob violence against Mexicans, we have persevered in compiling our list of Mexican victims for two reasons. First, such a list can be a stimulus to further research on the subject. The inventories compiled by the NAACP and other civil rights groups, flawed as they were, clearly galvanized sociological and historical research on African American lynching. Second, as long as the subject of anti-Mexican mob violence rests upon anecdotal evidence alone, without an actual count of victims, it will continue to be received skeptically by both scholars and the general public. Many people tend to disbelieve in

Table 0.1 Mob Violence against Persons of Mexican Descent by State, 1848–1928

State	Victims of Mob Violence
Texas	232
California	143
New Mexico	87
Arizona	48
Colorado	25
Nevada	3
Louisiana	2
Nebraska	2
Oklahoma	2
Montana	1
Oregon	1
Wyoming	1
Total	547

great tragedies until forced to face overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Determining the precise number of people killed in the Holocaust, for example, is impossible, just as it is for Mexican victims of mob violence. Yet, in both cases, numbers matter.[4]

With hundreds of specific victims in our list, mob violence against Mexicans cannot be dismissed as a rare occurrence. This violence was, not surprisingly, concentrated heavily in those states bordering Mexico (see Table 0.1). As a consequence, this book largely focuses on the four southwestern states of Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas (see Figure 0.1).

The number of Mexicans executed by vigilantes compels us to reconsider the geography of mob violence as a whole. A standard lynching map of the United States depicts mob violence as being predominantly a phenomenon of the Deep South. By including data on mob violence against Mexicans, it can be seen as a much more common occurrence in the southwestern states than has been previously understood. This changed perspective will be even clearer when there are more studies of mob violence in the American West that detail vigilantism against the Chinese, Native Americans, and men and women of European descent.

In 1949, progressive journalist and bestselling author Carey McWilliams wrote in *North from Mexico*, his classic survey of Mexicans in the United States, that "vast research would be required to arrive at an estimate of the number of Mexican lynchings."[5] In researching this book, we have come to a fuller appreciation of the truth of this statement. We have seen only a few

FIGURE 0.1 The Southwestern United States, circa 1900, courtesy of the Department of Geography and the Environment, Rowan University, Glassboro, New Jersey.

mentions of Mexican lynchings in the traditional sources used by lynching scholars, such as the archival records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Had we known then what we had embarked upon, we might have deemed the project unfeasible. Given the number of Mexicans killed by mobs in too many places, it is impossible to uncover every surviving document related to the lynching of Mexicans in the United States. Nevertheless, we have pored over a wide variety of sources to create the first systematic study of Mexican victims of mob violence. One narrative episode constructed from our research may help illustrate our methodological approach.

At two o'clock in the morning of May 3, 1877, a mob seized Francisco Arias and José Chamales from their jail cells and hanged them from the Upper San Lorenzo Bridge in Santa Cruz, California. The mob alleged that

the two men had killed and robbed a carpenter named Henry De Forest two days earlier. When the mob attempted to wrangle a confession from the prisoners, according to one newspaper report, each man denied culpability and indicted the other as the murderer. The two men, both natives of California, were widely reported to be ex-convicts. Their obfuscation over who killed De Forest meant little to the mob. Observers noted that the mob consisted largely of men from the vicinity of De Forest's home in Felton. The lynchers placed the two men in a small wagon and transported them to the bridge. There, they tied ropes around the necks of the prisoners, and then drove the wagon away from the bridge. One account stated that the region experienced relief after the hanging of these "desperate assassins." None of those involved in the murder were ever indicted or prosecuted. The brief investigation into the affair concluded that "parties unknown" had caused the deaths of the two men.[6]

The sources that helped us reconstruct this narrative are the most numerous documents available for the study of lynching in the United States: newspaper accounts. Newspapers often provide detailed information on the crime allegedly committed by the mob's victims, descriptions of the lynching itself, and editorial commentary on the episode's aftermath. In the case of Francisco Arias and José Chamales, the coverage of the *Sacramento Union,* one of at least a half dozen newspapers that reported the story, is illuminating.[7] First, the *Union* stated the motive for the killing of De Forest was robbery and that he was targeted at random. Second, the paper noted that the mob broke open the jail yard door and forced the jailer and the deputy sheriff to turn over the keys to the cells holding Arias and Chamales. The two men were then taken from the jail, their hands and feet bound with hay ropes, and transported to the bridge where they were hanged. Third, the *Sacramento Union* concluded with an editorial endorsement of the affair: "we really do not see how such wretches could have been more satisfactorily disposed of than upon the gallows."[8]

Newspapers were not objective reporters, but they are critical for the reconstruction of mob violence in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[9] Many small communities supported weekly newspapers, making it possible to recover local details on lynchings in remote locations. Even when the last copies of those smaller newspapers have disappeared, their reporting often survives because it was clipped and copied in larger urban newspapers.

Several Spanish-language press sources, such as Francisco P. Ramírez's *El Clamor Público* of Los Angeles, have also survived. Though

Spanish-language newspaper accounts do not exist for most cases of mob violence against Mexicans, taken collectively, these sources reveal much about Mexican reactions. Displaying the same wide range of attitudes as the Anglo press, these newspapers defended and at other times condemned lynching. They often provide differing interpretations of cases involving Mexicans and were far less sympathetic, in general, to contemporary defenses of mob violence.

Another invaluable category of sources is government documents: county level criminal court proceedings, prison records, death and birth certificates, the files of state agencies and police authorities, federal census records, diplomatic materials received and produced by the US State Department, and the correspondence of diplomats, governors, adjutants general, and other officials. Any particular case is unlikely to be recorded in very many, if any, of these sources, but the few instances where such documents can be tied to lynching victims are valuable.

Although nothing could be found on José Chamales in California's penitentiary records, the file for Francisco Arias tells us that he was born in 1832 in California when it was still part of Mexico. He stood nearly five feet nine inches tall. In 1859, when the prison at San Quentin admitted him for the first time, officials listed him as a laborer. Convicted of grand larceny, he also bore evidence of a difficult life. The prison records indicate that scars covered his body, including his ears, wrist, arms, and shoulders. His thumb was crooked from being broken at some point in his life. Nothing is known of his life after his release from San Quentin in 1860 until the time he reentered the prison on conviction of assault to do bodily harm on March 6, 1871. He served eighteen months of a twenty-four-month sentence and was released on November 20, 1872. He again disappears from the historical record until his fateful encounter with De Forest.[10]

Most of the time our searches for prison records turned up nothing because nineteenth-century penitentiary documents from the American West are so incomplete. We were fortunate to find Arias's prison record, but the most unusual source uncovered related to the lynching of Arias and Chamales was a photograph (see Figure 0.2). For years, there was very little attention given to the photographic record of lynching victims in general and virtually no analysis of images of Mexican victims of mob violence.[11]

As with most lynching photographs, "Hanged at the Water Street Bridge" was taken after the lynching. It was clearly shot during daylight

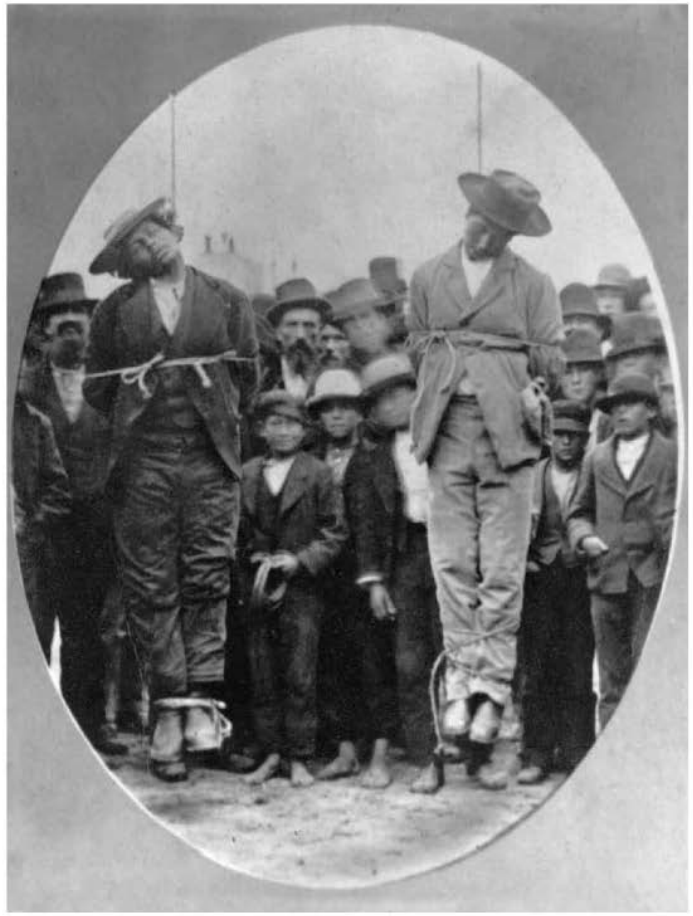

FIGURE 0.2 The Hanging at the Water Street Bridge, May 3, 1877, Santa Cruz, California, courtesy of Covello and Covello Photography, Santa Cruz, California.

hours, whereas Arias and Chamales were hanged at two o'clock in the morning, meaning that their corpses had been suspended for many hours when they were discovered. The men who committed the lynching are almost surely not pictured, having departed the scene. The suit-wearing men and the barefooted boys photographed were spectators. That they did not cut down the bodies but instead called upon and then posed for a photographer says much about the culture of lynching in Santa Cruz in 1877.[12]

Our use of photographs emphasizes the value of sources other than the traditional written record to reconstruct the stories of Mexican lynching

victims. Oral testimony may be even more significant. Many Mexicans living in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could neither read nor write, preserving stories of mob violence not in written sources but rather through oral tradition and folklore. There is little doubt that Mexicans in the Santa Cruz region talked about the lynchings of Arias and Chamales and fashioned their own interpretation of that event's meaning. Indeed, the episode must have been particularly painful because newspapers reported that Arias still had relatives in the area. What was said at the time and later, however, has not been preserved. Still, whatever oral tradition did exist combined with the widely reproduced photograph to keep alive the memory of the lynching among Latinos in the United States. In 2002, the Latino poet Martin Espada published a poem inspired by the photograph of the lynched Arias and Chamales.[13]

Two Mexicanos Lynched in Santa Cruz, California, May 3, 1877

More than the moment
when forty gringo vigilantes
cheered the rope
that snapped two Mexicanos
into the grimacing sleep of broken necks,
more than the floating corpses,
trussed like cousins of the slaughterhouse,
dangling in the bowed mute humility
of the condemned
more than the Virgin de Guadalupe
who blesses the brownskinned
and the crucified,
or the guitar-plucking skeletons
they will become
on the Dia de los Muertos,
remain the faces of the lynching party:
faded as pennies from 1877, a few stunned
in the blur of the execution,
a high collar boy smirking, some peering
from the shade of bowler hats, but all
crowding into the photograph.

We have not emphasized such contemporary references in our research, but we have sought out folktales and oral records of Mexicans

from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Spanish-language ballads called *corridos* were very popular forms of conveying narratives and interpretations of Mexican American history in the Southwest, and we have relied upon these sources for inklings of Mexican attitudes toward the violence that was so prevalent in the Borderlands. In addition to *corridos*, we have also learned much from commonly repeated legends and myths. Finally, we have been fortunate to find that local historians conducted numerous oral interviews with Mexicans, especially in Texas, that allow us to recover, however imperfectly, an important dimension of mob violence in the United States.[14]

Studying lynching means contending with the scattered nature of the sources. Although the lynching of Arias and Chamales was relatively well documented, there are several significant categories of primary sources relied upon in this study for which there are no records in this particular case. For example, among the most important sources for this study are diplomatic records maintained by both the United States and Mexico. We have not exhausted these sources, to be sure, but the correspondence, investigative files, and newspaper clippings collected by US and Mexican diplomats were absolutely crucial to our research. Unlike materials Mexican diplomats kept and later deposited in the Archives of the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores in Mexico City, Mexican officials did not investigate the lynchings of Arias or Chamales because both men were identified in the earliest accounts of the lynching as having been born in the United States. Indeed, Chamales was said to have been born three hundred yards from where he was hanged. Yet, the fact that Arias and Chamales were not Mexican nationals means that they produced no diplomatic records for historians to consult.

At the opposite end of the spectrum from diplomatic records were the sources created by ordinary men and women in the Borderlands. Particularly during the Gold Rush era, thousands of miners wrote letters, made entries in diaries and journals, and found time later in life to compose their memoirs. While no such sources could be located for the Arias and Chamales case, such documents were essential to our research of mob violence in the 1850s and, upon occasion, very helpful in later years. These sources, especially memoirs, are irreplaceable documents revealing the inner thoughts of the men and women living amidst the violence of the American West in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Almost all studies of lynching in the United States have relied upon the files of several civil rights organizations, notably the records of the

NAACP, the lynching clipping files collected by sociologist Monroe Work at Tuskegee Institute, and the archival collections of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching. These sources proved much less complete and useful for studying Mexican lynching victims than they are for studying African American lynching victims (or even Anglo lynching victims in the American South). To begin with, the published summaries of the data collected by these organizations divided lynching victims into two racial categories, black and white. No allowance was made for the fact that the "white" category included Mexicans, Native Americans, Chinese, and a host of other ethnic minorities who were not considered fully "white" by the Anglo mobs that lynched them. For example, Tuskegee reported that mobs lynched thirty-six people in New Mexico between 1882 and 1968. Thirty-three of these victims were listed as "white" and the other three were listed as "black." Our investigation of these records indicates that nine of the thirty-three whites were Mexicans and that one was a Native American. The pattern of ethnic misidentification is prevalent throughout the data on the western states. We have partially overcome this difficulty by our direct inspection of the archival materials, but we were often forced to use surname, an imperfect instrument to be sure, to identify potential Mexican victims of mob violence. We then tracked down the individuals in other sources, such as newspapers, to find clues as to the ethnic identity of the victim.

Beyond the binary racial categorization, there is another serious problem with relying upon these inventories for data on Mexican lynching victims. They seriously undercount victims of western vigilantism in general and Mexican victims in particular. According to Tuskegee's archival records, the states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California played host to fifty lynchings involving Mexican victims during the same period that our research has turned up over two hundred Mexican lynching victims. Even more limiting is the fact that none of the major inventories of lynching victims begins earlier than 1882, and more Mexican victims of mob violence died prior to that date than after. Nonetheless, these inventories and collections were still helpful. Organizations like the NAACP did not intentionally refrain from collecting material on Mexican victims of mob violence, and they have preserved important materials in several instances.[15]

It is ultimately impossible to recover from the obscurity of history every Mexican murdered by vigilantes in the United States. While this study represents the most exhaustive treatment of the subject to date, some of the victims remain unknown.

The book begins with an exploration of causes and origins of mob violence suffered by Mexicans in the United States and ends with a discussion of the reasons for the post-1928 decline in Anglo tolerance for public executions of Mexicans. It is organized thematically, with the first half exploring characteristics and patterns evident in the history of anti-Mexican mob violence, and the second half turning to the history of Mexican resistance to lynching.

The book balances the social scientist's desire to generalize broad patterns from particular data with the historian's understanding of the powerful impact of time and place on people and events. Thus, the book cites evidence drawn from multiple eras and regions to buttress arguments while also dedicating sections to the variations that come from studying a region as diverse as the American West.

It begins by focusing on some of the most basic questions surrounding Mexican victims of lynch mobs. The first chapter aims to chart the scale, scope, and general characteristics of mob violence against Mexicans, explaining why so many persons of Mexican descent were killed by lynch mobs from 1848 to 1928. While Chapter One underscores the degree to which lynch mobs targeting Mexicans were often motivated by the same compulsions that drove vigilantes more broadly, the second chapter analyzes the lynching of Mexicans from a comparative perspective, highlighting those aspects of anti-Mexican violence that diverged from more general patterns, especially the patterns found in African American lynching.

The second half of this book is dedicated to the struggle against lynching by Mexicans and their allies. Chapter Three examines the reaction of Mexicans resident in the United States to lynching and vigilantism. Due to the proximity of the border, many Mexicans fled from such violence, returning to the shelter of their ancestral homes and kin networks to the south. Others chose not to flee but to protect themselves and their families by aligning with sympathetic Anglos and assimilating to American culture to a greater or lesser degree. Numerous Mexicans, however, responded in kind to the attacks and violence they suffered. Such men became "bandits" in the eyes of Anglos but folk heroes in the songs and oral tradition of the Mexican people. Finally, Mexican civic leaders from newspaper editors to politicians consistently voiced strident criticism of mob violence and vigilantism.

Despite the impressive resistance orchestrated by Mexicans in the United States, the most effective form of opposition to this violence in

the United States came from Mexico City. Chapter Four explores diplomatic protest against the abuse of Mexican nationals living in the United States. Such protests waxed and waned according to the internal politics of Mexico. Furthermore, officials in Washington often ignored the pleas of Mexican diplomats. Yet, few opponents of lynching in the United States equaled in resources those Mexican diplomats who protested anti-Mexican mob violence. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Mexico City could claim real progress relative to opponents of African American lynching in the American South.

For all of their political power, those diplomats who sought to end abuse of Mexicans by mobs had very little control over how the media and popular histories would frame the memory of anti-Mexican violence. In the decades that followed the lynching of Rafael Benavides, historical memory of Mexican lynching largely faded from public consciousness.

Not everyone, of course, forgot that Mexicans were lynched in the United States. Even when confined to the margins, native Spanish speakers in the Southwest held onto their stories through a powerful oral and written tradition. As the Latino presence in the United States increased during the twentieth century, they were increasingly able to raise voices of protest in the mainstream culture. The Conclusion traces the reasons for the decline of lynching of Mexicans, the limited attention paid to this history in the mainstream culture, and how Mexicans in the United States, despite this neglect, preserved their memories of what took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, a new vigilante movement emerged in Arizona targeting Mexicans. In 2000, an organization known as Neighborhood Ranch Watch launched a campaign against Mexican migrants along the border between Sonora and Arizona. According to its leader, Roger Barnett, the ranchers had arrested thousands of illegal immigrants and said that a serious accident "with me or somebody else" was inevitable.[16] Throughout the decade, numerous Mexicans were found dead in the Arizona desert. Some had clearly been murdered, whether by Anglo vigilantes or by Mexican criminals was not clear. While the murderers of these men remain unknown, there is little doubt that some Anglos along the border see Mexican immigrants as hostile invaders who are an unacceptable threat to traditional American culture. In the words of Glenn Spencer of American Border Patrol, there is a "wholesale invasion" of illegal migrants from Mexico that is being orchestrated "with hostile intent" to subvert the United States.[17]

Mainstream media discussions of these border killings have rarely placed them in the long history of conflict and violence between Anglos and Mexicans in the United States. By contrast, contemporary discussions of hate crimes against blacks have almost always situated such crimes in the long history of antiblack mob violence in the United States. To be clear, contemporary violence against Mexicans is not identical to the violence that Mexicans suffered in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, just as contemporary hate crimes against blacks are not identical to the earlier violence to which African Americans were subjected. Yet, to many Mexicans, contemporary violence between Anglos and Mexicans can never be divorced from the bloody history of the Borderlands. They remember even if the rest of the country does not.

This persistence of racial conflict along the border was not the impetus for our writing this book, but it does underline the importance of a history of mob violence against Mexicans in the United States. Such a study provides a clearer contextual understanding of modern-day hate crimes, placing them within the longer history of Anglo violence against Mexicans while also helping better illuminate what makes contemporary violence ultimately different than that of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This book not only seeks to recover the "forgotten dead" but also offers lessons from the past for those concerned with persisting conflicts arising out of race and immigration.