Ce cours s'adresse à des étudiants possédant déjà des bases relativement solides en anglais. Il vise à travailler la compréhension de textes journalistiques et historiques complexes et à les familiariser avec les formes de l’anglais universitaire. Tous les textes portent sur l'histoire des États-Unis.

À cet effet, vous sont proposés 12 semaines de cours (1h30 par séance) selon le schéma suivant :

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEANCE (S2)</th>
<th>DOCUMENT*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S01. Jeu. 17 jan</td>
<td>Marthin Luther King, I Have a Dream, 1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S02. Jeu. 24 jan</td>
<td>Richard Rodriguez, Closed Doors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S03. Jeu. 31 jan</td>
<td>Theodore Roosevelt advocates &quot;Americanization&quot;, 1915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S04. Jeu. 07 fév</td>
<td>Jason Rothman and Amy Beth Rell, A Linguistic Analysis of Spanglish, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S06. Jeu. 21 fév</td>
<td>Bautista Hayes, Identifying&quot;Hispanic&quot;Populations, 1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S08. Jeu. 07 mars</td>
<td>A latino and an African-American Debate on the Construction of Race, 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S11. Jeu. 28 mars</td>
<td>Insular Cases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Liste de documents à titre d’information. Les documents et l’ordre de dates peuvent changer sans préavis.

Le contrôle continu des connaissances pour le semestre s’articulera de la manière suivante :

- Commentaire texte en cours, impératif lire avant chaque séance : 10 %
- Participation en classe (assiduité prise en compte) : 10 %
- Final (commentaire de texte sur table) : 70 %
- Questions de connaissances en classe : 10 %

**NOTE :** La grammaire, le vocabulaire et la construction syntaxique seront considérés dans tous les points énoncés ci-dessus.

**FRAUDES ET SANCTIONS**

Le plagiat, quelle que soit sa longueur, et la triche, feront l’objet de sanctions systématiques.
I Have a Dream
By Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Delivered at the Lincoln Memorial, In Washington D.C., 1963

I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity.

But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the "unalienable Rights" of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds."

But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so, we've come to this cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.

We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of Now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning.

And those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. And there will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people, who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice: In the process of gaining our rightful place, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force.

The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom.

We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead.

We cannot turn back.

There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as our children are stripped of their self-hood and robbed of their dignity by a sign stating: "For Whites Only." We cannot be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until "justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream."

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. And some of you have come from areas where your quest - quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive. Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed.
Let us not wallow in the valley of despair, I say to you today, my friends.

And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; "and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together."

This is our hope, and this is the faith that I go back to the South with.

With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith, we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

And this will be the day -- this will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning:

My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing.

Land where my fathers died, land of the Pilgrim's pride,

From every mountainside, let freedom ring!

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true.

And so let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire.

Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York.

Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania.

Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado.

But not only that:

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California.

Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia.

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee.

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi.

From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual:

Free at last! Free at last!

Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!
SAN FRANCISCO — Californians are afraid of the future and cannot imagine themselves in the great world. To prove it, Gov. Pete Wilson last week published an open letter to President Bill Clinton, urging a constitutional amendment to deny citizenship to the children of illegal immigrants as well as the repeal of federal mandates requiring health and education services for illegal immigrants.

On the same day that the governor published his letter ("on behalf of the people of California"), I was at a chic Los Angeles hotel. All day, I saw Mexicans working, busily working to maintain California's legendary "quality of life." The common complaint of Californians is that the immigrants, whether legally or illegally here, are destroying our quality of life. But there the Mexicans were--hosing down the tiles by the hotel swimming pool, gardening, everywhere gardening. The woman who could barely speak English was making beds; at the Yuppie restaurant, Mexican men impersonated Italian chefs.

Who could accuse Wilson of xenophobia? The governor was, after all, only concerned with those immigrants illegally here. His presumption was that the illegal immigrants are here only for the umbrella of welfare services. Remove those benefits and they will go back to Mexico, the governor reasoned. Here was a presumption in Wilson's letter that betrayed naivete about the desperation of the Third World poor and their wild ambition for work.

"God, do they work," a friend confides over martinis in Bel-Air. "I've never seen people work like those Mexicans."

What troubles us about the Mexican immigrant is that she works too hard. The myth California has advertised to the world is that here is a place of leisure--the myth of blond beaches and palm trees. The myth continues: California was created by "internal immigrants," by Americans from Iowa or Oklahoma or Brooklyn, N.Y. They came to California in search of a softer winter, an easier America.

In truth, life in Los Angeles today is no more difficult than life in Chicago or Atlanta or New York--but that is not the point. Californians expect life in L.A. to be easier than life back East. Native-born Californians remember being able to park in Westwood; they are appalled by the loss of the green hills and by having to wait in line--lines at the grocery store, lines at the DMV, lines on the Santa Monica freeway. California, people say, used to be easier.

It is inevitable that the governor of California would misunderstand, would assume that the Mexicans are coming for welfare. In a state whose most famous industry is entertainment, the desperate Mexican must puzzle us. Desperate immigrants challenge the sunniest myth we have about ourselves and this place. Mexicans, looking for work, would turn Los Angeles into a city like Cleveland or Hong Kong, a Mexican city.

It is embarrassing to watch the Mexican work, like watching a peasant ant. The Mexican, perhaps most especially the illegal immigrant, reminds us how hard life is, he reminds us that in much of this world, one must work or die.

Work becomes life. The feel of work, the assurance of a handle to hold, a hope. The peach is torn from the branch, the knife slits open the fish; the stove is plunged into the earth (faster . . . faster). Work or die. The Mexican works.

Not only are Mexicans working, of course. There are also Vietnamese, Koreans, Guatemalans, Salvadorans, Chinese. Wilson's letter to the President was only concerned with Mexicans and with Mexico, but many Californians probably are made more uneasy with the Asian migration. If, as the governor believes, Mexicans are a burden because they are poor, Asians are a threat because they are poised to take over the city. In San Francisco, people say it all the time--the Chinese are taking over the city.

During the Gold Rush, in the mid-19th Century, Chinese miners were chased off the fields by other prospectors. Mexicans (many of whom arrived from northern Mexico, bringing with them mining skills) were also chased away. But many generations later, now, the parent in Walnut Creek, a father of three, tells me that Asians are unfair. (His daughter has not been admitted to Berkeley.) "Asians are unfair because they work so hard."

In the 1970s, when L.A. officials boasted that their city was "the Pacific Rim capital," it seemed easy. After all, no one at the Chamber of Commerce imagined the Pacific Rim might also include the countries of Latin America. And no one imagined that the term had anything to do with freighters sagging with Chinese immigrants, eager for jobs at downtown sweat shops. L.A.--the Pacific Rim capital . . . Californians imagined that the providence of God that had created this lovely place would fulfill itself. We would be able to live off the fat of the emerging global economy, and we would pay no price.
Hyphenated Americanism
Former President Theodore Roosevelt, October 12, 1915, speech before the Knights of Columbus

... There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americanism. When I refer to hyphenated Americans, I do not refer to naturalized Americans. Some of the very best Americans I have ever known were naturalized Americans, Americans born abroad. But a hyphenated American is not an American at all. This is just as true of the man who puts "native" before the hyphen as of the man who puts German or Irish or English or French before the hyphen. Americanism is a matter of the spirit and of the soul. Our allegiance must be purely to the United States. We must unsparingly condemn any man who holds any other allegiance. But if he is heartily and singly loyal to this Republic, then no matter where he was born, he is just as good an American as any one else.

The one absolutely certain way of bringing this nation to ruin, of preventing all possibility of its continuing to be a nation at all, would be to permit it to become a tangle of squabbling nationalities, an intricate knot of German-Americans, Irish-Americans, English-Americans, French-Americans, Scandinavian-Americans or Italian-Americans, each preserving its separate nationality, each at heart feeling more sympathy with Europeans of that nationality, than with the other citizens of the American Republic. The men who do not become Americans and nothing else are hyphenated Americans; and there ought to be no room for them in this country. The man who calls himself an American citizen and who yet shows by his actions that he is primarily the citizen of a foreign land, plays a thoroughly mischievous part in the life of our body politic. He has no place here; and the sooner he returns to the land to which he feels his real heart-allegiance, the better it will be for every good American. There is no such thing as a hyphenated American who is a good American. The only man who is a good American is the man who is an American and nothing else.

... For an American citizen to vote as a German-American, an Irish-American, or an English-American, is to be a traitor to American institutions; and those hyphenated Americans who terrorize American politicians by threats of the foreign vote are engaged in treason to the American Republic.

...The foreign-born population of this country must be an Americanized population - no other kind can fight the battles of America either in war or peace. It must talk the language of its native-born fellow-citizens, it must possess American citizenship and American ideals. It must stand firm by its oath of allegiance in word and deed and must show that in very fact it has renounced allegiance to every prince, potentate, or foreign government. It must be maintained on an American standard of living so as to prevent labor disturbances in important plants and at critical times. None of these objects can be secured as long as we have immigrant colonies, ghettos, and immigrant sections, and above all they cannot be assured so long as we consider the immigrant only as an industrial asset. The immigrant must not be allowed to drift or to be put at the mercy of the exploiter. Our object is to not to imitate one of the older racial types, but to maintain a new American type and then to secure loyalty to this type. We cannot secure such loyalty unless we make this a country where men shall feel that they have justice and also where they shall feel that they are required to perform the duties imposed upon them.

...We cannot afford to continue to use hundreds of thousands of immigrants merely as industrial assets while they remain social outcasts and menaces any more than fifty years ago we could afford to keep the black man merely as an industrial asset and not as a human being. We cannot afford to build a big industrial plant and herd men and women about it without care for their welfare. We cannot afford to permit squalid overcrowding or the kind of living system which makes impossible the decencies and necessities of life....We cannot afford to run the risk of having in time of war men working on our railways or working in our munitions plants who would in the name of duty to their own foreign countries bring destruction to us.
… All of us, no matter from what land our parents came, no matter in what way we may severally worship our Creator, must stand shoulder to shoulder in a united America for the elimination of race and religious prejudice. We must stand for a reign of equal justice to both big and small. We must insist on the maintenance of the American standard of living.

… Finally and most important of all, we must strive for the establishment within our own borders of that stern and lofty standard of personal and public morality which shall guarantee to each man his rights, and which shall insist in return upon the full performance by each man of his duties both to his neighbor and to the great nation whose flag must symbolize in the future as it has symbolized in the past the highest hopes of all mankind.

Source: Theodore Roosevelt, ‘Americanism’ (1915) in Fear God and Take Your Own Part, 357-76
A linguistic analysis of Spanglish

Jason Rothman and Amy Beth Rell (2005)

Introduction

Who could have imagined that mundane phrases known to all through mass commercialization of the Hispanic culture such as *Yo quiero Taco Bell* and *Livin' la vida loca*, would in and of themselves embody a highly contentious academic, artistic and political debate between immigrants and natives alike. These phrases made famous by the Taco Bell Chihuahua and Ricky Martin have implications far beyond the mere television ad campaign and the music industry. They have come to represent an amalgamation of two languages, and by consequence that of two cultures, traditionally viewed as separate: Spanish and English. For many, this separation is *passé*; it is quite simply non-existent. The result: Spanglish.

What exactly is Spanglish? Where does it come from? Who speaks it? Moreover, since, as we will argue, it has come to define a sense of unique identity, we should also put forth the question: Who lives it? Indeed, while the aforementioned questions have somewhat indexical answers, the question of whether Spanglish is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ is as an emotionally charged issue as it is impossible to offer an adequate answer. Of course, linguistically speaking, Spanglish is no better or worse than its constituent parts: Spanish and English. That is, if it serves the function of communication and is rule governed, it is, quite simply, a language. Judgments pertaining to its status, however tangible and defendable, are merely opinions. Nevertheless, recent newspaper articles such as ‘Spanish in America has a new threat: Spanglish’ underscore the popular opinion that the mere presence of Spanglish and its proliferation endangers monolingual Spanish and, as a consequence, encroaches on the collective Hispanic identity. Even prolific Mexican icons, such as Carlos Fuentes and Octavio Paz have weighed in on the subject. Paz has commented that ‘[Spanglish is] neither good nor bad, but abominable’. Conversely, what some have labeled a ‘gutter language’, others coin a ‘dynamic fusion’ of crashing cultures noticeably merging at the interface of language and subsequently validating the existence of many immigrants and the ‘nether world of language duality [they] grow up in’.

The present article includes an analysis of the ‘language’ of Spanglish yet reaches farther. We will not be the first to suggest that language is synonymous with identity, as argued by researchers in the field of language and culture as well as psychoanalytic theory. A notable example that correlates language and identity can be found in Richard Rodriguez’s (1988) autobiography in which he cites his own struggle with identity in learning English as a child second language learner from a Hispanic background. He reflects that:

> for my part, I felt I had somehow committed a sin of betrayal by learning English. But betrayal against whom? I felt that I had betrayed my immediate family ... I came to feel guilty (this guilt defied logic). I felt that I had shattered the intimate bond that had once held the family close. (Rodríguez, 1988: 30)

Rodríguez comments on the fact that he lived, literally and figuratively, between two cultures and two languages, where Spanish was his private language and English his public language. Perhaps his parents said it best. In an effort to acculturate Richard, they requested that ‘Ahora, speak to us en inglés’ (1988: 21). After all, their request encapsulates the situation of Richard and so many other young Mexican-Americans who find themselves between two worlds.

On a larger scale, the influx of Mexican immigrants coupled with the expansion of their community within the United States has created an unparalleled situation of language contact. The effort to conserve Mexican traditions and identity, adopt American ones, and create a sense of self, which is an unequivocal byproduct of both, has resulted in a variant of Spanglish that has received relatively little attention in comparison with the Cuban and Puerto Rican cases. This article will examine the variant of Spanglish seen in the Mexican-American community and liken it to the bi-national identity under which this community thrives. It is just this analysis that is needed to validate the largest and fastest growing Hispanic group living in the United States, the Mexican-American community who number more than 20.6 million (Guzmán, 2001: 1, U.S. Department of Commerce News). Given that language compromises identity, Spanglish is the identity under which a majority of this 20.6 million lives: a ‘cultural ambiguity’ as evidenced through language and unparalleled in history […].
The definition and structure of Spanglish

Prior to analyzing the identity of Mexican immigrants living in the United States as evidenced through their language use, it is critical to more clearly define what is being spoken in these communities: Spanglish. This is not an easy task. In its most basic conception, Spanglish is just what its title indicates: a mixing of Spanish and English. Authors often describe it using terms such as ‘hybrid’, ‘mestizaje’, ‘fusion’, ‘collage’, and ‘eclectic’. Ilan Stavans, the forefather of scholarly Spanglish analysis who has gone so far as to publish a Spanglish dictionary as well as an enormously controversial Spanglish translation of Don Quijote, defines Spanglish as ‘the verbal encounter between Anglo and Hispano civilizations’.

Words of English or Spanish origin are borrowed from the lexicon of either language yet pronounced with the phonological rules of the other. In most cases, you will find that these words do indeed have a minimal pair (equivalent translatable word) known to the speaker in the other language. However, for reasons of association, effect, emphasis, etc., the speaker decides at the moment of simultaneous speech to adapt the word from one of the languages while superimposing the phonology of the other. For example:


When [we] went to the supermarket the baby-sitter was home with the children who were playing Barbies. (Rothman, 2002).

This speech sampling is taken from a Salvadorian woman living in Los Angeles for over 25 years, nearly half of her life. Given her perceived command of the English language, she categorizes herself as a monolingual Spanish speaker. The interview took place in Spanish and the interviewer quite consciously spoke in standard Spanish with no occurrences of Spanglish. It is also interesting to note that through the course of time and despite contact with a huge population of Mexican Spanish speakers, she has conserved many typical Salvadorian features to her language such as the aspirated [s] and the velarized [ŋ]. However, it is equally interesting to point out that throughout this interview, there is an overwhelming amount of occurrences, as seen in the above example ([supermarket] [baby-sitter]), in which she takes English words and pronounces them without pause or hesitation as if they were part of the Spanish lexicon. Specifically interesting is the addition of an empathetic [a] to the English word ‘supermarket’ as it is phonologically adapted. This is done because the word final coda position in Spanish is almost never a consonant, much less a voiceless alveolar occlusive [t], but almost exclusively a vowel. Phonological assimilations of this type are indeed quite common in the Spanglish of Los Angeles.

What is meant by morphological adaptations? It is prudent to point out that the amalgamation of two languages, such as the case of Spanglish, entails by definition a level of complexity where certain linguistic adaptations may not be mutually exclusive. Rather, the same example may be a result and indicative of more than one linguistic process.

Such is the case of morphological adaptations, which often imply phonological adaptations as well. Let us examine the emergence of new verbs into the lexicon of Spanglish as an example of both morphological adaptations and the rule-governed nature implicit to the formation of Spanglish. Spanish infinitives come in three varieties. Spanish, unlike English, has morphological infinitives that are comprised of a verbal root and any of the following three infinitival morphemes: 1) +ar+, 2) +er+, or 3) +ir+. [V]erbs that end in +ar+ are often referred to as the first conjugation. These verbs are not only the most abundant in Spanish, but also comprise the only active infinitival category in Modern Spanish. That is, the only class of verbs that allow for new members is the +ar+ category of verbs. In fact, the majority of new verbs in Spanish and Spanglish alike do not only conform to the aforementioned, but also share the particular ending [+ear], such as:

- telefonear to call
- luncheear to eat lunch
- chequeear to check
- watchear to watch
- parqueear to park

and the like. As can be seen in the case of luncheear, whose minimal pair in Spanish is almorrzar (to eat lunch), the English word ‘lunch’ has been borrowed to form a new Spanglish verb by means of phonological and morphological adaptation.
Language contact on the scale of Spanish and English will logically result in the adaptation of lexical items or manipulation of the already existing lexicon to take on the semantic value of the other language’s (in this case English) words or phrases. Often when borrowings of this type occur it also assumes a phonological shift as well as a morphological reorganization of the words to fit within the paradigms of the other language. For example, *tener un buen tiempo* instead of *pasarla bien* ‘to have a good time’ or *parquear* rather than *estacionar* ‘to park’ (Llombart, 2003: 3). Other commonly cited examples include *viaje redondo* rather than *viaje de ida y vuelta* ‘round trip’, *te llamo pai’tras* for ‘I’ll call you back’ and *voy a ordenar la comida* rather than *voy a pedir la comida* for ‘I’ll order food’. Additionally, we note other types of semantic adaptations such as the expansion of the semantic field of already existing Spanish words so that in their Spanglish form, their meaning is expanded or modified. Often is the case with so-called false cognates. For example one may note that *realizar* in a Spanglish sense means both ‘to fulfill’, the exclusive monolingual Spanish meaning, as well as ‘to realize’, *darse cuenta*, the transferred English meaning. Examples of these types abound. Furthermore, lexical elements also vary according to region, rendering vast the number of Spanglish dialects.

The term [Spanglish] incorporates two languages, Spanish and English, and by consequence, two cultures. ‘Spanglish’ is identity. It is the reality under which the more than 25 million Mexican-Americans in California find themselves living. For this reason, Morales entitles his entire book about the identity of Spanish speakers living in the United States as *Living in Spanglish* (2002) […].

Spanglish and the media

Spanglish is a means of accessing and personalizing products for the particular consumer demographic discussed above in the United States and shrewd companies take full advantage of this in Los Angeles. Currently, there are three national networks whose principle language for broadcasting is Spanish: Univisión, Galavisión, Telemundo. Additionally, in many major metropolitan areas within the United States, people have access to many more Spanish local channels. On all of these channels, local or national, Spanglish serves as a common second language and is employed with the explicit intent of identifying with or capturing the attention of a particular demographic. The media and entertainment capital of the world, Los Angeles, frequently reflects this dual identity that Spanglish encompasses. Nely Galan, the president of the Los Angeles television and film company Galan Entertainment, urges, ‘Spanglish is the future’. Whether television, radio, film, newspapers or magazines, Spanglish is present. Spanglish is frequently seen on television programs such as *Cristina* and *Sábado Gigante* and even ‘Saturday Night Live’[…].

In the realm of radio in which there are more Spanish language radio stations in California than all of Central America, Spanglish abounds. The following is one expert from a local station:

*Recúrdales hoy, esta tarde, vamos a estar en vivo in Dilliards, broad-casting live from 3 to 5, with your chance to win some cool KXTN prizes. Acompañen a sus amigos.*

Not only the discourse of the disc jockey, but also the music played, incorporate Spanglish. Mexican *raperos* such as Latin Alianza, Chicano 2 Da Bone, Latin Lingo, and Dr. Loco’s Rockin Jalapeño band all compose music stemming from Chicano Spanglish. Spanglish is not only embraced by local radio stations that serve the needs of the greater Los Angeles Hispanic community, rather Spanglish can be heard on the English channels as well in forms of commercials and public-service announcements. In fact, the highest rated talk radio station, KLSX 97.1, in Los Angeles, an Anglo-oriented channel, is the proud provider of Los Angeles’ only Spanglish talk radio show entitled *Reyes and Solis*. While callers and hosts alike are encouraged to speak any language they prefer, the most common vernacular heard is undoubtedly Spanglish.
Rev. D. A. Graham, Some Facts about Southern Lynchings, 1899
Jason Rothman and Amy Beth Reil (2005)

Little is known about Reverend D. A. Graham, who delivered the speech that appears below. However the minister's words were recorded as part of a nationwide protest in 1899 against lynchings of African Americans across the nation. On June 4, Reverend Graham delivered his sermon in Indianapolis as part of the protest. The sermon, reprinted in the Indianapolis Recorder, a local African American newspaper, appears below.

The American Negro is afflicted, and the cause of his affliction is a most unreasonable and silly prejudice in the white Americans. If the hatred were reversed it would seem more reasonable, since the Caucasian has suffered nothing from the Negro, while the latter has suffered everything at the hands of the Caucasian.

While this prejudice is greatest in the South, it also manifests itself greatly to the affliction of the colored man in the North. When he wants to buy property or rent a house he is often turned away because of his color. When he seeks employment where help is advertised for, he is told that "Negroes need not apply." Our girls cannot get employment in shops, stores or factories, no matter how well educated, refined and good looking. Naturally, this causes many to fall into evil ways and makes dishonest men of youth who with a man's chance would have become honorable and industrious citizens.

When we cross Mason and Dixon's line the evil shows itself at every turn. Separate waiting rooms, separate ticket windows, separate cars, nothing to eat at any lunch counter. Refused admission to churches, cemeteries and even parks. Parks and cemeteries are placarded "Negroes and dogs not admitted." The effect of such proscription is most baneful as well as inconvenient.

How can the colored youth ever learn to look upon himself as a man when he is constantly treated as a brute? This is one of the greatest causes of vice and drunkenness among the Negroes. To the Southern whites the manly, refined Negro is the most despicable because "he tries to act white," while the ignorant, servile fellow who dances jigs and acts the monkey on the street is the "good old darkey of antebellum days."

The disfranchisement of the Negroes in the South is not the worst evil. If they would require an educational qualification for all voters, we would see no evil in it whatever.

The greatest affliction we have to suffer is the lack of trial by jury when accused of crime. Lynching of Negroes is growing to be a Southern pastime. When reproved for their barbarity they say, "The only way to stop lynching is to stop the crime which leads to lynching." Many Northern people are influenced by this cry and talk about lynching as if it were always for crimes against women. Even some colored people up here have fallen into this error. You will pardon me, therefore, while I give you some plain facts to set you right about this. Since January 1, 1892, 1,226 people have been lynched in this country, principally Negroes. Not one third of these persons were accused of assaulting women.

In 1892, out of 241 lynched, only 46 had such charge against them. In 1893, out of 159 lynched, 39 were so charged. Last year, out of 131 lynched, 24 were charged either with assault or attempted assault. In the face of these figures who can say that we can stop lynching by stopping one crime? The very next day after Sam Hose was roasted and his charred remains divided among the white savages of Georgia for souvenirs, a Negro, Willis Sees, at Osceola, Arkansas, was hung on suspicion of barn burning. In 1894, 10 were lynched for barn burning. Three women were lynched the same year in three different states. Again, I beg you to consider carefully these charges of assault. How many of them are guilty? What is the proof against them? One year ago yesterday in the town of Dorcyville, Louisiana, a man named Will Steak was burned alive upon the charge of assault of one Mrs. Parrish. The Times Democrat of New Orleans in its account of the affair said: "Mrs. Parrish identified the Negro almost positively." He died protesting his innocence, but because he was almost identified he was burned alive.

William Offet, of Elyria, Ohio, was fortunate because he was in a Northern state. Being identified by Mrs. J. C. Underwood, the wife of a minister, he was sent to the penitentiary for fifteen years. When he had been in prison four years, this "respectable white lady," conscience smitten, confessed to her husband that she was equally guilty with the Negro. The husband had the prisoner pardoned, and secured a divorce from his depraved wife.

There are many such cases. Ed Coy, who was burned at Texarkana, Arkansas, was another instance exactly similar to that of Offet, and Judge Tourgee obtained the proof that the relatives and husband of the woman who...
made the charge were fully cognizant of the fact that she was equally guilty with Coy. They compelled her to make the charge and then to set fire to her paramour.

Again, white men often black themselves and commit crime, then lead a mob to lynch some Negro who may happen to be in the neighborhood. In Atlanta, Georgia, about four years ago a black man was discovered in the room of a young white girl of high standing. While attempting to escape he was shot and captured. The black man was found to be the son of a prominent white neighbor with his face and hands blacked. Had he not been captured some poor Negro would have been seized, identified "almost positively" and hung to the nearest tree. A similar case happened in Tennessee a few years ago.

Many innocent men are thus hanged or burned alive just because American prejudice refuses them a trial by their peers. And some court trials are little better than mob trials. The present governor of Georgia, Mr. Candler, while district judge three years ago, sent Ed Atkin, a boy of nineteen years, to the chain gang for ten years on the charge of attempted assault. The only evidence the girl offered against him was that she met him coming down a path and as he did not get out of the path she was afraid and ran. She swore that he was not within ten feet of her, did not speak to her, and did not follow her, but she would make an example of him so that young darkies would get out of the path when they saw white girls coming. Thereupon he sentenced him to ten years in the chain gang. This is an example of attempted assault.

Now, we want it distinctly understood that we are not trying to excuse crime. We contend that the death penalty should be inflicted upon every man who assaults a woman, without regard to the color of the victim or the criminal. This is more than the whites ask or will allow. In fact, there are twenty colored women assaulted by white men for every white woman assaulted by Negroes. Such cases are countless in every community in the South, but there is no redress for the colored women, either by law or by custom. Colored women are absolutely at the mercy of white men in the South, and a man does not lose social prestige or church relationship for ruining colored girls. I compelled a white Southern minister to acknowledge this fact before the ministers' meeting of Minneapolis a few years ago. And yet they talk about the immorality of the Negroes!

Under all these afflictions we have a great work to perform. We must not allow the injustice and cruelty of the whites to divert our attention from our own weaknesses and shortcomings. More attention must be given to the cultivation of Christian character. The morals of the race must be improved. Our women must spend more time in mothers' meetings and clubs for intellectual and moral culture and less on parties, receptions and balls. More money should be spent for good literature and in support of Christian Endeavor, Y.M.C.A., and kindred organizations instead of on Sunday excursions and theaters. If American justice and Christianity have decreed that we must lift ourselves by our own bootstraps let us set ourselves heroically to the task. Measured by the depth from which we have come, we have much to encourage us; casting our eyes to the summits yet to be gained, let us thank God and press on.

Sources:

Indianapolis Recorder (June 10, 1899).
Identifying "Hispanic" Populations: The Influence of Research Methodology Upon Public Policy
Jason Rothman and Amy Beth Rell (2005)

Chicano, Boricua. Mexican American. Latino. Puerto Rican. Spanish American. Raza. Latin American. Hispanic. Spanish Origin. White Person of Spanish Surname. The list of names seems endless and confusing. Which term is correct? In this issue of the Journal, an article by Roberts and Lee reports their study on health status of Mexican Americans; another article by Aday reports on those of Spanish heritage. It is quite likely that many readers will assume that the populations studied are comparable. However, the definitional differences (Mexican American vs Spanish heritage) can lead to operational differences which could mean that neither the population studied, nor the results can be compared with each other.

[In order to minimize terminological confusion, I will use the collective term Raza to refer to all the population groups mentioned at the beginning of this editorial. The reason for this will be discussed shortly.]

The operationalization of Raza groups has taken different forms over time and in different areas. Some surveys use a Spanish surname criterion which leads to two problems. One problem is that Raza with non-Spanish surnames may be screened out. If one were to apply this criterion in Mexico, one would screen out Indians (particularly Maya) who have not adopted Spanish surnames, and Mexicans of non-Spanish heritage. For example, Jacobo Zabludowsky, a news reporter of David Brinkley status, is an important public figure and often referred to as the "star of Aztec television." The second problem is that non-Raza are often included. The inclusion and exclusion do not cancel out one another, particularly when dealing with class and professional stratification.

About ten years ago as an undergraduate, I received a list from the U.S. Catholic Council of Spanish-American social workers in Alameda County California. Surprised to discover that there were so many listed, I did a reliability check on the Spanish surname criterion by developing a methodology which asked questions on self-identification, background or parents and grandparents, and other items. Of the 35 persons listed, only seven were what might be termed bona-fide Raza. The rest were Portuguese, Italians, or persons married to Portuguese, Italians, or Raza. A 500 percent error is intolerable. It was my hypothesis that the margin for error is greater the higher up the socioeconomic and professional ladder one conducts one's studies.

Spanish language is another criterion variable often used in surveys. However, this is a rapidly changing variable. In today's society, correlated with socioeconomic status, many second, third, and fourth generation Raza do not speak Spanish — in Mexico in the late 19th century, about half the population of the country did not speak Spanish as a primary language.

Birthplace of parents or self is another criterion used. However, one of the greatest waves of Mexican immigration occurred during World War I. Given rather short generations, there are many third and fourth generation Raza who do not fit this criterion.

Still another operationalization criterion is "Spanish Origin." A person is asked her/his origin or descent, and chooses from Mexican-American, Chicano, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, and other Spanish. As will be noted later, the last category, "other Spanish," creates a margin for error in studies of upper socioeconomic strata [...].

The Roberts and Lee study reports on Mexican-Americans (also referred to in the article as Chicanos) utilizing four variables to measure ethnicity: surname of head of household, birthplace of self or parents, Spanish language, and self-identification. Possession of any one was sufficient for inclusion in the sample.

The Aday article used a family surname or Spanish language criterion for inclusion for the national sample. Again, possession of any single variable was sufficient for inclusion. Other studies have used still other criteria to identify Raza respondents [...].

In order to understand how this confusion came about, some historical background is necessary. To illustrate the process, the terminological confusion regarding Mexicans and Chicanos will be used, but the same process can be applied to nearly all Raza groups. One way of stratifying society for distribution of benefits, privileges, and responsibilities has been by race and ethnicity. This means that ethnic groups have to be defined, and the operationalized so that individuals or groups can be appropriately
awarded such benefits as education and access to health care services.

Raza have had two major waves of definitions attempt to determine their social status: definitions by Spain and by the United States. When Columbus stumbled onto the Americas and thought he had landed in India, he called the inhabitants Indians. When it was later realized that India lay an ocean away, the label nonetheless remained. Thus the confusion in terminology began.

When the Spanish realized they had discovered a new group of people, they became concerned about the proper classification of Indians for reasons of colonial administration. In Spain, the Spanish had been racially xenophobic, having recently expelled both the Jews and Arabs from Spain. In New Spain (i.e., Mexico) the Spanish were a very small white minority imposing itself upon a large Indian (and increasingly mestizo i.e., a mixture of Indian and Spanish) majority. Thus, "limpieza de sangre" (purity of blood) had to be identified and maintained, lest Indians and mestizos were to begin to claim rights of governance. All office holders in New Spain had to be able to prove no taint of Indian, Jewish or Arabic blood. Furthermore, those so tainted were often denied entry to schools and universities. Mestizos in particular were subject to such discrimination; they fulfilled the role of an urban proletariat. Therefore, it was necessary for the Spanish to determine who was Indian and subject to Indian colonial law, ("ley de Indias") and who was mestizo or European, hence subject to regular Spanish law ("republica de Españoles").

Thus possessed with identifying a person ethnically, the Spanish developed a number of intricate schemes. One was a 16-category classification system which included nearly all possible combinations of Indian, Spanish, Black and mestizo. Whole new sub-categories were developed such as morisco, lobo, cambujo, coyote, chamiso, and so on [...].

Operationally, there is almost as much confusion and lack of standardization under American ethnic categorization as there was under the Spanish. But, a central fact remains: social benefits are still socially distributed, and ethnicity has been one method used to determine which groups receive which benefits.

The terms currently in vogue —"Hispanic" and "Spanish Origin"— are both misleading, stereotypical, and (one hates to use this trite term in the 1980s, but it is still true) racist. Spain is a European country and its inhabitants are white people of European stock. No Spaniard has ever suffered undue discrimination, either in Latin America of in the United States. Raza, be they Chicanos, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, etc., have not been denied access to social benefits because they might have had a distant Spanish ancestor: discrimination has been suffered because Raza are of Indian descent. Indeed, in Mexico as in all Latin America, the Spanish themselves discriminated against the Indians and the Indian descended mestizo.

Continued use of the term "Hispanic" or "Spanish Origin" denies the very basis upon which discrimination has been based, and confuses the basis for civil rights and affirmative action efforts. Because of this terminological and methodological confusion, not only is health research hampered, but legal efforts are placed in jeopardy. In 1979 in Maryland an Anglo named Robert E. Lee had his name legally changed to Roberto E. Leon in the hope he would qualify for affirmative action benefits because he would then have a Spanish surname.

This transparent ploy served to mock affirmative action. Yet, in reality, he was mocking an imprecise methodology. Judge Weber in Pittsburgh ruled that Hispanics are not a race, and denied affirmative action benefits to a person who had submitted proof that his father was a Mexican. Judge Renfrew, a proposed Carter appointee, has stated that Hispanics are no more than "lazy Caucasians", and not eligible for affirmative action efforts. One can understand such confusion as long as such terms as "white person of Spanish surname," "Hispanic," or "Spanish descent" are used for identification purposes.

An even more insidious consequence sometimes develops. Given the looseness and imprecision of definitions and operationalizations, persons not qualified for civil rights effort have nonetheless received such benefits, many times at the expense of bona fide Raza. These cases demonstrate the interaction of research methodologies and public policy. Not long ago I was asked by a public law firm to check the reliability of an "Hispanic" employee count used by a major California bank in its defense in a non-compliance of affirmative action lawsuit. The bank claimed it was in compliance, based on the Spanish surname and Spanish origin
criteria, and did not need to seek any more "Hispanic" employees. The employees were grouped into two categories: executive level and non-executive. I generated a random sample and administered a questionnaire which elicited information about ethnic identification of self, parents and grandparents, and birthplace of self, parents and grandparents, among other items.

I found that at the Executive level, 45 per cent of the sample was misclassified: they were Spanish, or French born (Basque), or born in the western hemisphere (usually South America) of Spanish parents and claimed a Spanish self-identification. At the non-executive level, the misclassification rate was much lower, only 20 per cent. In keeping with the social distribution of benefits by ethnicity, most of the non-executive workers (janitors, tellers, secretaries) were Mexican or Chicano. In the end, however, the lawsuit lost, because of the loophole offered by the U.S. Census Bureau's definition which states "...and other Spanish origin." Indeed, argued the bank, are not those from Spain of Spanish origin? Methodology once again influences public policy.

Many a public health school and medical school admissions committee has sweated (or should have sweated) over whether or not to admit a person claiming special admission privileges because of a grandfather's residence in Mexico or Venezuela. Is the candidate a bona fide Raza? The confusion lends itself to abuse. About ten years ago a bilingual job training and education program in the San Francisco Bay Area received funds to train and place hard-core Raza undereducated and unemployed. Rather than meet the spirit of the law, the program met the letter, and built up its success ratio by teaching English to Spanish and other white immigrant professionals (lawyers, doctors, etc.) from Argentina, Uruguay, and Spain. They were more easily placed than the Indian descended Mexican with only two- or three-years' education. Of the 12.0 million "persons of Spanish origin" in this country in 1978, 10.5 million are of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American origin; 1.5 million are "other Spanish," with significant numbers being European Spanish.9 It is contrary to the intent of the legislation to include this last 1.5 million under affirmative action benefits. What is to be done? I cannot offer an answer here, but I can outline a process by which an answer may be developed.

First, the terminology must be clarified. Based on historical reality, I feel that terms such as "Hispanic," "Spanish Origin," and the like which suggest European origin should not be used. Such terms deny the fact that Raza suffer because they are Indian descended, not because they might have a distant European ancestor. In addition, it lends itself to public policy and legal confusion. Some other term, such as Raza (which I have used here, and which is used by groups such as La Clinica de la Raza in Oakland, the Raza Health Alliance in California” and La Raza Medical Association nationally), or Latino, or even Latin American is preferable.

[In the end such an effort can supply the epistemological basis both for health services research and for civil rights and affirmative action in health care delivery.]
Malcolm X, “The Black Man” (1965)

I felt a challenge to plan, and build, an organization that could help to cure the black man in North America of the sickness which has kept him under the white man's heel.

The black man in North America was mentally sick in his cooperative, sheeplike acceptance of the white man's culture.

The black man in North America was spiritually sick because for centuries he had accepted the white man's Christianity -- which asked the black so-called Christian to expect no true Brotherhood of Man, but to endure the cruelties of the white so-called Christians. Christianity had made black men fuzzy, nebulous, confused in their thinking. It had taught the black man to think if he had no shoes, and was hungry, "we gonna get shoes and milk and honey and fish fries in Heaven."

The black man in North America was economically sick and that was evident in one simple fact: as a consumer, he got less than his share, and as a producer gave least. The black American today shows us the perfect parasite image -- the black tick under the delusion that he is progressing because he rides on the udder of the fat, three-stomached cow that is white America. For instance, annually, the black man spends over $3 billion for automobiles, but America contains hardly any franchised black automobile dealers. For instance, forty per cent of the expensive imported Scotch whisky consumed in America goes down the throats of the status-sick black man; but the only black-owned distilleries are in bathtubs, or in the woods somewhere. Or for instance -- a scandalous shame -- in New York City, with over a million Negroes, there aren't twenty black-owned businesses employing over ten people. It's because black men don't own and control their own community's retail establishments that they can't stabilize their own community.

The black man in North America was sickest of all politically. He let the white man divide him into such foolishness as considering himself a black "Democrat," a black "Republican," a black "Conservative," or a black "Liberal" . . . when a ten-million black vote bloc could be the deciding balance of power in American politics, because the white man's vote is almost always evenly divided. The polls are one place where every black man could fight the black man's cause with dignity, and with the power and the tools that the white man understands, and respects, and fears, and cooperates with. Listen, let me tell you something! If a black bloc committee told Washington's worst "nigger-hater," "We represent ten million votes," why, that "nigger-hater" would leap up: "Well, how are you? Come on in here!" Why, if the Mississippi black man voted in a bloc, Eastland would pretend to be more liberal than Jacob Javits -- or Eastland would not survive in his office. Why else is it that racist politicians fight to keep black men from the polls?

Whenever any group can vote in a bloc, and decide the outcome of elections, and it fails to do this, then that group is politically sick. Immigrants once made Tammany Hall the most powerful single force in American politics. In 1880, New York City's first Irish Catholic Mayor was elected and by 1960 America had its first Irish Catholic President. America's black man, voting as a bloc, could wield an even more powerful force.

U.S. politics is ruled by special-interest blocs and lobbies. What group has a more urgent special interest, what group needs a bloc, a lobby, more than the black man? Labor owns one of Washington's largest non-government buildings -- situated where they can literally watch the White House -- and no political move is made that doesn't involve how Labor feels about it. A lobby got Big Oil its depletion allowance. The farmer, through his lobby, is the most government-subsidized special-interest group in
America today, because a million farmers vote, not as Democrats, or Republicans, liberals, conservatives, but as farmers.

Doctors have the best lobby in Washington. Their special-interest influence successfully fights the Medicare program that's wanted, and needed, by millions of other people. Why, there's a Beet Growers' Lobby! A Wheat Lobby! A Cattle Lobby! A China Lobby! Little countries no one ever heard of have their Washington lobbies, representing their special interests.

The government has departments to deal with the special-interest groups that make themselves heard and felt. A Department of Agriculture cares for the farmers' needs. There is a Department of Health, Education and Welfare. There is a Department of the Interior -- in which the Indians are included. Is the farmer, the doctor, the Indian, the greatest problem in America today? No -- it is the black man! There ought to be a Pentagon-sized Washington department dealing with every segment of the black man's problems.

Twenty-two million black men! They have given America four hundred years of toil; they have bled and died in every battle since the Revolution; they were in America before the Pilgrims, and long before the mass immigrations -- and they are still today at the bottom of everything!

Why, twenty-two million black people should tomorrow give a dollar apiece to build a skyscraper lobby building in Washington, D.C. Every morning, every legislator should receive a communication about what the black man in America expects and wants and needs. The demanding voice of the black lobby should be in the ears of every legislator who votes on any issue.

The cornerstones of this country's operation are economic and political strength and power. The black man doesn't have the economic strength -- and it will take time for him to build it. But right now the American black man has the political strength and power to change his destiny overnight.

https://genius.com/Malcolm-x-chapter-16-out-annotated
A Latino and an African American Debate the Construction of Race, 1996

This is an old interview (1996) with Cornel West and Jorge Klors De Alva, but it hits on some interesting issues of race, class, this whole black/brown thing that I'm not sure that I fully comprehend. I mean that in terms of what this debate is trying to accomplish and what are the implications of using and operating within these labels in order to construct unity or agency. It keeps coming up more often than I'm used to now that I'm based in LA.

CONSTRUCTING HUMANS

[JORGE] KLOR DE ALVA: Nobody is born black. People are born with different pigmentation, people are born with different physical characteristics, no question about that. But you have to learn to be black. That's what I mean by constructedness.

[CORNEL] WEST: But are people born human? Is "human" itself constructed, as a category?

KLOR DE ALVA: Certainly as a category, as a social, as a scientific category, of course it's a construct. The species could have been identified in some other fashion. Since Columbus's landfall you had very extensive debates as to whether indigenous peoples in the Americas were human, like Europeans, or not. The priest Montesinos posed that question to the Spanish colonists in 1511, and Las Casas, a fellow priest, and the theologian Sepúlveda debated the issue at mid-century before Emperor Charles V.

WEST: You see, this historical process of naming is part of the legacy not just of white supremacy but of class supremacy. Tolstoy didn't believe his peasants were actually human until after he underwent conversion. And he realized, "My God, I used to think they were animals, now they're human beings, I have a different life and a new set of lenses with which to view it." So it is with any talk about blackness. It's associated with subhumanness, and therefore when we talk about constructed terms like "black" or "peasant" or "human," it means that the whole thing's up for grabs in terms of constructedness. And if that's so, then all we have left is history.

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KLOR DE ALVA: … We have, in the United States, two mechanisms at play in the construction of collective identities. One is to identify folks from a cultural perspective. The other is to identify them from a racial perspective. Now, with the exception of black-white relations, the racial perspective is not the critical one for most folks. The cultural perspective was, at one time, very sharply drawn, including the religious line between Catholics and Protestants, Jews and Protestants, Jews and Catholics, Jews and Christians. But in the course of the twentieth century, we have seen in the United States a phenomenon that we do not see anywhere else in the world-- the capacity to blur the differences between these cultural groups, to construct them in such a way that they became insignificant and to fuse them into a new group called whites, which didn't exist before.

WEST: Yes, but whiteness was already in place. I mean, part of the tragedy of American civilization is precisely the degree to which the stability and continuity of American democracy has been predicated on a construct of whiteness that includes the subordination of black people, so that European cultural diversity could disappear into American whiteness while black folk remain subordinated.

KLOR DE ALVA: But everything, even whiteness, must be constructed and is therefore subject to change.

*** ANGLOS MAY BE OF ANY RACE

[EARL] SHORRIS: We've just demonstrated one of the tenets of this conversation. That is, we have discussed almost exclusively the question of blacks in this society. But we started out
saying we would have a black-brown dialogue. Why does that happen? And not only in the media. Why did it happen here, among us?

KLOR DE ALVA: Part of the answer, as Cornel was pointing out, is that blacks are the central metaphor for otherness and oppression in the United States. Secondly, in part I take your question, when focused on Latinos, to mean, Don't Latinos have their own situation that also needs to be described if not in the same terms, then at least in terms that are supplementary?

I'm not sure. The answer goes to the very core of the difference between Latinos and blacks and between Cornel and myself: I am trying to argue against the utility of the concept of race. Why? Because I don't think that's the dominant construct we need to address in order to resolve the many problems at hand. Cornel wants to construct it in the language of the United States, and I say we need a different kind of language. Do you know why, Earl? Because we're in the United States and blacks are Americans. They're Anglos.

WEST: Excuse me?

KLOR DE ALVA: They're Anglos of a different color, but they're Anglos. Why? Because the critical distinction here for Latinos is not race, it's culture.

WEST: Speaking English and being part of American culture?

KLOR DE ALVA: Blacks are more Anglo than most Anglos because, unlike most Anglos, they can't directly identify themselves with a nation-state outside of the United States. They are trapped in America. However unjust and painful, their experiences are wholly made in America.

WEST: But that doesn't make me an Anglo. If I'm trapped on the underside of America, that doesn't mean that somehow I'm an Anglo.

KLOR DE ALVA: Poor whites similarly trapped on the underside of America are also Anglos. Latinos are in a totally different situation, unable to be captured by the government in the "five food groups" of racial classification of Americans. The Commerce Department didn't know what to do with Latinos; the census takers didn't know what to do with Latinos; the government didn't know what to do with Latinos, and so they said, "Latinos can be of any race." That puts Latinos in a totally different situation. They are, in fact, homologous with the totality of the United States. That is, like Americans, Latinos can be of any race. What distinguishes them from all other Americans is culture, not race. That's where I'm going when I say that Cornel is an Anglo. You can be a Latino and look like Cornel. You can be a Latino and look like you, Earl, or like me. And so, among Latinos, there's no surprise in my saying that Cornel is an Anglo.

*** WHAT COLOR IS BROWN?

KLOR DE ALVA: Do you think of Latinos as white?

WEST: I think of them as brothers and sisters, as human beings, but in terms of culture, I think of them as a particular group of voluntary immigrants who entered America and had to encounter this thoroughly absurd system of classification of positively charged whiteness, negatively charged blackness. And they don't fit either one: they're not white, they're not black.

SHORRIS: What are they?

WEST: I see them primarily as people of color, as brown people who have to deal with their blackness-whiteness.

SHORRIS: So you see them in racial terms.

WEST: Well, no, it's more cultural.
SHORRIS: But you said "brown.".

WEST: No, it's more cultural. Brown, for me, is more associated with culture than race.

SHORRIS: But you choose a word that describes color.

WEST: Right. To say "Spanish-speaking" would be a bit too vague, because you've got a lot of brothers and sisters from Guatemala who don't speak Spanish. They speak an indigenous language.

KLOR DE ALVA: You have a lot of Latinos who aren't brown.

WEST: But they're not treated as whites, and "brown" is simply a signifier of that differential treatment. Even if a Latino brother or sister has supposedly white skin, he or she is still Latino in the eyes of the white privileged, you see. But they're not treated as black. They're not niggers. They're not the bottom of the heap, you see. So they're not niggers, they're not white, what are they? I say brown, but signifying culture more than color. Mexicans, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, El Salvadorans all have very, very distinctive histories. When you talk about black, that becomes a kind of benchmark, because you've got these continuous generations, and you've got very common experiences.


My dad is thirteenth generation white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant. My mother is a second generation Japanese American. People say, "Did they meet under the bridge at the River Kwai?” and I say "No, the bridge at 160th and Amsterdam." It’s a typical American romance except that one happens to be of Japanese ancestry. My dad is from Massachusetts. He came to New York after the war. My mom is from Seattle. She came to New York via an internment camp in Idaho.

I define myself as a male human being. I think it’s society’s need to compartmentalize people that makes people call us half this or half that. I think the word white should be abolished because it perpetuates the notion that you can be this -> pure thing, and when your children are of European ancestry and something else, they are somehow seen as something less. So I never use the word white unless I have to. I define myself as Asian American because that is how I am perceived. The closest I’ve come to passing for an Asian is to have my middle name legally changed from Douglas to Tajitsu.

I was doing a lot of writing for Asian American papers, and people were wondering why a white man was writing about these issues, so I did it for that reason, and partly to honor the spirit of my mom’s family. That’s the closest I’ve come to wanting more of an Asian identity, and not having to explain all the time...

A lot of people are quizzical in a nice way. But it’s unfortunate that we have to always be defining ourselves. People ask questions like, "Do you know a good Chinese restaurant." I went through a real militant phase where I asked them, "Well, you’re French. Do you know a good French restaurant?" You know, the whole attitude that we should suddenly be experts on our cultures. I’m Japanese. Have I seen all of Kurosawa’s movies? Well of course not. I like some of his stuff, but I’m not expected to know everything about his work. I was never really angry at myself or my parents. The anger was more towards others for forcing me into situations where I would have to define myself. You look at the Irish European who can say, "Well, I’m a biologist. I’m not a black biologist." Why do we always have to define ourselves? To that extent. I’m still a little bit indignant. I don’t take it out on the average person who brings it up, because they just can’t be expected to know. I’m at a more mellow place right now where I take it as it comes. I’m trying to define for myself where I want to go....

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I’m proud of this country, but I’m not proud of all that has happened here. There is national chauvinism, things that are done in the name of this country that are not things I would do. Things are done in Hawaii, like annexation and racism. But I like the people. There is a basic goodness here. I’m not & blind patriot. I’ve travelled all around the world, and there are some good things here and there & some bad. My favorite quote is from Gandhi. Someone asked him what he thought of Western civilization, and he said, "I’d love to see it." I see myself as a patriot. I feel I belong here...

I don’t think the identity issue is one that will ever be fully resolved. My wife is part Haitian and part Chinese. I sometimes consider what our children will be like. The geneticists will want to see all the variations that could come out of our two gene pools. Haitians by definition are so mixed up genetically that we have cousins who may have black curly hair, with a blonde, blue-eyed sister. That happens with Haitian families, so that literally could happen to us. My wife’s father had red hair when he was younger. The recessive gene for blue eyes could happen to one of our kids, and we could have blue-eyed Asians without contact lenses. Or we could have someone who is very black-looking. So I’m personally prepared for whatever happens. I think it will be interesting.

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I imagine I’m going to be thinking about these issues for the rest of my life. The very knowledge that there is so much to think about has set me free. I know what I don’t want to be called, and anything else is fine.
“Ricky Martin Ain’t No Dixie Chick”
Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo

Introduction: The “Incident” and Purpose of this Essay

In February 2007, on a warm Friday night, Ricky Martin gave a two-hour concert in San Juan, Puerto Rico. According to the local press, the concert was an average Ricky Martin show, nothing all that remarkable, with one particular exception: while singing the song “Asignatura Pendiente,” an indulgent song about the perils of fame and the draining anguish of having too much money and material possessions, the usually well-behaved Martin proceeded to make an obscene gesture with his hand. But more than a random and momentary jump to the wild side, the hand gesture was strategically deployed during a specific line in the song about having his picture taken with President Bush. To be more precise, Ricky Martin showed the middle finger of his left hand when he sang President Bush’s last name.

When studied in depth, the reactions in the mainstream United States to this seemingly trivial event support the two-part argument of this essay: (1) after September 11, 2001, the category “American” (including notions about American citizenship—whether political or cultural) became a tenuous category tied to ideas about patriotism and non-immigrant status; and (2) patriotism was synonym with an unyielding support for President Bush and the policies of his administration. In Containing (Un)American Bodies, Bloodsworth-Lugo and Lugo-Lugo argue that beginning with the statement “Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists” in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the administration of former President Bush “reinvigorated a series of oppositional pairs through rhetorical means”. Another important feature of the Bush administration was the consistent attempt to (re)construct the notion of “the American people” or “Americans,” which they argue “is constructed in a unified way”. Moreover, “[t]he American people are taught to guard against what is ‘un-American,’ while implicitly defining the very categories ‘American’ and ‘un-American’ in the process”. This constant quest to articulate un-Americanness as something distinctly separate from Americanness, leads post-9/11 U.S. culture and society to create a sweeping category “un-American” that includes everything from terrorists to enemy combatants, to immigrants, to same-sex couples. Since the Bush administration was at the forefront of this effort, and President Bush was the leading figure in this endeavor, any criticism of the President and his administration was seen as unpatriotic and more importantly, as a threat to the nation and its (American) people.

In the midst of all this, as the U.S. kept symbolically shoring up definitions of Americaness, “Americans” also engaged in tangible efforts to keep un-Americaness out, including the creation of the Homeland Security Administration, the Patriot Act, Immigration and Costumes Enforcement, and constant references to a fence dividing the Mexico-U.S. International border, the Guantánamo prison in Cuba, and Abu Ghraiib in Iraq, which provided the American public with a plethora of images aimed at safeguarding the category “American.” The post-9/11 American versus un-American rhetoric is of particular importance, since the practices developed seem to be outlasting the Bush Presidency. That is, although some may claim that we are living in a new historical moment (i.e., a “post-post-9/11 era” or even more to the point, the “Obama era”), the elements and efforts developed during the post-9/11 era are still part of our realities for they were triggered by an event (i.e., the attacks on 9/11) that will remain fresh in the collective memory of Americans for years to come. They also became ideologies ingrained in people’s minds, and those ideologies morphed into a way of life for Americans. Pete Kuznick and James Gilbert make a similar claim about the Cold War when they argue that “much of what is usually thought of as Cold War culture outlasted the Cold War itself and will likely be with us for a long time”. The freshness of the event, along with the relentless, consistent, and systematic training Americans underwent for seven consecutive years are a guarantee that Americans will continue looking for (un)Americaness for a long time. In this essay, I use the backlash emanating from Ricky Martin’s “middle finger incident” to illustrate the connection between constructions of (un)Americaness, conceptions of citizenship, and demonstrations of patriotism toward the end of the George W. Bush administration, and the positionality of Puerto Ricans [...].
Flipping off the President: The Gesture in a Context

I would like to return to Ricky Martin and the middle finger incident, as it is my contention that the reactions to it from mainstream American media and Americans are characteristic of the post-9/11 climate and characteristic of the treatment of Latinos (and by extension Puerto Ricans) within that climate, as Latinos were seen as immigrants and immigrants were seen as a threat to Americanness. For instance, in July 2010, a year and a half after President Bush left office, Gallup reported that 50 percent of Americans thought that “halting the flow of illegal immigrants” should be the U.S. government’s main focus when dealing with the issue of illegal immigration, and 45 percent thought that immigration (any immigration, not just “illegal”) should be decreased (…). These perceptions, along with a barrage of reports of Latinos being harassed, beaten, incarcerated, detained, and deported tell us that the category un-American has been extended to include Latinos, and in many cases, without regard for citizenship status.

Perhaps because of his slight accent, and the constant media exoticization of his “Latino” body, Ricky Martin was/is seen as a Latino. In fact, if the individuals I quote below are any indication of how post-9/11 mainstream “Americans” see Ricky Martin, the majority seem to agree that he is an immigrant, and therefore “not-American.” When news about his uncharacteristic behavior at the February concert surfaced in the U.S., Martin released a statement to the press explaining that by flipping off the President he was condemning the war in Iraq. In his words: “My convictions of peace and life go beyond any government and political agenda and as long as I have a voice onstage and offstage, I will always condemn war and those who promulgate it”.

News websites (most notably MSNBC, AP, CNN, and Fox News), bloggers, and online chatters had plenty to say about both the incident and the anti-war statement. But, since most outlets simply reproduced the Associated Press original news release, they ended up with the exact same narrative. Thus, when reporting on the incident, the majority of the news outlets emphasized that the San Juan crowd cheered… when Martin “graciously” showed his middle finger to the then Commander in Chief. Although these reports provoked the most passionate responses from bloggers and chatters, statements about Puerto Ricans cheering a less than respectful gesture toward the President of the United States are the least interesting aspect of these reports. There really is no mystery in Puerto Ricans cheering a gesture that somewhat challenges the very person/office that controls their lives from afar. Any scholar with a vague notion of colonized/colonizer relations can explain this in her sleep. By the same token, there is no mystery in the number of news outlets reporting the incident, for the U.S. mainstream press is notorious for overdoing and sensationalizing stories on perceived out-of-the-ordinary behavior by celebrities. In this case, the out-of-the-ordinary behavior was considered an anti-Bush sentiment, which, as I mentioned above, within the post-9/11 climate translated into an anti-American sentiment in the minds of Americans. This explains why in responding to the news releases and blog posts, many chatters took Martin’s gesture and later statement as personal affronts, and thus tried to construct the gesture and him as un- or anti-American…

[Within the context of the U.S. (where these news articles were released), an allusion to other artists being critical of the war immediately reminded the public of Natalie Maines (white female from Texas) of the Dixie Chicks, who on the eve of the Iraq invasion in a concert in London, made the following anti-war statement in support of anti-war protestors in the city: “Just so you know, we’re on the good side with y’all. We do not want this war, this violence, and we’re ashamed that the President of the United States is from Texas”.

[I] saved for last the most illuminating of the comments made by anyone after Ricky Martin’s middle finger incident. The comment came from an online chatter, who simply yet emphatically wrote “Ricky ain’t no Dixie Chick!” (Us Magazine 2007). This statement has a multilayered truth captured in just five words… [I]t is true that Ricky isn’t a Dixie Chick, for the Dixie Chicks are accomplished musicians, while Ricky Martin is more of a pop culture icon. But more profoundly, Ricky Martin isn’t a Dixie Chick, for ultimately, he is not seen as an American. Martin’s perceived trespasses are those of a queer, un- or anti-American communist who summons terrorism by opposing the war. So, no, “Ricky Martin ain’t no Dixie Chick” even though they all dealt with similar issues after their behavior in a concert, in the same way that a Puerto Rican (even a light skinned one) “ain’t” no White American even though they are both U.S. citizens.

We can learn valuable lessons about history and citizenship from reactions to popular culture incidents. For
instance, if we are to understand how is it possible that Puerto Rico has remained an unincorporated territory of the United States of America even after countless bills seeking to discuss and address the island’s status have been introduced to Congress since 1898, mainstream knee-jerk reactions to Ricky Martin’s middle finger incident provide quite an insight. That is, how can Puerto Rico become anything other than a colony and Puerto Ricans anything other than second-class citizens, when U.S. first-class “neurotic” citizens do not have the tools to recognize Puerto Rico as a territory and Puerto Ricans as U.S. citizens? Or, how can Americans understand the nuances of race relations in their own country, when they don’t even know who is a citizen of the country? In the end, reactions to the middle finger incident underscore the invisibility if Puerto Ricans in the mainland, and on a broader level, the vulnerability of any racialized subject, regardless of citizenship status. But the biggest lesson we can learn from the middle finger incident is that, citizenship notwithstanding, as long as “Ricky Martin ain’t no Dixie Chick,” Puerto Ricans will continue to be invisible to the citizens of the “absent state.”
From Unincorporated Territory to Commonwealth: Connecting Decolonization and U.S. Empire
Cynthia H. Tolentino

My essay examines the transition of the Philippines and Puerto Rico from U.S. unincorporated territories to U.S. commonwealths in the mid-twentieth century. It studies the ideas of progress that are associated with this shift in legal and political status in order to then consider how they promote particular historical narratives and analytical frameworks for U.S. empire. The essay begins by examining dominant assumptions about the meanings and implications of the unincorporated territory and commonwealth in U.S. culture and history. Building on scholarship by Amy Kaplan, Christina Duffy Burnett, and Todd Shepard, I consider interpretations of the commonwealth as either a continuation or rectification of the U.S. colony status, but also as removed from the contemporaneous historical movement of decolonization. To understand how commonwealth stories operate as ambivalent narrations of U.S. decolonization, I analyze two fictional works, Bienvenido Santos’s 1955 short story “Brown Coterie” and the well-known 1957 musical West Side Story. The concluding paragraphs point to the possibilities opened up by situating the U.S. commonwealth in relation to twentieth century global and geopolitical formations such as United Nations trust territories and the outré-mer, rather than only within U.S. nation-based frameworks.

Between 1901 and 1922, the U.S. Supreme Court undertook a series of decisions known as the Insular Cases that gave legal sanction to the United States’ colonization of the islands of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines at the end of the Spanish-American War. What emerged from these legal cases was the designation of these new island “possessions” as neither foreign countries nor part of the United States; following this logic, the islands “belonged to” the United States, but without having been “incorporated” into the United States. To accommodate the in-between status of these overseas territories, the Supreme Court created a new legal and political category called the “unincorporated territory.”

Whereas the creation of the unincorporated territory marks the beginnings of U.S. global colonial empire at the turn of the century, the emergence of the commonwealth in the mid-twentieth century is viewed as either a symbol of the veiled persistence of U.S. colonialism or an amelioration of the island’s colonial status. For many, the shift of the Philippines and Puerto Rico from unincorporated territories to commonwealths was part of a progressive teleology by which the island governments would assume autonomy over local affairs through the establishment of an elected governorship and the ratification of a constitution. Following this logic, the inauguration of the Philippine Commonwealth in 1935 and the Estado Libre Asociado, or Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, in 1952 represented positive developments in the colonial relationship with the U.S., even as the federal government maintained control over key areas such as foreign policy and trade.

Situated as a stepping-stone, or transitional stage, to either U.S. statehood or national sovereignty, the commonwealth came to be understood strictly in terms of the failure or fulfillment of these goals. In the case of the Philippines, the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 marked the beginning of a ten-year transition period after which the Philippines would become an independent nation and included the creation of the Commonwealth of the Philippines in 1935 as
part of this framework. Today, however, Puerto Rico retains commonwealth status, and debate over the island's future continues through referendums and plebiscites.

The transition from unincorporated territory to commonwealth is generally assumed to be a natural (and presumably positive) evolution in the colony's development and is subsequently treated as flat description in historical accounts of the islands. Most criticism of the commonwealth has focused on identifying its advancement and expansion of U.S. colonial policies in order to shore up its associations with progress and increased sovereignty. Following this logic, the commonwealth is seen as a false promise of decolonization. Many scholars reject the notion that a “true” transition in the legal and political status of the colony has taken place; instead, they argue that Puerto Rico remains an unincorporated territory, despite the so-called shift to commonwealth status in 1952. The juridical invention of the unincorporated territory is directly tied to U.S. colonialism and empire in that it enabled the United States to assert direct rule over the new island possessions and in so doing, to assume the status of a world power akin to European empires. In contrast, the idea of the commonwealth revolves around the notion of a ‘compact.’ The theory of the “compact” holds that the taking of commonwealth status effectively terminates the territory’s “unincorporated” status, replacing it with a bilateral agreement in which the United States Congress no longer holds absolute sovereignty over the island’s affairs. The emergence of the commonwealth represented the realization of a gradual, if partial, transfer of sovereignty from Congress to the inhabitants of the island. Following this logic, the shift from “unincorporated territory” to “commonwealth” could be seen as marking the dissolution of the formal colonial relationship and the advent of a bilateral relationship between the islands and the United States.

This essay examines how (neo)colonial subjects of the Philippines and Puerto Rico have engaged the transition from unincorporated territory to the commonwealth. The shift to commonwealth status had the effect of rendering visible U.S. empire at the same time that it presumed to mark its dispersal or falling away. While the unincorporated territory and commonwealth have largely been contained to analyses of the waxing and waning of U.S. empire, I propose to understand the global and geopolitical landscape in which these categories operate, especially in relation to the historical movement of decolonization of the mid-twentieth century. Examining the U.S. commonwealth in relation to the discourse of decolonization will, I believe, offer perspective on the workings of U.S. empire and American exceptionalism. More specifically, I am interested in how dominant approaches to the commonwealth category have facilitated U.S. nationalist conceptions of the islands and foreclosed other possible conceptions of the islands.

In situating U.S. colonialism as the stage for the legal invention of the unincorporated territory, Christina Duffy Burnett remarks, “No one today defends the colonial status sanctioned by these cases, yet the idea of a relationship to the United States that is somewhere ‘in-between’ that of statehood and independence – somehow both foreign and domestic (or neither) – has not only survived but enjoys substantial support. A territorial status born of colonialism has been appropriated by colonial subjects.” By highlighting the enduring legacy of the Insular Cases, Duffy Burnett underscores the significance of the “unincorporated territory” and “commonwealth” to the ways in which colonial subjects imagine their relationships to the islands and to the United States.

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Frances Negron, Feeling Pretty: West Side Story and Puerto Rican Identity Discourses, 2000

There is no single American cultural product that haunts Puerto Rican identity discourses in the United States more intensely than the 1961 film, *West Side Story*, directed by Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins. Although neither the first nor last American movie to portray Puerto Ricans as gang members (men) or as sassy and virginal (women), hardly any Puerto Rican cultural critic or screen actor can refrain from stating their very special relationship to *West Side Story*. Jennifer López, the highest paid Latina actress in Hollywood today, recalls that her favorite movie was *West Side Story*. “I saw it over and over. I never noticed that Natalie Wood wasn’t really a Puerto Rican girl. I grew up always wanting to play Anita [Rita Moreno’s Oscar-winning role], but as I got older, I wanted to be Maria. I went to dance classes every week.”

…For Island-born cultural critic Alberto Sandoval, the film became pivotal in his own identity formation: “Alberto, I’ve just met a guy named Alberto.” And how can I forget those who upon my arrival would start tapping flamenco steps and squealing: ‘I like to be in America?’ As the years passed by I grew accustomed to their actions and reactions to my presence. I would smile and ignore the stereotype of Puerto Ricans that Hollywood promotes.”

One of the ironies of the film’s centrality in Puerto Rican identity discourses, however, is the universal consensus by both critics and creators of *West Side Story* that the film is not in any way “about” Puerto Rican culture, migration, or community life… [L]yricist Stephen Sondheim initially rejected the project on the grounds of his ignorance of Puerto Rican culture and experience with poverty: “I can’t do this show I’ve never been that poor and I’ve never even met a Puerto Rican.”

Without a touch of irony, Leonard Bernstein has written about the extent to which he researched Puerto Rican culture in New York before writing the score: “We went to a gym in Brooklyn where there were different gangs that a social organization was trying to bring together. I don’t know if too much eventually got into *West Side Story*, but everything does help.” The “superficiality” of the way that Puerto Ricans were represented in the book made one of the original *West Side Story* producers, Cheryl Crawford, insist that “the show explains why the poor in New York, who had once been Jewish, were now Puerto Rican and black. When someone said the piece was a poetic fantasy, not a sociological document, she replied, “You have to rewrite the whole thing or I won’t do it.” Hence, if *West Side Story* was never intended to be “real” and doesn’t feel real to Puerto Rican spectators, what accounts for its reality effects?

For those who have critiqued *West Side Story* oppositionally, the film opened a discursive space from which to speak for the “real” Puerto Rican community; a subjectivity allegedly not represented or misrepresented in the film. For many Puerto Rican spectators who identify with the narrative, *West Side Story* is a morality play about “our” everyday problems: racism, poverty, and the destructiveness of violence. An example of this pedagogical reading is exemplified by Actor’s Playhouse, a Miami-based theater group that recently staged the musical to a group of “at risk” young adults who were mostly Latinos. The purpose was “to show them the devastating consequences of associating with gang members who use violence as their primary way of solving differences.”

This benign view of the film, however, was not shared by the government officials who pulled *West Side Story* out of the Brussels World’s Fair “on the ground that it was bad publicity for America.” Hence, far from the homogeneous reading some critics have given the film as a piece of racist propaganda against Puerto Ricans, *West Side Story* endures in part due to the many discursive uses and “real” identifications it allows.

Simultaneously, the film’s instant canonization is not arbitrary. Several key discourses and histories of Puerto Rican–American representation merge in this text. First, the film—although not an entirely predictable Hollywood musical, perseveres in a long tradition of representing Latinos as inherently musical and performative subjects, ready to wear their sexualized identity for a white audience at the drop of a hat. Consistent with this history, the “Puerto Rican music” found in *West Side Story* is an American-made fusion of a wide range of rhythms with no discernible or specific national origin. In this sense, despite *West Side Story*’s dramatic elements, Latinos are doing exactly what they are expected to do, particularly at a time of significant racial and social unrest in the United States: singing and dancing the night away.

*[A]lthough *West Side Story* is not the first film to represent Puerto Ricans within a legal or sociological discourse (12 Angry Men and The Young Savages, for instance, preceded it), it remains the most cohesive product of American culture to “hail” Puerto Ricans as U.S. Puerto Ricans… [T]he film also allows an inquiry into the ambiguous relationships between Puerto Ricans and the United States.*

*[F]or instance, although Jerome Robbins had requested Rita Moreno to audition for the Maria character for the Broadway show, once the play was transformed into a Hollywood production, the likelihood that a Puerto Rican or Latina actress would be granted the lead role considerably diminished. Within these parameters, it is not surprising that Natalie Wood and George Chakiris were cast in the two lead Puerto Rican roles. At the same time, since Puerto Ricans are a multiracial people and some are indistinguishable from both whites and African Americans (as coded in the cinema), other visual and aural devices had to be mobilized to signify the specificity of*
the Puerto Ricans. Otherwise the visual economy of contrast between Jets and Sharks and Maria and Tony would be lost, and with it the allegedly objective nature of racial difference. The three most obvious signs of racialization efforts are the use of “brownface” for Bernardo, the always shifting, asinine accent deployed by most Puerto Rican characters, and the unnaturally blonde hair of the Jets. Without these three devices, most actors would simply look and sound like what they technically are: “Americans.”

The casting of Natalie Wood to play the lead character responds to several distinct, but related, discourses and taboos. While Jerome Robbins cast many unknowns for the Broadway version, Hollywood rarely takes this risk, since it may hurt the box office...

The union of Tony and Maria could have created anxiety in 1961... as any sexual contact between them could have resulted in interracial love and offspring. One way to alleviate this anxiety and allow white audiences to enjoy the interracial seduction without its consequences was to cast an actress whom everyone knew to be white. The interracial exchange becomes a safe spectacle for white audiences. A dissimilar, yet complementary, logic applies to the casting of George Chakiris as Bernardo. As the leader of the Sharks, Bernardo is an alternatively attractive and menacing subjectivity. Due to his projected power, possible seduction, and capacity for violence, employing a white actor is consistent with Hollywood casting logic... At the same time, although Bernardo is played by a Euro-American actor, it is acceptable for leading white men in Hollywood to seduce a nonwhite woman, an option rarely offered to actresses of color in relationship to unhyphenated American men...

Given the obviously “inauthentic” representations, what drags us Puerto Rican spectators back to the chair as Puerto Rican spectators? Although the leads are made up to look like “us” and fail, most of the identification work takes place with the secondary characters and the vaguely “Latino” music. Rita Moreno’s bodily poetics and dignity in playing Anita continuously threaten the narrative with a counternarrative of a female migrant experience, even if this is an inadvertent effect. The single most commented-on musical sequence by Puerto Rican critics, the rooftop “America” number, is one place to start. Poet Alberto Sandoval reads the song as a “political campaign in favor of assimilation” and remarks that “such assimilation is pronounced by a Puerto Rican herself, Rita Moreno, whose acting was awarded the coveted Oscar Award.”

In addition, one of the major criticisms of the “America” sequence is that “Puerto Ricans insult each other for being divided politically and ideologically between nationalists and assimilated.” Yet this is precisely one of the reasons that the number hits a chord among Puerto Rican spectators, since this is the way that the question of Puerto Rico–U.S. relationships has been historically discussed among Islanders—acrimoniously.

The number does not elude most of the immigrant issues like racism and economic marginality, at the same time that it highlights the rosy expectations and optimistic reasons that most migrants have for coming to the United States. If anything, “America” portrays an ambivalent picture of life in the United States, with all its oppression and promise. The level of irony, social critique, and protagonism of the women contrasts with most of West Side Story in its subtlety and insight. What is perhaps jarring for some spectators is the notion that it is the leading “authentic” Puerto Rican actress who is singing the praises to America, and the “brownface” Bernardo who critiques the United States. However, although some of us may not agree with what Anita sings, it is hard to deny that Anita is the most articulate and dynamic character in the film, and that undoubtedly most Puerto Rican immigrants have at one point or another agreed with both sides.