Module XI Losing Fear: A Decade of Struggle 2001-20012

*Text: Rodolfo F. Acuña, Occupied America: A History of Chicanos (New York: Pearson, 2014) Chapter 16 Losing Fear: Decade of Struggle and Hope.*

*Reader: Rodolfo F. Acuña, ed., Guadalupe Compeán ed., Voices of the U.S. Latino Experience [Three Volumes] (Santa Barbara: ABC CLIO Books, 2008). Do not buy the book (too expensive); access the E-Book through your university library. Part XXI Chicanas/os and Mexican Americans in Contemporary Society.*

I. Introduction: The 21st century opened with the U.S. Supreme Court stealing the presidential election – Bush v. Gore. It ushered in a period much like the 1920s where corporate American led the fight against the few regulations still in force after the Reagan and Clinton presidencies. Even so, George W. took a $5.6 trillion surplus from Bill Clinton and ran it into $11-plus trillion debt by the time he left office. Bush began two wars, the Afghanistan and Iraq, and cut revenues by giving the rich enormous tax breaks. Literally hundreds of billions of dollars went unaccounted for – generally private and often no bid contracts to contractors. Meanwhile, the Mexican American population had exploded. If Mexican Americans were a nation, they would constitute the fourth largest nation in Latin America—behind Mexico, Columbia, and Argentina and in a dead heat with Peru and Venezuela with populations of over 30 million. The dramatic growth has been in part driven by the Mexican immigration of the 1980s and 90s. In 2004 Mexicans accounted for 29 percent of the 34 million foreign-born persons living in the United States. They themselves numbered 28 million. And just over 41 percent of Mexicans were first-generation immigrants. Along with other Spanish-language immigrants they listened to Spanish-language radio and television media. The television giant Univisión had a market capitalization of $10 billion and variety shows such as Don Francisco's Sabado Gigante, broadcast throughout Latin America and Europe.

Although George W. was in many respects friendly to immigrant reform, his party was not. Right wing think tanks and foundations sponsored and financed front groups that led vicious anti-immigrant campaigns. The perfect storm occurred when the “[Jim] Sensenbrenner Bill,” H.R. 4437 (2005), passed the House of Representatives. A million marchers took to the streets in Los Angeles and hundreds of thousands in the streets of cities across the country in spring 2006. Among other things the bill would have made living here without documents a felony.

Nativists called for the deportation of the 12 million undocumented workers and their families— the cost would be at least $230 billion or more to deport 9 million. This show of strength

checked anti-Latino legislation in California, Texas and Illinois but a corporate assault took place in Arizona where the Koch Brothers and groups such as ALEC-the American Legislative Exchange Council poured in millions of dollars to buy legislators and capture the Republican Party and intimidate Blue Dog Democrats. With this influx of money they bought and financed the Tea Party and the Minutemen who manufactured the myth that Latino immigrants were flooding and taking back Arizona for Mexico. The objective of these corporate raiders was to nullify the U.S. Constitution and privatize the state as well as having the rich pay no taxes. This culminated in SB 1070 that legalized the racial profiling of Mexicans and HB 2281 that criminalized the teaching of Mexican American history saying that it was unpatriotic, unAmerican, and racially divisive.

By 2007 the voices in these communities were diverse. They were not only in Los Angeles, San Antonio, and Chicago but also in the Yakima Valley and the Deep South. By the year 2020 it is estimated that there will be 60 million Latinos in this country; by 2080 160 million. Latinos in general found strength in numbers and by 2011 comprised 16.1 percent of the nation – over 52 million. The 2008 election of President Barack Obama made it clear that he could not win reelection without a heavy Latino vote. Thus Latinos took on a much higher profile than in previous elections in 2012, and they contributed significantly to Obama’s re-election. Quo vadis? It is too early to tell, but during the campaign, Obama halted the immigration of undocumented Latino college students through an executive order. This was a movement of undocumented students who fought for the legalization of the undocumented.

1. Read the following and describe the barriers that remain.

“Although This Growing Population Has Experienced Marked Success, Barriers Re-main,” Center for American Progress (August 8, 2012), [http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/report/2012/08/08/11984/the-state-oflatinos-in-the-united-states/](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/report/2012/08/08/11984/the-state-oflatinos-in-the-united-states/%20%20%20)

1. What are the “fears” for the legal immigrants to the US?
2. What are the “fears” for the illegal/ undocumented immigrants to the US?
3. What is the Dream Act? How does this suggest that immigrants have lost fear?