CONSTRUCTING ETHICS FROM LATINA IDENTITIES: DECOLONIZING THE IMPACT OF LATE NINETEENTH TO EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY US PROTESTANT MISSIONS

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ABSTRACT

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TWENTIETH-CENTURY US PROTESTANT MISSIONS

Kenia Vanessa Mendoza

This dissertation constructs mujerista *aliviar* ethics in tracing the development of US Protestant home missions to the first Mexican and Puerto Rican—and specifically Latina—communities from the time of the Mexican-American War (1848), the Spanish-American War (1898), and on through the early twentieth century by exploring denominational archival records of the Woman's Home Missionary Society (WHMS) (1898–1940) of the Methodist Episcopal Church. It makes two primary claims: first, that during that era, Protestant missions solidified the US hegemonic culture and society's construction of Mexican and Puerto Rican racialized caricatures, particularly that of women and girls; and second, that Mexican and Puerto Rican women resisted the constructed identities ascribed to them in a way that was not clearly evident to the missionaries through a complex dynamic. This analysis leads to my construction of mujerista *aliviar* ethics in the concluding chapter.

The first part of this dissertation examines church and state contexts during the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It focuses particularly on the women who founded the WHMS, who proudly adhered to the social standards and practices of womanhood that men prescribed; in so doing, white Christian society proclaimed them as bearers of true womanhood. The WHMS passed on its combined values of patriarchy and patriotism to Mexican and Puerto Rican girls, whom it deemed lost, ignorant, and in need

of saving. The focus on girls and women during its missions was to ensure both a proper domestic and national "home" life.

The second part of this dissertation applies a decolonial Latina feminist lens, drawing on mujerista ethics and Chicana theories to nuance particular examples in these missions and in society to analyze how Mexicans and Puerto Ricans resisted hegemonic constructions of identity. The complex dynamic of being both oppressed and participating in their own oppression shaped Latinas' construction of their own identity. To understand and appreciate this complex dynamic, this dissertation constructs *mujerista aliviar ethics*—a spiraling and springing praxis of unbinding, healing, and liberating subjugated Latinas' lived experience and knowledge that is individualistic and communal.

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INTRODUCTION

I was baptized as an adult into a US Protestant church with a historically white demographic in the suburbs of northern Virginia. The strong appeal of being baptized at that church stemmed from my parents being members when they reached retirement age, and it was the only place I knew in my adulthood, since I did not grow up in church. I admired the way the older white members were so welcoming to my parents' Latina ministry—my father being the lay minister who co-led the Spanish service. Upon being baptized, every Sunday I then began to attend the English service led by the senior minister as well as the Spanish service, as the church began to have two services when the Latina ministry joined the white church.

For many years there appeared to be peace and unity between the two communities despite their ethnic diversity, and this was remarkable to me. It was remarkable because from the age of three I had grown up in the United States and I had not seen that type of acceptance and welcome in other spaces, such as schools, restaurants, workplaces, and other institutions. When the two congregations had joint service events once a quarter, we sang half of the hymns in Spanish and half in English, and the service was translated into both languages. My mother led the Latina women in planning and organizing the joint fellowship meals we all enjoyed. My mother would say that because the English-speaking members were like our "older siblings in Christ," we had to pay homage and respect to them by performing service—cooking, serving, and cleaning up after the shared lunch. Sure, we loved our cooking and we wanted to show the English-speaking church members how good our cooking was and how hospitable we

were in return for them welcoming us into their space, their church, where they had already been for decades.

In time, the English-speaking church leaders asked my mother and me to join the church board, as we were the only fully bilingual speakers. My mother became a trustee, and for eight years I held various positions, from secretary to vice-chair and chairperson of the board. I made a great effort during those years to learn my role and its duties, as well as the governing documents of the church. It was then that I learned that the answer to some of my questions were simply "this is how things are." Rather than question how things were, I did my best to internalize and work within the structure that had been established many decades before my birth. In time, I had to question certain things, and when I could not find the answer in the governing documents, I would ask the older English-speaking members, trusting that they had the answer. The default response when those members could not point to a particular church doctrine or bylaw was "that's how we've always done it." At first, I did not question that default response. But when conflict and the threat of racial division emerged, I felt I had no choice but to press them further. That my questions fell on deaf ears eventually made me realize that no one actually knew the history of the practices and beliefs I was challenging. That, too, I found unsatisfying given the trauma that I witnessed prompted by church division along racial, socio-economic, and arguably political lines.

Years later, when I became the senior minister of that same church, I knew that saying "that's how we've always done it" was no longer sufficient as an answer, and that I had to research more satisfactory responses to my questions, responses based in our cultural, historical, and theological values. So I began asking: What Christian Protestant

histories, practices, and ethical values have shaped our church cultural values? What issues must we explore to reveal the legacies that are at play today that shape our Christian ethics? How can we process, distance, and liberate ourselves from this often restrictive and discriminatory legacy to move towards a future of equal dignity for all? And, particularly, how do Latinas self-identify and self-determine who they are, given this history, and how can they transform themselves and their communities?

These are the questions that motivate this dissertation and my quest to understand how, although Christian doctrine holds that all members of the body of Christ (the church) are equal, in practice that is not the case.

To begin exploring how we got here requires not only exploring history but the notion of history itself. This dissertation acknowledges that, as womanist ethicist Emilie Townes points out, history is manufactured and produced to satisfy the "fantastic hegemonic imagination"—a concept I explore more fully in chapter two. For now, what is important to understand is that the hegemonic constructs a very particular "history," that is then narrated over and over again until it is the only one that anyone knows. I argue that if we are not willing to question what it is that we call history, from where it comes, whom it benefits and whom it harms, then we can be complicit in it and its continuation, despite our best intentions to be critical of dominant narratives.

In this dissertation, I discover that there is a complicated dynamic of complicity in the perpetuation of such history, complicity which co-exists with privilege and oppression, all intermeshed together, which we do not easily recognize because for centuries those in power have taught us to view things in separate categories or what might be called binaries. Another of the central aims of this dissertation is to analyze the

connection between US socio-cultural history and US Protestant missions in using colonial ideologies to create categories, hierarchies, and binaries that preserve hegemonic power over the marginalized.

One of the reasons that I choose to focus on the intermeshed relationship of US socio-cultural hegemony and US Protestant missions in this dissertation is that though I, too, was taught and believed that church authority, beliefs, and community life can be understood as separable from the rest of society, that is not the case. In this dissertation, I focus on US Protestant missions in the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, particularly to the Mexican and Puerto Rican communities that the US colonized following its military conquest of their lands. Those communities were arguably some of the first Latinas[1] to be exposed to US Protestantism. Their histories are consequently part of a continuity of history that impacts all Latinos in US Protestant churches today. Of course US Protestants directed their missions to other non-Latina racial and ethnic groups in the US as well, but those groups are not the focus of this dissertation.

Understanding that terminology such as *Latinas*, *Mexicans*, and *Puerto Ricans* can also have a homogenizing effect, I mitigate that by using specific examples and case studies throughout the dissertation. I note that my study of Puerto Ricans throughout this dissertation is specifically of those in the mainland. Likewise, aware that Protestants are neither a theologically nor demographically homogeneous group, I focus on one specific group and era—the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and more particularly the Woman's Home Missionary Society

[1] The term *Latinas* did not exist during the time period explored in this dissertation, and thus the word Latinas is used anachronistically when referring to Mexican and Puerto Rican communities in that era. The reason this dissertation nonetheless uses the term *Latinas* I explain at the end of this chapter.

(WHMS)— whose foundation I outline in chapter one. For now, I provide only a brief history of the MEC.

The MEC has historical roots in Britain in the early Wesleyan movement that migrated to the Americas via its founder, Anglican priest John Wesley.[2] The MEC was formed in 1784, approximately eight years after the nation of the United States (US) declared its independence from Britain.[3] Methodist missions historian Mark R. Teasdale states that the MEC is an ideal religious institution to be used to trace how the "American gospel" was evangelized to all in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries[4] because it "was organically connected to the American people" of that time; because the MEC left a "robust history of evangelistic work in which to view the values it perceived as essential to share with others"; and because of its theology centered on Wesley's "way of salvation"— an ongoing process of becoming holy.[5] The MEC's desire to preserve its archives meticulously is also evident in the WHMS archives, the focus of this dissertation.

The WHMS archives are housed at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. These archives are a particularly rich source of information about how Protestant missionaries not only evangelized the American gospel, or American Christianity, but also how they shaped the role of women and girls in their corner of Protestantism—a gendering process I describe in chapter one. I focus on the WHMS home missions to

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[2] Mark R. Teasdale, *Methodist Evangelism, American Salvation: The Home Missions of the Methodists Episcopal Church 1860–1920* (Pickwick Publications, 2014), 3.

[3] Teasdale, *Methodist Evangelism, American Salvation*, 3.

[4] Teasdale, *Methodist Evangelism, American Salvation*, 3.

[5] Teasdale, *Methodist Evangelism, American Salvation*, 3–4.

Mexican and Puerto Rican women and girls once they became US citizens following military conquest of their lands.

It is important to mention that the racial terminology used to identify whites during this time period from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century in WHMS articles and the US social-political context is particular and changes over time. There is rarely a reference to "white" and instead references to "Anglo" or "Anglo-Saxon," which is a social-political ideology for elite superior white people based on history that I discuss in chapter one. Over time, that ideology has become more inclusive of white people who internalize the ideology of superiority. Thus, I use *white* in reference to the twenty-first century to argue that the historical ideology of white supremacy persists. Further, it is important to note that the understanding of whiteness in Mexican American history and Puerto American history is Anglo, and the understanding of the missionary spirit is Anglo in this historical context. Towards the end of this dissertation I again make the shift to "white" people, for although the notion of race shifts over time (for white people and for people of color), it nonetheless retains its racial ideology as a continuation of history if we do not choose to name it and decolonize from it, as I argue in the concluding chapter.

Thus, in my archival research, I look beyond what is obviously documented and re-imagine it as described by decolonial Christian histories archivist Gladson Jathanna, who helpfully posits that the "interrogation of archival space, more precisely of missions archives, might provide us a re-imagined methodological position into local Christian

histories which were once viewed exclusively as Christian missions histories."[6] Looking again at the documents of the WHMS archives through this critical and imaginative lens can potentially help us to piece together some of the neglected, silenced, and forgotten stories within US Protestantism.

While historical archival research provides solid primary source documentation, it is nonetheless only one methodological tool I use in this dissertation. I recognize that "the term 'research' is itself inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism."[7] Thus, I am mindful of how documents and research in the past—in this case, on the WHMS—"was collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the West, and then, through the eyes of the West, back to those who have been colonized."[8] Thus, while I admit that my research was done in a Western theological institution and focused on a Western religious institution and thus can continue to be colonizing, those spaces can, I believe, "also become spaces of resistance and hope."[9] Thus, this dissertation holds in tension research methods that can marginalize and open spaces of resistance and hope. With that in mind the aim of this dissertation is for the descriptive and hermeneutical engagement to contribute to a decolonial epistemological framework for a Christian socio-ethical enterprise.

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[6] Jathanna Gladson, "Postcolonial Re-imaginations: Interrogating Archival Space in Indo-European Encounters" in *Postcolonialism, Theology and Construction of the Other*, ed. Britta Konz, Bernhard Ortmann, and Christian Wetz (Brill, 2020), 172.

[7] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Zed books Ltd., 2012), 1.

[8] Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 1.

[9] Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 4.

COLONIALITY AND MODERNITY

My review of archival missions to Mexican and Puerto Rican communities employs a Latina decolonial feminist framework to help establish and localize Christian histories missions. Decolonial theorist Walter D. Mignolo in *Coloniality Is Far from Over, and So Must Be Decoloniality*, argues that although the physical colonization of the Americas might be over, the mindset, tactics, knowledge, practices, theories, and so forth employed during that original colonization are far from over. [10] They exist as an ideology of *coloniality*, which "infects our minds and makes us 'see' what the rhetoric of Western modernity wants us to see."[11] In time, the rhetoric of Western modernity becomes normative and the status quo, because everything around us in schools, work, government, social programs, and churches operates according to that single rhetoric and structure. In addition, as decolonial theorist Anibal Quijano suggests,

> The colonizers also imposed a mystified image of their own patterns of producing knowledge and meaning. At first, they placed these patterns far out of reach of the dominated. Later, they taught them in a partial and selective way, in order to co-opt some of the dominated into their own power institutions. Then, European culture was made seductive: it gave access to power.[12]

The Europeans who colonized the Americas not only imposed their knowledge and their worldview on the colonized but also took knowledge from the colonized to manipulate and erase it as they deemed necessary. This created European knowledge versus "other" non-European knowledge in a hierarchy in which European knowledge

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[10] Walter D. Mignolo "Coloniality Is Far from Over, and So Must Be Decoloniality." *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry,* no. 43 (2017): 38–45. https://doi.org/10.1086/692552.

[11] Mignolo, "Coloniality Is Far from Over," 39.

[12] Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality." In *Foundational Essays on the Coloniality of Power*, ed. Walter D. Mignolo, Rita Segato, and Catherine E. Walsh. Translated by David Frye (Duke University Press, 2024), 169.

was superior. The creation of categories and hierarchies is, as Argentinian decolonial feminist Maria Lugones argues, what modernity does, in that it "organizes the world ontologically in terms of atomic, homogeneous, separable categories."[13] Categories and structures enable us to process information more quickly and thus are arguably a mental and linguistic necessity. But when such categories homogenize and erase differences, they can quickly have more malevolent consequences. Most malevolent is the colonial category or determination of who qualifies as human and who does not, and by extension which human (and their knowledge) is superior and which inferior—as my mother and I learned in my church story detailed in this chapter's opening—which Lugones argues is the "[i]s the central dichotomy of colonial modernity."[14]

This classification of who is deemed human versus non-human or less human likewise determines who is deemed to be civilized and who is uncivilized (or barbarous). That civilizing perspective further dictates who and how men and women are, as Lugones states:

> from the civilizing perspective as judged from the normative understanding of "man," the human being par excellence[,] [fe]males were judged from the normative understanding of "women," the human inversion of men.[15]

The colonial understanding of man as the exemplary human, and woman as the inversion of men, helps to explain how and why patriarchy continues to hold power in coloniality in their everyday interactions. The power of patriarchy is visible when discussing the

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[13] Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 743.

[14] Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 744.

[15] Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 744.

civilizing missions of the Americas, in which Christianity was another source of power. As Lugones states, "[t]he civilizing mission, includ[ing] conversion to Christianity, was present in the ideological conception of conquest and colonization."[16]

To begin to analyze Christianity, particularly its Protestant missions and their role in conquest and colonization, this dissertation focuses on the Protestant missions to Mexicans and Puerto Ricans of the Woman's Home Missionary Society (WHMS) of the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The subsequent chapters provide a brief history of the formation of the WHMS. The following section introduces those home missions to Mexican communities in the southwestern territory of the US and to Puerto Rican communities on the island.

PROTESTANT MISSIONS TO MEXICANS AND PUERTO RICANS

Protestant missions to Latina communities in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were primarily influenced by the military invasion of Mexican and Puerto Rican lands, which were subsequently seized by the US, typically with the US extending US citizenship to the people who remained on those lands. In the 1840s, the US invaded the southwest territory (which at that time was northern Mexican territory) in what became known as the Mexican-American War, prompting Mexico to defend itself from American aggression.[17] Most American Protestants agreed that such westward expansion was God-ordained, and hence that the "Anglo-Saxon race" was divinely

[16] Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 744.

[17] Juan Francisco Martínez, "Origins and Development of Protestantism among Latinos in the Southwestern United States, 1836–1900" (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1996), 11, ISSN (0419-4209).

destined and allowed to control those lands.[18] This God-ordained expansion will be nuanced in the following chapter. For now, it is important to note that following the military conquest, Mexicans who were on the southwestern lands had to choose whether to leave their lands and migrate south to Mexico, or remain on their lands and have US citizenship imposed on them.[19] The imagined history that it is Mexicans who cross the US border was certainly not so in the mid-nineteenth century. Rather, it was the border that crossed them. The United States infringed on Mexicans' territory. This border crossing contributed to the construction of a new identity: "Mexican-American." It is in this context of the Mexican-American War that the moral imaginations of Mexicans and of US Americans clashed politically.

The Mexican-American War, which ended in 1848, was one of the events that prompted many Americans (as historian Reginald Horsman states) to view "the American Anglo-Saxon [as] a separate, innately superior people who were destined to bring good government, commercial prosperity, and Christianity to the American continents and to the world."[20] Given the economic, industrial, and political prosperity which the US experienced during that time, the narrative became that God gave them the land for them to "redeem it from the wilderness—to settle it with an intelligent, honorable and interprising [sic] people."[21] This narrative undergirded Americans' subsequent civilizing and Americanizing missions.

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[18] Juan Francisco Martínez, *The Story of Latino Protestants in the United States* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 32.

[19] Martínez, *The Story of Latino Protestants in the United States*, 31.

[20] Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins Of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Harvard University Press, 1981), 1–2.

[21] Daisy L. Machado, *Of Borders and Margins. Hispanic Disciples in Texas, 1888–1945* (Oxford

Though slow at first, the pace of US migration to the newly seized southwestern territories quickened after the Civil War (1865),[22] and with it came missions for the formation of Christian churches. United States Protestants eagerly initiated missions to the southwestern region, intent on not allowing people in that region to be "lost"—meaning specifically either without Christianity or lost to the Catholic Church.[23] Most Protestant missions targeting Mexicans in the southwest began their work in the late 1860s.[24] Because public US discourse typically caricatured Mexicans as "doomed to 'ignorance, degradation, and misery,'"[25] US Protestants saw it as their mission to spread the American gospel and promote American Christian values among Mexicans in the newly conquered southwest region, now part of the US.

This dissertation likewise explores US Protestant missions to Puerto Ricans following the island's military colonization as a US territory. The US conquered the island of Puerto Rico—then a Spanish territory—following the Spanish-American War of 1898. Once conquered, Puerto Ricans were forced to accept US citizenship.[26] This made them prime targets to be Christianized the American way. In a 1922 article of the

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University Press, 2003), 67.

[22] Martínez, *The Story of Latino Protestants in the United States*, 33.

[23] Martínez, "Origins," 7; David Maldonado Jr., *Protestantes/Protestants: Hispanic Christianity Within Mainline Traditions* (Abingdon Press, 1999), 32–33.

[24] Martínez, "Origins," 2.

[25] Martínez, "Origins," 22.

[26] Victor M. Rodriguez Domínguez, "The Racialization of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans: 1890s–1930s." *Centro Journal* 17, no. 1 (2005): 75, 82, Hunter College-Cuny, Center Puerto Rican Studies.

WHMS, the "Bureau Secretary of Porto Rico and Santo Domingo" published her observations of the Puerto Rican people as having

> loose moral conditions which have prevailed for hundreds of years [and] are still the curse of the island. The responsibility of parenthood and the sanctity of the marriage relation are not felt by these people, due [in] large measure[]to the fact that the sacraments of the Roman Catholic church were not administered unless paid for, and the people were too poor to pay. The sacredness of the marriage relation must be emphasized, and the ideals of the people elevated.
>
> There are children, children everywhere, and thousands there are who are not cared for by their own parents and do not even know who they are. All this goes to prove that the island of Porto Rico is [a] most needy mission field.[27]

Note how this passage conveys the broad, intentional agenda of WHMS Protestant missions. Those missions were not simply to evangelize, but to judge morals, critique the Catholic Church, and caricature Puerto Rican people as a homogeneous morally "needy" group. The well-intentioned ideals for which some Protestant missions may have been initiated cannot cover up the harm they caused.

Lastly, the reason I highlight this example here in the introductory chapter is that it demonstrates that the WHMS expressed a particular interest in the role of women and girls, mothers and daughters, by critiquing Puerto Rican parenthood and children, which is part of what in chapter one I describe as the WHMS' gendering process. As part of the larger story of US Protestant missions spreading Americanized Christianity, I am particularly interested in how Latinas resist and exercise their agency in that environment.

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[27] Lillian Leonard Sack, "Returning from The Tropics" *Woman's Home Missions,* 39, no. 5 (May 1922): 7.

LATINA/CHICANA FEMINIST THOUGHT AND MUJERISTA THEOLOGY IN LO COTIDIANO

The final aim of this dissertation is to focus on the Christian social ethic of Latinas' quest for liberation and transformation, an ethic that centers on *lo cotidiano*—the everyday or quotidian life in which Latinas experience and expose systems and structures of coloniality that oppress, marginalize, and dehumanize them, in and out of the church. Amid that daily oppression, marginalization, and dehumanization, they resist and use their agency to self-determine and self-identify who they are and how they will relate and to whom. Latina/Chicana feminist thought and mujerista theology are not the only disciplines that center lo cotidiano, but in this dissertation they are the primary disciplines and approaches that I explore and discuss in my analysis of Mexican and Puerto Rican resistance and agency in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries amid the colonizing interventions of Americanizing Protestant missions.

Latina/Chicana feminist tradition was arguably spurred in the second half of the twentieth century in the Americas by various socio-political issues that prompted social movements for liberation that sought the "transformation of the current dominant paradigm of social living."[28] "The feminist movement in Latin America began to gain public recognition in the 1960s."[29] "[B]y 1971, grassroots organizations of 'U.S. third world feminists' began to form across the United States."[30] We must not underestimate

[28] Maria Pilar Aquino, "Latina Feminist Theology: Central Features," in *A Reader In Latina Feminist Theology*, ed. Maria Pila Aquino, Daisy L. Machado, and Jeanette Rodriguez (University of Texas Press, 2002), 134.

[29] Ivone Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation* (Fortress Press, 2002), 9.

[30] Aquino, "Latina Feminist Theology," 136.

the power of social movements of those on the ground—the grassroots—whether in the distant past or in our day. The impact of Latinas in the US and women in Latin America on the theory and practice of social transformation and liberation is vast, continues to spread globally, and is critical for the liberative life of church and society today.

Underlying this introductory chapter and all the chapters that follow is the question: Why has the Latina experience as a source of knowledge been subjugated? The answers to that question are various and complex. The question and its answers underlie not only this but all the chapters. I begin my answer with the words of Argentinean decolonial feminist Maria Lugones, who poignantly notes that " 'woman' has not been the name for a desirable position in the social realm, among Anglo-European people, simply because the name is entrenched in the ensemble of violence and power backed up by philosophical/ideological justifications."[31] In the 1980s, the Women of Color coalition "transformed the meaning of gender" by establishing that race and gender cannot be separate categories, and that "[t]o notice the inseparability of race and gender, to 'see' nonwhite women, produces an important epistemological shift."[32] Aside from recognizing that gender and race are interconnected identifiers, this dissertation leans on Lugones' conclusion that our true selves are a multiplicity."[33] This multiplicity is perhaps one of the pillars to answering why Latinas as a source of knowledge have long been

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[31] Maria Lugones, "Revisiting Gender: A Decolonial Approach," in *Theories of the Flesh: Latinx and Latin American Feminisms, Transformation, and Resistance*, ed. Andrea J. Pitts, Mariana Ortega, and José Medina (Oxford University Press, 2020), 31.

[32] Maria Lugones, "Methodological Notes toward a Decolonial Feminism," in *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*, ed. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Eduardo Mendieta (Fordham University Press, 2012), 68–69.

[33] Lugones, "Methodological Notes," 70.

subjugated, as they cannot fit in neat categories, binaries, or hierarchies. What does Lugones mean by *multiplicity*?

> Because multiplicity is also understood in two related ways, a double meaning, this answer also doubles. On the one hand, the racialized, gendered self is multiple in its perceiving others perceiving her as inferior, as lacking in the fundamental capacities of the rational modern self. Her inferiority to others' superiority is inscribed not just in how she is perceived but also in the very complex construction of the social world. Her construction of inferior is fictional but real because the fiction is upheld by power. The split in self-perception is crucial for the subjectivity/intersubjectivity of the nonwhite subject. […] Thus, she inhabits, at least, a fractured locus. As the fragmentation of the self is lived as double consciousness, one comes to inhabit the multiple position that reveals the imposed quality of the inferiority and the relation between power and that imposition. The doubling makes vivid the injunction to see and live only in white terms, erasing resistant subjectivities and relations within the dominant hegemonic mainstream, marking gender as real only among real people, white people. So hegemonically, Native American, black, and white are not ways of marking gender. They are disconnected from gender.[34]

Thus, Latinas operate in a double consciousness of what they see and how others see them. This means that their identity is fragmented. To operate as a fragmented being means one has to learn to occupy multiple positions, always being in-between positions and crossing positions and yet at the same time being told to ascribe to norms that erase self-identity and self-determination. Hence, the intent of the formation of the Latina feminist movements was for women to politicize their experiences as women with such lived multiplicity, including the spiritual and embodied, in lo cotidiano.

Before moving on to defining and applying lo cotidano in Latina feminist thought, it is important to parse out the different groups of Latina feminists and their formation. The discussion of lo cotidiano is arguably most often attributed to the founder of mujerista theology, Cuban theologian and practitioner, Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz. In the US

[34] Lugones, "Methodological Notes," 70.

in 1975, Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz found great satisfaction in becoming a feminist; however, when Isasi-Diaz tried to bring attention to how Latina women struggle differently from white women, many white feminists did not welcome that discussion.[35] This prompted Isasi-Diaz to leave the white feminist movement and find another space that could address the daily struggles of living in the United States as a Latina woman.[36] In Isasi-Diaz's experience, "women" seemed to refer to white middle-class women, and the rest of the women who were not in that strata require qualifiers, such as "poor women" or "African American women" or "Latina women" or "lesbian women," and so on.[37] In 1992, during the second wave of feminism in the United States,[38] the groundbreaking *Roundtable Discussion: Mujeristas Who we Are and What We Are About*[39] was published, in which theologian-practitioner Isasi-Diaz had a public discussion with contemporary Latina theologians on developing a name for themselves. For Isasi-Diaz, naming themselves was "an essential strategy in developing the moral agency of Latina/Hispanic women and is, therefore, timely and even urgent."[40] After much deliberation, the term "mujerista" was the name chosen to describe:

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[35] Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Orbis Books, 1996), 18.

[36] See generally, Isasi-Diaz, Ada Maria, Elena Olazagasti-Segovia, and Sandra Mangual-Rodriguez, et al., "Roundtable Discussion: Mujeristas Who We Are and What We Are About," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 8, no. 1 (1992): 105–125. edsjsr.25002173.

[37] Isasi-Diaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 20.

[38] Linda Martin Alcoff, "Decolonizing Feminist Theory: Latina Contributions to the Debate," in *Theories of the Flesh: Latinx and Latin American Femenism, Transformation, and Resistance*, ed.Andrea J. Pitts, Mariana Ortega, and Jose Medina (Oxford University Press, 2019), 21.

[39] See generally, Isasi-Diaz et al., "Roundtable Discussion."

[40] Isasi-Diaz, et al., "Roundtable Discussion," 125.

> a Hispanic woman who struggles to liberate herself not as an individual but as a member of a Hispanic community. She is one who builds bridges among Hispanics instead of falling into sectarianism and using divisive tactics. A *mujerista* understands that her task is to gather the hopes and expectations of her people about justice and peace. In the *mujerista*, God chooses to once again lay claim to and revindicate the divine image and likeness of women made visible from the very beginning in the person of Eve. The *mujerista* is called to gestate new women and new men—Hispanics who are willing to work for the common good, knowing that such work requires us to denounce destructive self-abnegation.[41]

Isasi-Diaz would also argue that the definition of *mujerista* is not final or concrete, but is continually being reinvented by Latina/Hispanic women "committed to a struggle for liberation."[42]

Another significant movement in Latina feminist thought is *Feminist Intercultural Theology*, which brings together the wisdom and knowledge of "Latina women in the Americas —Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States" that takes seriously the "epistemology that takes as a prime source for theological work the reality of women's lives" where the goal is a just world, where there is room for everybody."[43] For Mexican feminist Maria Pilar Aquino the urgent need for a Latina feminist intercultural theology stems from the immediate experience of a degradation in human rights around the world, the continued denigration of women's dignity, and theological knowledge that prompts people to interpret their human and religious existence.[44] Thus, Aquino states that the framework of intercultural theology is "not products already assembled, much less

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[41] Isasi-Diaz et al., "Roundtable Discussion," 107.

[42] Isasi-Diaz et al., "Roundtable Discussion," 125.

[43] Maria Jose Rosado-Nunes, "New Paradigms in Feminist Theological Thought," in *Feminist Intercultural Theology: Latina Explorations for a Just World*, ed. María Pilar Aquino and María José Rosado Nuñez (Orbis Books, 2007), 1.

[44] Rosado-Nunes, "New Paradigms," 11–13.

finished goods. What is more, these frameworks can come into existence only when there are people like you and me, interested in contributing to the creation of intercultural feminist processes and spaces."[45] Like mujerista theology, it is an evolving and continuous process that resists being rigidly defined, but whose essence and methodology lend themselves to transformation seeking justice. The intentionality of the international lens certainly expands the application of Latina feminist thought of the daily struggle of Latin women in lo cotidiano.

While there are other Latina feminist theologies and theories, these are the two that are central to this dissertation's discussion of lo cotidiano. While each Latina feminist individually or as a group has her or their own understanding of its theological goals, all of them undisputably center their locus methodologically on the everyday life of the grassroots Latina, lo cotidiano. Isasi-Diaz and Aquino, along with other feminists in the US and Latin America, explicitly use lo cotidiano as a lens through which to "undermine the epistemological foundation of patriarchal theology."[46] In Latin America, liberation theologians turned to the everyday life of the poor; in Europe theologians "turn[ed] to the subject"; and now in the US and Latin America there is a turn to the experience of women.[47] Hence, lo cotidiano refers to the daily lived experience, in practice and theory, of Latinas, and is a liberative praxis.

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[45] Rosado-Nunes, "New Paradigms," 13.

[46] Michelle A. Gonzalez, "Latina Feminist Theology: The Past, Present, and Future," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 25, no. 1 (2009):152. https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.drew.edu/journal/294."

[47] Carmen M. Nanko-Fernandez, "Lo Cotidiano as Locus Theologicus," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Latino/a Theology*, ed. Orlando O. Espín (Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 15.

For this dissertation the main focus of how Isasi-Diaz engages with lo cotidiano is "as a heuristic device that has as its goal a better–deeper—understanding of both the oppression of Latinas and our liberative praxis, has hermeneutical and epistemological implications."[48] With that understanding, the heuristic definition of lo cotidiano, then,

> refers to the immediate space—time and place—of daily life, the first horizon of our experiences, in which our experiences take place. It is where we first meet and relate to the material world—by which I mean not just physical realty but also the way in which we relate to that reality (culture) and how we understand and evaluate our relationship with reality (our memories of what we have lived which we refer to as "history") and the impoverished. […] Realizing that lo cotidinao has hermeneutical value that is, that it is not only what is but also the interpretive framework we use to understand what is, lo cotidiano is a powerful point of reference from where to begin to imagine a different world, a different social structure, a different way of relating to the divine (or to what we consider transcendental/radical immanence), as well as a different way of relating to ourselves: to who we are and what we do. Lo cotidiano, therefore, has an extremely important role in out attempt to create an alternative symbolic order.[49]

Isasi-Diaz is elaborate in her descriptors of lo cotidiano in almost all of her texts, because it involves an element of embodiment that is ever-evolving within the grassroots. However, before her passing she did little to expound on the embodied aspects of lo cotidiano—such as spirituality, sexuality, and ableism—, leaving us to do that work, helped (I suggest) by feminist Chicana theories of embodiment.

The Chicana/o movement of the 1960s significantly influenced Chicana/o studies, which are primarily focused on "the history and experiences of people of Mexican descent in the United States, drawing upon the methods and theories of multiple

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[48] Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, "Mujerista Discourse: A Platform for Latinas' Subjugated Knowledge," in *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*, ed. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Eduardo Mendieta (Fordham University Press, 2012), 48.

[49] Isasi-Diaz, "Mujerista Discourse,"48–49.

disciplines (political economy, cultural studies, historical analysis)."[50] This dissertation focuses particularly on Chicana embodiment and theories of spirituality and indigeneity. The insights, theories, and practices of Chicana spirituality and indigeneity contribute to the (re)imagining a future that is life-giving for a Latina/Chicana and her community. To enter into the realm of embodiment, spirituality, and indigenous thought, it is critical to do what is possible to remove the dominant colonial Christian lens as well as the colonial gender category. Without that, it will be hard to truly appreciate what Chicanas have to offer in our search for liberation and transformation.

One of the earliest and most notable Chicana queer theorists, and one with the greatest influence not only in decolonial and Chicana studies but also in Latina feminist and mujerista thought, is Gloria Anzaldúa. Her most notable work, published in 1987, is *Borderlands/La Frontera*.[51] In it, she theorized concepts of Chicana essence that even now continue to inspire Chicana/Latina feminist theory and thought of embodiment and spirituality. Anzaldúa was of Mexican heritage and spoke of her Mexican culture as a culture that had completely rejected her. That rejection catalyzed her theorizing. (This dynamic of being part of a community that rejects one will be critical for the concluding chapter.) So too did Anzaldúa's conceptual theories, which derived from her geopolitical location of residing along the US-Mexico border and its implications for daily living.[52] While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to explore all of Anzaldúa's theories and

[50] Eric Avila, "Introduction," in *The Chicano Studies Reader: An Anthology of Aztlan, 1970–2019*, ed. Chon A. Noriega, Eric Avila, Karen Mary Davalos, Chela Sandoval, Rafael Pérez-Torres, and Charlene Villaseñor Black (UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2020), 17.

[51] Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987).

[52] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, 29.

concepts, it will highlight the most salient in the continued conversation about how attention to lo cotidiano empowers Latina/Chicana agency.

Anzaldúa conceived of and theorized of the 'borderlands'—by which she means not only a physical location but also an embodied Chicana experience—as follows:

> The U.S.–Mexican border es una herida abierta where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture. Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a diving line, a narrow strip along steep edges. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants.[53]

How Anzaldúa defines the borderlands as places constructed as systems of protection to separate people and classify them as different/other is critical for this dissertation. While it might seem that a gate or fence or wall can define the contours of the borders, Anzaldúa argues that in fact it creates a third space—an in-between space—that is always shifting and that is messy and undefined. Such a space is where Chicanas have long lived. The use of the term *borderlands* is meant to "challenge power dynamics and arbitrary divisions, suggesting that no aspect of reality can be neatly divided into entirely separate parts."[54]

The lived reality of the Chicanas (and Latinas) in the US is always in-between two borders/cultures that edge each other, forcing the Latina to make theo-ethical decisions to survive, decisions that are never really embraced by either and thus always in flux. Anzaldúa argues that it is in these borderlands that Chicanas/Latinas develop *la*

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[53] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, 13

[54] AnaLouise Keating, *The Anzaldúan Theory Handbook* (Duke University Press, 2022), 92.

facultad to gain a deeper sense of seeing and sensing and dis-covering the truth of what is presented as reality.[55] The development of such a facultad leads to what Anzaldúa calls *conocimiento*, an ability which "often unfolds within oppressive context and entails a deepening of embodied perception that brings access to nonordinary realities."[56] This deepening of embodiment to unearth realities, such as the oppressive contexts in which Latinas/Chicanas live in lo cotidiano, is a decolonial way of knowing. This decolonial knowledge is necessary, as Chicana scholar Irene Lara states, so that "[d]ominant patriarchal, Eurocentric, and homophobic cultures [that] have negatively represented and perpetuated wounding silences against Chicanas and other racialized and sexualized bodymindspirits" can be exposed.[57]

Lastly, Chicana theorist Teresa Delgadillo in her text *Spiritual Mestizaje: Religion, Gender, Race, and Nation in Contemporary Chicana* has likewise advanced Anzaldúa's thought.[58] Delgadillo expands the theorizing of spiritual mestizaje, which entails

> the transformative renewal of one's relationship to the sacred through a radical and sustained multimodal and self-reflexive critique of oppression in all its manifestations and a creative and engaged participation in shaping life that honors the sacred.[59]

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[55] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*, 56.

[56] Keating, *The Anzaldúan Theory Handbook*, 108.

[57] Irene Lara, "Goddess of the AméRicas in the Decolonial Imaginary: Beyond the Virtuous Virgen/Pagan Puta Dichotomy," *Feminist Studies* 34, nos. 1/2 (2008): 120, edsjsr.20459183.

[58] Teresa Delgadillo. *Spiritual Mestizaje: Religion, Gender, Race, and Nation in Contemporary Chicana Narrative* (Duke University Press, 2011).

[59] Delgadillo. *Spiritual Mestizaje*, 1.

The only reason this is deemed to be radical is because it goes beyond institutionally organized Western religions to "non-institutional forms of relation to the sacred" and because it recognizes realities beyond the visible where a queering (or querying) spirituality helps to combat oppression.[60] The use of spiritual knowledge that does not subscribe to Christianity or coloniality of gender enables spiritual mestizaje to become an embodiment of consciousness that can be more authentic in lo cotidiano of many Chicanas and Latinas.

In short, the majority of Latina feminist, mujerista, and Chicana theorists are pushing for a recognition and appreciation of the lived experience of Chicanas/Latinas, not only in living their lives, theorizing their lives, and self-determining their lives, but also in their testimonios, or witnessing. Delgadillo argues that giving a testimony that embodies and describes a rupture of consciousness is what begins to decolonize the body as a colonized subject.[61] I discuss further the importance of testimonios as counter-narratives to hegemony in chapters two and three in my examination of particular documentary examples of the Woman's Home Missionary Society and in my analysis of the testimonios that Mexican and Puerto Rican women arguably left behind. But before proceeding, I explain my use of the word *Latina* in this dissertation.

TERMINOLOGY: LATINA

Why I choose to use the word *Latina* to speak of my community of accountability begins with the question of what to call ourselves. In writing of the philosophy of race,

[60] Delgadillo. *Spiritual Mestizaje*, 3.

[61] Delgadillo. *Spiritual Mestizaje*, 10.

Jorge J. E. Garcia holds that, "names *identify*: they tell us both about what they name and about what we know concerning what they name."[62] I choose to use the term *Latina* (instead of other identifiers such as Hispanic or Hispana), understanding that Latina is not a monolith and that no one is qualified to speak for everyone. I do not use the term *Hispanic* as Isasi-Diaz did in her mujerista work because it is a term coined by federal bureaucrats in the US in the mid-1970s to group together people of diverse cultural and historical backgrounds who have some connection to the Spanish cultural diaspora, and thus, the name was forced upon us.[63] As Joanne Rodriguez-Olmedo argues, *Hispanic* is a name imposed on us (by people from Latin American countries with linguistic and cultural ties to Spain) and has been debated for decades.[64] I am among the many people who prefer the term *Latino/a* because it "disassociates [us] from Spanish imperialism, and has as its focus Latin America rather than Spain."[65] In the US, many people from Latin America prefer to identify themselves "by their country of origin or [that of] their parents."[66] Arguably, they prefer not to "melt" into one pot or one Latina culture that in effect obscures their particular origins. Historian Daisy L Machado argues that the US has been fixated on creating a "common culture" and on "melting" people together ever since it embraced the ideology of Manifest Destiny—a "multilayered doctrine that

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[62] Jorge, J.E. Garcia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity: A Philosophical Perspective* (Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 2000), 1–2.

[63] Joanne Rodriguez-Olmedo, "The U.S. Hispanic/Latino Landscape," in *Handbook of Latina/o Theologies,* ed. Edwin David Aponte and Miguel A. De La Torre (Chalice Press, 2006),124; see also Garcia, *Hispanic/Latino Identity*, 124.

[64] Rodriguez-Olmedo, "The U.S. Hispanic/Latino Landscape," 124.

[65] Rodriguez-Olmedo, "The U.S. Hispanic/Latino Landscape," 124.

[66] Rodriguez-Olmedo, "The U.S. Hispanic/Latino Landscape," 124.

reworks the religious images of a chosen people, God's redeeming nation, religious and moral superiority, and the religious right to conquer and subjugate, in order to create a national mythology that underlines the civil religion of the United States."[67] This arguably makes the desire for one common US culture a worthy goal to pursue, despite its impossibility.

Similarly, I recognize that Latinas, or Mexicans, or Puerto Ricans, are not a homogeneous group but, in contrast, a richly diverse people sociologically, culturally, politically, racially, and in terms of class, sex, and sexuality. By the same token, it is important to name that the "US" is also a diverse society with differing power groups of influence and social locations. In this dissertation, I am observing a historical process of US socio-cultural-religious evolution. In that historical process, there is a US political culture to universalize Latinas such that it tries to erase diversity and differences, which cannot be erased. There are particularities of our family histories mixed together with social identities and labels for each of us that testify to who we are and how we define ourselves. Nonetheless, our particularities are relational (not isolated, where anything goes) and are held in our community of accountability. I chose that community of accountability to be the Latina community in the US. With this understanding, we can move into the outline of the chapters.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

[67] Daisy L. Machado, "Kingdom Building in the Borderlands: The Church and Manifest Destiny," in *Hispanic/Latino Theology: Challenge and Promise*, ed. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Fernando F. Segovia (Fortress Press, 1996), 63.

Questions drive each chapter in this dissertation. Questions are a central element of the method of continual (un)learning, exploring, and (re)imagining. Chapter one asks: How did the US construct its image and narrative of exceptionalism in the nineteenth century? And how was that interwoven into Protestant Christian missions, particularly in regard to gender? To answer such questions, I offer a concise exploration of certain relevant aspects of European cultural and religious history, a history that migrated to the US with European colonizers and informed the formation of the US nation. I subsequently explore the formation of the Women's Home Missionary Society (WHMS) missions to Mexican and Puerto Rican lands that the US had seized. This first chapter then examines specific excerpts from WHMS to see how they represented their role in executing their missions to women and girls. I do this in conversation with the work of gender theorists and post-colonial scholars.

With that in mind, chapter two asks: How and why did US socio-political culture construct Mexican and Puerto Rican caricatures? To answer this the second chapter leans on the theory of the fantastic hegemonic imagination as outlined by Womanist scholar Emilie Townes. With that I then construct the metaphor of a hegemonic dome to explain the theory regarding US society and culture and the role that WHMS missions to Mexicans and Puerto Ricans played in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Chapter three then makes a paradigm shift to ask: Did Mexican and Puerto Rican women and girls exercise resistance and agency during WHMS missions in the context of this hegemonic dome? To answer that question it examines and (re)imagines the counter-narratives present, and considers the complexity of oppressed/oppressor dynamics, demonstrating that it is possible for privilege, complicity, oppression, and resistance to

co-exist in the messiness of reality, in the in-between transitional (or border) spaces and places, especially when in conversation with Latina/Chicana mujerista feminist ethics.

The fourth and concluding chapter then constructs a *mujerista aliviar ethics*—an ongoing process of Latina resistance that is both *en la lucha* against oppression and, at the same time, is also participating in oppression. And so the question arises, how does that ongoing process of resistance unfold? The chapter discusses three fluid stages of mujerista aliviar ethics—(un)binding, healing, and liberating—which occur individually and in community, and require the stage of being in solidarity. The aim is to begin to provide conversational space to (un)learn our systems of protection that categorize people so that some are included and others excluded, and instead learn that there are no neat categories of people, and thus, to appreciate the complexity of our existence as a complicated dynamic of being included and excluded and participating in the inclusion and exclusion of others. It explores how we tend to benefit from exclusionary hegemonic categories despite the harm we inflict on ourselves and others, and suggests that we begin to acknowledge the messy reality of ourselves and the spaces and places we inhabit as we try to transform and construct a new symbolic order.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CHOSEN ONES: THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF PROTESTANT MISSIONS TO MEXICAN AND PUERTO RICAN LATINA COMMUNITIES

One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one.
—Simone de Beauvoir

At the turn of the twentieth century, the US conquered two territories that had previously been Spanish colonies. The first followed the Mexican-American War of 1848, in which the US seized northern Mexico, making it a southwestern region of the US. The second followed the Spanish-American War of 1898, in which the US made Puerto Rico a US territory. The treaties ending the wars transferred the lands to the US Empire, and the US imposed US citizenship on all people on those lands. Given the socio-political, economic, and religious history of that time in the US, many in government, schools, businesses, and religious institutions felt an urgency to Americanize the lands and people. This chapter analyzes the history of the colonial project of the Americanization of Mexican and Puerto Rican (on the mainland) communities, particularly the role of Protestant missions in this endeavor. This analysis includes an examination of the worldview known variously as US American Christian nationalism and White Supremacy (or superiority). The worldview derives partly from European histories and ideologies, and partly from US nationalist ideologies, moral politics, patriarchy, patriotism, and Christianity.

After briefly recapitulating European history up to the formation of the treaties that followed the ending of the Mexican-American and the Spanish-American Wars, the chapter turns to a particular design within the worldview—that of the Woman's Home

Missionary Society ("WHMS") of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The WHMS operated in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and took great pains to document its activities and events, documents which are now archived at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. My focus on WHMS sources in this chapter is on gendering processes in patriarchal cultural traditions and the imaginary of the Christian "home" as a patriotic endeavor. I discuss these themes of gender, Christian "home," and how they intersect across socio-economic classes through the lens of decolonial and post-colonial scholars who, among other areas of interest, explore colonial mechanisms of disciplining, representation, and the construction of the other. The aim of this chapter is to begin to demonstrate how we learn certain understandings of worth and value through good intentions, privilege, complicity, and systems of protection.

This chapter and the ones that follow highlight the archival documentation of the Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in articles, journals, and other primary sources, acknowledging that particular people assembled the archives for specific purposes and with particular imaginations of how they would be used. Given the active role of the archivists, one cannot pretend that the assembly of the archives was apolitical.[68] Nonetheless, these records and the archives in which they have preserved permit some level of accountability and transparency.[69] Furthermore, the formal nature of the WHMS archive can be unsettled by informal archives that bring to light silences within the formal archives, and this will be the topic of the following

[68] Krista McCracken and Skylee-Storm Hogan-Stacey, *Decolonial Archival Futures* (Ala Neal-Schuman, 2023), vii.

[69] McCracken and Hogan-Stacey, *Decolonial Archival Futures*, vii.

chapters as it relates to Latina agency and resistance amid oppression and coloniality.[70] While this chapter does not aim to provide a complete history or a singular narrative, it does aim to understand the paradigm within which WHMS missions' ideology, practice, and ethics operated during their home missions to Mexican and Puerto Rican communities following the seizure of those lands and people.

Though Latinas have been a vital part of US culture, society, and religious life even before the Mexican-American War (1848), mainstream US society often regards them as socio-cultural "others," as members of an "alien" human classification that renders Latinas perpetually in need of "saving" by US Protestant Christianity and its members/proponents. As Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Eduardo Medina write in their introductory chapter of *Decolonizing Epistemologies*, Latinas' "religions, languages, and cultural practices are perceived to be too different from what is considered the fundamental culture of this nation, commonly referred to as the American Way of Life."[71] It is a way of life that Anglo Americans deem(ed) to be superior to all others. Why do so many people believe the American Way of Life to be the best? How did that come to be? And why does it continue to persist? This chapter aims to respond to these questions through a brief historical-socio-religious analysis of Europe before the European colonizers migrated to the Americas, focusing on their paradigms and ideologies used in the formation of the US as a nation. This chapter then examines how

[70] Maria Paz Carvajal Regidor, "(En)Countering Archival Silences: Critical Lenses, Relationships, and Informal Archives," in *Unsettling Archival Research*, ed. Gesa E. Kirsch, Romeo Garcia, Caitlin Burns Allen, and Walker P. Smith (Southern Illinois University Press, 2023), 108.

[71] Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Eduardo Mendieta, "Introduction: Freeing Subjugated Knowledge," in *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*, ed. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Eduardo Mendieta (Fordham University Press, 2012), 2.

US Protestant Christianity implemented those ideologies, particularly through the gendering process of 'true womanhood' during its mid-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century missions.

As historian Reginald Horsman states, "[i]t is not uncommon for a people to think of themselves as chosen, but it is much rarer for a people to be given apparent abundant empirical proof of God's choice."[72] During the formation of the US, the political-religious argument was just this, claiming that this nation was chosen by God, and then explaining it was chosen because of its self-proclaimed superior economics, politics, and religion, among other things, in the nineteenth century. How could US leaders make such bold claims? They clearly did not arise out of thin air or simply by measuring total economic wealth. Instead, as historians have argued, those ideas came from ideologies and experiences of Europeans who migrated to the Americas and who came to be known as Anglo Americans, influencing the establishment of US nationalism.

Historian Vijay Prashad affirms that in the post-Reformation European religious context, "Europeans differentiated one another and themselves from others on the basis of axes of religion and language, and mainly the former."[73] Religious wars in Europe plagued the continent (at least as Prashad opines) until the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648.[74] Given that religious wars were commonplace in Europe, some people were motivated to migrate to the Americas to escape religious persecution. One of the most notable ideologies that traveled to the Americas is the "religious myth of a pure English

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[72] Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 3.

[73] Vijay Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity* (Wilsted & Taylor Publishing Services, 2001), 13.

[74] Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting*, 13.

Anglo-Saxon church," that is "cleansed [from] the Roman Catholic church of the abuses introduced through the centuries by papal power."[75] This led English colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to believe that an Anglo-Saxon political institution was superior because it was one that was free of abuses, and thus the illusion was formed that there exists a "free nature of Anglo-Saxon political institution."[76] The English colonies experienced much political, economic, and military success within a short period, establishing themselves, revolting against Great Britain, and gaining their independence and other forms of prosperity—none of which was a surprise given that "[s]ince the seventeenth century the idea of the Americans as a 'chosen people' had permeated first Puritans' and then American thought."[77]

A growing myth of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority, which likewise originated in Europe, complemented this notion of a superior Anglo-Saxon religious and political institution. Prashad argues there are "two sixteenth-century developments [that] indicate the beginning of raciology: the Iberian [Portugal] Inquisition and the slave trade."[78] These developments contributed to the underlying paradigm with which the European colonizers came to the Americas—using both a religious hierarchy and one of master and slave to develop the notion of Anglo superiority. The Iberian Inquisition "tore tens of thousands of people of the Jewish and Muslim faiths from their homes and lands," and the Church tested the purity of the blood of those who converted to Catholicism to show

[75] Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 9–10.

[76] Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 9.

[77] Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 3.

[78] Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting*, 15.

kinship in a "genealogical context of families." Thus, people were now being condemned on the basis of their religious blood kinship.[79]

The second salient aspect of the sixteenth century which influenced those who migrated to the Americas from Europe was the Irish slave trade. When England colonized Ireland, the English viewed the Irish as "heathens, wicked, barbarous, and uncivil," and dispatched them to various locations, including the American colonies, to serve as indentured servants.[80] But at the end of the 1600s, the tactics of the European slave trade shifted: "the enslavement of those with fair skin was stopped and the Europeans traded solely in those with dark skin," later enabling Irishmen to lay claim to "whiteness."[81] Chapter two includes further discussion of racialization in the US in the section examining how Mexicans and Puerto Ricans were racialized in the US nation. For now, I mention this process of racialization only briefly enough to provide historical context for the European mindset that evolved in their migration to the US.

The last historical aspect significant for this chapter's discussion on US superiority based on religious grounds is the role of Manifest Destiny. Historian Daisy L. Machado argues that the church is and always has been part of the colonial project of conquest and expansion, noting that "[l]ike the Spanish before them, the Euro-American settlers in the eighteenth-century Borderlands brought the church with them as an agent of conquest."[82] Machado argues that the ideology and ethos of Manifest Destiny—

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[79] Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting*, 15.

[80] Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting*, 15.

[81] Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting*, 15.

[82] Machado, "Kingdom Building in the Borderlands," 68.

namely, that God destined God's people (aka white Anglo-Saxons) to conquer and take others' lands as their own— had, since 1776, been a mix of nationalism, imperialism, and expansionism theories and practices, long before that idea was trumpeted in the public square in 1845 by newspaper editor John L. O'suliivan when it was argued that Manifest Destiny was the reason to conquer Texas.[83] The ideology of Manifest Destiny manifested as a religious racial hierarchy with the Anglo white Christian at its top and all others, such as but not limited to, non-Anglo-Saxon Europeans, Native Americans, Mexicans and non-Christians (i.e. Jews) were below. Americans continued to hold a strong sense of Manifest Destiny as they expanded into the Southwest. They imagined that God had given them—US Americans—the land for them to "redeem it from the wilderness—to settle it with an intelligent, honorable and interprising [sic] people."[84] This superior chosen people mentality then became an ideology used "to force new immigrants to conform to the prevailing political, economic, and social system, and it could also be used to justify the suffering or deaths of blacks, Indians, or Mexicans."[85] Thus, from the beginning, Christianity was a pivotal tool used in the formation of US Christian nationalist superiority.

Religion was such a pivotal tool in the formation of the US that during the American Revolution, "most colonies supported officially established churches, and when those colonies became states, they by and large retained their civil sectarianism."[86]

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[83] Machado, "Kingdom Building in the Borderlands," 71.

[84] Daisy L. Machado, *Of Borders and Margins. Hispanic Disciples in Texas, 1888–1945* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 67.

[85] Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 5.

[86] Elizabeth Fenton, *Religious Liberties: Anti-Catholicism and Liberal Democracy in Nineteenth-Century U.S. Literature and Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 28.

However, it was not just any religion but Protestantism specifically. Religious historian Elizabeth Fenton argues that,

> In the early and nineteenth-century United States, figuration of Catholic intolerance formed a vital component of U.S. political culture's notions of individual freedom and national pluralism. The symbiotic relationship between liberal democracy and Protestantism is thus most evident... in anti-Catholic cultural productions.[87]

A binary between Catholic and Protestant ideologies was arguably constructed as necessary for the formation of a US liberal democracy. Thus, from the outset in the early nineteenth century, anti-Catholic sentiments were rife in the US. Fenton holds that "the Catholic served as a site throughout the nineteenth century for testing the limits of democracy's capacity to accommodate difference."[88] In the following chapter, I nuance this concept a bit more as it relates to Protestant missions in the southwestern Mexican community, which held a strong Catholic heritage, and thus, Mexicans were thought to be "mentally weak" because the Catholic Church never taught them to think for themselves.[89] For now, it is important to note that religion, particularly Protestantism, was intertwined to varying degrees in the formation of the US as a nation, as well as in what it meant to be a 'US American citizen,' and this to such an extent that, I argue, a system to preserve Protestantism was created at all costs, including at the cost of caricaturing and othering those who identified as Catholic in the Mexican and Puerto Rican communities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see the following chapter).

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[87] Fenton, *Religious Liberties*, 4.

[88] Fenton, *Religious Liberties*, 4.

[89] Martínez, *The Story of Latino Protestants in the United States*, 34.

When the US government seized what became Texas, New Mexico, and California following the Treaty of Guadalupe of 1848, the US had to determine how it would relate to the Mexican people who lived there and were now US citizens.[90] Before being seized by the US, the territory gained its independence from the Spanish colonizer and formed the Republic of Mexico; later, Texas gained its own independence, and so the region was controlled by the Republics of Texas and Mexico before it became colonized by the US government.[91] Thus, it was comprised of a diverse political, cultural, and ethnic population.

The Mexicans who were on the lands following the US conquest had no recourse but to abandon their lands and migrate south to Mexico *or* to remain on their lands that now formed part of the US and accept US citizenship.[92] Thus, this initial group of Mexicans on US southwestern territory did not cross the border: the border crossed them. In an instant, they were 'Mexican Americans,' an identity that had never existed before and had to be newly constructed. Horsman notes that while "Mexicans and others might not be enslaved, ... they would be subordinated to the rule of a superior [white US Anglo-Saxon] people."[93] Thus, I argue that Mexicans in the southwest territory, despite being understood legally as US citizens, were never going to be fully "American" but would remain "Mexican-American," a subordinate group in the US socio-political, economic, and religious framework, as discussed briefly here and further in the following chapter.

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[90] Martínez, "Origins," 9.

[91] David Maldonado Jr., *Protestantes/Protestants: Hispanic Christianity Within Mainline Traditions* (Abingdon Press, 1999), 29.

[92] Martínez, *The Story of Latino Protestants in the United States*, 31.

[93] Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 230.

Almost from the outset, the US viewed the conquered Mexican community in the southwest region as inferior. Following the Mexican-American War, the US Congress debated whether it should continue its battle with Mexico in order to acquire more Mexican land. United States representative of Pennsylvania, James Pollock, stated that he opposed taking further Mexican land because "Mexican provinces are filled with a population, not only degraded, but of every possible shade and variety of color and complexion, from the deep black to the negro, to the shallow white of the Mexican Indian"[94]—meaning he found them undesirable. Others were less concerned by the Mexican populations because they believed that "the largely Indian Mexicans would fade away, and that the American Anglo-Saxons were destined to outbreed the whole world."[95] Thus, the ideology of the Anglo-Saxon US American superiority continued to pervade arguments in the mid-nineteenth century about the conquest of northern Mexican lands. There was no imagination at that time that the *Mexican* population would outgrow the Anglo-American population in the US. While the US government eventually resolved the debate of how much land it was able or willing to take from Mexico, the dehumanizing rhetoric of Mexicans continued in church and society. Of particular interest for this chapter is the continued rhetoric in Protestant missions about Mexicans.

Protestant denominations in the 1840s had an ongoing "concern about ecclesiological purity" and pondered "how pure one's church had to be and what one needed to do to help it remain pure."[96] This worldview continued to grow. Of particular

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[94] Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 239.

[95] Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 243.

[96] John C. Pinheiro, *Missionaries of Republicanism: A Religious History of the Mexican-American War* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 57.

interest for this chapter is how that desire for purity was spliced into the formation of the Woman's Home Missionary Society (WHMS) of the Methodist Episcopal Church. It resulted in a gendering process that included how its founders viewed themselves and those among and upon whom they imposed their missions. Primarily white male church leaders and other males in the dominant white society formulated these gendering standards and processes, establishing them by and for the maintenance of patriarchal and patriotic ideologies. To examine those WHMS gendering processes and influences, I turn now to give a brief history of the WHMS.

The Methodist Episcopal Church was the largest Protestant denomination in the US by the end of the nineteenth century, with significant contributions from its home missions.[97] Part of those home missions entailed the efforts of the Woman's Home Missionary Society. In 1886, the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) authorized the formation of the WHMS, which was to operate similarly to its Women's Foreign Missionary Society but within the US-"home" front.[98] At that time, MEC considered the women in the Methodist Episcopal Church as "subject to the authority of male church leaders," and so the women had to seek establishment authority from male leadership to form the WHMS entity. [99] They found it difficult to convince those men to allow women to leave their local churches (and local homes) to serve in missions. Yet the women who labored to found the WHMS were educated, financially well-off, and influential and

[97] Teasdale, *Methodist Evangelism, American Salvation*, 27.

[98] Sara Joyce Myers, "Southern Methodist Women Leaders and Church Missions, 1878–1910" (PhD diss., Emory University, 1990), abstract, ocm23885917.

[99] Myers, "Southern,"1 –2.

powerful women who were finally able to convince men that it would benefit their church and their nation if women participated in home missions.[100]

These founders of the WHMS understood the patriarchal socio-political climate and the standards of "true womanhood," and aspired to obtain that elite status.[101] Late nineteenth-century patriarchal norms described women's standard of purity "in terms of physical delicacy, prudence, virtuousness, innocence, modesty, lack of sensuality, abhorrence of evil, and self-control."[102] Such norms expected women to prioritize their church life and family life, and women who demonstrated this were held in high esteem. To guide the women, there was ample literature, primarily written by male ministers and moral philosophers.[103] The literature dictated what was proper for a moral society, in particular, the woman's role in the private and public spheres, so that it aligned with Christian standards.[104] For example, the women leading the WHMS had to ensure that their children were taught religion, reading, literature, manners, morals, self-discipline, and other domestic values that the men deemed necessary to form good families of the future.[105] Thus, the nineteenth-century WHMS missions were highly influenced by "true womanhood" values and ethics and the need to spread that in their missions.

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[100] Myers, "Southern," abstract.

[101] Myers, "Southern," 14.

[102] Myers, "Southern," 44–45.

[103] Myers, "Southern," 44–45.

[104] Myers, "Southern," 34.

[105] Myers, "Southern," 132.

The WHMS's fourth annual convention (1896) made clear via a resolution passed that its mission was of the utmost importance; US civilization was on the line, the resolution states:

> Whereas there is a foreign population in all our cities, and many of our towns…the majority of which foreign elements is heathen and unpatriotic, and with a spirit of infidelity and anarchism endangering our institutions and civilization, and whereas recognizing the fact that we must Christianize them or they will corrupt our people and destroy our own beloved institutions and substitute for our religion that of heathenism; therefore be it resolved…That as home mission workers God has laid upon us the responsibility of Christianizing this generous and antagonistic element.[106]

In short, women had a mission ordained by the Methodist Church's male leadership and, in their own words, by God, a mission which they internalized as vital. More than a mission, it was a "responsibility of Christianizing," because if these women did not do so the "foreign population" (so they believed) would then "corrupt *our* people and destroy *our* beloved institutions." How exactly would those foreigners inculcate such corruption? The foreigners, says the text, will "substitute *our* religion" for their heathenism; thus, there seems to be a dichotomy of being a Christian or a heathen religion where both cannot co-exist and where one is a threat to the other.

In learning and promoting the urgency of the mission's work, the WHMS continued to employ the constructed binaries and categories formed from the colonization of the Americas. First, there is the binary of the "foreign" unpatriotic category that is directly contradictory to "our" American patriotic category. A person cannot be both, but is inevitably either a foreigner or one of us. Then there is the "Christian home" category that is civilized by Christianity, and a foreign home is uncivilized by "heathenism," and

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[106] Myers, "Southern," 132. [citing Minutes of the Fourth Annual Convention," *Our Homes* 6 (February 1897): 8.]

thus not only can they not co-exist, but the existence of foreign heathenism is a threat to Christianity in the home. Lastly, there is in this excerpt an underlying understanding that these WHMS women "home mission workers" are tasked with the responsibility of Christianizing because of their nature as women whom society and culture deems to have dominion over the "home."

But what does it mean to be a woman? Postcolonial and decolonial scholars have pondered the gender dynamics constructed in Western societies since European colonization. Their discussions can help us to understand (if not appreciate) the WHMS gendering process. I select the work of only a few of these scholars to make the argument that gender is a colonial patriarchal construct whose purpose is to maintain a hierarchy of men over women, a construct to be internalized by women to keep to their assigned roles. This hierarchy and power dynamic arguably allows the WHMS to be used as a tool to (de)value other women who do not ascribe to that same construct.

I begin this discussion with Judith Butler's quandary on power and how it is constructed, in particular regarding gender. Writes Butler,

> Power seemed to be more than an exchange between subjects or a relation of constant inversion between a subject and an Other; indeed, power appeared to operate in the production of the very binary frame of thinking about gender. I ask, what configuration of power constructs the subject and the Other, that binary relation between "men" and "women," and the internal stability of those terms?[107]

Thus, power lies not merely in one person enforcing it over another; it also appears in the thinking of binary categories and the creation of binary categories, and in what maintains that binary framework. Once we can construct in our minds a framework in which men

[107] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 1990), vii–viii.

and women are different, we can then argue that because they are different they should operate and relate differently. But even beyond that, this binary framework—that men and women are different—is then believed to be a natural disposition, and thus hard to question. However, Butler argues that gender is a learned behavior disciplined through teachings from various cultural and social sources. Thus, "gender is a kind of persistent impersonation that passes as the real."[108] For example, when we see movies or read books of how women act or think (whether or not this is really how women act or think), many of us believe it is so simply because of the authority they perceive in the writing or seeing of such beliefs in those media sources. So when the women who founded the WHMS read Christian material that told them how a true woman acts, and saw those qualities prized in their women peers or family members, they may have been persuaded to adopt it as their standard.

The formation of the WHMS was primarily the work of women who accepted their gender roles as women. They adopted them as if they were only natural and right, and thus, the women internalized participating in "true womanhood" values as natural. Women who did not ascribe to that understanding of true womanhood would presumably be outcasts in society and church. Since the reward for accepting and internalizing true womanhood standards in the nineteenth century was being regarded as virtuous and being accepted by the male leaders and others, it was understandable that many women participated without outward reservation. Yet presumably the women who formed the WHMS did think outside of that gender construction because they argued that women should be allowed or encouraged to travel to do mission work away from their homes,

[108] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, viii.

which in itself broke with the gender norms of that time. Yet even those women who did engage in such mission work far from home typically traveled with the true womanhood framework, which was viewed as being that of a good patriotic Christian.

In the earlier quotation by the WHMS in the year it was founded, the excerpts equate being a "heathen" with being "unpatriotic," and thus being a Christian with being patriotic. This element of patriotism is critical both in how the WHMS viewed Mexican and Puerto Rican girls and in how they related to Mexican and Puerto Rican girls when they conducted their missions. To understand the dynamics of those relations, I highlight decolonial feminist Maria Lugones' understanding that "[m]odenity organizes the world ontologically in terms of atomic, homogeneous, separable categories,"[109] but that such categories are not so easily separated or identified.

Lugones demonstrates that this desire to categorize and classify originated in the colonization of the Americas and the desire to categorize or distinguish the human from the non-human; and then to determine how humans (the so-called civilized) should relate to non-humans (the so-called uncivilized).[110] European colonizers regarded Native Americans as non-human and thus uncivilized.[111] If one were classified as non-human and uncivilized, the rules of civilization to treat one equally did not apply.[112] In terms of the WHMS article referenced above, the women saw themselves as Christian and patriotic—as true women—who were civilized and saw the foreigner as heathen and

[109] Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 742.

[110] Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 743.

[111] Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 743.

[112] Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 743.

unpatriotic—arguably as a non-human uncivilized heathen class. The true women were therefore justified in attempting to erase the heathen's identity, including religion/spirituality, and instead in imposing Americanized (civilized) Christianity on them. Since they regarded Mexican and Puerto Rican women and girls as being among the foreign, heathen, non-human uncivilized class, WHMS women were at liberty to erase who they were (heathen, unpatriotic, uncivilized) and replace those qualities with values of true womanhood (patriotism, purity, civilized Christian) as evidenced in other parts of the archival documentation.

At the turn of the century, a 1902 Woman's Home Missions journal article entitled *The Spanish Industrial Home in Los Angeles, Cal.* briefly describes how Spanish-speaking girls came to the missions unable to speak English, and at times not even managing their native language well. Then it shows a picture of the girls after the missions worked on them, reporting a visitor commenting, "[h]ow lovely and refined these girls look! They cannot be the neglected, native children we have heard of."[113] The "after" picture shows the girls in white dresses with their hair pinned up in white bows to demonstrate that the Spanish-speaking girls had an acceptable, refined physical appearance that fit within the category of 'true womanhood' as validated by the comments of a male visitor. Further, the comment by the male visitor implies that the girls no longer looked neglected and Native. Clearly, the WHMS missions were gradually erasing the Native Indigenous features of the Spanish-speaking girls—an important part of their patriotic work in the construction of civilized, true womanhood.

[113] W.A. Goodman, Jr., "The Spanish Industrial Home in Los Angeles, Cal." *Woman's Home Missions* 19, no. 7 (1902): 130.

Lastly, protecting the US home from foreign heathens also meant creating a category of patriotism as a system of protection to keep out unpatriotic heathens that would not assimilate. Within the WHMS, patriotism as a virtue of Christianity is one that was used not only to judge and condemn Mexican and Puerto Rican women, but also to erase non-patriotic features and virtues. I continue this discussion of patriotism in the following chapter when I look more closely at US culture and politics during the nineteenth century which inculcated into all US systems and institutions, including Protestantism, the need to be patriotic.

Following the Spanish-American War of 1898, the US began to colonize Puerto Rico, as the island was now a US territory and the people were now US citizens. The WHMS followed suit. Underlying its approach to the girls and women in Puerto Rico was still the value system of true womanhood and patriotism. Approximately nine years after the war, a 1908 article in the Woman's Home Missions showed how hard the missionaries were working at this, stating:

> In the Home today are forty bright, attractive Porto Rican girls,[and t]heir progress in every way is remarkable and those who are helping to support these girls may feel that all they are doing is bringing forth a hundredfold.[114]

The missionaries worked with only forty girls at this particular school, but their efforts were evidently bountifully rewarded. The photograph of the Puerto Rican girls shows them wearing white dresses with white ribbons in their hair, similar to the earlier one of the Mexican girls. The progress made with the Puerto Rican girls was evidently intended to erase any of their native features and transform them into girls who looked more like

[114] May Leonard Woodruff, "Bureau of Porto Rico," *Woman's Home Missions* 25, no. 2 (1908): 25.

white girls. Looking more like US white girls arguably equates the Puerto Rican girls to looking more civilized and thus, the WHMS women are praised for their efforts.

In addition to missions to make the native girls appear more refined in physical appearance, the WHMS made great efforts to help them acquire certain socioeconomic markers of worth. Another article about Mexican girls from the early twentieth century, entitled *Bureau for Spanish Work in New Mexico and Arizona*, states:

> This year 1908 finds our school at Albuquerque in a prosperous condition. Miss Cora E. Blood and an excellent force of teachers are working in harmony and making a success. Girls who may have seemed dull and slow under the influence of this Christian life are developing finely in mental power and lovable qualities. One third of our students are self-supporting. This shows the reputation our school has among the Spanish-speaking people when so many seek its opportunities for their daughters.[115]

Evidently, the WHMS missionaries were working hard to transform and mold the girls to be successful. The missionaries believed that their work was transformative because it was evidenced in the change in the girls' caricature from "dull and slow," implying low intelligence, to "fine[...] mental powers and lovable qualities." In other words, once the girls acquired the missionaries' qualities, they attained true womanhood, which the missionaries believed they had lacked before their intervention. The article also applauds the girls for being self-supporting, implying it to be a valuable quality. When the article mentions that "[o]ne third of our students are self-supporting," it implies that the students' economic success—a virtue—is thanks to the missionaries' work. We have seen that the WHMS founders came from families with stable economic means, and that their economic status was an asset to their ability to pursue missionary work; thus, they share

[115] Anna Kent. "Bureau for Spanish Work in New Mexico and Arizona" Woman's Home Missionary Society 25, no. 2 (1908): 23.

that value by making these Spanish-speaking girls self-supporting. But did the Mexican community value that financial independence in the same way? Or did that shift change the community's economic and cultural dynamics and create new and perhaps unwanted value systems? Discussions of these questions appear in the following chapters.

A decade into the twentieth century, the WHMS made it explicit that their religious and patriotic convictions fueled their work. The article, *To The Women Of The Methodist Episcopal Church*, begins:

> The Woman's Home Missionary Society, one of the greatest woman's societies of the church, appeals to the two of the strongest forces governing humanity—patriotism and religion. These motives should be a compelling force upon every woman of the church. But do facts indicate that they are such?[116]

Like other US Protestant missions where religion and patriotism were intertwined, the WHMS made clear that one cannot have patriotism without religion or religion without patriotism. A 1910 WHMS article written by a male reverend and incorporated into the Woman's Home Mission shows that religion was the marker of morality for US Protestantism. In "The Basis of Belief in Immortality," the author states that "the Christian system makes a distinct contribution to the doctrine of immortality."[117] Thus, if religion was the maker of morality, then US Protestants and, in particular, the WHMS, contributed to the teaching of morality. In this instance, I understand morality in its most simplistic social function—as setting the standards of what is right and wrong that guide principles of human behavior in society and church; thus, morality involves judging

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[116] George O. Robinson, Delia Lathrop Williams, F.A. Aiken, and George H. Thompson, "To The Women of the Methodist Episcopal Church," *Woman's Home Missions* 26, no. 5 (1909): 3.

[117] F.D. Bovard, "The Basis of Belief in Immorality," *Woman's Home Missions* 27, no. 1 (1910): 18.

actions, intentions, and character traits. The WHMS's sense of religious obligation assumes an entitlement to teach what is right and wrong in a way that furthers values related to patriotism, patriarchy, and gendering processes. This then has a significant impact on how missions are conducted to foreign populations like those of Mexico and Puerto Rico, populations which from the outset are viewed as being wrong—of the wrong religion, the wrong government, the wrong values and morals of life.

The moral politics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which heavily influenced the standard way of life of US Americans, influenced Protestants and redirected their missions aims, as historian Locke states:

> Moral politics—public battles over alcohol, prostitution, gambling, and other preceived vices—consumed more and more of the energy of Protestant activities at the turn of the twentieth century. For all of its fundraising and accomplishments, the plea for missions could never match the growing intensity of spiritual warfare being increasingly waged for a great national "moral reconstruction.[118]

Thus, Protestant leaders used the moral politics that outlawed alcohol and gambling, among other vices, to target Mexican communities that participated in drinking alcohol and gambling. That Protestant leaders made it a moral more than a spiritual indictment of all Mexicans, only increased their urgency of mission work to Mexican communities.[119] Indeed, US Protestants understood it as their mission to "rescue Mexican morality," and consequently "missionaries saw their task as one not only of spiritual salvation but of moral uplift."[120] The following chapter amplifies this theme of the non-gambling, non-

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[118] Joseph L. Locke, "The Heathen at Our Door: Missionaries, Moral Reformers, and The Making of the 'Mexican Problem,'" *Western Historical Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (2018): 141 edsjsr.26782972.

[119] Locke, "The Heathen at Our Door," 141.

[120] Locke, "The Heathen at Our Door," 140.

drinking US Christian as being moral compared to the drinking and gambling Mexican creates a binary, with Mexicans "clearly" needing to be rescued by US Christians.

Lastly, it is important to reference the constructed imagination of a Christian home, where the micro Christian home was a reflection of the macro Christian home. United States patriotic Protestantism arguably helped define the contours of the US Christian national home of that time, whose inhabitants were surely all moral and patriotic Protestants. This is the ideology that undergirded WHMS missions in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when encountering Mexican and Puerto Rican communities. This mission paradigm to discipline the US home the WHMS implemented mainly through education, constructing schools, and teaching domesticity to establish flourishing Christian homes.[121] Thus, a priority for the WHMS's Americanization project was to target at the macro level the "un-American households the Mexican women kept" and it reflected the micro-imagination of how US homes ought to be.[122] Changes at the micro or grassroots level needed to reflect the US Christian home at the national level. Bringing Mexican and Puerto Rican homes up to American standards was clearly women's role and hence a priority of WHMS missions. Working on and in the "home" is connected to the characteristic of being a true woman under the WHMS paradigm.

To conclude this chapter and in preparation for the following chapter, I turn my attention to the work of post-colonial scholar Edward Said in *Orientalism*. In it, Said explains his critical understanding of what was commonly called the "Orient" and was

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[121] Teasdale, *Methodist Evangelism, American Salvation*, 140–42.

[122] Teasdale, *Methodist Evangelism, American Salvation*, 143.

identified as a geo-political location. He explains its imagined existence in what he calls *Orientalism.* This *Orientalism*, he argues, holds a "special place in European Western experience" because it helps define "one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other."[123] Said describes several attributes of *Orientalism* and how those attributes construct and imagine the "Orient." While this Orient is a figurative place of the European Western imagination, it nonetheless holds material and concrete power and influence in the lives of Europeans and those who live in the Orient.[124] Of particular importance for this dissertation is how Said demonstrates "that European culture gained its strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self."[125] In a similar vein, the dissertation's subsequent chapters demonstrate how a complex configuration of power dynamics and the US hegemony's imagination constructed Mexican and Puerto Rican caricatures so that US society and the church view themselves as superior.

This first chapter has given a brief account of how certain elements of European cultural history played a role in the aims and actions of European colonizers as they emerged in the Americas, forming English colonies during the seventeenth century, eventually embedding their ideology in the underlying socio-political establishment of the US nation. Proclaiming the US as Protestant, superior, and God-ordained, and then weaving such pronouncements into the WHMS mission, the Methodist Church in turn

[123] Said, *Orientalism*, 1.

[124] Said, *Orientalism*, 2.

[125] Said, *Orientalism*, 3.

applied those ideologies to forms of moral indoctrination and gendered processing as its members conducted missions among Mexican and Puerto Rican girls.

The WHMS constructed a system and ideology of true womanhood as morally superior, and as capable of and necessary for protecting any good US home. The need to protect what they regarded as their own US Christian moral values, people, and homes then led to creating systems of protection to exclude the 'other,' the 'non-Protestant,' the 'non-patriotic,' the 'non-true woman,' the 'non-American,' among others, and such binaries only strengthened the walls of exclusion. The missionary founders and women of WHMS acted within the societal and religious roles that male leaders had prescribed for them, thus spreading patriarchal views of women and shaping their social and religious construction. While it could be argued that WHMS missions had good intentions, they nonetheless were tools of the US colonization project. Nevertheless, the aim of this dissertation is not to chastise or praise any colonial group but to focus on the systems and structures of learning binaries that exclude and create an imagination of hierarchical moral categories when, in fact, such categories are not clear or precise but complex and entangled, and their creation wreaks serious harm. Once able to recognize how these binaries are formed and learned, one can then recognize that such binaries are illusions that do not actually exist so distinctly and cleanly in the messiness of reality.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FANTASTIC HEGEMONIC IMAGINATION OF MEXICAN AND PUERTO RICAN CARICATURES

This chapter theorizes the role of hegemony in the US public moral constructions of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans that Protestant missions employed in the mid-to-late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The chapter follows Emilie Townes' definition of the theory and practice of hegemony in *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil.*[126] Whereas Townes focuses on the US cultural hegemony of the US black community, here I analyze the US cultural hegemonic caricature of US Mexican and Puerto Rican communities following US colonization. I have a particular interest in how dominant cultural hegemony racializes and disciplines Mexican and Puerto Rican identities, knowledge, and bodies to erase or silence their histories so that they are positioned according to the values, norms, ideals, and worldview of the hegemony. To explain how hegemony does this, I introduce the metaphor of a *hegemonic dome*, suggesting that hegemony can be understood as an invisible dome, system, or container that dominates and contains all activities in society and church life. This system aims to erase native Mexican and Puerto Rican histories while centering hegemonic narratives of superiority and heroic virtues of white men, making them an innate part of US society that remains unquestioned.

[126] Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

This chapter explores one aspect of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: US society's and church missions' implementation of a singular narrative of the white Anglo Protestant Christian US as 'hero' and 'progressive savior' to Mexican and Puerto Rican communities. For the US to be a hero or progressive savior meant that the Mexican community had to be the 'enemy' and the Puerto Rican community had to be 'native,' regardless of evidence to the contrary. An analysis of some of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century primary sources, including novels, travel journals, scientific reports, missionary letters, and photographs, reveals some of the underlying socio-political motives behind the need for US supremacy in creating caricatures of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. Townes suggests that this harmful messaging of US dominance, if unchecked—specifically by those being caricatured—can lead to "traffic[king] in people's lives that are caricatured or pillaged so that the imagination that creates the fantastic can control the world in its own image."[127] The worldview imagined by the US hegemony is one that innovates and creates opportunities to expand its problematic moral ordering in almost undetectable ways; thus, the aim of this chapter is to make visible that which fuels hegemonic invisibility.

CULTURAL PRODUCTION: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION AND RACIALIZATION

Townes' work and this dissertation examine the fantastic hegemonic imagination that dominates through the abuse or misrepresentation of history and memory. As Townes explains:

> The fantastic hegemonic imagination uses a politicized sense of history and memory to create and shape its worldview. It sets in motion whirlwinds of images

[127] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 21.

> used in the cultural production of evil. These images have an enormous impact on how we understand the world, as well as others and ourselves in that world. […] It is most important to note at this point that the fantastic hegemonic imagination is in all of us. It is found in the privileged and the oppressed….None of us naturally escapes it, for it is found in the deep cultural coding we live with and through in U.S. society.[128]

In other words, the fantastic hegemonic imagination has particular interests to advance, and it (ab)uses history and memory for its benefit. The hegemony's memory of history is what is solidified in US history as "*the* US history"—a single narrative that is reiterated in various forms of messaging in schools, churches, hospitals, courts, newspapers, politicians, and missionaries—and it thrives by people's continuing complicity in accepting and promoting that narrative.

In *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, Townes employs the term 'fantastic hegemonic imagination,' which metamorphoses over time through its play with what it deems to be history and memory to "spawn caricatures and stereotypes" of the black community in the US for the benefit of white society.[129] For Townes, the hegemony is US white society—in all its political, economic, social, and religious iterations—that operates as the norm and as 'normal.' It deems all those who are non-white to be abnormal, though perhaps aspiring to be normal, thus making normal a superior category that does not seem to appear to be superior but instead simply normal. Townes "explore[s] how a manifestation of evil as a cultural production is embodied" in the fantastic hegemonic imagination, and she does this by focusing on five black stereotypes developed in past centuries that even now continue to influence the US social

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[128] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 21.

[129] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil,* 7.

order adversely towards black people.[130] In a similar vein, this chapter probes the fantastic hegemonic imagination in its socio-cultural production of Mexican and Puerto Rican stereotypes, examining the diverse racial histories of each community that interact with the US black-white racial dichotomy in the formation of caricatures.

What is meant by "the fantastic"? Townes reminds us that the "fantastic" references Foucault's "Fantasia of the Library"—the notion that persons can use their imaginations to interpret what they read and then to construct that imagined world in their minds. Fantastic realities that the reader imagines are then reproduced over and over again, so that eventually the fantastic is no longer questioned as fantastic but is simply the norm, the truth.[131] Townes then expands this fantastic literary base to the non-literary arena, and observes that in this expansion, the fantastic begins

> to form a part of the cultural production of our realities—it is in the very fabric of the everyday. The fantastic lives in those moments of uncertainty when it is not clear if what we perceive or experience is an illusion of the senses (which makes it a product of the imagination and the laws of the world remain intact) and when we detect that the event has actually taken place but laws unknown to us control reality.[132]

In other words, in our everyday lived reality, we are constructing images/symbols, and when our lived experience makes us pause and question whether we really experienced what we thought we experienced, we judge our experience against hegemonic society and culture, and then silence our experience if it does not match the hegemonic ordering and symbolic imagining of how reality operates. Thus, we judge our lived experiences

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[130] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 7.

[131] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 19.

[132] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 19.

according to the hegemonic imagination to determine what is r*e*ality. The supreme (hegemonic) authority that governs society then reorients us in line with the hegemonic worldview. Because, as Townes states,

> the fantastic may be the everyday for those who *live in it*. […] Only those of us who sit outside these worlds must ponder what they 'see,' 'feel,' [or] 'know' because *our* realities are challenged in the face of the fantastic as it emerges from other, sometimes more sinister, sources.[133]

She emphasizes that those who benefit from the existence of the fantastic hegemony are at the center of it, and thus it is *their* norm. As such, they are less likely to question the status quo. This is in contrast to those on the periphery (who are not centered) who might have moments in which they must question what really happened—only to decide to dismiss their questioning experience because they are used to existing in the hegemonic norm views and values. Thus, the fantastic has a primary characteristic of subordination that maintains the hegemonic dominance for those who benefit from it over those at the periphery.[134]

Townes understands the hegemony to manage the fantastic—a bit like the Wizard of Oz. So even when we *want* to operate counter to the norms, values, or narratives of the hegemonic from within the hegemony, it is not possible because the hegemony is ready to respond in a way that maintains its power (making those doubt whether they really want to counter the norms, and typically deterring them from doing so). Townes takes this understanding of the hegemony from Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci,

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[133] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 19.

[134] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 19.

who described it as an "ideological domination that is moral, political, and cultural and is transmitted by language."[135]

Hegemony operates ideologically across the significant areas of lived experience and uses the basic tool of language, a foundational aspect of communication in many societies. Gramsci was a revolutionary Marxist who was imprisoned for his resistance to the Italian fascist regime of Mussolini (1926–1937). While incarcerated, writing in prison notebooks he developed the concept of cultural hegemony, which addresses the "question of dominance and subordination in modern capitalist societies."[136] In other words, Gramsci was interested in how the dominant hegemony—those in power—held power over subordinate groups. A significant part of the answer to that includes the subgroup's apparent consent to hegemony. Says Townes,

> [t]he notion of consent is key, because hegemony is created through coercion that is gained by using the church, family, media, political parties, schools, unions, and other voluntary associations—the civil society and all its organizations. This breeds a kind of false consciousness (the fantastic is a neocultural and sociopolitical drag) that creates societal values and moralities such that there is [only] one coherent and accurate viewpoint on the world.[137]

The element of consent can appear to mean that one has the choice to participate or not; however, when the entire way in which society, culture, and religion is organized is the norm, then that consent can be coercive because people feel compelled to operate within the 'norm' or 'normal' way in which all structures and institutions operate. For example, democracy can appear to have the liberty of free choice, and we have the right to vote for

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[135] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 20.

[136] T. J. Jackson Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities," *The American Historical Review* 90, (1985): 568, https://doi.org/10.2307/1860957.

[137] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evi*l, 20.

what we want, but the reality is that the majority of the vote or the dominant vote rules, and all others in the minority have to abide by the majority's choice. Thus, coercion to consent to the hegemony does not always appear to be a blatant coercive action, and indeed can even appear to be much more subtle and non-hegemonic.

To highlight the individual internalization of the hegemony, I highlight another example. Suppose we are taught from an early age that we need to be economically successful to enjoy a good life, and that our success depends on how hard we work. If we do not succeed, we understandably conclude it is because we did not work hard enough. This makes it counter-cultural to blame or question the institutions or systems that are deliberately structured to keep some people down or to make it harder for them to succeed (here, economically), and that simultaneously advantage some people. The hegemony wants us to view all institutions as impartial, but the people who develop the rules and make the decisions are certainly far from impartial, if for no other reason than by virtue of being human. While the existence of a hegemony is in and of itself not evil, that determination is made based on its pursuits, how it is practiced, how it is resourced, and who benefits from it, as well as who is harmed by it, and these priorities can make it evil.

As I argued in chapter one, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the US embraced an ideology of Anglo-Saxon superiority and the concept of manifest destiny. As historian Horsman states, these ideologies centered on "a sense of racial destiny" as the key to "American progress and of future American world destiny."[138] It boiled down to "white is right," and that God has ordained it to be so. This

[138] Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 1.

ideology was bolstered by US victories such as "[t]he success of the Puritan settlement, the triumph of republicanism in the Revolution, the extensive material prosperity, the rapid territorial growth, and the presence of blacks and Indians" which, Horsman argues, "all gave a special quality to the manner in which the Untied States received and developed the racial thought of Western Europe."[139] In time, politicians, economists, educational officials, and even religious leaders perpetuated the notion of US superiority.

How the fantastic operates to dominate is of particular interest to me in this chapter. Through the examples of Mexican and Puerto Rican communities, I argue that the fantastic hegemonic imagination dominates by silencing and oppressing the native narratives and identities while at the same time constructing native identities as something opposed to the hegemony, which is narrated as superior, progressive, salvific, and innately virtuous. The hegemonic imaginary reinforces this binary between 'them and us' within deeply ingrained societal and moral values, where equality is not a conceivable possibility. Once ingrained, those values drive policies and practices that affect the everyday lives of people, and thus coerce people to ascribe to its ideology.

While the deep cultural encoding of those values might make it seem as if we have no choice but to ascribe to the fantastic hegemonic imagination, the reality is that there has been and there can continue to be a space to pause and question it. Townes suggests creating a space of resistance through counternarratives and counter-memories to confront the hegemonic imagination. Latina feminist theologies and decolonial theorists, similarly, argue that forming counter-narratives or *testimonios* is an important

[139] Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 3.

way to weaken and dispel the hegemony and assert the periphery (I discuss this further in the following chapter).

However, to affirm counter-narratives, memories, and testimonies, one must first clarify what is meant by history and memory. Townes states that:

> History...is often viewed as [being] closer to a "scientific" field where the historian [identifies] proofs and corroborating evidence as the twin guardians for an objective, balanced analysis. Therefore, memory is [viewed as] impressionistic and history is knowledge.[140]

In other words, to the hegemonic imagination history is more objective than memory, and thus is typically accepted as scientific proof. The dichotomy created to assert history as being contrary to memory can discount or minimize the memories of people if they do not fit into the notion of scientific history. However, Townes helpfully points us to French historian Pierre Nora's argument that "[h]istory is a reconstruction of what no longer exists and [it] calls for analysis and criticism."[141] Thus, for Townes history is a reconstruction in which

> [m]emory is multiple but also specific; collective and plural but also individualized. […] History is only interested in temporal continuities, and in the relationship between things. Memory is an absolute, and history only knows the relative.[142]

In other words, memory is what occurred and happened in a particular context to you and me and us, meaning it is both multiple and specific. History is about creating some kind of a timeline of what happened, but we can only create that history/timeline based on experiences as remembered by people.

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[140] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 13.

[141] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 13.

[142] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 14.

The history we construct depends on those remembered experiences, our memory of it, and how we interpret it into a timeline. Who determines whether something merits entering the timelines of history? Whoever holds power to construct and wield that history. Understanding that there is no ahistorical and apolitical life-experience of any person, we must admit that an authentic rendering of history always involves a reconstruction of places, spaces, and people that are dynamic, not static. Omitting memory therefore biases historians and histories. Therefore, there is a benefit to deconstructing both our understanding of history and the dichotomy of memory. History is therefore better expressed as histories.

Whereas Townes examines so-called US history in the white and black racial dynamics that constructed black caricatures for the benefit of white dominant society, I examine the racialization of US Mexicans and US Puerto Ricans (on the mainland) in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, and their US-constructed identities created to benefit US white Anglo nationalist Christianity. Many scholars have examined the caricatures of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans during this time period, either from a socio-political standpoint or a religious standpoint. I aim to do both, and in doing so emphasize the interconnectedness of society and religion. For once the US colonized and extended US citizenship to those of Mexican and Puerto Rican peoples, one of the imperatives of the US hegemony was to raise them up to what it deemed to be US standards of civilization.

This occurred in US dominant culture through racializing them into a subcategory and caricaturing them for the benefit of hegemonic aims. The US political leaders and missionaries did not consider that Mexicans and Puerto Ricans were already civilized in

their own way because they did not equate to US civilization according to the constructed criteria by which to judge others' (non-US) level of civilization. Before we advance to the created criteria that lead to the conclusion that Mexicans and Puerto Ricans were not civilized, I propose the metaphor of a dome to describe hegemony.

The US Hegemonic Dome

In non-definitive, non-static terms I propose the metaphor of the US Hegemonic Dome ("US HD") to better to understand what this dissertation identifies as the hegemony. In later sections of this chapter I apply this US HD to the US Mexican and US Puerto Rican (mainland) communities following their US colonization.

To understand the context of US HD, one must first comprehend the goals of coloniality. Decolonial feminist Maria Lugones argues that in the

> [b]eginning with the colonization of the Americas and the Caribbean, a hierarchical, dichotomous distinction between human and non-human was imposed on the colonized in the service of Western man.[143]

This creation of categories and hierarchies is a fundamental tool that ensures that the hegemony remains in place, one that European colonizers who migrated to these lands used to impose their worldview of Western man's superiority. Thus, the US HD operates to maintain Western man's dominant position over others. We can see this in US history, in which, for example, schools are structured for white boys to advance academically, as white girls needed to advance in domestic chores; where church leadership is a white man's role; where a white man is the head of the household; and where political institutions are structured with white male leaders making decisions for society based on

[143] Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 743.

their experience and worldview being the norm. There is no concept of an equal playing field for others. A goal of the hegemony is to implement rules, systems, institutions, messages, virtues, and rules that discipline members of the society, and even incorporate their religious traditions and practices to accept the Western male worldview.

In *Coloniality Is Far from Over, and So Must Be Decoloniality*, decolonial theorist Walter D. Mignolo focuses on the concept of center and periphery in relation to the colonial matrix of power.[144] More specifically, he examines how Western modernity sits in the center and "make[s] [the oppressed] 'see' what the rhetoric of Western modernity wants us to see[;]" nothing more and nothing less.[145] Western US modernity centers the European Anglo colonizers, and colonized natives are disciplined to accept that hierarchy and the worldview of those in the center.

Thus, the aim of the US HD is to maintain US Western male superiority by perpetually disseminating ideology and knowledge to create and control the values and moralities in US society in an invisible, ahistorical, and apolitical manner, such that it appears natural and, thus, uncontestable. The goal is for no one to question from where the hegemonic knowledge and values come, and for individuals to believe this is just the way things are and how everyone else sees the world too. As decolonial mujerista Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz notes, "'[i]ndividual' knowledge is never merely individual: It is always a knowledge claimed by an individual within a community but not quite yet knowledge until it is understood and validated by a community (or another)."[146] The hegemonic

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[144] Walter D. Mignolo, "Coloniality Is Far from Over, and So Must Be Decoloniality," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context, & Enquiry* 43, no. 1 (2017): 39–45.

[145] Mignolo, "Coloniality is Far from Over," 39.

[146] Otto Maduro, "An(other) Invitation to Epistemological Humility: Notes toward a Self-Critical

knowledge of US superiority (primarily male) derives from their own histories, experiences, perspectives, desires, and imaginations, which are then incorporated into all facets of US society and religion, thus continuously self-validating.

In the context of this dissertation, the hegemonic knowledge of Mexican and Puerto Ricans in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is transmitted and distorted from various sources, such as US male authors of texts and images in travel logs, dime novels, photographs, postcards, missionary letters, etc. Evidence can be found in those sources that perpetuate the ideology and values of US superiority, which US society validates, and which religion in Protestant missions solidifies. Of particular importance for this chapter is how the ideology and values of US superiority, as well as caricatures of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, are transmitted to all corners of society, including religion. A partial answer I provide is through my metaphor of an invisible hegemonic dome.

Imagine an invisible dome force field with invisible microphones surrounding it that operate 24/7, sending sound waves across the dome, and specifically spewing messages of hegemonic virtues, values, and morals. Sound waves can travel through any surface; there are no barriers (even if some muffle the sound). The soundwaves are invisible yet powerful as they seep into the minds of people, into the operations of institutions, into the organization of structures and systems, into the micro levels of our everyday lives in our schools, churches, political offices, courts, newspapers, photographs, etc. Once the messages enter, they are internalized because those messages correspond to how society, culture, and religion operate; to an already almost brainwashed public, they seem *only natural*. The longer we participate in the US HD, the

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Approach to Counter-Knowledges," in *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*, ed. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Eduardo Mendieta (Fordham University Press, 2012), 89.

harder it becomes to hear or imagine messages beyond those wired into the dome of our lives.

Lastly, it is difficult—and rare—for someone to deviate from the messages permeating the US HD, as such deviation marks a resistance to some or all that has ever been known up until that point and thus, makes it difficult to operate within the US HD configuration that dominates all of society and church. Because the US HD teaches or disciplines a person to remain coded in the way that the US HD understands to be true and real, and to move about in the way that the US HD dictates, even if someone wants to resist, there is no ideology and there are rarely messages within the US HD to help them resist or imagine that they have agency to resist. In chapter three, I suggest, however, that resistance can be present even when it appears we continue to operate within the US HD.

Racialization of Mexican-Americans and Puerto Rican Americans

We recognize the characteristics of hegemonic ideology in how it is practiced. To show this, I review particular examples that employ the US HD in the construction of Mexican and Puerto Rican caricatures. These examples are of how dime novels, travelogs, photographs, and scientific studies employed US socio-cultural hegemonic politics to participate in the racialization and subordination of Mexican and Puerto Rican communities. The dominant characteristic of the US HD in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was to make its messages appear virtuous, innate, and natural, thus not raising any level of suspicion. This it practiced by disseminating a narrative in which the US "saves" Mexican and Puerto Rican communities both from their inability to govern themselves and from their "nativist" ways. The racialization process of the US,

which sought to place Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in the racial hierarchy below white Anglos, perpetuated this dominant messaging. By examining how these two cultural groups were incorporated into the racial architecture of the US—by having some facts in hand—we can begin to confront the fantastic hegemonic imagination.

In this section of the chapter I follow Victor M. Rodriguez Dominguez in defining racialization as "a process that includes socialization into a culture signified by race, with individuals internalizing patterns of behavior and thought that contribute to their own subordination and to the perpetuation of the system."[147] In other words, the racialization process occurs through social messaging to non-Anglo races that they are 'other' and that they should accept that 'other' category/status and obey the parameters of how the 'other' category is dictated to act. Further, Rodriguez-Dominguez states that,

> racial categories are constructed in binary opposition to each other; they become part of the comparative taxonomy of white/black, wherein racialization occurs in the context of comparison and categorization with an "other." It is precisely in this process of comparison, where meaning is constructed by creating categories, that racialization becomes cognitively intelligible.[148]

Therefore, to define Mexican or Puerto Rican identity, the US HD had to compare them to the US (white superior) Protestant Anglo and, through that comparison, to construct a caricature that US society could easily understand. The following sections give specific examples of these comparisons and categorizations to solidify Mexicans and Puerto Ricans as 'other,' despite them being US citizens following the US conquest of their lands.

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[147] Rodriguez Dominguez, "The Racialization," 73.

[148] Rodriguez Dominguez, "The Racialization," 73.

The racialization of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in the US was distinct from the racialization of other groups, given the particular history, society, and culture of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. Central to Mexican and Puerto Rican society and culture was the mixing of different racial groups, through marriage, cohabitation, or rape, and thus, as Rodriguez-Dominguez states, "the idea of *mestizaje* was part of nation-building efforts."[149] He further notes that racial hierarchies of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans "had intermediate racial categories that allowed people to be described in terms of other than black (Guerra 1998)."[150] Thus, the US black/white binary was not as static or fixed for those communities as it was in the rest of the US; therefore, internalizing and perpetuating the black/white binary was not easy for them.

Mexico, says Rodriguez Dominguez, "'imaged itself' as a *mestizo* nation and incorporated Mexicans of African descent into the concept of the mestizaje. Therefore, the *tercera raiz* (African) is conspicuously absent from the Mexican imaginary."[151] As a mestizo, one can reduce and downplay ties to African blackness; thus, one is not black but mestizo, which is other-than-black. In the US racial binary of black/white, some lighter-skinned mestizo Mexicans could align themselves more with whiteness. This alignment had significant effects on how Mexicans decided to participate in US society and Protestant missions, which I discuss in chapter three.

Further, Rodriguez-Dominguez notes that Puerto Ricans had a

> racial system [that] was not a bifurcated system of categories, making it easier to move from one racial category to a more prestigious status. The Puerto Rican

[149] Rodriguez Dominguez, "The Racialization," 74.

[150] Rodriguez Dominguez, "The Racialization," 74.

[151] Rodriguez Dominguez, "The Racialization," 74.

> racial hierarchy was not based on an either/or framework but rather a series of racial categories constructed according to a less rigid continuum. […] Each intermediate category was a composite of color and physical features, bounded one end of the spectrum by the concept of whiteness and on the other end by the concept of blackness."[152]

Thus, a whitening process that enabled Puerto Ricans to move along the spectrum of color inherited from the Spanish colonizers made it difficult for Puerto Ricans to internalize a binary of white/black. In chapter three, I suggest that Puerto Ricans resisted the othering process that the US tried to employ in its racialization process, instead always seeking to be an independent nation, perhaps in response to their unwillingness to adopt the black/white racialization architecture.

With that context in mind, I now move to the case studies of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans racialized into US society and Protestant missions during the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This racialization process was often a silent but pernicious undertow in how these communities were incorporated into the US narrative of superiority during that time.

US Cultural Caricatures of Mexicans in the Context of the US-Mexican War (1848)

At the start of the nineteenth century, Mexico governed what is the present-day southwestern territory of the US. In time, US whites from the East Coast of the US traveled to those frontier lands in the southwestern territory with their Manifest Destiny ideology and Anglo superiority, concluding that they were superior to the Mexicans they encountered and documenting this in writing. While I focus on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of the interaction between white Anglos and Mexicans, historian

[152] Rodriguez Dominguez, "The Racialization," 74.

Doris L. Meyer argues that the origins of Anglos' demeaning attitudes toward Mexicans date back to even before the colonization of the Americas. She writes that "[n]ineteenth-century Anglo writers were influenced in their negative opinion of Mexicans by earlier prejudices dating back three centuries to the conflict between Protestant England and Catholic Spain."[153] Meyers cites the historical studies of David Weber in which he states that "[t]he English colonist also believed that Spanish government was authoritarian, corrupt and decadent and that Spaniards were bigoted, cruel, greedy, tyrannical, fanatical, treacherous and lazy."[154] The English colonists' perception of Spaniards they projected onto the Spanish-colonized Mexicans. Thus, it appears that even before having a face-to-face encounter with Mexicans, the US Anglo colonizers were, in their ignorance, already caricaturing Mexicans.

In time, the US government waged war against the Mexicans in the southwestern territory and officially took control of those lands via the 1848 signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Despite the Treaty granting US citizenship to all Mexicans who remained and statehood to the territories conquered, stereotypes applied to Mexicans delayed and derailed the actual implementation of this citizenship and statehood. Meyers argues that the fact that the Mexican territory—or what is present-day New Mexico—had a heavily Spanish Catholic influence and no public education system, prompted the US government of that time to deem the territory insufficiently "American," delaying its

[153] Doris L. Meyer, "Early Mexican-American Responses to Negative Stereotyping." *New Mexico Historical Review* 53, no. 1 (1978): 75, ISSN 0028-6206.

[154] Meyer, "Early Mexican-American Responses," 75.

statehood.[155] These religious and educational categories that led to the determination of being 'insufficiently American' and allegedly incapable of self-governance meant that Mexicans were initially 'othered' due more to their socio-cultural-religious differences rather than to their biological and racial differences. Further, Rodriguez-Dominguez documents that elite Mexicans still owned significant areas of land after the Mexican-American War, and that they served as intermediaries between Anglos and Mexicans, demonstrating once again that the racialization of Mexicans was not initially biological or within the white/black binary. (That came later, in the early twentieth century, Rodriguez-Dominguez notes.[156]) This is one example of how the US hegemonic imagination shifts and changes over time to ensure its continued dominance over Mexicans (and other 'others').

The rhetoric and view of the US government that the conquered territories inhabited by Mexicans were not sufficiently American was also evident in the public square. For example, Meyer demonstrates how US English-language newspapers erroneously portrayed the Mexican community as welcoming and almost begging for a US English education system in New Mexico.[157] However, upon closer review of the Mexican newspapers *in the Spanish language*, Meyer finds that a contrary opinion was voiced, one that I engage more thoroughly in the following chapter's discussion of Mexican resistance and agency amid hegemonic oppression. But here I stress this language issue as a prime example of how the fantastic hegemonic imagination operates.

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[155] Doris L. Meyer, "The Language Issue in New Mexico, 1880–1900: Mexican-American Resistance against Cultural Erosion," *Bilingual Review / La Revista Bilingüe* 4, no. 1/2 (1977): 99.

[156] Rodriguez Dominguez, "The Racialization," 76.

[157] Meyer, "The Language Issue," 100.

It deliberately disparages the Mexican Catholic school system already in place and states that the Mexican community desires a US educational system, which implies that the Mexican people have already internalized a notion of the US educational system as superior. Whether that was true or not, the English-language newspapers ran with the story, reiterating this messaging in the broader US society, no doubt fully aware that the dominant society (and those in positions of power) would not question such a story because it benefits them to be seen as having a superior educational system. This is one way US hegemony is practiced: constructing a narrative for its own benefit and repeating it until community members in the society hold it as truth, and perhaps only a few question it.

But such rhetoric of US superiority was hardly restricted to the government and newspapers. Popular media entertainment of that time, in the form of dime novels, disseminated the hegemonic narrative to even broader swaths of society. For example, Meyer notes that during the time of the Mexican annexation,

> [w]riters of western dime novels, popular in the late nineteenth century, perpetuated existing prejudices and often referred to Mexicans as "greasers," a term that was also used in [the] Eastern press. Paradoxically, other authors at the end of the century preferred to romanticize the "mission culture" of the southwest, giving rise to the equally inaccurate stereotypes of the gallant hidalgo and the picturesque peon and his burro.[158]

The US HD is versatile, shape-shifting as needed to meet its aims. As Meyer states, dime novels caricatured Mexicans as "greasers" at the beginning of the century and as "gallant hidalgos" at the end of the century to fall in line with the Protestant mission culture. Additional caricatures of Mexicans during the nineteenth century depicted Mexicans as

[158] Meyer, "Early Mexican-American Responses," 76.

"untrustworthy, villainous, ruthless, tequila-drinking, philandering *machos*, or as courteous, devout, and fatalistic peasants who were to be treated more as pets than people[]"—all of which helped US society and missions to imagine themselves as essential for their aims of civilizing Mexicans.[159] The US produced a spectrum of Mexican caricatures to sell US hegemonic narratives to US society, regardless of their (in)accuracy.

In the article, *The Literature of the U.S.-Mexican War: Narrative, Time, and Identity*, Jaime Javier Rodriguez, a professor of literature who specializes in the study of literary interactions between the United States and Mexico,[160] explores and analyzes the popularity of such war dime novels.[161] That popularity is what this dissertation argues makes war dime novels accessories to the US hegemonic cultural production of evil Mexican caricatures. That some argue that the novels are fiction and should be held harmless is another example of how symbols and images infiltrate society without accountability for the harm they cause. However, given that in times of war an easy blurring of fiction and non-fiction occurs that confuses the moral imagination, and given that such confusion can then be instrumentalized for political aims, we should question the morality of holding harmless war dime novels/their authors. Rodriguez provokes such questions stating that,

> [n]ovelette writers were not the only scribblers rushing to cash in on the war's narratological opportunities, but their efforts—mostly short adventure tales about 100 pages long—directly incorporated the conflict as an element of imaginative

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[159] Meyer, "Early Mexican-American Responses," 76.

[160] "Jaime Javier Rodriguez," University of North Texas, accessed January 15, 2026, https://lmas.unt.edu/people/dr-jaime-javier-rodriguez.html.

[161] Jaime Javier Rodríguez, *The Literatures of the U.S.-Mexican War: Narrative, Time, and Identity* (University of Texas Press, 2010), 19.

> fiction, and because their authors strove to cater—or pander—to an emerging U.S. American readership, they have understandably become the focus of several scholarly literary studies that examine the intersection of narrative and social context.[162]

This literary genre developed in the 1840s, right in time to center on the US-Mexican War as its muse.[163] The novels' short, condensed stories made a frontier world accessible to many across the US who would perhaps never actually travel to the Southwest territory or meet a Mexican. Yet these novels captured such armchair travelers' imaginations.

Rodriguez notes that such novels typically featured a recurring central theme, with slight variations. Central to the novels was a "heroic Anglo-Saxon soldier travel[ing] to Mexico to battle—successfully, of course—an oppressive regime, liberating both nations in the process."[164] Thus, the novels aggrandized the US victory over Mexico and then created a narrative of the Mexican government as an oppressive regime in an attempt to justify the US intervention and victory. The hero motif of US white Anglo-Saxon men that can be transposed onto US people generally, as well as US society, is subtly ingrained in the hegemonic imagination. Heroes are usually virtuous and justified, and thus, their actions, reasons, and purpose can remain unexamined by readers. While some people might argue that such novels were merely fantastical, I suggest that there is potentially great danger in a single story—in this case the motif of the US hero and Mexican villain—because a story that is repeated and repeated until it is imagined as truth is no longer merely a story but becomes the basis of socio-political decisions with

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[162] Rodríguez, *The Literatures of the U.S.-Mexican War*, 17–18.

[163] Rodríguez, *The Literatures of the U.S.-Mexican War*, 18.

[164] Rodríguez, *The Literatures of the U.S.-Mexican War*, 18.

real-life consequences. Once a narrative is instilled in culture and becomes inherent to how things are "naturally," it becomes virtually impossible to question it. Thus, as Rodriguez argues, "the U.S.-Mexican War's literary legacy erases Mexicans as visible agents of hemispheric American history. Racism works to control and stabilize internal fault lines, and it depends on economic and governmental powers that confine, define, and oppress the objects of its attack."[165] The interconnectedness of racialization and its dependence on economic and governmental power is evident in another aspect of war dime novels that often feature women.

Most salient for this dissertation is Rodriguez's analysis of war dime novels' use of domestic unions to tie up loose ends, particularly unions between US military officers and members of the Mexican aristocracy.[166] In this type of narration, it is apparent that US military officers would not be united domestically to just any Mexican woman, but to the highest class of Mexican women: aristocrats. While still not equal in status to a US Anglo woman, such a union will do because such a woman is at the top of the hierarchy of women in Mexican society. Note how here gender and economic status become intertwined in the racial classification of Mexican women. It seems that not all Mexican women are homogenized in this example, and that the US gaze incorporates an economic-social hierarchy of Mexican women, placing the social elite and economically wealthy women at the top, and rendering them eligible for mixed marriages. Thus, it appears that when a US Anglo male has a need to marry, then it warrants a closer look at the diversity within Mexican women, separating the rich Mexican women from the poor

[165] Rodríguez, *The Literatures of the U.S.-Mexican War*, 18–19.

[166] Rodríguez, *The Literatures of the U.S.-Mexican War*, 41.

Mexican women, and opting for the rich. Argubly if there was no need to marry, then there would be no need to view the diverse socio-economic status of Mexican women.

These domestic unions did not originate in war dime novels. Rodriguez notes that the use of domestic unions between Anglos and Mexicans had been used before war dime novels to symbolize "a happy and foundational synthesis of Old and New Worlds in which a feminized Hispanic Catholic domain gives way sexually, theologically, and politically to a liberating, Protestant, heroic Anglo U.S. imperial power."[167] No doubt Mexican women's backs have long been used as bridges between Mexico and the US, between Catholic and Protestant, between the conquered and conquerors. More notable is that the romantic pairing in the novels is always between a Mexican woman and a US white man (not a US white woman and a Mexican man), symbolizing "metaphors of U.S. aggression, both national and masculinist," as Rodriguez notes.[168] I discuss this feminization of Mexico further in the following section after a review of some of the caricatures of Puerto Rico and its people.

In addition to the dime novels prevalent in the nineteenth century, newly discovered scientific human race classifications published in scientific journals justified Anglos status above that of others. Among them, the most notable is *On the Origin of the Species* (1859) by Charles Darwin, published approximately ten years after the Mexican-American War. In it, Darwin created a category of scientific racism in which only the fittest survive—and therefore are privileged to dominate—and others are fit only to be

[167] Rodríguez, *The Literatures of the U.S.-Mexican War*, 41-42.

[168] Rodríguez, *The Literatures of the U.S.-Mexican War*, 40.

dominated.[169] Herbert Spencer took Darwin's theory and applied it to free market ideologies to construct what is known as social Darwinism, which understood "society []as part of the natural order [that] could not function contrary to the laws of nature."[170] This was a means to justify social stratification, stratification that understood "it was useless to try to civilize the natives in the colonies."[171] Since many people believe science to be apolitical and based only on unbiased factual data, it was arguably hard for anyone who might question those findings to be heard. In response, the US government, educational institutions, and missions doubled down on their perceived need to order and classify the races, spreading the message that such classification was "only natural." Mexicans were told to believe they belonged in a social sphere other and below that of white Anglos, and hence under their control. Moreover, US elites used scientific studies to support the notion that their hegemony was both natural and naturally dominant and superior to others.

In order to solidify the hegemony of the US Anglo as superior to Mexicans, other scientific studies were introduced to bolster this narrative and to caricature Mexicans. In the twentieth century a study entitled *The Mexican Mind: A Study in National Psychology* (1922), held that "Mexicans have compulsive sex drives and that they 'have a child's or savage's unwavering grasp of the details of desire.'"[172] This type of description of the sexuality of Mexicans as that of a child or a savage certainly equates it to being below

[169] Rodriguez Dominguez, "The Racialization," 77.

[170] Rodriguez Dominguez, "The Racialization," 78.

[171] Rodriguez Dominguez, "The Racialization," 78.

[172] Rodriguez Dominguez, "The Racialization," 85.

that of an adult white Anglo American, who clearly would not have a child's, let alone a savage's, sexual drive, and thus, implies the need for the white US men to save Mexicans. The distorted narration of sexuality to categorize Mexicans below US Anglos is yet another aspect of the racialization practice that they endured.

Why has there been no similar 1920s study of the white Anglo-American mind? Or on the sexual drive of the white Anglo? If there had been such a study, how would their sexual drive be racially categorized, and what conclusions about the general population of white Anglos would be drawn? How would the US public have received such findings? The so-called scientific study of the Mexican mind and, in particular, of Mexican sexuality takes a topic that many, especially in the 1920s, would consider private, thus publicizing it in the scientific-public sphere is further dehumanizing, particularly given such sexuality's categorization and narration as childish and savage. The publication of studies, novels, travelogs, books, articles, and mission reports that repeat the derogatory sexuality of Mexicans served a purpose and a benefit—to maintain Mexicans under the white Anglo hegemonic gaze. That these sources entered the public square meant it was unsurprising that a national "Mexican Problem" ideology developed that was, in part, robustly fed by the images they projected.

The ways in which US racial and social hierarchy categorized and pigeonholed Mexican people whom the US had conquered in the southwest region following the Mexican-American war (1848) helped to maintain the white Anglo dominant group's political control. That occurred through the use of intersectional organizations and structures within US society that perceived the white Anglo as hero and savior, and naturally superior to the therefore subordinated Mexican caricature. Race, gender, and

sexuality were prime factors in the proliferation of the caricatures that seeped into US society, culture, politics, education, and economics. Protestant missions were not immune to this hegemonic narrative, and their embrace of it in their missions is the subject of the final section of this chapter. But first I turn to the hegemony's infiltration of society to racialize and caricature Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans. Puerto Rico's geopolitical situation required the US hegemony to employ different tactics and resources then that of Mexico.

US Cultural Caricatures of Puerto Ricans in the Context of the Spanish War (1898)

Puerto Ricans and Mexicans share some similarities in terms of their colonial histories. Both were colonized by Spain and then by the US. However, they diverge greatly in context, culture, and customs. Puerto Rico's relationship with the US before its colonization was primarily with US corporations, given its exports of sugar, tobacco, textiles, and other commodities.[173] While Puerto Rico was already well known to US economists in the late nineteenth century as a result of such trade, it was not until it became a US colony following the Spanish-American War (1898) that members of US society had personal encounters with Puerto Ricans.[174] Officially, Puerto Ricans became US citizens following a treaty to end the war, but in practice the US dominant hegemony did not then and does not now consider Puerto Ricans to be US citizens on par with its own people.

[173] Rodriguez Dominguez, "The Racialization," 82–83.

[174] Rodriguez Dominguez, "The Racialization," 75.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the US was a political and economic empire that sought systems and structures to maintain its power. Given the economic relationship US corporations enjoyed in Puerto Rico, it was logical to deem the conquest of Puerto Rico as an economically profitable relationship. To be in a profitable relationship, it is typically beneficial to maintain at least the appearance of peace and amicability; thus, one of the early narratives constructed of Puerto Ricans was that they were peaceful and inviting people who welcomed the conquest of the US. As Rodriguez Dominguez states,

> [The] Puerto Rican, like the Mexican, was being domesticated into accepting his proper place within a racial hierarchy that had whites as the archetype of what Puerto Ricans should aspire to be. This internalization was expected to be smooth, particularly since Puerto Ricans already were understood by Americans to be malleable and peaceful people.[175]

Arguably, given the low number of casualties resulting from the Spanish-American War and the perceived ease with which Spain handed over Puerto Rico to the United States, it is likely that most people in the US imagined Puerto Ricans as peaceful people who would easily settle into their assigned social and racial status.[176] The US public square view of Puerto Rico can be summarized in Amos K. Fiske's New York Times article in 1898, in which he states,

> [t]here can be no question to perplex any reasonable mind about the wisdom of taking possession of the island of Puerto Rico and keeping it for all time. There has been the same depressing misrule there as in Cuba, and the only reason why there has not been the same revolt against it is that the case was hopeless… There is the same reason for driving the corrupt despotism of Spain out of Puerto Rico

[175] Rodriguez Dominguez, "The Racialization," 88.

[176] Kelvin Santiago-Valles, "The Sexual Appeal of Racial Sifferences: U.S. Travel Writing and Anxious American-ness in Turn-of-the-Century Puerto Rico," in *Race and the Production of Modern American Nationalism*, ed. Reynolds J. Scott-Childress (Garland Pub., 1999), 127.

> as for driving it out of Cuba, save for the melancholy difference between a hopeless submission to wrong and a hopeless struggle against it.[177]

Following the conquest, "the island's political, economic institutions were in the hands of the [US] military between 1898 and 1901 and later, [of] U.S.-appointed civilian authorities."[178] The US solidified its conquest of Puerto Rico by taking immediate control of its politics, economics, and military presence. The US narrative of its easy conquest of Puerto Rico is central in the caricatures it constructed of its people and lands.

Since initially many in the US had no occasion or desire to travel to Puerto Rico (aside from economists, politicians, and military personnel), it was important for the hegemony to construct a caricature of its people via images. In *Imagining The Great Puerto Rican Family*, cultural anthropologist Hilda Llorens analyzes photographs and artistic representations of Puerto Rican people and lands during the early American occupation, demonstrating how the US superiority lens constructed them.[179] Llorens states that "American photographers at the turn of the century illustrate that [Puerto Ricans and their lands] are as much a depiction of the American obsession with race and blackness as they are about colonial expansion and Puerto Ricans more generally."[180] The racial white/black binary dominant in the US was being imposed on the lands and people in Puerto Rico, in particular, its anti-blackness bias. Thus, the US racial fetishization and objectification of Puerto Ricans and the island was more pronounced than that of Mexico

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[177] Brad K. Berner, *The Spanish-American War : A Documentary History with Commentaries*, (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press. 2014), 188.

[178] Rodriguez Dominguez, "The Racialization," 83.

[179] Hilda Llorens, *Imaging The Great Puerto Rican Family: Framing Nation, Race, and Gender During the American Century* (Lexington Books, 2014), 2.

[180] Llorens, *Imaging The Great Puerto Rican Family*, 3.

and Mexicans, perhaps in light of Puerto Rico's African heritage that remained pronounced during its colonization by the US. The ways in which the US classified Puerto Ricans racially, combined with the US depiction of the island's tropical landscape, influenced the pejorative US perception of the people of Puerto Rico as 'natives.'

At the turn of the twentieth century, Llorens focused on photographic images because of "[t]he portability of the photographic document, as well as its ease of reproduction, [which] allowed it to become a significant instrument in the global legitimization of U.S. colonial expansion into the former Spanish colonies."[181] Thus, instead of reading a war dime novel of roughly a hundred pages to gain insight into the imagined caricature of Mexicans in the nineteenth century, in the twentieth century one could simply view photographs to imagine a caricature of Puerto Ricans from their ostensibly remote tropical island. Akin to how dime novels spread a hegemonic ideology about Mexicans, so too photographs were a great resource to US hegemony in spreading its ideology and caricatures of Puerto Rico to the US public.

Among the most notable of these photographs is one entitled "Puerto Rican Natives." Taken five years after the US invaded Puerto Rico, Llorens states this image and its caption is meant not only to highlight the primitive nature of its people and lands,[182] but also to contrast with the American who is far from primitive and, indeed, is modern and progressive.[183] The creation of this binary (primitive vs. modern) to differentiate the US American Anglo from the 'other'—primitive native Puerto Rico was

[181] Llorens, *Imaging The Great Puerto Rican Family*, 4.

[182] Llorens, *Imaging The Great Puerto Rican Family*, 4.

[183] Llorens, *Imaging The Great Puerto Rican Family*, 4.

a common tactic used to caricature Puerto Ricans. Why wasn't the picture captioned 'Puerto Rican People' instead of using the word 'Native'? The idea that US American people were entitled to be viewed as the cultural norm and Puerto Ricans were native others made it much easier to persuade the US public of the need to 'save' them through cultural, educational, military, and/or Christian mission interventions. The US was living out its savior complex, which was then easily transferred to Protestant missions, as the final section of this chapter demonstrates.

Llorens notes that the photograph is clearly staged, as people stand in an unnatural arrangement solely for the camera.[184] The arrangement of the people for the camera lens is a prime metaphor of how the hegemony arranges all people within the hegemonic dome for the purpose of the hegemony's narrative, values, power, and control. That the people in this photograph are artificially arranged and that the photograph is given the title "Puerto Rican Native," is an example of the hegemony exerting its power to caricature Puerto Ricans. It wields its power by choosing how to stage the scene to be captured from behind the lens, and by portraying to its purchasers that this is how Puerto Rico and its people are. Such wielding of power is deliberate, as is how the photograph was staged and produced. For as Llorens notes, it is important to note the differences in how certain photographs were classified:

> [the] late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century photographic archive is made up of images that fall into two main categories, the family photograph and the classificatory image. The family photograph establishes lineage, context, and filial stories or histories. […] A classificatory image such as 'Puerto Rican natives' is pseudo-scientific in nature and is an example of images produced at the turn of the century by information professionals (e.g., colonial administrators, photographers, and scientists). These classificatory images are now a part of the historical inventory of places, landscapes, peoples, nature, etc. […] At a time

[184] Llorens, *Imaging The Great Puerto Rican Family*, 5.

> when the United States was in the midst of colonial expansion, photography became an important aid in introducing the new acquisition (the places, landscapes, flora, fauna, and people) to citizens on the mainland.[185]

This classification was a tool for US intellectuals to classify the photographs of the people and lands of Puerto Rico in the non-human-familial or pseudo-scientific category. This categorization is then passed down generation after generation. Over the course of these generations, how many people have questioned why this photograph of a group of humans was classified in this way? Most viewers have likely just accepted the image and its caption as authentically representing their humanity, and these people as things to be studied and gazed upon.

The caricature of the 'native' as one who is not progressive carries with it biases and assumptions that separate such a person from the US American viewed as progressive and superior. This assumed differentiation then contributes to US Americans' inability to see Puerto Ricans as equals. This has practical implications for how US Anglos relate to Puerto Ricans and whether they are truly accepted as US citizens, in theory and in practice. The 'native' primitive Puerto Rican caricature was interchangeable with the caricature of an orphaned child in need of a benevolent adult.[186] Each caricature was intended to depict the imagined needs and desires of the people of Puerto Rico toward the US. Constructing such caricatures was how this US Anglo-American imaginary reinforced its practices of dominance over Puerto Ricans.

These caricatures also laid the groundwork for the hegemony's ideology of saviorism, which was also visible in the Mexican context. This narrative of being in need

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[185] Llorens, *Imaging The Great Puerto Rican Family*, 13.

[186] Llorens, *Imaging The Great Puerto Rican Family*, 14.

of saving because one is a child promotes the common-sense conclusion that the orphaned child is inferior and "lacking meaningful histories"[187] to the savior parent. Irrespective of any possible well-meaning (albeit paternalistic) intentions, the public moral and socio-cultural consciousness of the US as savior was intended to erase Puerto Ricans' sense of agency and self-determination. The motif of the US as savior was a simple one to affirm in the early twentieth century, as it has been in place since at least the Mexican-American War in the mid-nineteenth century.

The US further portrayed the land of Puerto Rico as a tropical paradise to depict Puerto Rican people as natives, as Llorens argues.[188] The US used images (chiefly photographs) of the outdoor, natural environment of this tropical land to support its narrative of Puerto Ricans, a narrative which Llorens argues the US used intentionally to identify them as part of the "natural" world, and further, that "[t]hese photographs stand as evidence that these 'others' do in fact cohabitate closely and naturally with/in nature as if they fail to have other identities or participate in exchanges that might occur elsewhere."[189] Though it may seem ecologically romantic, in these racist narratives to associate people with nature is actually meant to portray certain groups of people as innately belonging to a subaltern category. A subaltern usually does not speak in ways that the US colonizer can comprehend, and thus that subaltern is ignored, or worse, seen as being without voice. United States colonial photographs did this by equating Puerto Rican people with their lands, silencing them, and making it easier to promote a single

[187] Llorens, *Imaging The Great Puerto Rican Family*, 14.

[188] Llorens, *Imaging The Great Puerto Rican Family*, 14.

[189] Llorens, *Imaging The Great Puerto Rican Family*, 14.

US hegemonic narrative. Finally, equating the people of Puerto Rico with its ecology or lands makes it easier for the US dominant society to deem them ripe for conquest. Not only was US society and church predisposed to support US intervention, but they regarded it as an urgent task—to take Puerto Ricans out of their primitive natural state because they were now US citizens.

One last significant strategy that the US dominant powers used to subordinate Mexico and Puerto Rico, their people and lands, was to feminize them, which in turn had the effect of masculinizing the US and thus fit the hegemonic narrative of superior patriarchy. The exploitation of race and now gender were two forces that made it almost impossible for US society not to subordinate Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. That subordination of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans by Protestant missions religion then echoed to solidify both Mexican and Puerto Rican caricatures, and also a single US hegemonic narrative—a narrative that has persisted into the twenty-first century. The following section discusses the feminization of the people and lands of Mexico and Puerto Rico, and the final section analyzes how Protestant missions joined in perpetuating those efforts.

Colonial Feminization of Mexican and Puerto Rican People and Lands

The racialization and caricature of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans contains an aspect of feminization that is used to further degrade and subordinate those communities in the US hegemonic hierarchy. As decolonial feminist Maria Lugones posits, the colonizer constructs gender to legitimize and reinforce colonial pursuits. This construction typically entails prioritizing men over women and associating certain traits and characteristics with

each gender to buttress the notion of men being innately superior to women.[190] In the case of the Americas, Lugones affirms that this inequality began during the colonization of the Americas and holds that,

> [t]he European bourgeois woman was not understood as his [bourgeois man's] complement, but as someone who reproduced race and capital through her sexual purity, passivity, and being homebound in the service of the white, European, Bourgeois man.[191]

The European woman served a purpose inasmuch as she was pure and passive and in the service of European men. These characteristics of passivity, purity, and of existing to serve men were ascribed to women's innate identity and benefited US Anglo male hegemonic pursuits.

As Lugones argues, this ideological view of women serving men and being pure and passive is something that US leaders used to contrast white European women with natives, resulting in the latter being described as "bestial and thus non-gendered, promiscuous, grotesquely sexual, and sinful."[192] The non-gendered classification ranks the native as below white European women, who are below white European men, in a category that is animalistic and overtly sexual. If natives are non-gendered, then they are non-human and, as a different category of being the harm done to their bodies is not equated to the harm done to European bodies. Thus, as Lugones holds, "[t]urning the colonized into human beings was not a colonial goal," but caricaturing the natives through sexual exploitation of their bodies and creating feminizing images of them was

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[190] Lugones,"Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 743.

[191] Lugones,"Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 743.

[192] Lugones,"Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 743.

acceptable.[193] Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century travel and academic nonfiction and nonfiction texts, photographs, and public voices that discuss Mexican and Puerto Rican people and lands reflect this framework.

Returning to examples of mid-nineteenth century war novels, Jaime Javier Rodriguez notes that a recurring theme is the association of "[a]n exotic landscape, an evil dictator as an enemy, [and] an oppressed people ready for the liberating catharsis of benevolent invasion, golden-haired heroes."[194] The use of land as a descriptor or category, along with identifying physical traits such as golden hair and labeling the invasion as benevolent, leads the hegemonic imagination to compare and contrast Mexican exotic lands to US non-exotic lands and golden-haired heroes to black-haired natives. While in the mid-nineteenth century the southwestern US may not have been considered exotic compared to other parts of the US, it was depicted as such because at the time the term "exotic" was often used to describe distant and different places. It was important for US society to consider the Mexican frontier lands as exotic for that distanced US society from Mexican society and made it easier for whites to justify the conquest of those lands by golden-haired heroes. White conquerors told narratives of US golden-haired heroes conquering the Mexican lands in a benevolent invasion—as if the Mexican lands and people had welcomed them as pure, passive women sexually welcome men in a colonizing ideology and hegemonic fantasy.

Whom does it benefit for Mexican women to welcome and desire US men? Arguably narrating Mexican women (and lands) as exotic and supportive of US invasion

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[193] Lugones,"Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 744.

[194] Rodríguez, *The Literatures of the U.S.-Mexican War*, 17.

makes it easier for US society to understand and accept the domestic union of US men to Mexican women on conquered Mexican lands. However, as Rodriguez argues in his extensive study of chivalric novelettes, "[t]he reason, that is, that these men might have felt at ease writing about Mexican women to their families, even to their wives, is that at some level they reinscribe national or cultural boundary lines."[195] Thus, it can be argued that the need to be patriotic and loyal to the US was key in support for cultural tolerance and degrees of acceptance of exotic Mexican women (and lands) in domestic unions with US Anglo men.

Even at the turn of the twentieth century, the exotic feminization fetish persisted in the colonization of Puerto Rican. For Puerto Rico, it was used not simply to objectify women but also to subordinate women and their lands. That the US conquest of Puerto Rico was commonly referred to as the "Splendid Little War" arguably supports the ease with which the US white hegemony triumphed. In *The Sexual Appeal of Racial Differences: U.S. Travel Writing and Anxious American-ness in Turn-of-the-Century Puerto Rico*, sociologist Kelvin Santiago-Valles highlights the feminization of Puerto Rican people and lands following the war.[196] Using official US documents of that time, Santiago-Valles demonstrates how the narrative feminized Puerto Rican people and lands as 'submissive' natives. For example, following the Spanish-American War (1898), Republican representative from Ohio, Jacob H. Bromwell, claimed that

> Puerto Rico came to us voluntarily and without bloodshed. She welcomed us with open arms. Her adherence to the United States during the Spanish wars saved the

[195] Rodríguez, *The Literatures of the U.S.-Mexican War*, 45.

[196] Santiago-Valles, "The Sexual Appeal of Racial Differences."

> loss, possibly, of many lives and the expenditure of millions of money. Her people welcomed the armies.[197]

Santiago-Valles highlights how the US regarded the land and people of Puerto Rico as female, passive, submissive, and indeed welcoming US male penetration. Lugones argues that during the colonization of the Americas, it was virtuous for European bourgeois women to be submissive to European bourgeois men, and that such submissiveness US hegemony used to facilitate the colonization of Puerto Rico. It would be hard for a US-dominant society to question this caricature of a submissive female Puerto Rico because it simultaneously makes the US the masculine superior figure and then ascribes the virtue of benevolence to it. Santiago-Valles argues that "[t]he grammar of colonization was thus, inseparable from the iconography of captured exotic women waiting to be ravaged and to be subjected to the carnal knowledge of Western science and government."[198] Thus, it was not only their bodies and lands that were subject to objectification but also Puerto Ricans' minds, for the US perceived them as non-progressive in the scientific, militaristic, and capitalist arenas. Controlling what classifies as knowledge to Puerto Ricans was an aim for Puerto Ricans to internalize US hegemonic aims of superiority—and ideally accept—the hegemonic pursuits.

In summary, the theme of regarding Puerto Rican and Mexican women and lands as "exotic" feminization is, as Santiago-Valles asserts, the result of a Western heterosexist male fascination with "native" female bodies.[199] The hegemonic fascination

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[197] Santiago-Valles, "The Sexual Appeal of Racial Differences,"127.

[198] Santiago-Valles, "The Sexual Appeal of Racial Sifferences,"130.

[199] Santiago-Valles, "The Sexual Appeal of Racial Sifferences," 130.

of the exotic is also transposed onto its lands as "[t]he tropics provide a site of European pornographic fantasies."[200] The element of remoteness attracts these fantasies, which would surely not be permissible in US society and moral culture or purity and Christian values.

This exotic feminization narrated by the US hegemony of Mexican and Puerto Rican communities seeped into US religious institutions. Santiago-Valles draws attention to a Christian missionary text that describes Puerto Rico as a space and place beyond reason, because it is "unreal and irrational," being both exotic and yet a virgin space.[201] Christian missions were not immune to the trope of feminizing land and peoples for their own uses. After all, they stood to benefit from this imagination, as they were part of those saving the Mexicans and Puerto Ricans and raising them up to the US American citizenship standard. Thus, US Protestant missions further solidified a fantastic hegemonic imagination through the caricature of Puerto Ricans and Mexicans as I demonstrate in the following section.

WHMS PROTESTANT MISSIONS SOLIDIFYING HEGEMONIC CARICATURES

The Woman's Home Missionary Society ("WHMS") of the Episcopal Methodist Church in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was not immune to this colonial US worldview of superiority; in fact, it incorporated it into its missions to help solidify the caricatures and stereotypes of Mexicans and Puerto Rican people, particularly

[200] Santiago-Valles, "The Sexual Appeal of Racial Sifferences," 130.

[201] Santiago-Valles, "The Sexual Appeal of Racial Differences," 135.

women and girls. As outlined in chapter one, the WHMS actively sought to Americanize the newly conquered people with US Christianity, with the aim that the morals of the conquered people live up to those of US civilized standards. The texts and photographs of WHMS documentation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were influenced by, and in turn influenced, US society's understandings of Mexican and Puerto Rican communities.

As a group within a larger Protestant organization, the WHMS exhaustively documented their work in writing and photographs, and contributed to the printed production of writings and photos used to caricature Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. It is almost impossible to argue with what was printed in photos because, as cultural anthropologist Hilda Llorens argues, "[t]he camera was believed to be a scientific instrument for recording and revealing the truth and for depicting objective reality during that time period—a mechanism for evidentiary production."[202] As if the scientific photos and texts were not enough to solidify the caricatures of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans as being in need of saving, the weight of the religious Protestant missions surely helped to solidify that caricature using their own text and photos.

Following the Spanish-American war, in the Seventeenth Annual Report (1898) of the WHMS, Annual Address, the president of the WHMS stated in her address that

> "i]t must be our duty to put forth renewed efforts to carry on the work already under our charge, and also to carry to the newly-acquired territory, where ignorance, sin, superstition, and sorrow abound, the blessings of a better and a truer life.[203]

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[202] Llorens, *Imaging The Great Puerto Rican Family*, 38.

[203] William Christie Herron, "Annual Address: Before the General Board of Managers of the Woman's Home Missionary Society, October 23, 1898," *Seventeenth Annual Report of the General Board of Managers of the Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Years 1897–98*, (1898): 77.

For the WHMS, narrating the stereotypes that caricatured Puerto Ricans was a regular practice, one they used to emphasize their position, their calling, their participation in 'saving' Puerto Ricans. There was no doubt that the US was going in to save Puerto Ricans, and that the WHMS was key to civilizing Puerto Rico, for the Annual Address continues by stating that, "Emreson [when] asked to define the world "Civilization," ... answered, "It is the Power of good women." Thus, members of the WHMS saw themselves as central to the transformation necessary in Puerto Rico. Likewise, US leaders executed various Americanization projects in the early twentieth century in and out of the church, and these also conveyed to Puerto Ricans that it was best to assimilate to achieve American civilization. Thus, it was a project between government, society, culture, education, finances, and the church to civilize the colonized Puerto Ricans to the American standard. The goal was for the Puerto Ricans to accept the superiority of the US American civilization and internalize it as a goal for them, indicating that they had to aspire to it because they fell far short of it.

This project of American evangelization primarily targeted women and children, as seen in a 1929 publication, *Americanization through Homemaking*, which stated that

> If we assimilate the countless number of Mexicans that cross our southern border, either legally or otherwise, to better their condition in a new land, we must begin at the basic structure of their order—the home. […] Since the girls are potential mothers and homemakers, they will control, in a large measure, the destinies of their future families. The teacher of homemaking has a large field for instruction. Hers is not a mere calling but an opportunity.[204]

[204] Pearl Idelia Billis, *Americanization Through Homemaking* (Wetzel Publishing Co., Inc. 1929), Preface. https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gdc/gdclccn.29023389.

This understanding of control over women and girls as a means to gain control of the destinies of all families henceforth was evident in Protestant all-girl schools that developed throughout the southwest territories and on the island of Puerto Rico. In my review of the WHMS materials, there was never a mention of an all-boys school(s) as the focus seemed to be on girls. Perhaps because the WHMS had female missionaries, but then again, weren't the women supposed to teach all their children the correct ways, including their male children? Why couldn't the WHMS missionaries also teach in all-boys schools? Nonetheless, the aim was for Protestant missions to work with socio-political Americanization projects to target girls and assimilate them into what they imagined a US family to be. The Puerto Rican girls and women become useful for ensuring that a US patriarchal definition of family persists. The US patriarchal ideology was strongly solidified within WHMS as the women in the WHMS valued the status their white womanhood was given in US society.

In the moral construction of womanhood, a significant aspect of the hegemonic American way of life was the virtue of purity, seen as the sign of true womanhood, and best exemplified by the US white woman missionary. Consequently, missions judged the manners and physical appearance of women and girls, as we see in a 1908 WHMS article reporting on the physical state of Puerto Rican young ladies. It stated that

> [i]n the Home today are forty bright, attractive Porto Rican (sic) girls. Their progress in every way is remarkable and those who are helping to support these girls may feel that all they are doing is bringing forth a hundredfold.[205]

[205] May Leonard Woodruff, "Bureau of Porto Rico," *Woman's Home Missions* 25, no. 2. (1908): 25.

The photo associated with that statement has Puerto Rican girls wearing white dresses with ribbons in their hair. Puerto Rican girls with white dresses and ribbons are emblematic of what one saw in white US Anglo family photos; thus, it seems that the Puerto Rican girls in the picture are attractive because of their assimilation to white US standards of girlhood—at least in terms of clothes and hair ribbons. There were similar articles of Mexican girls as referenced in chapter one that were taken from their native ways and washed up in white dresses and bows to demonstrate their attractiveness at the hands of the WHMS work.

It may be more difficult to acknowledge the WHMS's role in solidifying the demeaning caricatures of Mexican and Puerto Rican communities because of a desire to separate religious aims and practices from sociopolitical ones, but they are deeply interconnected in everyday lived realities. Indeed, US Protestant missions during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century clearly saw themselves as saviors ordained to spread *American* Christianity and save those who did not possess it, especially and of dire importance to those on the home front, those who were classified as US citizens. This urgency did not provide any opportunity to pause and question the caricature of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans formulated by social, political, economic, scientific, media, and Protestant sources.

CONCLUSION

The coloniality at play since the conquest of the Americas by European colonizers and their formation of the US was supported by their claims of Manifest Destiny to religiously justify the conquest of Mexican lands and the island of Puerto Rico. Given the

perceived success of the US in various socio-political, economic, and religious realms, it created itself as a hegemony. The US hegemony sought to present the US Anglo as innately superior and virtuous, and thus, naturally above other races. It narrated itself as a benevolent colonizer, presenting the colonized as welcoming because of their desire to be saved by the colonizer. This hegemony practiced a single narrative of superiority and dominance that it sought to maintain. Thus, it had to work strategically to incorporate Mexicans and Puerto Ricans into the US socio-religious structure. The US hegemonic dome produced messages in politics, society, education, and religion of superiority to which Mexican and Puerto Rican people had to be raised up to meet before they could be truly US American citizens. The WHMS missions were primarily aimed to raise up the standards of Mexican and Puerto Rican homes by teaching, training, and disciplining the women and girls according to American values and virtues. The hegemony used all the resources it had at its disposal to caricature Mexicans and Puerto Ricans so that they would be viewed as 'other' than Americans and subordinate to Americans, but always with the carrot and stick, putting Americanism within their reach, despite it being a hoax.

While the fantastic hegemonic imagination tries to oppress and erase others, Townes argues that "[t]he fantastic can also open up subversive spaces within the status quo […] One such subversive place/space is counter-memory,"[206] to which the next chapter turns. Despite the excellence of the hegemonic dome and its messaging, there are those within it who can struggle to resist via an exercise of their agency, their memories, and their experiences. The following chapter re-examines WHMS missions to Mexicans and Puerto Ricans to discover spaces of subversion amid hegemony.

[206] Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, 22.

CHAPTER THREE

MEXICAN AND PUERTO RICAN LATINA RESISTANCE DURING THE LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES

And when our white sisters
radical friends see us
in the flesh
not as a picture they own,
they are not quite as sure
if
they like us as much.
we're not as happy as we look
on
their
wall.
—Jo Carrillo[207]

We have now read and experienced second-hand what it might have felt like to have been the objects of US hegemonic ideologies and practices in Christian missions and society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which centered themselves as the morally superior way of existing. To maintain that centered position, they felt it was necessary to caricature the 'other' non-centered racial groups, in this case, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. This chapter invites us to make a paradigm shift, to read and feel resistance within that hegemonic dome. To do so, we must be willing to transcend the dome's messaging system and enter the "in-between" places, which Chicana scholars call "nepantla." For those who have never been there, it can be described as that in-between space where things are not so black and white because "Nepantla is the point of contact y

[207] Jo Carrillo, "And When You Leave, Take Your Pictures With You," in *This Bridge Called My Back: Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua (SUNY Press, 2015), 60.

el lugar between worlds—between imagination and physical existence, between ordinary and nonordinary (spirit) realities."[208]

Nepantla is a place and space that Latinas in the US traverse, as they often identify as being neither fully here nor there, not fully American and not fully Mexican or Puerto Rican, despite being US citizens. Intercultural feminist Maria Cristina Ventura Campusano posits that the acknowledgment of living in-between "motivates us to move toward abandoning those stable, ready-made images that limit imagination and impede the creative and re-creative force exerted by an imaginary that is capable of provoking encounters among different spaces and times."[209] This chapter challenges those who have never had to imagine let alone exist in an in-between place, and affirms those who have or still are, those who know what it is to exist in an intermeshed existence of resistance, agency, struggle, and oppression en la vida cotidiana. It is primarily through the lens of Mexican-American Chicana decolonial scholars, Puertoriquena Spiritists, and Mujerista theologians that this chapter explores, analyzes, and liberates the practice of resistance from existing in any singular, monolithic form, and instead imagines resistance as something intermeshed and complex. It does so by examining some of the characteristics and innovations of resistance practices within Mexican and Puerto Rican communities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Using a multidisciplinary and counternarrative approach, this chapter returns to the Woman's Home Missionary Society (WHMS) archives, as well as to other societal

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[208] Gloria Anzaldúa, "Preface," in *Light in the Dark Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, ed. Analouise Keating (Duke University Press, 2015), 2.

[209] Maria Cristina Ventura Campusano, "Between Oppression and Resistance: From the Capture of the Imaginary to the Journey of the Intercultural," in *Feminist Intercultural Theology: Latina Explorations for a Just World*, ed. María Pilar Aquino and Maria José Rosado-Nunes (Orbis Books, 2007), 180.

and cultural documentation of that period, to explore Mexican and Puerto Rican struggles for representation, identity, resistance, and agency in their everyday life—lo cotidiano. To learn how it is that we build binaries of oppressor and oppressed that in turn dictate (and limit) what resistance should look like and what it should not look like requires us to (re)imagine resistance and agency in all of their complexity. Before we turn to examples of resistance, however, we do well to recall why some of the first Latinas in the US—Mexican and Puerto Rican—needed to resist.

We have seen that Mexicans and Puerto Ricans were socio-politically 'othered' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the US, despite being US citizens. Why? Could it be because the cultural lives of Latinas in the US are different from dominant constructions of the normative way of life, and because the dominant Anglo society does not receive that difference well? As the founder of mujerista theology Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz observes, Latinas are

> at best a burden, at worst a threat. Our religions, languages, and cultural practices are perceived to be too different from what is considered the fundamental culture of this nation, commonly referred to as [T]he American Way of Life. […] That the majority of us Latinas/os came to live in this country, obliged by circumstances in which most of the time the U.S. government has had a hand, or were crossed by the border after the United States took one-third of northern Mexico or appropriated Puerto Rico, means nothing to the dominant group.[210]

This different way of practicing religion, speaking a different language, and having a different culture means that Latinas cannot fit into the US dominant way of life. Thus the question arises: Is not fitting in a form of resistance that Latinas employ? Or can fitting in and assimilating be a form of resistance? Would an attempt to assimilate and fit in contradict and cancel out their resistance?

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[210] Isasi-Diaz, and Mendieta. "Introduction," 2.

To appreciate Latina agency amid being othered and oppressed, it helps to (re)imagine the context of resistance—its defining characteristics, how it is practiced and by whom, and thus how it is recognized, supported, and fueled to create collective strategies. Resistance, as decolonial feminist Maria Lugones explains, can be found even in a small spark [211] —in anything within ourselves and others through which we can exercise our self-determination amid society, systems, and structures that tell us who and how we ought to be. In particular, this chapter considers whether a spark of resistance exists even if it remains unseen (because it appears to be part of the oppressive dominant regime). For our purposes, can the (in)action of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans be a spark of resistance?

In the WHMS fifty-ninth annual report (1939–1940), approximately four decades after the US colonized Puerto Rico, there is an article titled "Puerto Rico and New York," by Mrs. Estella Howard, the Superintendent of the Geo. O. Robinson School Ida Haslup Goode Hall located in San Juan, Puerto Rico. In it, she reports that:

> Puerto Rico has been a very busy and active little Island throughout the year of 1939–40, due to the feverish haste in building the large naval and air bases which Uncle Sam has started. While some material benefit has come to the Puerto Rican people because of it, there has not been as much improvement in the unemployment situation nor in the general economic condition of the Island as would first appear on the face of it. Much of the skilled labor has been imported. The average laborer who is a rural worker felt little change except that there were more 'Americanos.'
>
> Our school has had its usual busy year. We have averaged seventy-six students throughout the year, all but a few of whom are in our elementary school. Those few are in the public high school. They are our graduates and live with us, helping with the care of the smaller children in return for their room and board. Each year some of the graduates are enrolled in the Blanche Kellogg Congregational High

[211] Maria Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition against Multiple Oppressions*, (Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 5.

> School, but there are usually a few who are unable to enter this school because of financial stress. Our total high-school group averages about eight in number.[212]

These two paragraphs give a sampling of the socio-economic conditions of Puerto Rico and a glimpse into the work of Protestant missions approximately forty years after the US invasion. The paragraphs are structured in a manner similar to many of the WHMS articles, which consistently portray the US in an extremely positive light. In this case, the article discusses the US military and economic presence in Puerto Rico, which benefits the island, although not as much as expected, but a benefit nonetheless. Thus, it sets up a moral framing that conveys that it is only right to import US skilled workers for US military bases and to import missionaries to teach US-type schools with US knowledge so that Puerto Rico, as a territory and a people, can be worthy of US governance and citizenship. In these two paragraphs, there is so much left unsaid that we must interrogate. Examining the situation, particularly that of mission schools, through a decolonial lens enables us to assess how the US entered Puerto Rico and controlled the educational field with its mission schools and whether there was any resistance or agency by Puerto Rican girls who attended the schools.

These two introductory paragraphs hint at the socio-economic context in which Puerto Rican girls attended WHMS mission schools. Four decades after the invasion of Puerto Rico it seems evident that the Puerto Rican people are not much better off economically. That raises the question of whether the US truly 'saves,' as was narrated of its invasion of Puerto Rico. It seems that despite the imported US militaristic

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[212] Estella Howard, "Geo. O. Robinson School Ida Haslup Goode Hall: San Juan, Puerto Rico," *The Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Fifty-ninth Annual Report for the year 1939–1940,* (1939–1940): 224.

advancements and technological skills, as well as missionary schools, Puerto Rico remains ill equipped and its people no better off. Its written materials show that from the outset the WHMS believed that the schools it ran were a saving grace for Puerto Rican children, and that as such, the children would desire and gravitate toward it without resisting.

A short excerpt in the same WHMS article references an account by a Mrs. Nieves, a Puerto Rican woman, who is said to be struggling to provide for her children, and who thus agreed that her daughter, Norma, attend the mission school because Norma would be better off in that school. The mission school offers her daughter

> big clean schoolrooms where her mind is absorbing new ideas, songs, stories, and gaining concepts of right living; where her body has a chance for play and exercise in safe, wholesome surroundings and ….[where] she knows that every effort will be made on the part of the teachers and ministers of the church to start them in the Christian way of living.[213]

The way the missionary writes the story makes it unimaginable for the reader to conclude anything but that Mrs. Nieves' daughter would benefit from such a school, and implies that this school far exceeds what any Puerto Rican school could offer. This short excerpt of a missionary letter portrays US mission schools as morally good because they are big and clean and bring "new" ideas, songs, stories and the "right" living concepts to inculcate in youth "the Christian way of living." One is led to infer that Puerto Ricans have small and dirty schoolrooms where children are taught "wrong" ideas, songs, and stories, and the incorrect way to lead a Christian life. Such a bifurcated moral conceptualization and racial classification creates binaries and hierarchies. It is a pivotal

[213] Bernice Huff, "Puerto Rican Kindergartens" *Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Fifty-Ninth Annual Report for the Year 1939–1940*, (1939–1940): 225.

element of how the US colonizing hegemony insidiously projects an intention to help and save Puerto Rico and its people.

A decolonial critical framework raises the question of whether something else could be driving Mrs. Nieves' desire for her daughter to participate in the mission schools. Note, for example, that some of the school's graduates return to work there in exchange for room and board. If Puerto Ricans have been pushed out of the new colonial economic structure requiring "Much of the skilled labor [to be] imported" (as referenced in the WHMS article), such room and board could promise survival for those Puerto Rican mission school graduates. If the prospect of a job with room and board is available to those who attend this educational mission school enterprise of Americanized Christianity, is opting for it really a sign of valuing the educational system and its teachings, or a way to survive in economically precarious times? Or could it be both? The decision to enter a mission school might appear simple to the US missionary, but surely it is more complex for Puerto Rican girls. Puerto Rican girls could reasonably recognize that they will not attend Spanish-speaking Puerto Rican schools like their peers, but rather an American school where they will be taught American subjects in English. Whether they desire such identity formation or not, it may lead to job prospects upon graduation, which can secure them the food and housing they need to survive. Could young Puerto Rican girls assimilate to ensure economic viability, and not necessarily desire to assimilate? Or perhaps they do desire economic viability, and they desire to assimilate understanding, both of which open more doors in the US socio-economic structure? Can one be oppressed *and* participate in the oppressing? Can one resist *and* be part of an oppressive structure?

The demands of the everyday—lo cotidiano—arguably drive life and death decisions for Latinas in the US socio-economic and religious realms. As mujerista theology states,

> [t]he valuing of lo cotidiano means that we appreciate the fact that Latinas see reality in a different way from the way it is seen by non-Latinas. And it means that we privilege Hispanic women's ways of seeing reality insofar as the goal of their daily struggle is liberation.[214]

Mujerista theology recognizes that Latinas, like Puerto Ricans in the early twentieth century, face daily struggles to survive and have to find ways to liberate themselves from those struggles. One of the questions this chapter raises is whether, in finding daily liberation, it is also possible for Latinas to simultaneously participate in oppressive structures. If so, how do they benefit from that privileged positionality?

In the context of the US colonization of Puerto Rico (1898), perhaps young girls targeted by mission schools responded to the oppressive US government and economic situation by participating in mission schools simply as a means to secure shelter, food, and clothing, and having attained that security, participated in expanding the very US knowledge and Christian ideology that oppressed Puerto Rican society in general and the young girls who were teachers in mission schools, in particular? There are no definitive answers to such questions, partly because complex dynamics affected the decisions of Latinas in their everyday lives, and partly because not all Latinas or Puerto Ricans are the same. It may be that some Puerto Rican girls who joined mission schools in the early twentieth century resisted in a variety of perhaps less visible ways, but it may also be that some girls joined the schools simply as a means of physical survival.

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[214] Isasi-Diaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 68.

It would be understandable if the dominant culture and leaders of US mission schools did not notice Puerto Rican girls' resistance and agency. After all, as Isasi-Diaz notes of Latinas in the US (from all Latin-American countries, not specifically Puerto Ricans),

> the dominant society is ignorant of our experiences and ways of understanding […] The dominant group, in contrast, being blind to its own privilege, has created an epistemic hegemony: an epistemic hegemony that makes it possible for those in the dominant group to ignore or disavow their epistemic privilege. Little or no effort has been made to facilitate and encourage the elaboration of knowledge that does not use the dominant episteme, that is, the dominant system of understanding and the ideas that emerge from the experience of the dominant group.[215]

Because US white missionaries never experienced for themselves a day in the life of a Puerto Rican girl, it would likely be hard for them to recognize their own privilege, let alone have true knowledge of struggle and difference. After all, for those who are a part of the hegemony, the ways in which US organizations, structures, governance, and missionary schools operate are simply "how it has always been," and are therefore, naturally good, and implied as being good for others too.

The WHMS wanted to participate in the US colonizing aim of "helping" and "saving" Puerto Rico in the only way it could: through its missions, in particular, by establishing schools for girls. Even though it can be easy to label mission schools as part of the oppressive system, the reality is obviously more complicated. Such schools were also paths to liberation in that they gave Puerto Rican girls tools (the English language, an English education, a teaching vocation and experience, jobs, room, board) that they could choose to use in other contexts. This makes it challenging to categorize people and

[215] Isasi-Diaz and Mendieta, "Introduction: Freeing Subjugated Knowledge," 3.

organizations definitively as either oppressor or oppressed, as they can be both simultaneously.

Of course, the story of Mrs. Nieves and other stories shared in this chapter do not represent *all* Puerto Rican or *all* Mexican families: they are particular stories that exemplify some of the dynamics experienced within those communities. When shared in community, the stories are accountable to the community that works towards liberation of Latinas, understanding that there is no homogenizing group in which all Latinas fit and that there are various oppressions of race and sexuality that exist within such a group framework.

We see how accountability to the community can empower innovative resistance in this next example of how some of the Spanish-language newspapers responded to the US caricaturizing the Mexican-American community following the Mexican-American War of 1848. Doris L. Meyer is a historian who wrote extensively on that early Mexican experience, relying on sources from within the Mexican community at that time, so I reference her work as a counter-history. In one particular study, Meyer analyzed Mexican newspapers for their responses to the Americanization of the newly acquired southwestern US region.[216]

The US government, centrally located on the eastern shore, clearly did not initially place much importance on southwestern lands—and more particularly on the region of New Mexico—as those on that land continued to govern without US

[216] Doris L. Meyer, "Early Mexican-American Responses To Negative Stereotyping," *New Mexico Historical Review* 53, no. 1 (1978): 75–91.

intervention for the first thirty years.[217] That initial indifference to the territory of New Mexico is emblematic of US indifference to its newly conquered lands and people. Meyers argues, however, that the primary cause of the lack of attention to the NM area was the lack of access until the railroads were established thirty years later. However, if the US government was able to wage war in Northern Mexico to conquer those lands and travel there to do so, the claim that there was a lack of access to those lands seems counterintuitive.

Regardless of the reason, it was not until 1888 that the US House of Representatives began to evaluate New Mexico seriously and determined that the region was not yet fit for statehood. Congressional Representatives felt that the strong Spanish-Catholic influence in New Mexico made that territory and its people unfit to be Americans and have statehood.[218] Highlighting the Catholic heritage of Mexican people as a reason to deem them unfit plays on the strong Protestant American values the US held during that time.

In response to this characterization, the people of New Mexico, via the Spanish-language newspapers, had a conscious and methodical dialogue with those in their community. The Spanish-language editors expressed how many people in the community felt both about the US interventions and about US categorizations of Mexicans as ignorant and unable to govern themselves. Since the newspapers were in Spanish, I assume that the editors' reflections were shared only with those in the Mexican Spanish-

[217] Doris L. Meyer, "The Language Issue in New Mexico, 1880-1900: Mexican-American Resistance Against Cultural Erosion," *Bilingual Review / La Revista Bilingüe* 4, no. 1/2 (1977): 99.

[218] Meyer, "The Language Issue in New Mexico, 1880–1900," 99.

speaking community, not with Anglo Americans. This demonstrates that resistance can be ignited by self-determination within the community being caricatured and denied citizenship and full inclusion. Such community resistance quickly grows in strength. Spanish-language newspapers spoke directly to the Mexican-American community of New Mexico during and about the US Congress's debates on New Mexico's statehood. It is an innovative and creative collective strategy of resistance, which employed consciousness and counternarratives to determine who they were and how they would relate to the invading force.

The US government's conclusion that NM did not merit statehood clearly did not take into account that for almost thirty years the state capably managed to govern itself. Why should it reach that conclusion? Because finding otherwise does not support the US government's conclusions that Mexican-Americans are incapable and unworthy. As Isasi-Diaz remarks, "[t]here is no knowledge claim that is not involved in some sort of power struggle."[219] The aim of the narrative of the (self)-assigned keeper of knowledge is to hold power over the other, in this case over Mexican-Americans. Yet the narrative was not unopposed, for some Mexican-American journalists were not silent in response but critical, arguing that they would accept US state schools and the primacy of the English language to demonstrate their readiness for statehood, but they would also do so to preserve their culture. As Meyers eloquently states:

> there is nonetheless a factor which Mexican-Americans considered fundamental and which they expressed repeatedly in the press: the pursuit of education and the learning of English were a means to an end, and ... the ends [were] the preservation of their own unique cultural identity and their own rights as

[219] Isasi-Diaz and Mendieta, "Introduction: Freeing Subjugated Knowledge," 10.

> guaranteed by the United States Government in the Treaty of Guadalup Hidalgo.[220]

While it was not all Spanish-language newspaper journalists, it was a great majority of Mexican-American news journalists who consciously recognized the colonizers' tools (such as schools and the English language) as assets their community could use to meet their own ends of cultural preservation. Ultimately, they have largely remained "Mexican"-American, not giving up the essence of their Mexicanness, no matter how assimilated they might appear. This sense of cultural preservation would be hard to achieve in isolation; however, Spanish-language newspapers helped.

In addition to journalists' articles providing communal reflection, diverse artistic expressions within the Mexican-American community voiced resistance, as evidenced here by the Spanish poem responding particularly to Nevada US Congressman Stewart's requirement that prospective jurors be proficient in the English language:

> Stewart de Navada
> Republicano influente
> A nuestra pobre gente
> Clave sutil Espada
> Nos quiere destituir
> De server de Jurado
> Y de empleados honrados
> Nos ataja server.
> De calificacciones
> El Ingles amonesta
> Y al Espanol protesta
> Sin consideraciones.
> La ley nos hace iguales
> Por la constuacion
> Sin ver la situacion
> Credo, raza o caudales.
> Por reguardar la union
> Milles de mejicanos
> Quedaron en los llano

[220] Meyer, "The Language Issue in New Mexico, 1880–1900," 101.

En tiempos de invacion.
Ganada la Victoria
Tambien la Libertad
Gritaban! Iguaaldiad
Y para todos gloria!
Hoy todo ya passado
A este pubeblo indulgente
Stewart imprudente
Tiene vilipendiado.
!Pueblo infeliz depierte
De tu profundo sueno!
Y al despertar se deuno
De ti mismo y! Alerta![221]

This poem, Meyer argues, expresses the people's collective consciousness of what was occurring during that time.[222] I choose not to provide a translation of this poem in its entirety, as it was not meant to be translated and cannot be accurately translated as a nuanced artistic expression. I translate certain parts of it for the sole purpose of exploring how the poem speaks to the lived experience of Mexican Americans and how that lived experience in lo cotidiano creates ethical space, and "how we face it and ...deal ... with it."[223] In essence, our quotidian experiences are a lens through which to see and interpret reality and to imagine a different and just social order in which to live our lives, and to live them in the ways we decide to live them. [224] The poem does this in an eloquent manner by stating that Congressman Stewart uses his power to keep the people from serving as jurors unless they are proficient in English, sin consideraciones (without consideration) of the law that they are equals under US law, even if the US does not

[221] Meyer, "The Language Issue in New Mexico, 1880-1900," 101–102.

[222] Meyer, "The Language Issue in New Mexico, 1880-1900," 101.

[223] Isasi-Diaz, "Mujerista Discourse," 49.

[224] Isasi-Diaz, "Mujerista Discourse," 49.

actually treat them as such. The poem calls the community to wake up in a conscious way and affirm who they are, as it states "al despertar se dueno de ti mismo" (loosely translated as "and as you wake up become the ruler of yourself"). In other words, as you wake up, see reality through your own experience and assert your agency.

Asserting our agency to decide who we are and how we will relate has continued to be a critical element of consciousness raising for Mexicans, as evidenced in the 1960s Chicano/a movement. The Chicano/a movement among Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in the US "signified a proud, militant ethnicity with connotations of self-determination, rejecting accommodation and assimilation, and favoring confrontation strategies."[225] For many Chicana scholars, consciousness raising is closely tied to a spiritual activism, as Chicana scholar Anzaldua describes in her theory of *conocimiento*:

> Conocimiento urges us to respond not just with the traditional practice of spirituality (contemplation, meditation, and private rituals) or with the technologies of political activism (protests, demonstration, and speakouts), but with the amalgam of the two: spiritual activism, which we've also inherited along with la sombra. Conocimiento pushes us into engaging the spirit in confronting social sickness with new tools and practices whose goal is to effect a shift. Spirit-in-the-world becomes conscious, and we become conscious of spirit in the world. The healing of our wounds results in transformation, and the transformation results in the healing of our wounds.[226]

Chicana activism does not divest the spiritual from the political but intermeshes them so that healing and transformation can occur. The poem that responds to Congressman Stewart's reform for English proficiency is a form of spiritual activism, urging its hearers

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[225] Nora O. Lozano, "Mexicano/a Descent" in Handbook of Latina/o Theologies, ed. Edwin David Aponte and Miguel A. De La Torre (Chalice Press, 2006), 138.

[226] Gloria E. Anzaldúa, "Let us be the healing of the wound," in *Light in the Dark Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, ed. Analouise Keating (Duke University Press, 2015), 19.

to wake up and respond, to confront the social sickness of injustice, to become "dueno[s] de ti mismo" and in so doing to affirm their agency to transform and heal.

Resistance can also be found in innovative and creative collective strategies. One such strategy is evident in the communal sharing of lived experiences through counternarratives, as seen in the poem. That the poem is written from within *la comunidad* sparks a collective action for the community as a community to make ethical decisions and to determine how, as a body, they will deal with the unjust law requiring English as the mandated language for jurors, and more generally, how they will be treated as equal US citizens. Regardless of whether one wins or loses the political battle to change the law, voicing opposition as a community can serve as a form of self-liberation, as it is a step towards self-determination. Thus, not only individually but in a collective way Mexican-Americans can harness their spiritual activism to assert themselves and confront stereotypes and false claims.

Given their racial history of mestizaje[227] during the Spanish colonization and then the US colonization, it was important for Chicana scholars following in Anzaldua's footsteps to analyze spiritual mestizaje.[228] Chicana scholar Teresa Delgadillo in her book *Spiritual Mestizaje*[229] emphasizes the importance of spiritual mestizaje as a

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[227] Lozano, "Mexicano/a Descent," 136–7. ["The arrival of the Spaniards produced a violent clash, which included the Spanish and indigenous cultures. […] The mixture of people and cultures produced a stratified society in the new Spanish colony. The Spaniards rather crassly constructed the division of races as being Indigenous, Black, and Spanish. The combination among these three races determined the way in which a person was classified: as a subject or as a vassal, as someone who received tributes or gave them" (Fuentes 1992:234).

[228] Anzaldua uses spiritual activism and spiritual mestizaje in her lexicon of terms and theories. Teresa Delgadillo in her book *Spiritual Mestizaje* parses that meaning and applies it to narratives to demonstrate how Chicanas achieve spiritual mestizaje.

[229] Teresa Delgadillo, *Spiritual Mestizaje: Religion, Gender, Race, and Nation in Contemporary Chicana Narrative* (Duke University Press, 2011).

"transformative renewal of one's relationship to the sacred through a radical and sustained multimodal and self-reflexive critique of oppression in all its manifestations and a creative and engaged participation in shaping life that honors the sacred."[230] In other words, spiritual mestizaje calls us to return to our relationships to the sacred with a critical lens, to recognize the dynamics of relationships that oppress our beings, and then to transform that oppression in order to live such that one is able to honor the sacred more authentically. Similar to mujerista theology—although not identical to it, as mujerista theology has a firm foundation in Christianity (initially Catholic but expanding to Protestantism)—Chicana spiritual mestizaje emphasizes that we choose who we are and how we will relate to self, others, and the divine, without institutional or systematic limitations.

As Delgadillo argues, Anzaldúa pushes beyond organized religion and excavates the beliefs and practices of indigenous female deities of Mexican heritage to explore the themes of gender and sexuality of her Chicana body, which would not have been permitted in Christianity. For example, Anzaldua's exploration of her Mexican indigenous past was, as Delgadillo states,

> not only to Chicanos/as in the 1960s and 1970s but, in some ways, to Mexico and the world beyond, since it was a period both of significant archeological finds in Mexico and of the emergency of research and analysis about Mexico's indigenous civilizations that sought further understanding of gender and sexuality in the organization of spirituality of native peoples. Anzaldua acknowledges the paradigm shifts these archeological finds engendered when she recounts her first view of the newly discovered figure of the mutilated Coyolxauhqui in Mexico City in 1972. An understanding of female deities and figures, let alone gender and sexuality, in Mexico's indigenous history was never a given, but instead a task to be undertaken, and Anzaldua, too, participates. The rewriting of Borderlands of a Chicano/a indigenous past to include sacred female figures contests the limitations of a Chicano nationalist identity and attempts to heal, to (re)member

[230] Delgadillo. *Spiritual Mestizaje*, 1.

> the Chicana body, to give back to the "maligned and abused" Chicana, Indian, woman, queer body her sexuality, spirit and mind, a project also of the Chicana narratives under discussion here.[231]

Thus, spiritual mestizaje does not subscribe to doctrines or dogmas that limit how Chicanas unearth their indigenous spiritual roots. Rather, it encourages people in exploring expansive and imaginative queer ways to practice their spirituality that heal the abuse and deformity that various forms and empires of colonization have caused. At the same time, spiritual mestizaje is not an "anything goes" practice. Rather, at its core it has to do with transforming injustices to (re)imagine how we relate to self in mind, body, and spirit.

Lastly, to this conversation on resistance by Mexicans in the nineteenth century is added a practice central to mujerista theology and Chicana spiritual mestizaje (as with other decolonizing feminist theories) called *testimonios*. For Anzaldua, testimonios "inherently reject the notion of 'private' pain, instead publicly attesting to the individual pain, misery, oppression, and heroism resulting from inequalities or specific circumstances."[232] This type of resistance in testimonios counters the hegemony's desire for a single dominant narrative to silence oppressed voices. The sharing of testimonios reveal that the oppressed are not alone and that the inequalities they experience are not figments of their imagination, but part of reality for them and others. Such resistance, as expressed through testimonios, can take many forms and is affected by geopolitical contexts.

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[231] Delgadillo, *Spiritual Mestizaje*, 25.

[232] Delgadillo, *Spiritual Mestizaje*, 45.

While Chicana scholars wrestle with the meaning of being Mexican and Mexican-American on US territory, Puerto Ricans are people of diaspora, some located in the island of Puerto Rico and others on the US mainland, and this affects their testimonios. Despite their geo-political diversity, Puerto Rican testimonios can still "contribute[] to the spiritual liberation and mental decolonization of those …who work out [Puerto Rican] destiny" in the island and in the US mainland.[233] To exemplify this further, we turn to a historical example in Puerto Rico of a group of non-Christian women who ascribe to some aspects of Christianity, such as following the teachings of Jesus, and who also ascribe to aspects of non-Christian faiths, such as the use of spiritual after-life testimonios, to speak against patriarchy and other oppressions. *Spiritist Women in Puerto Rico (1880–1920)*[234] offers a brief documentary history and evidence of these women, who, through spiritual liberation, took up public space in religious and non-religious settings to reflect critically on the daily oppressions women faced in Puerto Rico during that time (and arguably the present). Most notably, the Spiritist women created *El Iris de Paz*, a spiritual magazine which was published in Puerto Rico between 1900 and 1912, sharing in it their critical reflections.[235]

Recall that in the sixteenth century Spain colonized Puerto Rico and forced the nation to convert to Catholicism; however, in 1869 (thirty years before the US military colonization of Puerto Rico) Spain enacted the Freedom of Worship Decree in the Island

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[233] Luis N. Rivera-Pagan, "Puertorriquenos/as," in *Handbook of Latina/o Theologies*, ed. Edwin David Aponte and Miguel A. De La Torre (Chalice Press, 2006), 151.

[234] Clara Roman-Odio, *Spiritist Women In Puerto Rico (1880–1920),* trans. Henry Hirschfeld (Clara Raman-Odio, 2022).

[235] Roman-Odio, *Spiritist Women In Puerto Rico (1880–1920)*, 63.

of Puerto Rico which, historian Clara Roman-Odio argues, resulted in Protestant and Spiritist religious communities forming publicly as an alternative to Catholicism.[236] When freedom of worship became legally possible again in Puerto Rico, Spiritism was imported from France. Its founder, Hippolyte Leon Denizard Rivail, described Spiritism as

> both a science of observation and a philosophical doctrine. As a practical science, it consists of the relationship that can be established with the Spirits; as a philosophical doctrine, it understands all of the moral consequences that follow from such relationships. We can define it thus: Spiritism is the science that addresses the nature, origin, and destiny of Spirits, and their relationship with the human world.[237]

Spiritism is an interdisciplinary way of existence that applies practical science and philosophical doctrine of Spirits to everyday living in the human world. The Spiritist women of Puerto Rico then interpreted and applied Spiritist doctrines and practices to their own context, formalizing a Federation of the Spiritists of Puerto Rico chapter in 1903.[238] Four years earlier, the US had colonized Puerto Rico, at which time Protestant missions began zealously to spread Americanized Christianity on the island to save the "heathen" Catholic "natives." Despite this religious climate women in Puerto Rico prevailed in establishing a Spiritist Federation, in so doing resisting the prior colonial religion of Spain-Catholicism and the new colonial religion of Americanized Protestantism. However, Spiritists not only resisted institutional religious dogmas and

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[236] Roman-Odio, *Spiritist Women In Puerto Rico (1880–1920)*, 19–20. Romano-Odio arges that the Freedom of Worship Decree in Puerto Rico was affected by religious political changes taking place in Spain, primarily the Spanish Glorious Revolution of 1868, which overthrew Queen Isabell II and as a result of which Spain created a constitutional monarchy under the new Spanish Constitution of 1869.

[237] Roman-Odio, *Spiritist Women in Puerto Rico (1880–1920)*, 19.

[238] Roman-Odio, *Spiritist Women in Puerto Rico (1880–1920)*, 20.

their embedded patriarchy, they also provided a resource that supported and fueled resistance to gender oppression, as evident in the following brief story of one of its founders.

Francisca Suarez Gonzalez (1861–1925) was among the first generation of Puerto Rican Spiritists, yet unique among them as she was blind and was renowned for her spirit visions from the after-life.[239] These visions were written down and published in *El Iris de Paz*, the aforementioned Spiritist magazine distributed freely throughout the island as a way of sharing the Spiritists women' knowledge, experience, and faith.[240] As Roman-Odio observes, "Suarez produced a counter-discourse [in which] women played a central role that promised to transform the spaces where Puerto Rico society created its laws and norms: in the home, the Church, and the State."[241] Thus, these afterlife visions and testimonios which the Spiritist women documented had an activist purpose. They were, I suggest, a form of spiritual activism.

The impact that this might have had on the Puerto Rican women is better appreciated by knowing a brief history of how women in Puerto Rican have historically been caricatured. Historian of Puerto Rico, Maria de Fatima Barcel Miller, holds that through the ages religion has caricatured women. For example, in the eighteenth century, Catholic women were perceived as wicked and evil, and in the second half of the nineteenth century women were lauded as saviors—specifically meaning that like Mary they were pure and could *transmit* (but notably not produce) Christian values to their

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[239] Roman-Odio, *Spiritist Women in Puerto Rico (1880–1920)*, 63.

[240] Roman-Odio, *Spiritist Women In Puerto Rico (1880–1920)*, 63.

[241] Roman-Odio, *Spiritist Women In Puerto Rico (1880–1920)*, 63-64.

families and community.[242] Given this history of Puerto Rican women being objectified to advance religious values, the work of Spiritist women in conveying after-life visions was transformative.

As resistance to patriarchy, Spiritism began to produce its own values in a way that involved spirits in the afterlife—a stance that was hard to debate unless one admits to having the same spiritist gift to contact the dead, which Christianity frowns upon or even punishes. While Catholics and Protestants can try to heathenize and demonize the belief in spirits of the afterlife, they cannot so easily negate the moral predicaments that arise in the afterlife encounters shared by Francisca Suarez Gonzalez. For example, in 1885, Suarez had an afterlife spiritual encounter with the spirit of Maria del Pilar and wrote about it in an essay entitled *A Monastery Within: Dedication from the Afterlife by the Spirit of Maria del Pilar*, which was printed in 1893, five years before US colonization. In that detailed account, Suarez attests to a time and place when Maria del Pilar was sent to a monastery and where, behind closed doors, she witnessed abuse by a Catholic priest. She subsequently denounced the abuse and the systems and structures that permitted it.[243] The prologue to the account reads:

> This work is not a literary gem. It only contains the sad episodes of my life, and for that reason you will only find it in the memories that my Spirit has kept of the time when it dwelt on that Earth where you now reside; so that you can see how many stories humanity ignores because it is unaware of the events that take place within the mystery and silence of those places that the world calls *Monasteries* or houses of prayer; so that you may be persuaded by those who have not hesitated to call themselves *Minsters of Jesus*.
>
> Here you will find the simplest emblem of truth engraved in its most genuine expression, to testify in simple words to the ideals that sustain the clergy who

[242] Roman-Odio, *Spiritist Women In Puerto Rico (1880–1920)*, 65.

[243] Roman-Odio, *Spiritist Women in Puerto Rico (1880–1920)*, 69.

> claim to be inspired by God; so that you can be convinced once more of what your brothers from the afterlife have told you, those Spirits that, eager to enlighten you, come to deposit knowledge into your soul that will make you transcend the triviality of your world.
>
> In this narrative, you will see fulfilled the prophecies of the messiah when he said: *may nothing remain hidden that was not discovered*.[244]

There is much in these paragraphs of the prologue that demonstrates what mujerista theology, Chicana scholars, and decolonial feminist theories aim to explain through testimonios, affirming the lived experiences of Latinas/Chicanas amid oppressive structures. To begin: this witness constitutes a woman's counternarrative—that of Maria de Pilar, which is then shared orally, written down, and documented. This being a personal testimonio, it can only be spoken by Maria de Pilar, as it was her life, and is shared through the medium of Suarez, a Spiritist woman. While some (Christians) may denounce it or disregard the testimony, they cannot prevent Maria de Pilar from telling her truth to anyone open to hearing or reading it.

Who would have been and is more likely to dismiss this testimonio? And who is more open to accepting it? Those who affirm her testimonio have perhaps themselves experienced such harm by priests or can connect it to another testimonio of harm by men towards women that has been silenced. Those who dismiss the testimonio may not recognize the injustice it reveals or may not believe it because they are not affected by patriarchal control of women; or perhaps they do not experience it in their everyday life and believe themselves to be innocent of participating in it. Either way, this argument of who it might and might not affect likely relates to the demands of la cotidiano in people's lives. Those who face the demands of patriarchy in religious settings in lo cotidiano are

[244] Roman-Odio, *Spiritist Women In Puerto Rico (1880–1920)*, 73–74

more readily able to identify with Maria, who recounts a time when 'Father Jose' said "I am great and powerful: everyone must surrender to me," to exemplify his authority.[245] Those who are less likely to face the demands of patriarchy in their cotidiano might perhaps be less willing to accept as true this afterlife testimonio.

Irrespective of the demands of patriarchalism in lo cotidiano that one may either understand or choose to ignore from this testimonio, Suarez not only speaks out against it but she does so using Christian scripture that what is hidden will be revealed, because for Christians God is light and God shines a light in the darkness, revealing what is hidden.[246] Suarez draws on Christianity as a needed tool or means to execute her goal of calling out our patriarchy. Likewise, the spiritual framework developed by Spiritist women of Puerto Rico significantly raises the volume of their cries of resistance, enabling others to hear.

Thus, counter-narratives of everyday life can fuel and support resistance. Maria de Pilar's particular account speaks to her lo cotidiano demand—the ethical space in that monastery where she must pay attention to her surroundings, as failure to do so can make her vulnerable to the predatory priest's abuse. The sharing of that testimonio fuels resistance in other places and spaces. For such reasons, mujerista theology claims that Latinas—such as Maria del Pilar— who are subject to oppression "embrace lo cotidiano and in doing so, lo cotidaino becomes the space—time and place—where they exercise their moral agency and determine who they are, who they become, and how they live

[245] Roman-Odio, *Spiritist Women In Puerto Rico (1880–1920)*, 76.

[246] Luke 8:17 (NIV) "for there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open."

their lives."[247] Lo cotidiano testimonios become ethical spaces in which sacred decisions are made en la lucha for survival.

Now the lo cotidiano lived experience of Maria de Pilar, told by Suarez, is only one account of a Latina Puerto Rican woman who faced oppression in a particular context. Context is important to analyze because it can reveal other particularities that will not essentialize experience. For example, in Maria de Pilar's context it is important to note that there were certain privileges she had that set her apart from the typical grassroots women of her time, because in the monastery she was receiving an education and had her necessities of shelter, clothing, and food guaranteed, which not all women enjoyed. Thanks to that religious education, food, clothing, and shelter, it can be argued that Maria del Pilar was privileged among Puerto Rican women, and in some ways detached from others of a lower socio-economic class, and others who were not religious. I share this complication to exemplify that even if one belongs to an oppressed class of women in a patriarchal society, one can also participate in oppression in other socio-economic and religious contexts. Thus, there is no strict border between those in the "oppressed" category and those who belong in the "oppressor" category. For a person can belong to both at the same time in different contexts. To demonstrate this, I turn to another example of stories of Mexican women in the US following the Mexican-American War.

[247] Isasi-Diaz, "Mujerista Discourse," 52.

Deena J. Gonzalez, in *Refusing the Favor*,[248] analyzed the lives of women living in Santa Fe, New Mexico, before, during, and after the Mexican-American War (1848), discovering how they persisted and resisted US socio-economic, religious, and political colonization of New Mexico. During that time, the US began expanding westward under the ideology of Manifest Destiny and Anglo superiority, as previously explained. Following the US victory over northern Mexican lands, the "Army of the West" arrived in Santa Fe and, based on historical research by Gonzalez, that Army was loud and abrasive with the Spanish-Mexican people.[249] Gonzalez finds that "the colonizers of New Mexico, soldiers, merchants, and travelers, having availed themselves of women's services, began to 'claim' the women, to possess them, by writing about them, by drawing caricatures of them and of their society."[250] The Spanish-Mexican women in Santa Fe had to decide, for better or worse, how they would respond to these loud and boastful Anglo colonizers.

The example of the Spanish-Mexican woman Dona Maria Gertudis Valdez de Beremende of Santa Fe, who married James Wiley Magoffin, gives us insight into the complex dynamics of everyday life in a colonizing oppressive regime where resistance can involve participating in oppression and assimilation while oneself being oppressed. James Wiley Magoffin was known as "the most important businessman in the Mexican north. Magoffin learned Spanish quickly and served as U.S. consul in Chihuahua" where, Gonzalez posits, "Dona Gertrudis helped him adjust to his new life in the Mexican

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[248] Deena J. Gonzalez, *Refusing the Favor: The Spanish-Mexican Women of Santa Fe 1820–1880* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

[249] Gonzalez, *Refusing the Favor*, 70.

[250] Gonzalez, *Refusing the Favor*, 69–70.

frontier."[251] What did it mean for a woman of Mexican and Spanish-Catholic heritage to marry a US Anglo man with a cultural and political history of colonizing in the name of Christianity and superiority? Gonzalez demonstrates that most historians have concluded that these types of inter-racial marriages occurred during the nineteenth century basically because "lonely male[s] married the indigenous female[s]."[252] However, as Gonzalez rightly notes, this conclusion overlooks the complex dynamics of the socio-cultural and economic context of Santa Fe, New Mexico during the 1840s where the number of legal complaints "between newcomers and locals, as well as between men and women, multiplied[]" for things like disturbing the peace or selling liquor without a permit.[253]

These tensions, which affect and shape communities, are not easily summarized in 'lonely man marries indigenous female' to explain intercultural marriages. Such summary explanations are merely superficial imaginings by historians to reinforce a hegemonic narrative that US men would not have married Mexican women but for their loneliness, making it then acceptable for them to marry. But what about the Mexican women. Why would they conceivably marry US Anglo men? The explanation would surely not be a 'lonely Mexican woman marries Anglo male' narrative. Mujerista lenses can help us to see aright and respond to this question.

Mujerista discourse aims to highlight the voices of Latinas. These voices are largely ignored in US society because they are often deemed inferior and thus ignored at

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[251] Gonzalez, *Refusing the Favor*, 71.

[252] Gonzalez, *Refusing the Favor*, 72.

[253] Gonzalez, *Refusing the Favor*, 72.

best and set in opposition to virtue at worst.[254] Thus, as a mujerista scholar, I write this dissertation and in particular this chapter to think "with" and not "about" Latinas—in this case, nineteenth-century Mexicans—using my own contemporary social location[255] instead of imagining that I have an ahistorical perspective and can be neutral in my thinking about them and their actions.[256] It is this thinking *with* that propels me to disclose that there might not be only one reason why Mexican women married Anglo men (or were in domestic unions with them) but a multitude of factors that influenced Mexican frontier women of that time. This intermeshed variety of factors and complexity of oppressed/oppressor dynamics enables me to (re)imagine resistance and agency of Spanish-Mexican women during the nineteenth century.

In the context of being conquered by the US, the Mexican female in the southwestern lands now had to find a way for herself and most likely for others in her community to survive. Because her (and their) survival depended on it, there was an urgency in her lo cotidiano that required a constant action-reflection-action response that kept her "alive and searching for ways to flourish."[257] I wonder whether marriage or domestic union with a US Anglo man could have been a way for some Mexican women to retain their culture and language? Or could it have been that the Mexican women were

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[254] Isasi-Diaz, "Mujerista Discourse," 44.

[255] Isasi-Diaz, "Mujerista Discourse," 55. As Isasi-Diaz states "If we claim about unveiling and enabling subjugated knowledges, definitely a liberation and decolonial move, then we have to enter into the world where the knowledge is produced, for there is no knowledge without 'encountering' the reality we claim to know. As a Latina living in the United States, I indeed have experienced oppression. I also have some understandings of other forms of oppression—poverty and homophobia, for example—of which I have no personal experience. However, without the constant commitment to 'encounter' the reality of impoverished Latinas, as a middle-class woman I cannot claim to value Latinas' subjugated knowledges."

[256] Isasi-Diaz, "Mujerista Discourse," 44.

[257] Isasi-Diaz, "Mujerista Discourse," 56.

coerced into teaching Anglo men about Mexican culture and language? Can both possibilities exist at the same time?

Returning to the case of Dona Maria Gertudis Valdez de Beremende and her US Anglo husband James Wiley Magoffin, the text states that he was able to learn Spanish quickly. The question arises: How? And why? Did Dona Maria's willingness to teach him enable it? Or did Magoffin demand that she teach him, and did she assent and teach him to the best of her abilities because he demanded it, and perhaps also because she wanted to preserve her Spanish language in the home? For if James were to learn Spanish and do so quickly, there would have been little need for Dona Maria to learn English to communicate in their marriage. Presumably, she taught her husband Spanish so he could navigate being bilingual, a particular asset if not a requirement to serve as US consul in Chihuahua, a predominantly Spanish-speaking community. Even if the husband had coerced Dona Maria to teach him Spanish so that he could do his job, did that perhaps also benefit the wife financially and perhaps socially, and could improving her own socio-economic status perhaps also be a reason for her to agree to teach him Spanish and introduce him to Mexican culture?

Whatever the case, the fact remains that Spanish was a language that remained in the relationship. Not only that, Spanish remained dominant in New Mexico for at least three decades after the Spanish-Mexican War. Furthermore, the 1850 US census of Santa Fe "reveal[ed] that nearly 50 percent of all Euro-American men in Santa Fe resided with Spanish-Mexican women who appeared to have been their wives," which makes it possible to argue that through those marriages or domestic partnerships they learned

Spanish and the Mexican culture.[258] Did women such as Dona Maria Gertudis Valdez de Beremende have a role to play in the almost thirty years in which the Spanish language persisted in New Mexico? I would argue that they certainly did, but the reasons underlying this fact are not always clear. It could have been through an act of resistance or not. Even if it was an act of resistance, that does not mean there was resistance to other types of colonization of culture.

The last aspect of Mexican women's participation in the longevity of the Spanish language in Santa Fe and New Mexico to which I turn concerns their connection to their community. While mujerista theo-ethics affirms the preferred option for the grassroots Latina, that option is not apart from or without her community, as "self-determination, responsibility, and the exercise of moral subjectivity happen socially, that is, they happen in and through the communities of where we are part."[259] Thus, I posit that Mexican women married to US Anglo men could have seen the retention of language not only as an advantage for themselves but also for their community.

Can we imagine that Mexican women in Santa Fe socialized and organized collectively to retain the Spanish language? Perhaps the women who were married to US men and presumably were in a position of power over other women in their community not married to US men took on the responsibility to retain Spanish for the benefit of all in their community. However, it is also possible that the women did not work collectively, that they had no intention of retaining the Spanish language, but that it happened organically. Perhaps the married Mexican women wanted to or preferred to speak

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[258] Gonzalez, *Refusing the Favor*, 73.

[259] Isasi-Diaz, "Mujerista Discourse," 59.

English, but had to teach Spanish to their Anglo husbands. These are just some examples of the complex possibilities and factors that play into operating in resistance, not homogenizing its complexity, and not excluding it from also participating in oppression in other contexts.

In conclusion, this chapter addressed how resistance is possible even while coercive societal dynamics persist, as exemplified by the hegemonic dome metaphor outlined in chapter two. In the hegemonic dome, the fantastic imagination instills cultural values and norms that become a crucial part of the way societal systems and structures function. The colonized eventually internalize these in such a way as to make it appear as if resistance is impossible. However, resistance by the colonized might not be visible to all members of the community, but nevertheless can exist in everyday practices by and for the resisters. Those on the periphery who are able to pause long enough to question and to reflect and/or respond in a way that liberates them are creating spaces of resistance—whether or not they continue to participate in hegemonic systems and structures. Resistance does not have to be a public demonstration or opposition to all that is oppressive; instead, resistance can be an internalized act of self-determination that leads to the creation of counter-narratives or testimonios that affirm resisters in their own way. This is why this chapter began by inviting us to make a paradigm shift by reading about and seeking to understand resistance with and by those resisting in their own ways.

Mexican and Puerto Rican resistance during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was practiced by and for them, against injustice and oppression, by any means necessary to fuel self-identity, transformation, and innovative collective strategies. This type of resistance is independent of who recognizes or acknowledges it as

such. The practices and theories of resistance occur within the context of the demands of lo cotidiano—the everyday decisions and determinations made amid intermeshed oppressions and oppressing factors. The everyday socio-political and economic demands on Mexicans and Puerto Ricans during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also permeated Americanized Christianity.

United States' Protestant missions taught a Christianity that reflected their own knowledge, language, and beliefs, and for their aims. In particular, WHMS targeted women and girls who were viewed as the catalyst for familial influence. Mexican women could have resisted by employing spiritual activism and spiritual mestizaje, which Chicanas constructed as theological theories decades later, and were arguably influenced by Mexican women decades earlier. Puerto Rican women could have resisted during that time via other forms of spiritual practices, such as sharing afterlife testimonios. The spiritual practices of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, while not homogeneous, were not constrained by dogmas or doctrines but instead allowed for a more fluid form and manner of connecting with and relating to themselves, others, and the sacred or divine(s). However, as part of that resistance the women could also have continued to participate in oppression in other contexts within their community and the larger community, and thus, resistance is not so clear and neat as it is imagined. Resistance occurs in the in-between spaces of oppression and resistance. The result is often a certain messiness where complicity, privilege, and oppression co-exist in the real demands of lo cotidiano.

What kind of complex mujerista ethics resistance process can we conceive that allows each Latina to determine for herself who she is and how she relates to others and

the divine? The following chapter crafts a constructive vision of resistance ethics in response to this question.

CONCLUSION

MUJERISTA *ALIVIAR* ETHICS: A RESISTANCE FRAMEWORK

I understand mujerista theology as a process, a process of conscientization, a process of self-identification and self-definition for Latinas. Therefore, in no way is [it] 'conclusive'
—Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz[260]

I am what I am and I am US American I haven't wanted to say it because if I did you'd take away the Puerto Rican but now I say go to hell I am what I am and you can't take it away with all the words and sneers at your command. I am what I am.
—Rosario Morales[261]

Who am I, a poor Chicanita from the sticks, to think I could write?
—Gloria Anzaldua[262]

I was born in Bolivia, a country in South America with one of the largest indigenous populations. That is also where my parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and other ancestors were born. It is a country, like most in South America, that Spain colonized in the sixteenth century, and that was dominated since the twelfth century by the Aymara kingdom, and before that inhabited by the Tiahuanaco people.[263] By the time my maternal grandmother was born in the 1940s, all she could remember was the Spanish

[260] Isasi-Diaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 203.

[261] Rosario Morales, "I Am What I Am," in *This Bridge Called My Back: Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua (SUNY Press, 2015), 12.

[262] Gloria Anzaldua, "Speaking In Tongues: A Letter To Third World Women Writers," in *This Bridge Called My Back: Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua (SUNY Press, 2015), 164. ["Who gave us permission to perform the act of writing? Why does writing seem so unnatural for me? I'll do anything to postpone it—empty the trash, answer the telephone. The voice recurs in me: *Who am I, a poor Chicanita from the sticks, to think I could write?* How dare I even consider becoming a writer as I stooped over the tomato fields bending, bending under the hot sun, hands broadened and calloused, not fit to hold the quill, numbed into an animal stupor by the heat."]

[263] Herbert S. Klein, *A Concise History of Bolivia* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 13.

influence, in particular, Catholicism. I recall my grandmother sharing that we have some Spanish ancestry in our family, but she never mentioned any indigeneity in our lineage. When the first Indigenous president of Bolivia, Evo Morales, was elected in 2006, my entire family was angry and frustrated, among other things because they thought he might return our country to practices of ancient times. I remember traveling to Bolivia before and after his presidency, and the most notable memory I have of the man who became president was seeing signs everywhere that by law we could no longer discriminate against Indigenous people, and that we had to call women in folkloric outfits "senoras de la pollera," not "cholas." I also remember my cousins being frustrated that they now had to learn the Aymara language in school. There was so much I did not know or even think to question about our family and our Indigenous roots at that time. Nor can I ask questions now, as most of my family refuses to recognize their Indigenous ancestry. Perhaps I am not so unlike them actually, because it was not until my Master's of Divinity and doctoral studies that I began to explore that family heritage myself and found myself feeling a bit reluctant and detached about that quest.

Eventually, I found it necessary to explore my history as a Bolivian-American Protestant Christian in the US, particularly how I got here religiously in a Christian family that stays firm to the Bible and the teachings of Jesus, and yet witnesses and remembers folkloric Indigenous dances and practices that many in Bolivia and in my family practice, such as honoring *Pachamama*.[264]

[264] For example the preservation of *Pachamama,* an indigenous theology of mother earth shared throughout central and South America. Minna Opas, "Constituting De-Colonizing Horizons: Indigenous Theology, Indigenous Spirituality, and Christianity," *Religious Studies and Theology* (Equinoxonline: 2017), 94. *Pacha* pertains to the focus on indigenous cosmos, where *Pa* is Aymara for two; and *cha* means strength and energy. See Luis I. Pradanos and Leonardo E. Figuero Helland, "How to Listen to Pachamama Testimonio: Lessons from Indigenous Voices," in *Studies in 20th and 21st Century Literature*, 39, no. 2 (2015). https://doi.org/10.4148/2334-4415.1841, 12. In *Pacha,* both elements are operating in a manner that

To explore that history, I returned to my oldest living relative, my maternal grandmother, and asked about her religious upbringing. My grandmother said she did not remember much aside from being Catholic because in Bolivia in the 1940s, "one was born Catholic" and that is all that one knew. No one remembers when our family ancestors first converted to Catholicism; as it was just the way things were since we were children. Growing up, my mother recalls Catholic school being very strict, with students attending mass every school day and again on Sundays. One of my aunts would have entered the convent but for my family's migration to the US in the 1980s. When my parents migrated to the US in adulthood with their three children (I was the oldest, at three years old), they were focused on providing financially for their children so that they could have a good education and accomplish the "American Dream." This meant there was no time for Sunday mass or Catholic observances, and so I did not grow up in church. Once my parents retired from work, they began to explore their faith and visited a Catholic church for a while, and then a Protestant church. Then they formed their own church in our basement for a while, then rented space at a Protestant church, and then were invited to become members and settled into a Protestant church. At the time, they were told that the denomination values unity above all else, and so every congregation can worship as they wish, conservatively or liberally, but all were welcomed to the Table for Communion. That is where I was baptized at the age of thirty, and after observing that in reality "unity" was practiced through privilege and assimilation, I became curious

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is not separable, but instead interconnection. The second part of the word—mama—is clearly translated as "mother" with all its characteristics and notions of a mother figure. Some argue that *Pacha* is not restricted to mother earth but to all that exists. (ibid., 11). However, the most popular translation and interpretation of *Pachamama* is "Mother earth who provides energy (material and spiritual) to unleash and form life in all its plenitude." The article states in Spanish "Madre naturaleza que provee las energías (materiales y espirituales) para desarrollar y "encaminar" la vida en toda su plenitud."

about the history of that church and why white members do what they do, and why it is that Latina members do what they do in church.

Thus, history is a key component of this dissertation because it provides a narrative of who we are, and that narrative (going back to the colonization of the Americas) can have a strong continuity into the present and future in who we aspire to become and how we relate to ourselves, others, and the divine. Most of the dominant narratives of North American history depict US Protestants as virtuous saviors who have historically taken Latinos (such as Mexicans and Puerto Ricans,) out of their ignorance and their Catholic views and have modernized them, raising them to the level of Americans, so they can be equals. Those US Protestant missionaries founded US Protestant churches, so those churches belong to their grandparents, their parents, and to them. This is what has been done and accepted over and over again.

Now, in the twenty-first century, few would consider questioning the ethics of some older white Protestant members who tried to kick out Latina members. No one can imagine another course of action. Can older white members ever be kicked out? Is kicking out part of unity above all else? We do not live in history, but it still shapes our imagination of who we are and our sense of our value (or lack of it), and it gives us a sense of continuity which we can either affirm or stand up against. I have chosen to begin the process of contesting it.

In this chapter, I focus on how to begin looking at history's continuity through a critical lens, with the aim of transforming that history using mujerista theo-ethics—Proyecto Historico, which refers to "our [Latina] liberation [which has to do with

becoming agents of our own history] and the historical specifics needed to attain it."[265] In mujerista theology, historical events can be "eschatological glimpses" into the kin-dom of God, glimpses which require us to take responsibility for making justice a reality in our world, here and now.[266] This chapter synthesizes key components of mujerista theo-ethics that amplify a continuing process of conscientization, self-identification, and self-definition through what I call *mujerista aliviar ethics*. As we seek justice here and now, we do so *aliviando*, which entails unbinding ourselves from histories that devalue Latinas' worth, healing those now unbound wounds, and resisting the continuity of history. In its place, we embrace liberating self-identity and self-determination. While this is an individual process, it is also a communal one—one which we do in solidarity with others. In what follows, I do not specify constraining parameters of mujerista *aliviar* ethics, but instead provide fluid and amorphous guiding posts which I think is a starting point to what could be life-giving to Latinas in the US.

The first Latinas to be incorporated into the US nationalist framework via military conquest were Mexicans and Puerto Ricans; thus, they are the focus of this dissertation. In previous chapters, I explored the US socio-cultural process of racialization in the public and political arenas, as well as, in gendering processes of Protestant missions, particularly the Woman's Home Missionary Society ("WHMS") of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The US government and the missions used a quintessentially theological principle in Christianity to ground

[265] Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, *En La Lucha / In the Struggle: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology* (Fortress Press, 2004), 52–53.

[266] Isasi-Diaz, *En La Lucha*, 53.

their theory and practice—salvation. Traditionally, Christians are taught that they are saved through one Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, "our Savior." As I have shown, this Christian principle of saviorism morphed into the principle that US Protestant Christians are the ones who save, and the ones who proclaim themselves to be the saviors of Mexican and Puerto Rican communities colonized by the US. The theo-ethical implications of that narrative of being saviors explicitly and innately render them superior to and more virtuous than Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, and at the same time make Mexicans and Puerto Ricans unable to save themselves or even to question whether they need saving at all.

Following the US colonization of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, I have analyzed possible resistance amid racialization, gendering and caricaturization to argue that there is a complex dynamic in actions that may appear assimilating or resisting, which can be both/and situations. Within that analysis of resisting as a both/and dynamic, I have identified mujerista *aliviar* ethics as a fleshing out of that dynamic via circular springing processes.

The Spanish word *aliviar* in this chapter has to do with unbinding, healing, and liberation, all of which are processes in the pursuit of justice. Pursuing justice requires resisting injustice, a complex process that at times includes both resisting oppression and participating in oppression. Such aliviar embraces and recognizes a mujerista ethics that "some discontinuity, not total discontinuity—with our past and present reality" is needed for justice, and that consequently "[t]his means that justice 'is not dependent on the

possibilities inherent in the past.'"[267] This understanding of discontinuity is central to the (re)imagination of resistance for a just future.

Lastly, this chapter touches on solidarity as an interconnected struggle for liberation, in which equality, mutuality, respect, and appreciation of difference are cornerstones. Such solidarity can decolonize the US hegemonic figure of US Anglo Protestants as superior. To that end, this chapter suggests a mujerista framework for enabling collective healing amid the US nationalist hegemony.

The practice of mujerista aliviar ethics occurs in a space and place affected by its histories, histories that absolutely must be taken into account in formulating current ethical practices. European colonizers brought to the Americas a worldview that had developed through historical events, political agendas, and religious wars of power in Europe. The Anglo-Saxon myth of white Anglos being a superior race, in tandem with Manifest Destiny—allegedly a calling from God to dominate and subordinate—made it feasible for European colonizers to conquer US lands and assign lesser human worth and value to the colonized than to the colonizer. Once the lands were conquered, the mission was to maintain power and domination across all realms—political affairs, social programs, economic and capital ventures, and religious missions. Hence, the hegemonic messaging dome metaphor, in which messages of US superiority infiltrated schools, politics, economics, newspapers, novels, medical and scientific practices, as well as Christian missions, were central for the continuity of a colonial human hierarchy.

This socio-cultural messaging of US superiority was a pivotal tool in Christian Protestant missions, as is most evident in the Nineteenth Annual Meeting of the WHMS

[267] Isasi-Diaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 117.

held in Chicago from October 17 to 24, 1900.[268] The redacted summary of the annual meeting begins with how various US representatives graciously welcomed the WHMS women to Chicago, applauding them for "their personal worth, because of love for them, because of that little word 'Home,' so dear to every American heart and so conspicuous in the title of our organization."[269] Others likewise welcomed them, stating that "the work of the [Women's Home Missionary] Society [is deemed] patriotic as well as religious, in that it looked after the foreign population, it sent women of purity and strength down into the slums to uplift the unfortunate, and, being altruistic in spirit, stood in opposition to the materialistic evolutionist of to-day."[270]

The words of both parties welcoming the women demonstrate how nationalist patriotism equates to a religious virtue, and how the WHMS aid in that task by protecting "their" home front. Further, the greetings from politicians and prominent members of society in Chicago arguably further demonstrate the interconnectedness of WHMS missions with socio-political aims. Thus, there is arguably a great benefit and reward for the WHMS to participate in their home domestic missions, given such gracious welcoming remarks. If society and government had not been so supportive of their efforts, would the WHMS have promoted such missions to the "slums"?

Lastly, the significance of the emphasis on the gender of the WHMS as "women" is prominent in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, given the moral politics of

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[268] "Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Meeting held in South Park Ave. Methodist Episcopal Church, Chicago, ILL., October 17–24, 1900" in Nineteenth Annual Report of the General Board of Managers of the Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Years 1899-1900 (Western Methodist Book Concern Press (1900), 19-20.

[269] "Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Meeting," 19.

[270] "Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Meeting," 20.

women, which uphold the alleged purity of women, equating it almost to holiness. In their particular role as women, the Methodist women are the ones called to clean up those slums and bring sunshine, making the Protestant woman's role almost essential to US nationalist patriotism. This helps us to understand the vigor with which WHMS targeted Mexican and Puerto Rican women and girls during their missions, as seen in some of the examples in chapter three.

The strong ties of nationalist pride in Protestant missions arguably encouraged, if not aided, Protestant Americanized Christianity in solidifying the colonial project of US patriotism to Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. Earlier chapters of this dissertation analyzed how the narrative of US superiority pigeonholes Mexican and Puerto Rican people, portraying them as "heathen" and "native" caricatures, so that the US can be viewed as a progressive savior. My aim in this final chapter is to begin to formulate a counternarrative framework of unbinding, healing, and liberation of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and now Latinas from that socio-cultural and religious production of evil caricatures that harm and constrain their self-identities and self-determination. The importance of liberation is a Christian pillar for all—Latinas and non-Latinas alike—and thus all Christians should work for the liberation of all.

This chapter focuses on the conceptualization of the liberation of Latinas through the example of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, using and applying the framework of mujerista aliviar ethics to Latinas in the twenty-first century. This conceptualization is an initial guidepost that I alone cannot complete, as it is a communal process of reimagining a new symbolic order where justice and equality reign. I provide some initial thoughts, but these should not be construed as answers to all

Latinas' liberation question, as that is something that cannot be answered until space is ceded and created to listen to each other.

APPLICATION OF MUJERISTA *ALIVIAR* ETHICS

While there is no definitive start or end to the process of mujerista aliviar ethics, it does entail, at least initially, an unbinding process. To unbind oneself from the worldview of US superiority is almost unimaginable, given its strong hold on politics, governance, economics, and religion for centuries. The virtues and godliness allegedly innate to the US further solidify that stronghold, making it almost impossible to see anything wrong with it in the everyday life of a person living in the US. To be a US-American in global contexts outside the US has many benefits, proliferated by the American superiority narrative. Those communities that are oppressed and stigmatized as 'other' or 'non-Anglo' are usually bound as they seek to assimilate in an effort to be found worthy and be valued as equals. That being said, this is not to say that all "others" are on equal footing simply because they are non-Anglos.

Nonetheless, to unbind would mean preliminarily not to question the desire to be Anglo as used in earlier nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and now white in the twenty-first century and thus, to (re)imagine a different worldview, a different way of determining worth and value—something that is not always easy in the hegemonic dome that says being US Anglo-American is *the* way to be seen as virtuous and as one who rightfully belongs. In other words, to unbind means not to center a US Anglo-American worldview amid the hegemonic dome that is constantly messaging how natural it is to center that worldview, and therefore, there is nothing wrong with it.

To move away from a US colonial worldview of domination entails a process of decolonizing that allegedly "natural" knowledge. Decolonial theorist Walter Mignolo states, "[d]ecolonizing epistemology means to decolonize naturalized principles on which knowledge is built in disciplinary formations as well as in ideological discourses in the public square."[271] Mujerista theology, with its centering on lo cotidiano of Latinas, is a decolonial theology. Mujerista aliviar ethics seeks to provide a decolonial process for de-centering a US worldview of worth and value.

That process of decentering can start by simply questioning what we are purported to like and dislike about ourselves. It means unbinding those parts of us that we are purported to dislike or erase or to be ashamed of. Unbinding from the knowledge we received in the hegemonic dome (the US worldview) is what I call *a coiled process*, as it can be circular and can stretch forward or recoil backward and then forward again, a bit like a spring, and thus it has no endpoint and remains in perpetuity because self-identity and self-determination are continuous and life-long processes.

Further, the action of unbinding requires unraveling or unwrapping layers that bind, perhaps only to discover more layers or to discover that we are not yet ready to process what we have unbound. Yet in the best possible scenario one can nonetheless begin healing and liberating oneself in the unbinding process, as those are intermeshed processes. The unbinding process for mujerista aliviar ethics initiates what mujerista theology calls *conscientization*—an ongoing process of critical reflection on action that

[271] Walter Mignolo, "Decolonizing Western Espitemology / Building Decolonial Espistemologies," in *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*, ed. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and Eduardo Mendieta (Fordham University Press, 2012), 22.

leads to the critical awareness to spark a person to action.[272] The application of decoloniality and mujerista conscientization invites Latinas to detach from caricatures, such as the Mexican and Puerto Rican ones in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

During the American-Mexican War, the US government and society at large portrayed Mexican people as villains to garner support for the war. Following the military conquest and triumph of the US, the US characterized and caricatured the Mexican people as heathen and ignorant Catholics peons who, when presented with it, welcomed US government and religion. Thus, the US portrayed itself as the liberator of all Mexicans. More particularly, there were narratives of US soldiers allegedly saving Mexican women via permissible domestic unions. These images were beneficial to excuse the entrance and imposition of US culture, morality, education, politics, economics, and Protestantism into Mexican communities with the paternalistic pretext of improving Mexicans. This need to save also drove the US to take similar actions in Puerto Rico.

Following the US military conquest of Puerto Rico in 1898, the US pushed a similar narrative in order to caricature the Puerto Rican people. It caricatured Puerto Ricans as "natives" on the basis of an imagined and romanticized connection to tropical lands and rural habitation. Portrayed as such, the US deemed them to be in need of the United States' progress and modernity, primarily on militaristic and economic grounds. Consequently, the US government told the US public that Puerto Ricans welcomed the US invasion. These are only a few of the bonds and bindings that previous chapters

[272] Isasi-Diaz, *En La Lucha,* 161–2.

outlined to demonstrate how multi-layered the hegemonic messages used to caricature Mexicans and Puerto Ricans were.

The process of unbinding through critical reflection, awareness, and action enabled Mexicans and Puerto Ricans to begin to discover their self-identification and critique its suppression. For example, Spanish newspapers reflected on the US caricature of Mexicans, and some of them decided that it was not who they were, and they did not believe that US culture was superior to Mexican culture. Thus, despite accepting assimilation into the English language and US schools, they determined for themselves that they would use those tools as a means to retain their Mexican culture, a critical part of their identity.

Then, there is the example of Puerto Rican Spiritist women who used afterlife spiritual experiences to speak up against patriarchy. They recognized the stronghold that Christianity had on them during and after US colonization. But they created independent pathways of resonance with US Christianity in their spiritual reflections; they cited Christian scripture, claiming all that is hidden will come to light. These critical actions of self-determination, I argue, were in part ignited by what Isasi-Diaz calls, "*'mi concencia me dice*,' my conscience tells me, which is a phrase often heard among Hispanic [Latina] Women, appealing to one's conscience in regular conversations, in discussions, and even arguments of small consequence, is not unusual for us."[273] Thus, in a mujersita aliviar ethics, there is a push to listen and value our *concencia* in our daily lived experiences in such a manner that it can spark us to unbind (as slowly or quickly as we can manage) that which oppresses us, even if that unbinding includes strategically employing the

[273] Isasi-Diaz, *En La Lucha*, 150.

colonizer's tools and the colonizer's religious language to do so. Unbinding does not require one to quit participating in that oppression; to the contrary, one can still participate strategically in it in order to unbind and loosen other shackles. Further, the unbinding process can at times lead to re-binding due to the processing that occurs in the next phase of mujerista aliviar ethics to be discussed: healing, specifically healing from the history of that which binds.

Once we pull back the bandages, once we lose our shackles and recognize that part or all of us has been erased, deceived, fractured and/or despised, then we will require healing. Chicanas, those of Mexican-American heritage, in a movement for transformation recognize that, in the process of unbinding and healing there can be fragmentation, incompleteness, ambiguity, in-betweenness, and living in transitory realities. While that way of existing can seem perilous and destructive to the dominant person who operates under the illusion of completeness or wholeness, it can also be a source of strength for Chicanas and all Latinas. Chicanas have said that for many of them, "time and again memory rather than history (an official record from which women are often absent) nurtures a spiritual mestizaje attentive to the constraints of nation, race, and norms of gender and sexuality."[274] (Re)membering stories that affirm their pain in the bindings and that affirm that which is unbound is a way of creating counter-memories of who they say they are and how they will relate to themselves, others, and the spiritual. This aspect of Chicana studies, which other Latina feminist and mujersita studies also center, is incorporated into mujerista aliviar ethics grounded in the need for healing via counter-narratives that are life-giving to Latinas.

[274] Delgadillo, *Spiritual Mestizaje*, 20–21.

(Re)membering counter-narratives is a practice meant to be shared in the community, in particular in a community of accountability, because outside there is a risk that it might be read with the intention of the "capitalists' publishing enterprise that reproduces [the] desire of exotic Others."[275] As Mujerista theology affirms, Latinas are not in isolation but in community. Thus, there is an element of communality in this process of healing. However, healing an identity in a community that rejects such identity can be harmful. Consequently, differences within the community should be relational points, not categories, where we seek to relate from different points instead of being bound by intractable categories. Mujerista theology posits "embracing differences as a moral option," where difference is plural, requiring us to embrace ambiguity but not total relativity. For because mujerista theology "is a strategy for liberation, there is a certain discipline of action that we demand of each other."[276] Whether one is in the community of accountability or not, there is always an invitation for all to be in solidarity, to which I turn in the final portion of this chapter.

Of particular interest in mujerista aliviar ethics is the role of grassroots women as a community—like the aforementioned Mexican women who did not hold government or religious positions but who entered into domestic unions with Anglo men during the time of the Mexican-American War. Their example helps us to understand the complicated dynamics of unbinding and healing. Whereas chapter three analyzed possible resistance within these domestic unions by Mexican women, this chapter considers the unbinding and healing that may have occurred through that resistance. One aspect of the Mexican

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[275] Delgadillo, *Spiritual Mestizaje*, 34.

[276] Isasi-Diaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 80–81.

women's resistance was retaining the Spanish language, at least for a few decades following the Mexican-American War. They did so by teaching their Anglo husbands Spanish. In so doing, these Mexican women may have uncovered the binding imposed over the Spanish language which deemed it inferior to the English language, and have refused to keep that binding by teaching their Anglo domestic partners Spanish, the language with which they identified as part of their culture. To share their language is arguably a counteraction to accepting the English language. However, it could also be that since the majority of people in New Mexico spoke Spanish, teaching their Anglo domestic partners Spanish would actually facilitate their husbands' ability to govern and strengthen their influence and economic status. Thus, even as the Mexican women are unbinding and healing, they might actually be binding in other areas.

Along similar lines, to this day, the Spanish language is still widely spoken on the island of Puerto Rico due to the resistance of many (although arguably not all) islanders following the Spanish-American War. There is something about language that serves as an identity marker. Its preservation (not letting it be bound or deleted) provides speakers with healing amid efforts to erase and silence their language. The examples shared of the Mexican-American and Puerto Rican communities are not meant to homogenize the communities but are instead meant to (re)imagine instances of unbinding and healing in acts of resistance in lo cotidiano of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in that colonial and postcolonial era.

A focus on the quotidian life of Latinas is a pillar of mujerista theology, for it is an intentionally reflective process that grounds moral agency amid oppression.[277]

[277] Isasi-Diaz, *En La Lucha*, 182.

Latinas' moral agency enables them to decide who they are and how they will relate to others and the divine in lo cotidiano. To determine who we are enables us to value what we deem to be important to our daily liberation and identity. Thus, it is crucial to recognize the diversity in the unbinding and healing processes, as well as in the recoiling of the processes. With that in mind, I present the final ongoing process of mujerista aliviar ethics in the complex dynamics of the oppressed and oppressor: liberation.

Liberation for Isasi-Diaz is a two-pronged praxis in mujerista theology. The first prong is to work "to enable Latinas to understand the many oppressive structures that almost completely determine our daily lives"[278] and not to participate in such structures. The second prong is to aid Latinas in defining their "preferred future: What would a radically different society look like? What will be its values and norms?"[279] In mujerista aliviar ethics, the recognition of systems and structures that determine our lives entails recognizing what binds us and thereafter deciding whether we are ready to unbind them. Thus, where I stretch mujerista theology is in arguing that participation in such binding oppression, once recognized, is sometimes permissible and even warranted for healing and liberation. We do not have to always recognize oppression and then make a hard stop in participating in it. Sometimes when we unbind, it is too hard to initiate healing, and so we bind ourselves again, even to something or someone ultimately destructive. Sometimes, when we are undergoing the process of healing, it becomes too much, so we bind again and then unbind and heal, and so on. At other times, we unbind in one area but are still bound in other areas, and because we cannot unbind all at once, we sometimes

[278] Isasi-Diaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 62.

[279] Isasi-Diaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 62–63.

need to let the recognized bind (say, an oppressor of some kind) remain and thus we continue to participate in remaining bound. In other words, we liberate and resist in some areas, while continuing to participate in binding oppression in others. However, we must be cautious that our rebinding is not done as an excuse for tolerating the status quo, especially when it prevents us from being in solidarity. In mujersita theo-ethics, we recognize that each individual is also part of a community and thus accountable to the communal truths. In that communal context solidarity entails recognizing "a union of kindred persons 'arising from the common responsibilities and interests, as between classes, people, or groups; community of interests, feelings, purposes, or actions; social cohesion.' Solidarity moves away from the false notion of disinterest[.]" [280]

While mujerista aliviar ethics invites us to identify our oppression and then refuse to participate in it anymore, I argue it is not always possible or warranted to do so instantaneously, but instead it involves a life-long process. For example, I can resist patriarchy, but because of my socio-economic privilege I nonetheless participate in the economic marginalization of grassroots workers. Or I can resist racism, but still participate in heteronormative systems that oppress queer Latinas. Thus, the liberation process in mujerista aliviar ethics, like the unbinding and healing processes, is an ongoing and never-ending process of metamorphosis.

As outlined in chapter three, resistance is not always clear-cut. Sometimes it is an extremely complicated dynamic. Among the various examples of resistance within Puerto Rico, particularly for the mujerista aliviar ethics liberation process, is the example of resistance of the young women participating as students in mission schools and then,

[280] Isasi-Diaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 89.

upon graduation, teaching in mission schools as a way of surviving economically. Given the socio-economic situation of Puerto Rico following the US invasion, young girls might have seen teaching in Protestant mission schools as a means of liberating themselves from poverty. The young Puerto Rican girls learned English in the English Protestant school system, and used those tools and skills for their endeavors and goals, in other words for their self-determination. Though in the short run those goals may have been to eat, and to have shelter and clothing, in the long run perhaps those goals were to preserve their own culture, even if it meant using English—the oppressor's tool—to do so.

Having the necessary imagination to understand that Puerto Rican girls might join white Protestant schools to gain tools so they could preserve their own culture and attain their desired future is hard in the binary of oppressor and oppressed. On the surface, it can be argued that the young Puerto Rican girls assimilated into the US language and schooling, and thus, participated in colonizing systems. However, if we (re)imagine Puerto Rican young girls preserving their culture and sense of identity by using the colonizer's tools or despite using those tools, then we would not so easily dismiss these girls as non-liberating or non-resisting. This (re)imagining envisions new forms of validation and norms. For example, it is acceptable not to be perfectly virtuous and free of all oppressive ways, and instead to recognize resistance, even if partial, as contributing to liberation and self-determination. Understood this way, one can be resisting even while still participating in aspects of assimilation.

In this mujerista aliviar ethics, the liberation process lets Latinas decide for themselves who they are, how they relate to others, and how they relate to the divine/spiritual. As Isasi-Diaz states,

> [i]n order to remain true to the struggle for liberation, one needs to continuously find ways of creating knowledge from the underside of history. This is why mujerista thought attempts to be beyond the controlling rationality of dominant discourses. To do this, we use the experience of Latinas as the source of knowledge. This is a nonnegotiable understanding in the struggle for liberation. […] As a decolonial discourse, mujerista thought seeks adequacy and validation from its usefulness in Latinas' struggles. This does not mean, however, that we can claim to be free from "dominant thinking" or that we can always evade its categories, or that we always find it necessary to do so. As a matter of fact, the goal of mujerista discourse, the liberation/flourishing of Latinas, obliges us to use in our methods, in our categories, and in our strategies whatever we find valuable to achieve our goal.[281]

None of us can claim to be completely free from "dominant thinking"; nonetheless, in that we still find ways to liberate using our methods, our categories, our strategies, "whatever we find valuable to achieve our goal" we are freeing ourselves. Thus, this struggle for liberation comes from the struggle of dancing with creativity—meaning that in struggles we must find creative knowledge, methods, strategies, and practices to process and practice liberation. The struggle for liberation demands that Latinas imagine a new way of existing beyond the constraints of dominant society and religion (outside of colonial categories, hierarchies, binaries). This is a struggle for liberation because Latinas seek liberation despite being constantly inundated with the dominant oppressive messaging, like of US superiority. Yet at the same time, realizing that we are living in the US hegemonic dome, it means that Latinas are not immune to internalizing and practicing dominant thinking so that they can survive and even benefit from assimilating.

Mujerista aliviar ethics understands that the colonizer and the colonized participate in oppression of one form or another because there are benefits and rewards, like "fitting in" and being seen as "American." This makes the struggle for liberation

[281] Isasi-Diaz, "Mujerista Discourse," 44–45.

even harder to process. Losing the benefit might mean a loss in economic and social status. Losing that benefit might be more than one can imagine bearing. Hence, mujerista aliviar ethics entails unbinding, healing, and liberating as a non-linear, amorphous, circular, and back-and-forth process for Latinas.

The reason this oppressor/oppressed and binding/unbinding dynamic is important is that Latinas are not a monolith or homogeneous. For example, there are some Latinas of "white" complexion who benefit from racist oppressive systems over darker-complexioned Latinas. There are also heterosexual Latinas who benefit from operating in society and church without being sexually marginalized due to their sexual orientation, compared to queer Latinas. All of this again affects one's ability to resist and/or to participate in other forms of oppression. This diversity among Latinas does not mean we are not Latinas: it simply identifies our diversity and makes us consider how to be in relationship with one another without centering our oppression (as if we did not participate in other forms of oppression). Latinas with privileges over others have an obligation to hold themselves accountable to our community and to recognize how they can be in solidarity with the struggle for liberation within our community.

Mujerista ethics of processing and liberating identity recognizes that we cannot do all this alone. That is why mujerista aliviar ethics is complemented with solidarity in the struggle for liberation in our communities. Mujerista solidarity is more than just supporting, agreeing with, or being inspired by the cause of Latinas. It calls us to recognize all our "interconnections that exist between oppression and privilege" and to recognize the "common responsibilities and interests" that cannot afford disinterest or

indifference.[282] I suggest that it also requires a de-centering of self or a stepping back from centering "my oppression" so that I can take into account "my participation in oppression" at the same time. This is a complex relationship that is not either/or but is also/and part of who I am and how I show up to solidarity.

In mujerista aliviar ethics, this entails my recognition of how I have many bindings—some that I unbind, some that I choose to retain bound, and some that I do not yet see, and so how do I choose not to center some bindings over others. In otherwords, how do I choose not to center my oppression in one way and ignore how I participate in oppression in other ways? Because in the end, we arguably all face some type of oppression, but focusing on that can take my attention away from how I participate in oppression (how I leave some binds on because I benefit from leaving them on). If we do not decenter ourselves we will not recognize how we participate in systems and structures of control and domination. To decenter self is not to center others but to step back and enter into a space of mutuality, of giving and receiving, of listening so that together we can (re)imagine a new symbolic order in church and society.

As decolonial feminist Intra Pramaditha asks when discussing feminism in a group of decolonial feminists, "Am I really ready to listen?" which means "having the capacity to listen, to learn, and thus, to decolonize."[283] Thus, when entering a space of de-centering and mutuality which mujerista ethics invites, we must also ask if we are really ready to listen to one another. Decentering or stepping back will invite conscientization

[282] Isasi-Diaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 89.

[283] Intan Paramaditha, "Radicalising 'Learning From Other Resisters' in Decolonial Feminism," *Feminist Review* 131 (2022): 34. https://doi.org/ 10.1177/01417789221102509.

of the complexity of oppressed and oppressor dynamics in ourselves and in our community. It will foster greater solidarity that does not easily cancel out anyone.

In summary, mujerista aliviar ethics is a continuous, circular, and elastic process. Its purpose is to unbind, heal, and liberate subjugated Latinas' lived experiences and knowledge. It is an ongoing process of resistance that seeks to affirm self-identification and self-determination. It uses a variety of tools such as counter-narratives and testimonios to help (re)imagine new ways of existence in church and society. Mujerista aliviar ethics was present in the early Latina communities of Mexico and Puerto Rico, and arguably remains present in Latina communities today.

Given this reality, in order to recognize how resistance and oppression co-exist, there are further questions to probe that this dissertation has brought to the surface, including other examples in other communities—questions like: How are we to respond to those participating in systems and structures that marginalize while resisting them? Is the response of "canceling" people for the slightest indication of oppressive actions necessary? Is there a level of participating in resistance that must outweigh the level of participating in oppression? Who evaluates and determines these answers? What are the ethical implications of who and how these questions are evaluated and determined? While it is easy for me to tell others to decenter and step back, I recognize that there are moments in this dissertation when that was not possible for me as a Latina in the US who self-identifies as a mujerista to do so. Thus, even this dissertation is part of a continuous, never-ending process. The central goal of this dissertation is to continue to think, reflect, evolve, and move individually and communally in a way that liberates despite the constraints of the US dominant hegemonic society and church. And in that liberating

process, the goal is to make sure that the diverse multiplicity of our being, as Maria Lugones argues, "is never reduced"[284] into colonial categories, binaries, dichotomies, logic, ideologies, systems, or structures that seek to make us a "hybrid product" which hides the colonial hegemonic power at play. We decide who we are and how we relate—en la lucha!

And so the intention of mujerista *aliviar* ethics, along with the other methodologies and findings in this dissertation, is to contribute more dialogical analytical frameworks to the field of Christian social ethics and Christian mission history. In imagining aliviar ethics, I learned from and built upon the unique contributions of a Womanist ethics framework and connected this with Mujerista theo-ethics to interrupt and challenge certain kinds of historical narratives and constructions of Mexican and Puerto Rican women and girls. I also identified relevant, popular, cultural sources that provided unique historical tools for recognizing how the cultural fantastic hegemonic imagination contributes to a Christian ethics paradigm that interrogates how both the hegemonic constructs and resistance operate. Beyond cultural resources, my Christian ethics critique of the hegemonic imagination centers on the role of the church, in particular, its history of missions. Conceptually interweaving the lenses of ethics and mission history, I utilize archival research to delve deeply into the historical effects of white Anglo supremacist understandings of Christian missions. For example, the colonial adoption of a US patriotic virtue ethics perspective played a subjugating role in how people were morally disciplined both racially and in the context of gender mores. This challenges explorations of coloniality in the field of missions to pay attention to

[284] Lugones, "Toward a Decolonial Feminism," 755.

Womanist ethics in conversation with Mujerista ethics and how together they contribute to a liberative understanding of Christian ethics.

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APPENDIX: PRIMARY SOURCES

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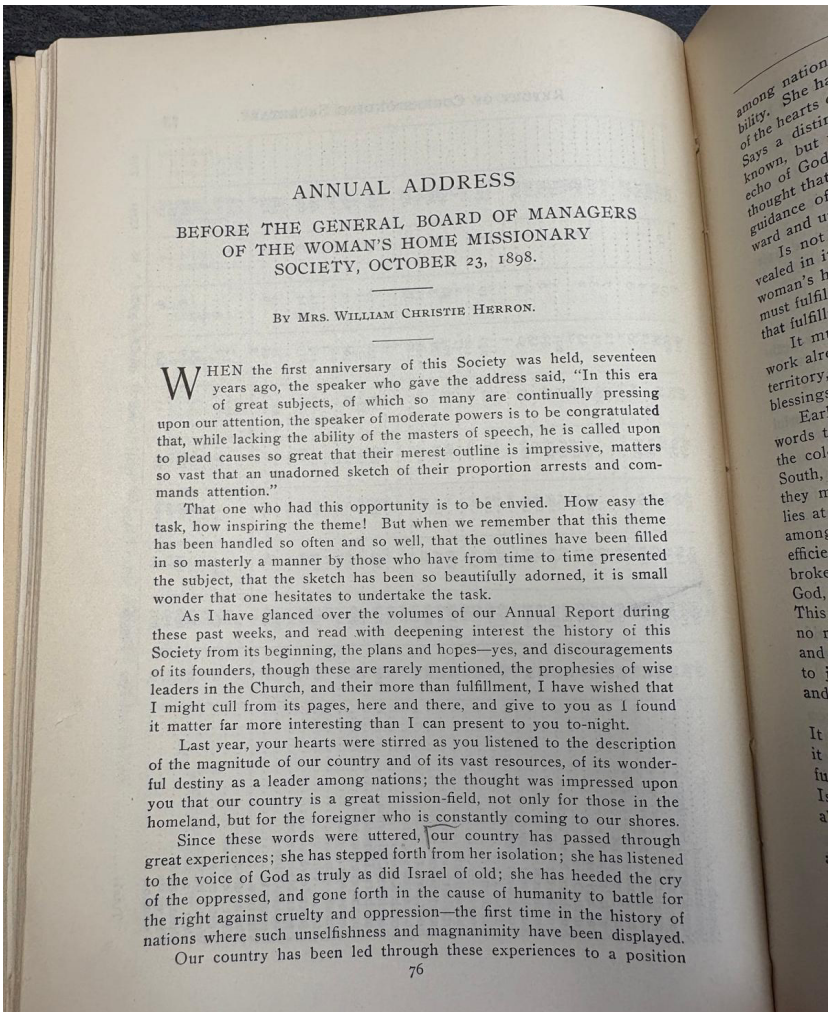

ANNUAL ADDRESS

BEFORE THE GENERAL BOARD OF MANAGERS OF THE WOMAN'S HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY, OCTOBER 23, 1898.

By Mrs. William Christie Herron.

WHEN the first anniversary of this Society was held, seventeen years ago, the speaker who gave the address said, "In this era of great subjects, of which so many are continually pressing upon our attention, the speaker of moderate powers is to be congratulated that, while lacking the ability of the masters of speech, he is called upon to plead causes so great that their merest outline is impressive, matters so vast that an unadorned sketch of their proportion arrests and commands attention."

That one who had this opportunity is to be envied. How easy the task, how inspiring the theme! But when we remember that this theme has been handled so often and so well, that the outlines have been filled in so masterly a manner by those who have from time to time presented the subject, that the sketch has been so beautifully adorned, it is small wonder that one hesitates to undertake the task.

As I have glanced over the volumes of our Annual Report during these past weeks, and read with deepening interest the history of this Society from its beginning, the plans and hopes—yes, and discouragements of its founders, though these are rarely mentioned, the prophesies of wise leaders in the Church, and their more than fulfillment, I have wished that I might cull from its pages, here and there, and give to you as I found it matter far more interesting than I can present to you to-night.

Last year, your hearts were stirred as you listened to the description of the magnitude of our country and of its vast resources, of its wonderful destiny as a leader among nations; the thought was impressed upon you that our country is a great mission-field, not only for those in the homeland, but for the foreigner who is constantly coming to our shores.

Since these words were uttered, our country has passed through great experiences; she has stepped forth from her isolation; she has listened to the voice of God as truly as did Israel of old; she has heeded the cry of the oppressed, and gone forth in the cause of humanity to battle for the right against cruelty and oppression—the first time in the history of nations where such unselfishness and magnanimity have been displayed.

Our country has been led through these experiences to a position

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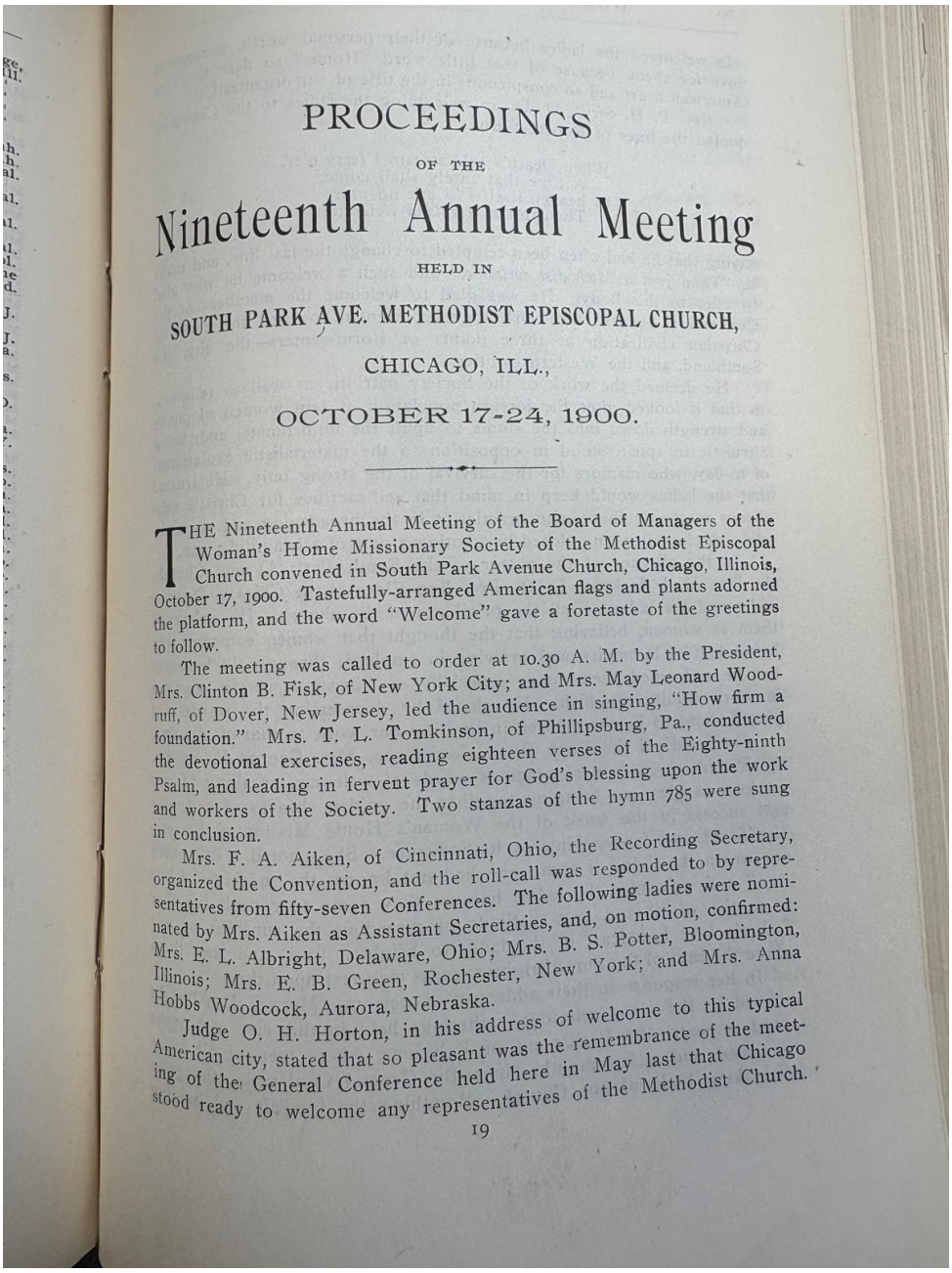
"Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Meeting held in South Park Ave. Methodist Episcopal Church, Chicago, ILL., October 17–24, 1900." *Nineteenth Annual Report of the General Board of Managers of the Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the Years 1899–1900* (Western Methodist Book Concern Press, 1900).



PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

Nineteenth Annual Meeting

HELD IN

SOUTH PARK AVE. METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,

CHICAGO, ILL.,

OCTOBER 17-24, 1900.

THE Nineteenth Annual Meeting of the Board of Managers of the Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church convened in South Park Avenue Church, Chicago, Illinois, October 17, 1900. Tastefully-arranged American flags and plants adorned the platform, and the word "Welcome" gave a foretaste of the greetings to follow.

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 A. M. by the President, Mrs. Clinton B. Fisk, of New York City; and Mrs. May Leonard Woodruff, of Dover, New Jersey, led the audience in singing, "How firm a foundation." Mrs. T. L. Tomkinson, of Phillipsburg, Pa., conducted the devotional exercises, reading eighteen verses of the Eighty-ninth Psalm, and leading in fervent prayer for God's blessing upon the work and workers of the Society. Two stanzas of the hymn 785 were sung in conclusion.

Mrs. F. A. Aiken, of Cincinnati, Ohio, the Recording Secretary, organized the Convention, and the roll-call was responded to by representatives from fifty-seven Conferences. The following ladies were nominated by Mrs. Aiken as Assistant Secretaries, and, on motion, confirmed: Mrs. E. L. Albright, Delaware, Ohio; Mrs. B. S. Potter, Bloomington, Illinois; Mrs. E. B. Green, Rochester, New York; and Mrs. Anna Hobbs Woodcock, Aurora, Nebraska.

Judge O. H. Horton, in his address of welcome to this typical American city, stated that so pleasant was the remembrance of the meeting of the General Conference held here in May last that Chicago stood ready to welcome any representatives of the Methodist Church.

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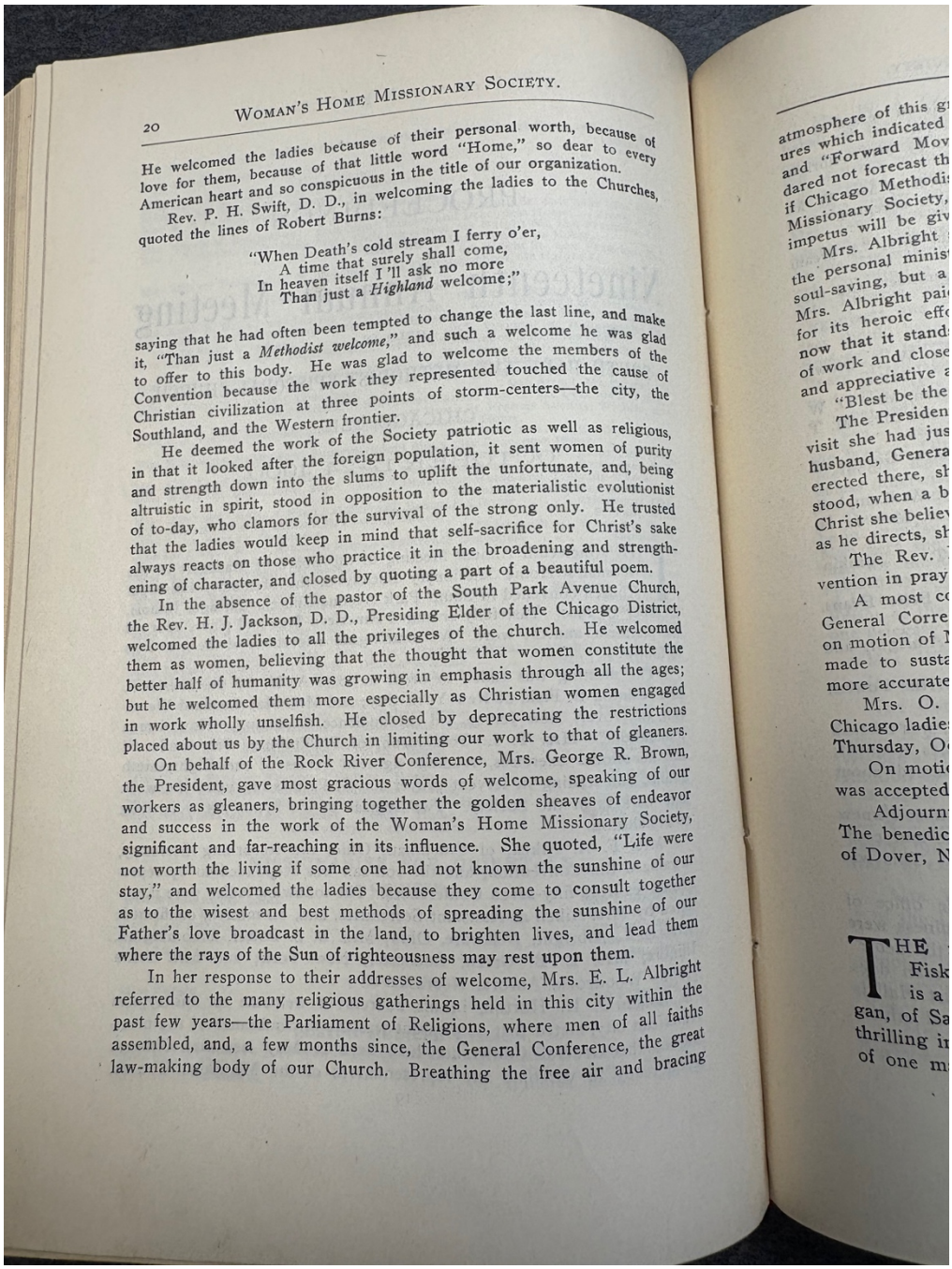


He welcomed the ladies because of their personal worth, because of love for them, because of that little word "Home," so dear to every American heart and so conspicuous in the title of our organization.

Rev. P. H. Swift, D. D., in welcoming the ladies to the Churches, quoted the lines of Robert Burns:

"When Death's cold stream I ferry o'er,
A time that surely shall come,
In heaven itself I 'll ask no more
Than just a *Highland* welcome;"

saying that he had often been tempted to change the last line, and make it, "Than just a *Methodist welcome*," and such a welcome he was glad to offer to this body. He was glad to welcome the members of the Convention because the work they represented touched the cause of Christian civilization at three points of storm-centers—the city, the Southland, and the Western frontier.

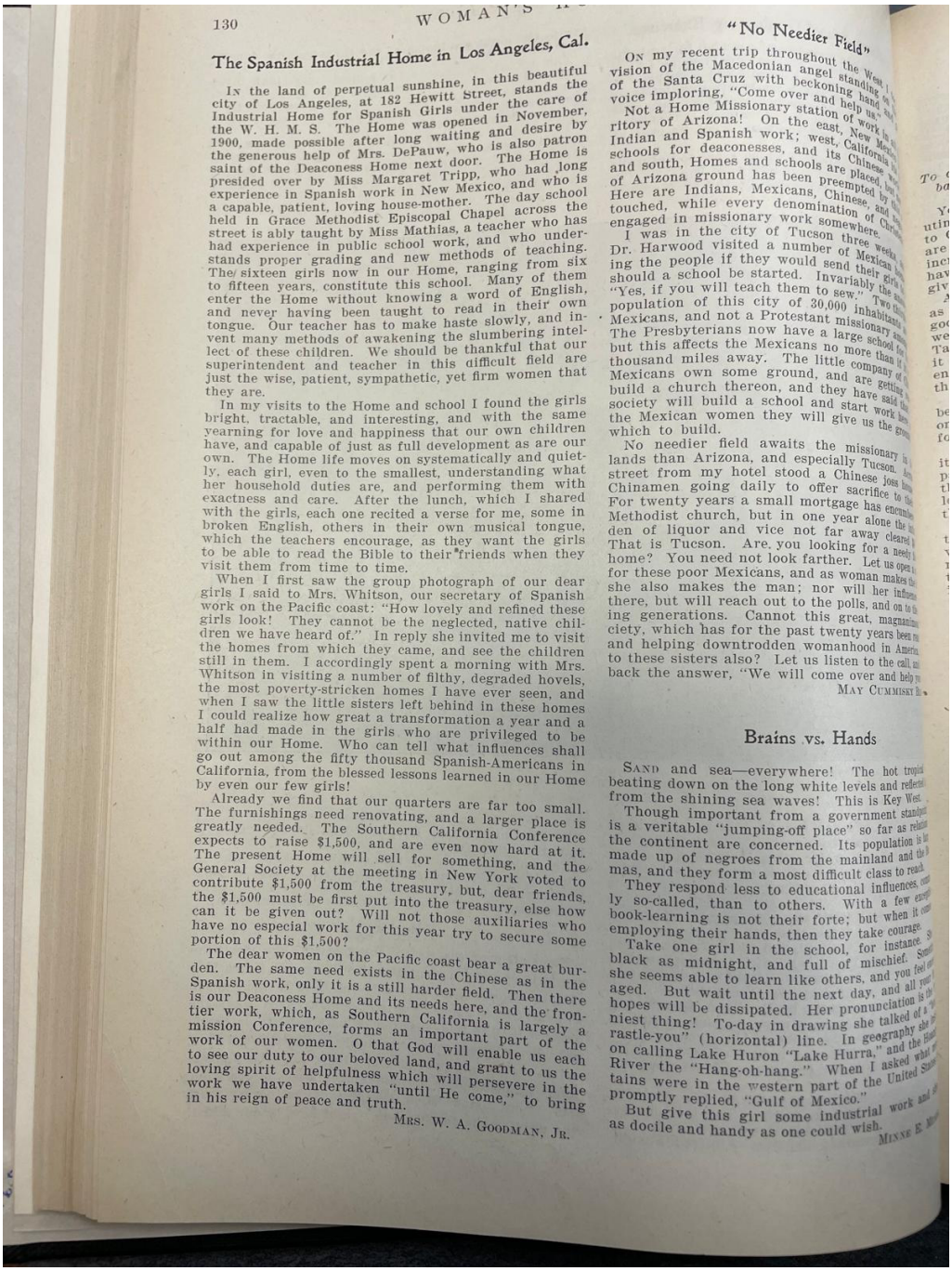
He deemed the work of the Society patriotic as well as religious, in that it looked after the foreign population, it sent women of purity and strength down into the slums to uplift the unfortunate, and, being altruistic in spirit, stood in opposition to the materialistic evolutionist of to-day, who clamors for the survival of the strong only. He trusted that the ladies would keep in mind that self-sacrifice for Christ's sake always reacts on those who practice it in the broadening and strengthening of character, and closed by quoting a part of a beautiful poem.

In the absence of the pastor of the South Park Avenue Church, the Rev. H. J. Jackson, D. D., Presiding Elder of the Chicago District, welcomed the ladies to all the privileges of the church. He welcomed them as women, believing that the thought that women constitute the better half of humanity was growing in emphasis through all the ages; but he welcomed them more especially as Christian women engaged in work wholly unselfish. He closed by deprecating the restrictions placed about us by the Church in limiting our work to that of gleaners.

On behalf of the Rock River Conference, Mrs. George R. Brown, the President, gave most gracious words of welcome, speaking of our workers as gleaners, bringing together the golden sheaves of endeavor and success in the work of the Woman's Home Missionary Society, significant and far-reaching in its influence. She quoted, "Life were not worth the living if some one had not known the sunshine of our stay," and welcomed the ladies because they come to consult together as to the wisest and best methods of spreading the sunshine of our Father's love broadcast in the land, to brighten lives, and lead them where the rays of the Sun of righteousness may rest upon them.

In her response to their addresses of welcome, Mrs. E. L. Albright referred to the many religious gatherings held in this city within the past few years—the Parliament of Religions, where men of all faiths assembled, and, a few months since, the General Conference, the great law-making body of our Church. Breathing the free air and bracing

Goodman, Jr., W.A. "The Spanish Industrial Home in Los Angeles, Cal." *Woman's Home Missions* 19, no. 7 (1902).



The Spanish Industrial Home in Los Angeles, Cal.

In the land of perpetual sunshine, in this beautiful city of Los Angeles, at 182 Hewitt Street, stands the Industrial Home for Spanish Girls under the care of the W. H. M. S. The Home was opened in November, 1900, made possible after long waiting and desire by the generous help of Mrs. DePauw, who is also patron saint of the Deaconess Home next door. The Home is presided over by Miss Margaret Tripp, who had long experience in Spanish work in New Mexico, and who is a capable, patient, loving house-mother. The day school held in Grace Methodist Episcopal Chapel across the street is ably taught by Miss Mathias, a teacher who has had experience in public school work, and who understands proper grading and new methods of teaching. The sixteen girls now in our Home, ranging from six to fifteen years, constitute this school. Many of them enter the Home without knowing a word of English, and never having been taught to read in their own tongue. Our teacher has to make haste slowly, and invent many methods of awakening the slumbering intellect of these children. We should be thankful that our superintendent and teacher in this difficult field are just the wise, patient, sympathetic, yet firm women that they are.

In my visits to the Home and school I found the girls bright, tractable, and interesting, and with the same yearning for love and happiness that our own children have, and capable of just as full development as are our own. The Home life moves on systematically and quietly, each girl, even to the smallest, understanding what her household duties are, and performing them with exactness and care. After the lunch, which I shared with the girls, each one recited a verse for me, some in broken English, others in their own musical tongue, which the teachers encourage, as they want the girls to be able to read the Bible to their friends when they visit them from time to time.

When I first saw the group photograph of our dear girls I said to Mrs. Whitson, our secretary of Spanish work on the Pacific coast: "How lovely and refined these girls look! They cannot be the neglected, native children we have heard of." In reply she invited me to visit the homes from which they came, and see the children still in them. I accordingly spent a morning with Mrs. Whitson in visiting a number of filthy, degraded hovels, the most poverty-stricken homes I have ever seen, and when I saw the little sisters left behind in these homes I could realize how great a transformation a year and a half had made in the girls who are privileged to be within our Home. Who can tell what influences shall go out among the fifty thousand Spanish-Americans in California, from the blessed lessons learned in our Home by even our few girls!

Already we find that our quarters are far too small. The furnishings need renovating, and a larger place is greatly needed. The Southern California Conference expects to raise $1,500, and are even now hard at it. The present Home will sell for something, and the General Society at the meeting in New York voted to contribute $1,500 from the treasury, but, dear friends, the $1,500 must be first put into the treasury, else how can it be given out? Will not those auxiliaries who have no especial work for this year try to secure some portion of this $1,500?

The dear women on the Pacific coast bear a great burden. The same need exists in the Chinese as in the Spanish work, only it is a still harder field. Then there is our Deaconess Home and its needs here, and the frontier work, which, as Southern California is largely a mission Conference, forms an important part of the work of our women. O that God will enable us each to see our duty to our beloved land, and grant to us the loving spirit of helpfulness which will persevere in the work we have undertaken "until He come," to bring in his reign of peace and truth.

MRS. W. A. GOODMAN, JR.

"No Needier Field"

On my recent trip throughout the West ... vision of the Macedonian angel standing on ... of the Santa Cruz with beckoning hand and ... voice imploring, "Come over and help us."

Not a Home Missionary station of work in ... ritory of Arizona! On the east, New Mexico ... Indian and Spanish work; west, California ... schools for deaconesses, and its Chinese ... and south, Homes and schools are placed, ... of Arizona ground has been preempted by ... Here are Indians, Mexicans, Chinese, and ... touched, while every denomination of Chris... engaged in missionary work somewhere.

I was in the city of Tucson three weeks ... Dr. Harwood visited a number of Mexican ... ing the people if they would send their girls ... should a school be started. Invariably the ... "Yes, if you will teach them to sew." Two th... population of this city of 30,000 inhabitants ... Mexicans, and not a Protestant missionary ... The Presbyterians now have a large school for ... but this affects the Mexicans no more than if ... thousand miles away. The little company of ... Mexicans own some ground, and are getting ... build a church thereon, and they have said th... society will build a school and start work here ... the Mexican women they will give us the grou... which to build.

No needier field awaits the missionary in ... lands than Arizona, and especially Tucson. Ac... street from my hotel stood a Chinese joss hou... Chinamen going daily to offer sacrifice to the ... For twenty years a small mortgage has encumbe... Methodist church, but in one year alone the ... den of liquor and vice not far away cleared ... That is Tucson. Are you looking for a needy ... home? You need not look farther. Let us open ... for these poor Mexicans, and as woman makes th... she also makes the man; nor will her influence ... there, but will reach out to the polls, and on to th... ing generations. Cannot this great, magnanimo... ciety, which has for the past twenty years been m... and helping downtrodden womanhood in America ... to these sisters also? Let us listen to the call, an... back the answer, "We will come over and help u...

MAY CUMMISKY H...

Brains vs. Hands

Sand and sea—everywhere! The hot tropic... beating down on the long white levels and reflecting ... from the shining sea waves! This is Key West.

Though important from a government standpoint ... is a veritable "jumping-off place" so far as relation... the continent are concerned. Its population is la... made up of negroes from the mainland and the ... mas, and they form a most difficult class to reach.

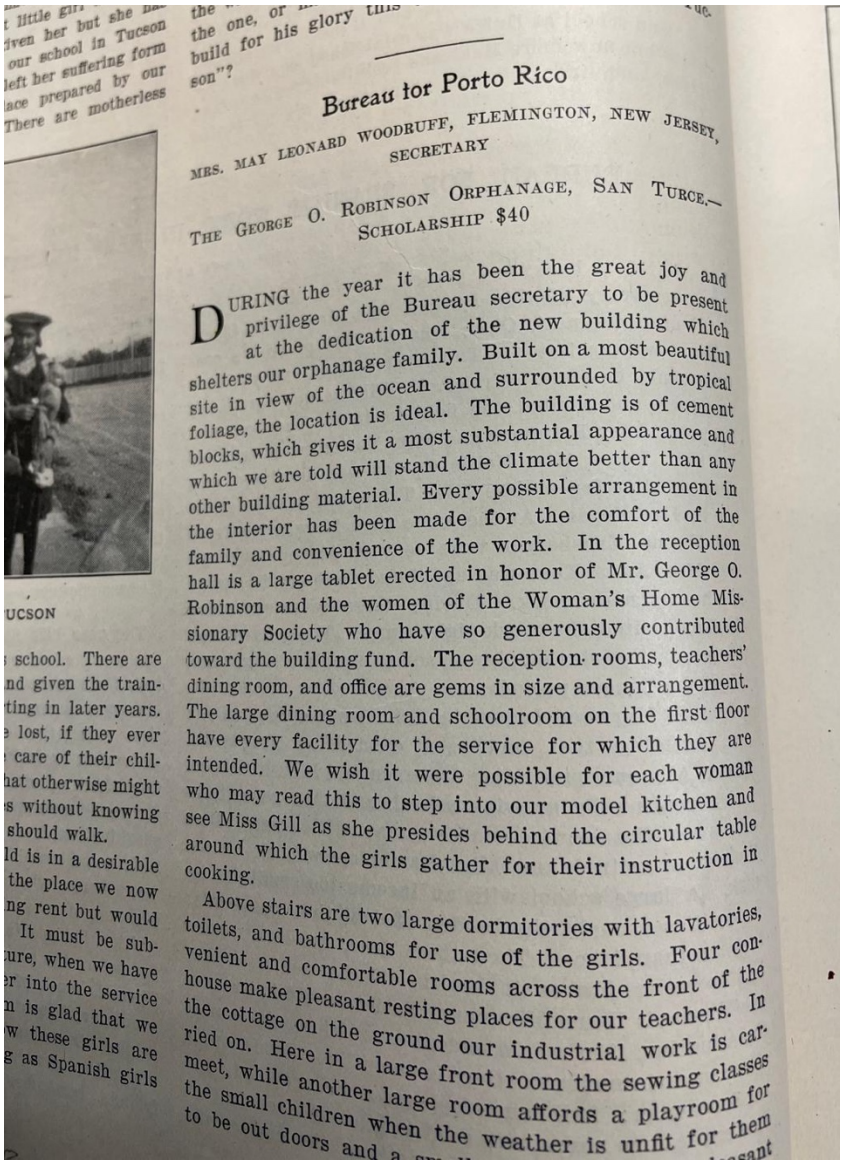
They respond less to educational influences, com... ly so-called, than to others. With a few excep... book-learning is not their forte; but when it com... employing their hands, then they take courage.

Take one girl in the school, for instance. S... black as midnight, and full of mischief. Some... she seems able to learn like others, and you feel en... aged. But wait until the next day, and all your ... hopes will be dissipated. Her pronunciation is the ... niest thing! To-day in drawing she talked of a "... rastle-you" (horizontal) line. In geography she ... on calling Lake Huron "Lake Hurra," and the Hud... River the "Hang-oh-hang." When I asked what ... tains were in the western part of the United State... promptly replied, "Gulf of Mexico."

But give this girl some industrial work and ... as docile and handy as one could wish.

MINNE E. M...

Woodruff, May Leonard. "Bureau of Porto Rico." *Woman's Home Missions* 25, no. 2. (1908).



little girl ... given her but she ... our school in Tucson ... left her suffering form ... place prepared by our ... There are motherless

TUCSON

... school. There are ... and given the train- ... ting in later years. ... lost, if they ever ... care of their chil- ... hat otherwise might ... s without knowing ... should walk. ... ld is in a desirable ... the place we now ... ng rent but would ... It must be sub- ... ure, when we have ... er into the service ... n is glad that we ... w these girls are ... g as Spanish girls

... the one, or ... build for his glory this ... son"?

Bureau for Porto Rico

MRS. MAY LEONARD WOODRUFF, FLEMINGTON, NEW JERSEY, SECRETARY

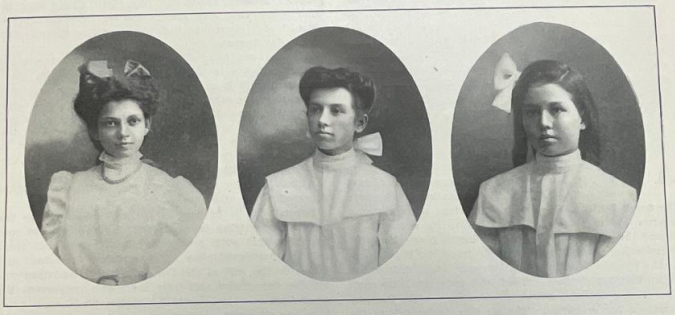
THE GEORGE O. ROBINSON ORPHANAGE, SAN TURCE.—SCHOLARSHIP $40

DURING the year it has been the great joy and privilege of the Bureau secretary to be present at the dedication of the new building which shelters our orphanage family. Built on a most beautiful site in view of the ocean and surrounded by tropical foliage, the location is ideal. The building is of cement blocks, which gives it a most substantial appearance and which we are told will stand the climate better than any other building material. Every possible arrangement in the interior has been made for the comfort of the family and convenience of the work. In the reception hall is a large tablet erected in honor of Mr. George O. Robinson and the women of the Woman's Home Missionary Society who have so generously contributed toward the building fund. The reception rooms, teachers' dining room, and office are gems in size and arrangement. The large dining room and schoolroom on the first floor have every facility for the service for which they are intended. We wish it were possible for each woman who may read this to step into our model kitchen and see Miss Gill as she presides behind the circular table around which the girls gather for their instruction in cooking.

Above stairs are two large dormitories with lavatories, toilets, and bathrooms for use of the girls. Four convenient and comfortable rooms across the front of the house make pleasant resting places for our teachers. In the cottage on the ground our industrial work is carried on. Here in a large front room the sewing classes meet, while another large room affords a playroom for the small children when the weather is unfit for them to be out doors and a ... pleasant

library and reading room for the larger girls. We expect during this year to put this cottage in such order that we may be able to use the second story for dormitory purposes as our family increases.

Our dedication day, February 7, dawned clear, bright, and beautiful as a tropical day could be. There were present for the exercises between two and three hundred guests. There was the greatest joy in the heart of the Bureau secretary, as she presented the building to our good Bishop Wilson for dedication, to be able to say there was no debt and everything in sight had been paid for. It had meant much of sacrifice and planning, but God had guided it all and we were able to set apart this building, which is a thing of beauty and we hope may be a joy for many years to come, to



SOME OF THE GIRLS

Mercedes Minez — Rose Eloisa Rivera — Concepcion Rivera

his service in the caring for the little waifs of humanity who come to us. In the Home today are forty bright, attractive Porto Rican girls. Their progress in every way is remarkable, and those who are helping to support these girls may feel that all they are doing is bringing forth an hundredfold. That many more hearts may be opened to help us in the matter of Student Aid, so that we may soon have a family of at least one hundred girls, is our constant prayer and aim.

Before closing we must refer to the splendid services of our three missionaries and teachers. These women are giving the very best of themselves to this work and in the atmosphere of love that pervades the Home they are giving forth the sweetness of Christian character. Miss Hegeman, our superintendent, must return to the States for three months during the winter, and we have been most fortunate in securing the service of Miss Emma Theobald, of Dayton, Ohio, who takes her place during her absence.

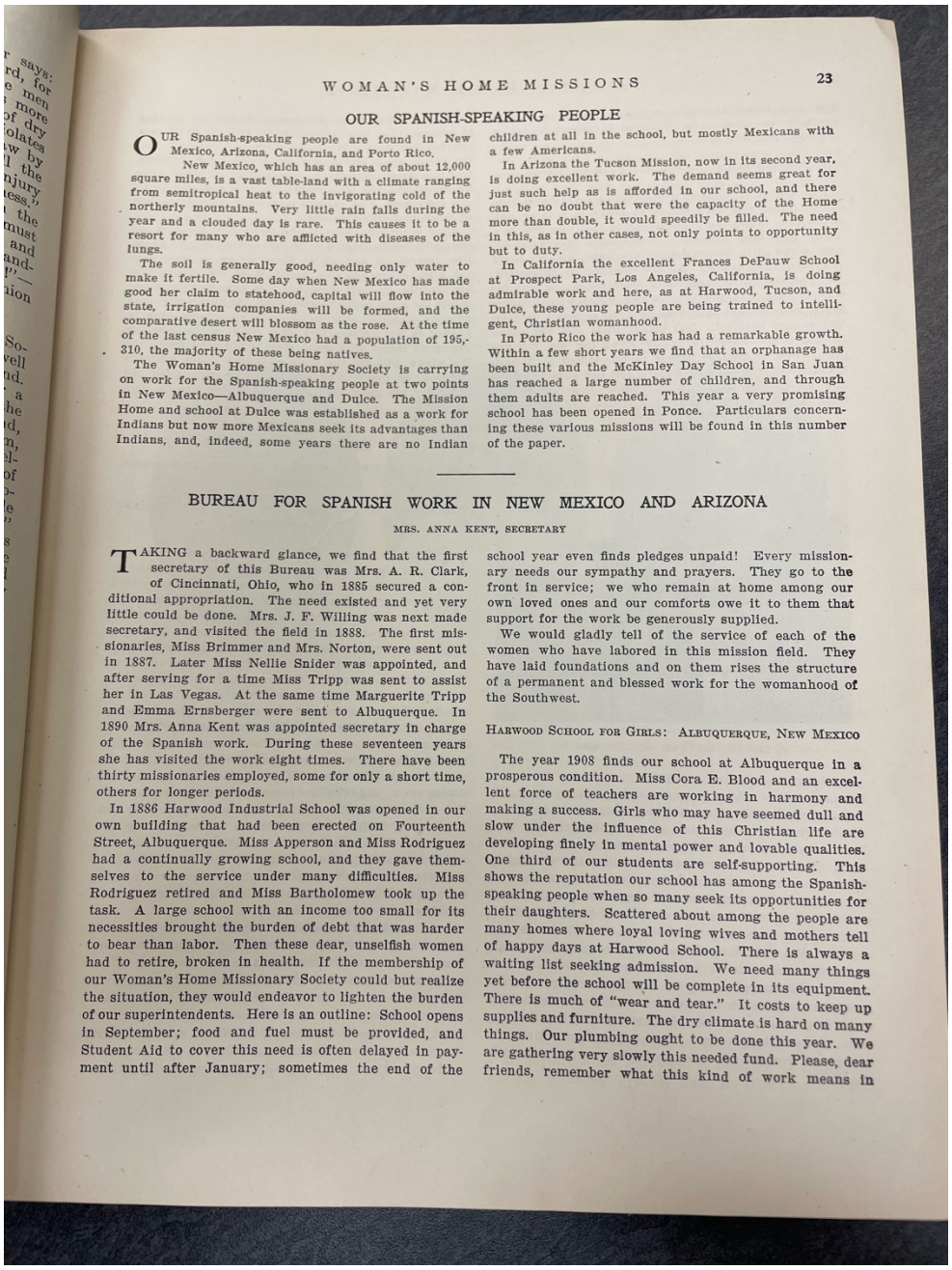
THE MCKINLEY KINDERGARTEN AND DAY SCHOOL, SAN JUAN, PORTO RICO.—SCHOLARSHIP $15

While visiting the island last winter we found that such provision had been made in the public schools that it was not necessary for us to give instruction above the third year primary in this day school, but we added to the work here a kindergarten department under the supervision of Mrs. Floyd Allen, who has proven herself to be an invaluable and tireless worker. At the present time we have an enrollment of about one hundred and twenty-five in this school. The children are learning rapidly and it is interesting to see their eager little faces as they listen to the teaching from Mrs. Allen. In connection with the kindergarten we have also opened a small training school for young Porto Rican women who desire to become teachers, and have at the present time six young ladies studying with Mrs. Allen. It was our pleasure to meet these young ladies and we found them to be earnest and attentive to their work and we believe that much good will result from the training they are now receiving. We hope that some of them may be able to open kindergarten schools in connection with the various Methodist churches on the island. The crying need in Porto Rico is the care and education of the child life, and we believe in this as in no other way can the child problem on the island be solved. We are asking friends to give us $40 a year for the support of these girls, as they come from such poverty-stricken homes that they cannot support themselves. We hope that friends may be so interested in this department of the work that we shall find no difficulty in securing the assistance needed for these young women. Mrs. Allen will be glad to receive supplies of cotton clothing for boys and girls from five to twelve years of age, also school supplies, especially such as are used in kindergarten work. We solicit for this work your prayers, your sympathy, and material aid.

PONCE DAY SCHOOL.—SCHOLARSHIP $15

By permission of the board of trustees we transferred the appropriation formerly made for Guayama to Ponce.

Kent, Anna. "Bureau for Spanish Work in New Mexico and Arizona" *Woman's Home Missionary Society* 25, no. 2 (1908).



OUR SPANISH-SPEAKING PEOPLE

OUR Spanish-speaking people are found in New Mexico, Arizona, California, and Porto Rico.

New Mexico, which has an area of about 12,000 square miles, is a vast table-land with a climate ranging from semitropical heat to the invigorating cold of the northerly mountains. Very little rain falls during the year and a clouded day is rare. This causes it to be a resort for many who are afflicted with diseases of the lungs.

The soil is generally good, needing only water to make it fertile. Some day when New Mexico has made good her claim to statehood, capital will flow into the state, irrigation companies will be formed, and the comparative desert will blossom as the rose. At the time of the last census New Mexico had a population of 195,310, the majority of these being natives.

The Woman's Home Missionary Society is carrying on work for the Spanish-speaking people at two points in New Mexico—Albuquerque and Dulce. The Mission Home and school at Dulce was established as a work for Indians but now more Mexicans seek its advantages than Indians, and, indeed, some years there are no Indian children at all in the school, but mostly Mexicans with a few Americans.

In Arizona the Tucson Mission, now in its second year, is doing excellent work. The demand seems great for just such help as is afforded in our school, and there can be no doubt that were the capacity of the Home more than double, it would speedily be filled. The need in this, as in other cases, not only points to opportunity but to duty.

In California the excellent Frances DePauw School at Prospect Park, Los Angeles, California, is doing admirable work and here, as at Harwood, Tucson, and Dulce, these young people are being trained to intelligent, Christian womanhood.

In Porto Rico the work has had a remarkable growth. Within a few short years we find that an orphanage has been built and the McKinley Day School in San Juan has reached a large number of children, and through them adults are reached. This year a very promising school has been opened in Ponce. Particulars concerning these various missions will be found in this number of the paper.

BUREAU FOR SPANISH WORK IN NEW MEXICO AND ARIZONA

MRS. ANNA KENT, SECRETARY

TAKING a backward glance, we find that the first secretary of this Bureau was Mrs. A. R. Clark, of Cincinnati, Ohio, who in 1885 secured a conditional appropriation. The need existed and yet very little could be done. Mrs. J. F. Willing was next made secretary, and visited the field in 1888. The first missionaries, Miss Brimmer and Mrs. Norton, were sent out in 1887. Later Miss Nellie Snider was appointed, and after serving for a time Miss Tripp was sent to assist her in Las Vegas. At the same time Marguerite Tripp and Emma Ernsberger were sent to Albuquerque. In 1890 Mrs. Anna Kent was appointed secretary in charge of the Spanish work. During these seventeen years she has visited the work eight times. There have been thirty missionaries employed, some for only a short time, others for longer periods.

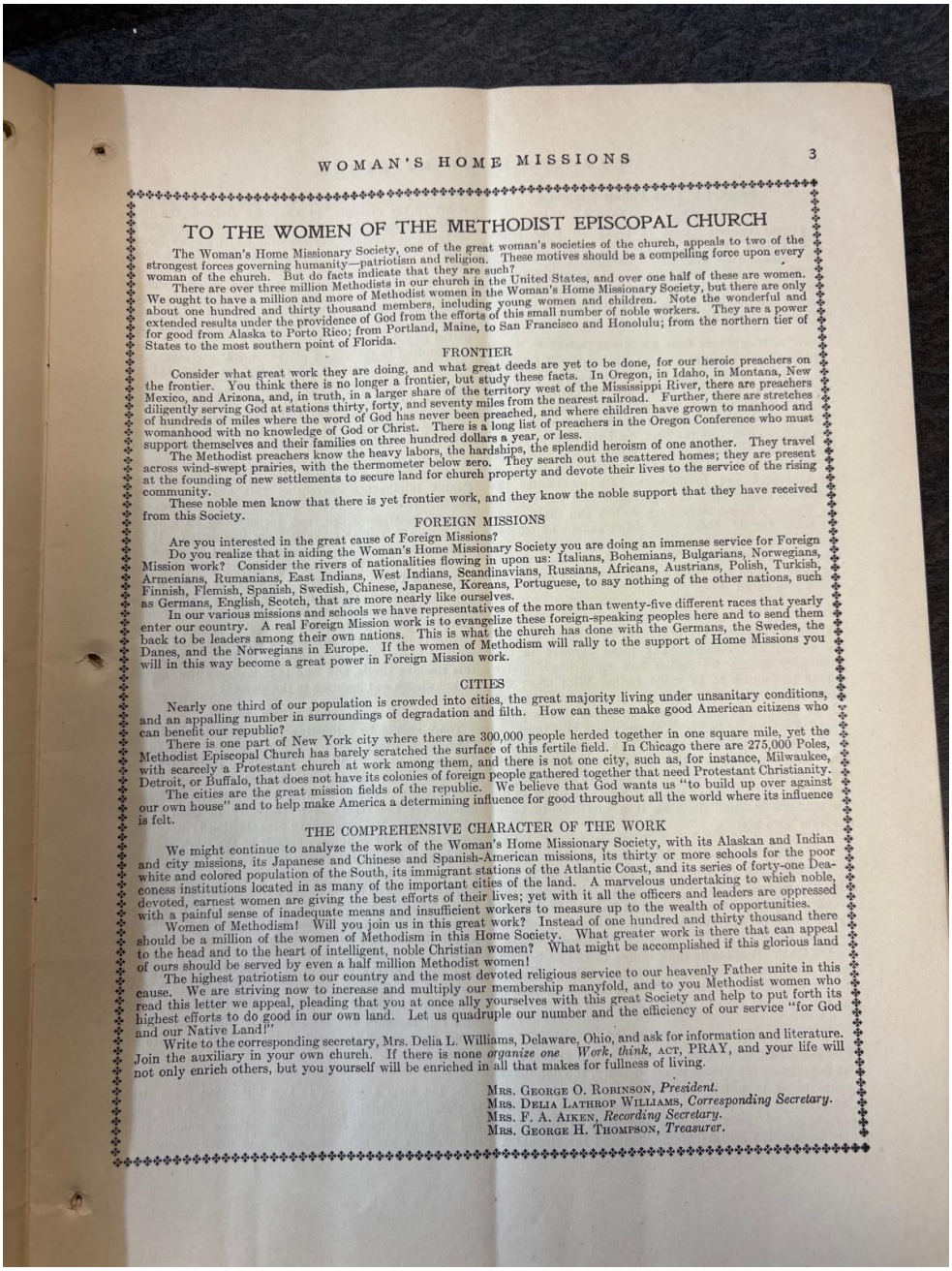
In 1886 Harwood Industrial School was opened in our own building that had been erected on Fourteenth Street, Albuquerque. Miss Apperson and Miss Rodriguez had a continually growing school, and they gave themselves to the service under many difficulties. Miss Rodriguez retired and Miss Bartholomew took up the task. A large school with an income too small for its necessities brought the burden of debt that was harder to bear than labor. Then these dear, unselfish women had to retire, broken in health. If the membership of our Woman's Home Missionary Society could but realize the situation, they would endeavor to lighten the burden of our superintendents. Here is an outline: School opens in September; food and fuel must be provided, and Student Aid to cover this need is often delayed in payment until after January; sometimes the end of the school year even finds pledges unpaid! Every missionary needs our sympathy and prayers. They go to the front in service; we who remain at home among our own loved ones and our comforts owe it to them that support for the work be generously supplied.

We would gladly tell of the service of each of the women who have labored in this mission field. They have laid foundations and on them rises the structure of a permanent and blessed work for the womanhood of the Southwest.

HARWOOD SCHOOL FOR GIRLS: ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

The year 1908 finds our school at Albuquerque in a prosperous condition. Miss Cora E. Blood and an excellent force of teachers are working in harmony and making a success. Girls who may have seemed dull and slow under the influence of this Christian life are developing finely in mental power and lovable qualities. One third of our students are self-supporting. This shows the reputation our school has among the Spanish-speaking people when so many seek its opportunities for their daughters. Scattered about among the people are many homes where loyal loving wives and mothers tell of happy days at Harwood School. There is always a waiting list seeking admission. We need many things yet before the school will be complete in its equipment. There is much of "wear and tear." It costs to keep up supplies and furniture. The dry climate is hard on many things. Our plumbing ought to be done this year. We are gathering very slowly this needed fund. Please, dear friends, remember what this kind of work means in

Robinson, George O., Delia Lathrop Williams, F.A. Aiken, and George H. Thompson, "To The Women of the Methodist Episcopal Church." *Woman's Home Missions* 26, no. 5 (1909).



TO THE WOMEN OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The Woman's Home Missionary Society, one of the great woman's societies of the church, appeals to two of the strongest forces governing humanity—patriotism and religion. These motives should be a compelling force upon every woman of the church. But do facts indicate that they are such?

There are over three million Methodists in our church in the United States, and over one half of these are women. We ought to have a million and more of Methodist women in the Woman's Home Missionary Society, but there are only about one hundred and thirty thousand members, including young women and children. Note the wonderful and extended results under the providence of God from the efforts of this small number of noble workers. They are a power for good from Alaska to Porto Rico; from Portland, Maine, to San Francisco and Honolulu; from the northern tier of States to the most southern point of Florida.

FRONTIER

Consider what great work they are doing, and what great deeds are yet to be done, for our heroic preachers on the frontier. You think there is no longer a frontier, but study these facts. In Oregon, in Idaho, in Montana, New Mexico, and Arizona, and, in truth, in a larger share of the territory west of the Mississippi River, there are preachers diligently serving God at stations thirty, forty, and seventy miles from the nearest railroad. Further, there are stretches of hundreds of miles where the word of God has never been preached, and where children have grown to manhood and womanhood with no knowledge of God or Christ. There is a long list of preachers in the Oregon Conference who must support themselves and their families on three hundred dollars a year, or less.

The Methodist preachers know the heavy labors, the hardships, the splendid heroism of one another. They travel across wind-swept prairies, with the thermometer below zero. They search out the scattered homes; they are present at the founding of new settlements to secure land for church property and devote their lives to the service of the rising community.

These noble men know that there is yet frontier work, and they know the noble support that they have received from this Society.

FOREIGN MISSIONS

Are you interested in the great cause of Foreign Missions?

Do you realize that in aiding the Woman's Home Missionary Society you are doing an immense service for Foreign Mission work? Consider the rivers of nationalities flowing in upon us: Italians, Bohemians, Bulgarians, Norwegians, Armenians, Rumanians, East Indians, West Indians, Scandinavians, Russians, Africans, Austrians, Polish, Turkish, Finnish, Flemish, Spanish, Swedish, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Portuguese, to say nothing of the other nations, such as Germans, English, Scotch, that are more nearly like ourselves.

In our various missions and schools we have representatives of the more than twenty-five different races that yearly enter our country. A real Foreign Mission work is to evangelize these foreign-speaking peoples here and to send them back to be leaders among their own nations. This is what the church has done with the Germans, the Swedes, the Danes, and the Norwegians in Europe. If the women of Methodism will rally to the support of Home Missions you will in this way become a great power in Foreign Mission work.

CITIES

Nearly one third of our population is crowded into cities, the great majority living under unsanitary conditions, and an appalling number in surroundings of degradation and filth. How can these make good American citizens who can benefit our republic?

There is one part of New York city where there are 300,000 people herded together in one square mile, yet the Methodist Episcopal Church has barely scratched the surface of this fertile field. In Chicago there are 275,000 Poles, with scarcely a Protestant church at work among them, and there is not one city, such as, for instance, Milwaukee, Detroit, or Buffalo, that does not have its colonies of foreign people gathered together that need Protestant Christianity.

The cities are the great mission fields of the republic. We believe that God wants us "to build up over against our own house" and to help make America a determining influence for good throughout all the world where its influence is felt.

THE COMPREHENSIVE CHARACTER OF THE WORK

We might continue to analyze the work of the Woman's Home Missionary Society, with its Alaskan and Indian and city missions, its Japanese and Chinese and Spanish-American missions, its thirty or more schools for the poor white and colored population of the South, its immigrant stations of the Atlantic Coast, and its series of forty-one Deaconess institutions located in as many of the important cities of the land. A marvelous undertaking to which noble, devoted, earnest women are giving the best efforts of their lives; yet with it all the officers and leaders are oppressed with a painful sense of inadequate means and insufficient workers to measure up to the wealth of opportunities.

Women of Methodism! Will you join us in this great work? Instead of one hundred and thirty thousand there should be a million of the women of Methodism in this Home Society. What greater work is there that can appeal to the head and to the heart of intelligent, noble Christian women? What might be accomplished if this glorious land of ours should be served by even a half million Methodist women!

The highest patriotism to our country and the most devoted religious service to our heavenly Father unite in this cause. We are striving now to increase and multiply our membership manyfold, and to you Methodist women who read this letter we appeal, pleading that you at once ally yourselves with this great Society and help to put forth its highest efforts to do good in our own land. Let us quadruple our number and the efficiency of our service "for God and our Native Land!"

Write to the corresponding secretary, Mrs. Delia L. Williams, Delaware, Ohio, and ask for information and literature. Join the auxiliary in your own church. If there is none *organize one*. *Work, think,* ACT, PRAY, and your life will not only enrich others, but you yourself will be enriched in all that makes for fullness of living.

MRS. GEORGE O. ROBINSON, *President.*
MRS. DELIA LATHROP WILLIAMS, *Corresponding Secretary.*
MRS. F. A. AIKEN, *Recording Secretary.*
MRS. GEORGE H. THOMPSON, *Treasurer.*

Bovard, F.D. "The Basis of Belief in Immorality." *Woman's Home Missions* 27, no. 1 (1910).

The Deaconess at Work

"For the love of Christ and in His name"

The organ for Deaconess Work associated with the Woman's Home Missionary Society

A NEW YEAR MESSAGE

MY Dear Coworkers: Like one of old I call to you, "What of the night?" Is not the day breaking? Does not the dawn of the approaching morn strengthen your courage? Truly, we meet sin, sorrow, and suffering everywhere, yet we find so many forces joining with us for the lessening of sin, for the assuaging of sorrow, for the healing of the suffering, that, like Elisha of old, by faith we cry out, "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." Yes, the dawning of the day of promise is here.

MISS BANCROFT

Again has come and gone the wonderful Christmas season, when we literally find it far more blessed to give than to receive, when our hearts are filled with joy in proportion to our power to give, not of our material things alone, but also of our dearest treasures of heart and mind. What is the meaning of this our joy? Is it the measure of the largeness of our minds and hearts? Faith, love, and peace are ours in proportion as we are ready to claim personally the promise of our Divine Master. From this time forward let us make these promises more and more fully ours.

Homely duties have during all the year demanded alertness, fatigue—even exhaustion—but they have brought blessed compensations. The soul hunger that our efforts have awakened, the inspiration that has strengthened character and purified life—these are our rewards. Often in toil and weariness, yet with joy and love, you have labored, but the holy thoughts and desires that you as workers for God and his children have put into the minds of the younger generations have strengthened the forces of goodness and have perpetuated the best of yourselves.

Have you through the performance of these duties seen the face of the Lord? Have these services resulted in a deeper faith and stronger spirit of love? If so, thank God and continue to claim larger gifts from his hand. May the year upon which we are entering prove most glorious in the closer recognition of his divine companionship.

It is because we have such vital faith in the living Christ that our hearts are full of his faith, hope, and joy. Let us expect from his hand the coming of larger things than ever before. In His Name,

Sincerely yours, H. A. BANCROFT.

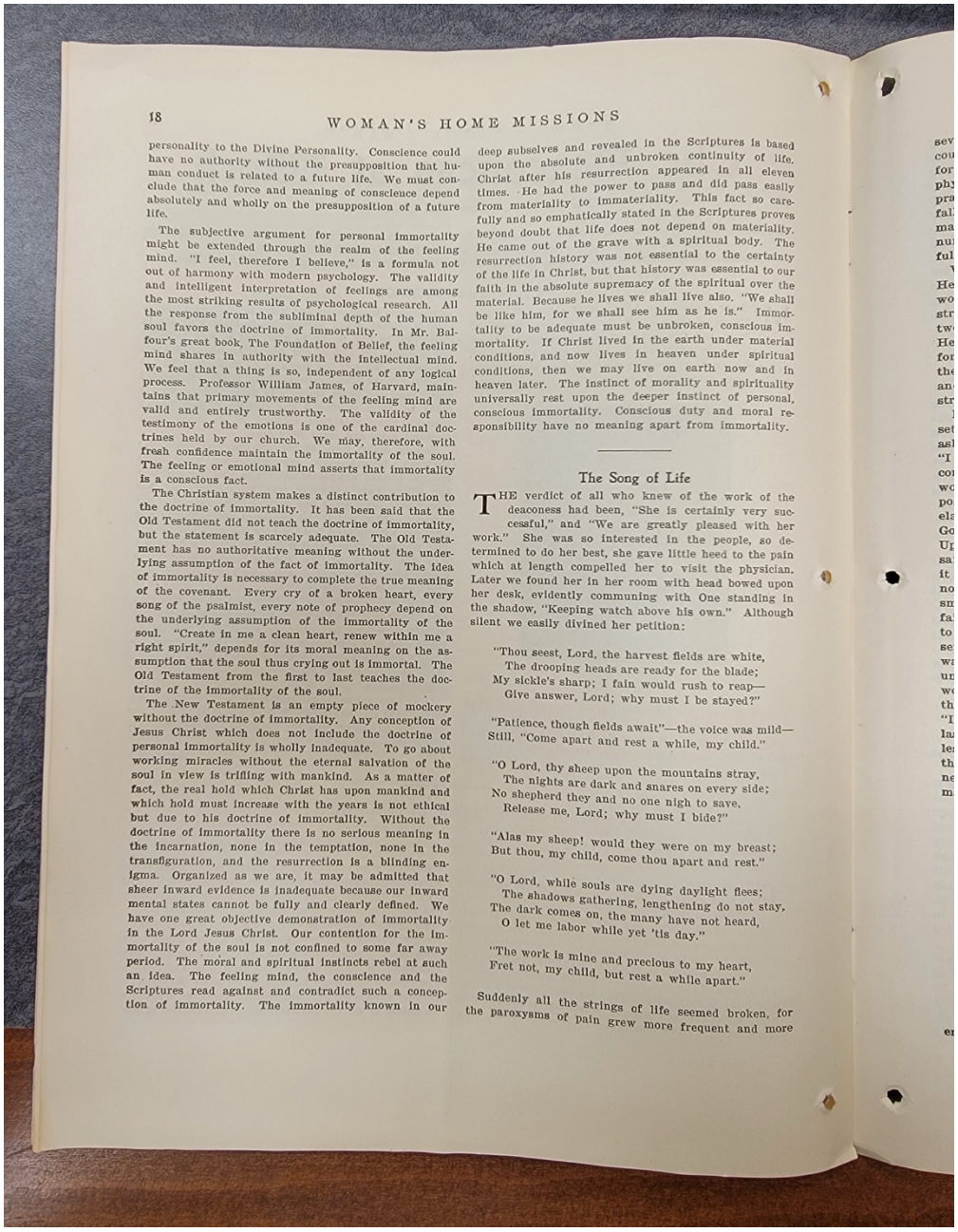
THE BASIS OF BELIEF IN IMMORTALITY

BY THE REV. F. D. BOVARD, D.D.

(Address delivered before Annual Convention of the Woman's Home Missionary Society at Los Angeles.)

THE progress of psychology has not disturbed the fundamental religious instincts. The argument of the ancient philosopher, based upon the indivisibility of the soul has not been shaken. Modern science has strengthened and confirmed the primary evidence of personal immortality. The greatest criterion of a subjective truth is its universality. The immortality of the soul is the strongest universal instinct underlying human effort. That instinct instead of weakening with the advance of Christian civilization is strengthened and intensified. It is one of the few rudimentary and constitutional principles of human life which Christianity has recognized and promoted. The universal instinct of immortality remains in full force and lies at the base of all morality and spirituality.

The second subjective evidence of immortality is conscience. There have been many attempts to account for conscience. Primarily, conscience is the universal consciousness of the presence of the Divine Personality. The contact of human personality with the Divine Personality gives rise to conscience. Conscience predicates its authority on the primary but vital relation of our



personality to the Divine Personality. Conscience could have no authority without the presupposition that human conduct is related to a future life. We must conclude that the force and meaning of conscience depend absolutely and wholly on the presupposition of a future life.

The subjective argument for personal immortality might be extended through the realm of the feeling mind. "I feel, therefore I believe," is a formula not out of harmony with modern psychology. The validity and intelligent interpretation of feelings are among the most striking results of psychological research. All the response from the subliminal depth of the human soul favors the doctrine of immortality. In Mr. Balfour's great book, The Foundation of Belief, the feeling mind shares in authority with the intellectual mind. We feel that a thing is so, independent of any logical process. Professor William James, of Harvard, maintains that primary movements of the feeling mind are valid and entirely trustworthy. The validity of the testimony of the emotions is one of the cardinal doctrines held by our church. We may, therefore, with fresh confidence maintain the immortality of the soul. The feeling or emotional mind asserts that immortality is a conscious fact.

The Christian system makes a distinct contribution to the doctrine of immortality. It has been said that the Old Testament did not teach the doctrine of immortality, but the statement is scarcely adequate. The Old Testament has no authoritative meaning without the underlying assumption of the fact of immortality. The idea of immortality is necessary to complete the true meaning of the covenant. Every cry of a broken heart, every song of the psalmist, every note of prophecy depend on the underlying assumption of the immortality of the soul. "Create in me a clean heart, renew within me a right spirit," depends for its moral meaning on the assumption that the soul thus crying out is immortal. The Old Testament from the first to last teaches the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

The New Testament is an empty piece of mockery without the doctrine of immortality. Any conception of Jesus Christ which does not include the doctrine of personal immortality is wholly inadequate. To go about working miracles without the eternal salvation of the soul in view is trifling with mankind. As a matter of fact, the real hold which Christ has upon mankind and which hold must increase with the years is not ethical but due to his doctrine of immortality. Without the doctrine of immortality there is no serious meaning in the incarnation, none in the temptation, none in the transfiguration, and the resurrection is a blinding enigma. Organized as we are, it may be admitted that sheer inward evidence is inadequate because our inward mental states cannot be fully and clearly defined. We have one great objective demonstration of immortality in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our contention for the immortality of the soul is not confined to some far away period. The moral and spiritual instincts rebel at such an idea. The feeling mind, the conscience and the Scriptures read against and contradict such a conception of immortality. The immortality known in our deep subselves and revealed in the Scriptures is based upon the absolute and unbroken continuity of life. Christ after his resurrection appeared in all eleven times. He had the power to pass and did pass easily from materiality to immateriality. This fact so carefully and so emphatically stated in the Scriptures proves beyond doubt that life does not depend on materiality. He came out of the grave with a spiritual body. The resurrection history was not essential to the certainty of the life in Christ, but that history was essential to our faith in the absolute supremacy of the spiritual over the material. Because he lives we shall live also. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Immortality to be adequate must be unbroken, conscious immortality. If Christ lived in the earth under material conditions, and now lives in heaven under spiritual conditions, then we may live on earth now and in heaven later. The instinct of morality and spirituality universally rest upon the deeper instinct of personal, conscious immortality. Conscious duty and moral responsibility have no meaning apart from immortality.

The Song of Life

THE verdict of all who knew of the work of the deaconess had been, "She is certainly very successful," and "We are greatly pleased with her work." She was so interested in the people, so determined to do her best, she gave little heed to the pain which at length compelled her to visit the physician. Later we found her in her room with head bowed upon her desk, evidently communing with One standing in the shadow, "Keeping watch above his own." Although silent we easily divined her petition:

"Thou seest, Lord, the harvest fields are white,
The drooping heads are ready for the blade;
My sickle's sharp; I fain would rush to reap—
Give answer, Lord; why must I be stayed?"

"Patience, though fields await"—the voice was mild—
Still, "Come apart and rest a while, my child."

"O Lord, thy sheep upon the mountains stray,
The nights are dark and snares on every side;
No shepherd they and no one nigh to save,
Release me, Lord; why must I bide?"

"Alas my sheep! would they were on my breast;
But thou, my child, come thou apart and rest."

"O Lord, while souls are dying daylight flees;
The shadows gathering, lengthening do not stay.
The dark comes on, the many have not heard,
O let me labor while yet 'tis day."

"The work is mine and precious to my heart,
Fret not, my child, but rest a while apart."

Suddenly all the strings of life seemed broken, for the paroxysms of pain grew more frequent and more

Sack, Lillian Leonard. “Returning from The Tropics.” *Woman’s Home Missions,* 39, no. 5 (May 1922).

RETURNING FROM THE TROPICS

MRS. LILLIAN LEONARD SLACK, Bureau Secretary for Porto Rico and Santo Domingo

March 20, 1922

Dear friends and readers of WOMAN'S HOME MISSIONS:

The long anticipated, and much talked-of visit to the island of Porto Rico has been made, and the good ship San Lorenzo, which bore us to the beautiful island in January, is now speeding toward the shores of the homeland, and it will not be many hours until we will feel the last icy breath of winter instead of the warm, soft breezes and golden sunshine of the tropics. Right well has Porto Rico been called the "Island of Enchantment," and true it is, that one who has once beheld the beauties and felt the charm of this "garden spot," will sooner or later return, lured by the azure of the skies and seas, and the waving of the graceful palms as they are swayed by the soft summer breezes. Truly Dame Nature seems to smile, and most lavishly does she bestow her luscious gifts on all who worship at her shrine.

"But why was the long voyage made," do you ask? Because there are those living among these beautiful surroundings whom we love and call our own, our missionaries and girls in our George O. Robinson Orphanage, and the little people in our day schools.

During the eight years since our last visit, noticeable progress has been made. Particularly is this true in the larger cities. Many beautiful homes have been built by prosperous American and Porto Ricans, and the Board of Education has erected a number of splendid schools. But while the latter fact is true, only a little more than one third of the children of school age are in school. All the children of school age could not go to school if they desired to do so—there are not enough schools or teachers to teach them.

The island is now suffering greatly from the general financial depression, which is affecting all the world. The price of sugar, which is the standard by which all prices are regulated, has dropped to three cents per pound, and means that the wages of the peons has declined to pre-war prices, from forty cents to one dollar per day.

The condition of the rural population is most pitiful, and we must remember that 80 per cent of the population is rural. While it takes but little to satisfy these children of nature, many become discouraged in their effort to secure that little, and when they do not succumb to want and disease, often simply give up the struggle and die by their own hands. To relieve such conditions is a real problem.

The loose moral conditions which have prevailed for hundreds of years are still the curse of the island. The responsibility of parenthood and the sanctity of the marriage relation are not felt by these people, due in large measure to the fact that the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church were not administered unless paid for, and the people were too poor to pay. The sacredness of the marriage relation must be emphasized, and the ideals of the people elevated.

There are children, children everywhere, and thousands there are who are not cared for by their own parents and do not even know who they are. All this goes to prove that the island of Porto Rico is a most needy mission field. All agencies whose aim is to uplift these people are greatly needed and would be warmly welcomed. It has truly been said, "lifting up a people by Christian education is casting up a highway for the Prince of Peace."

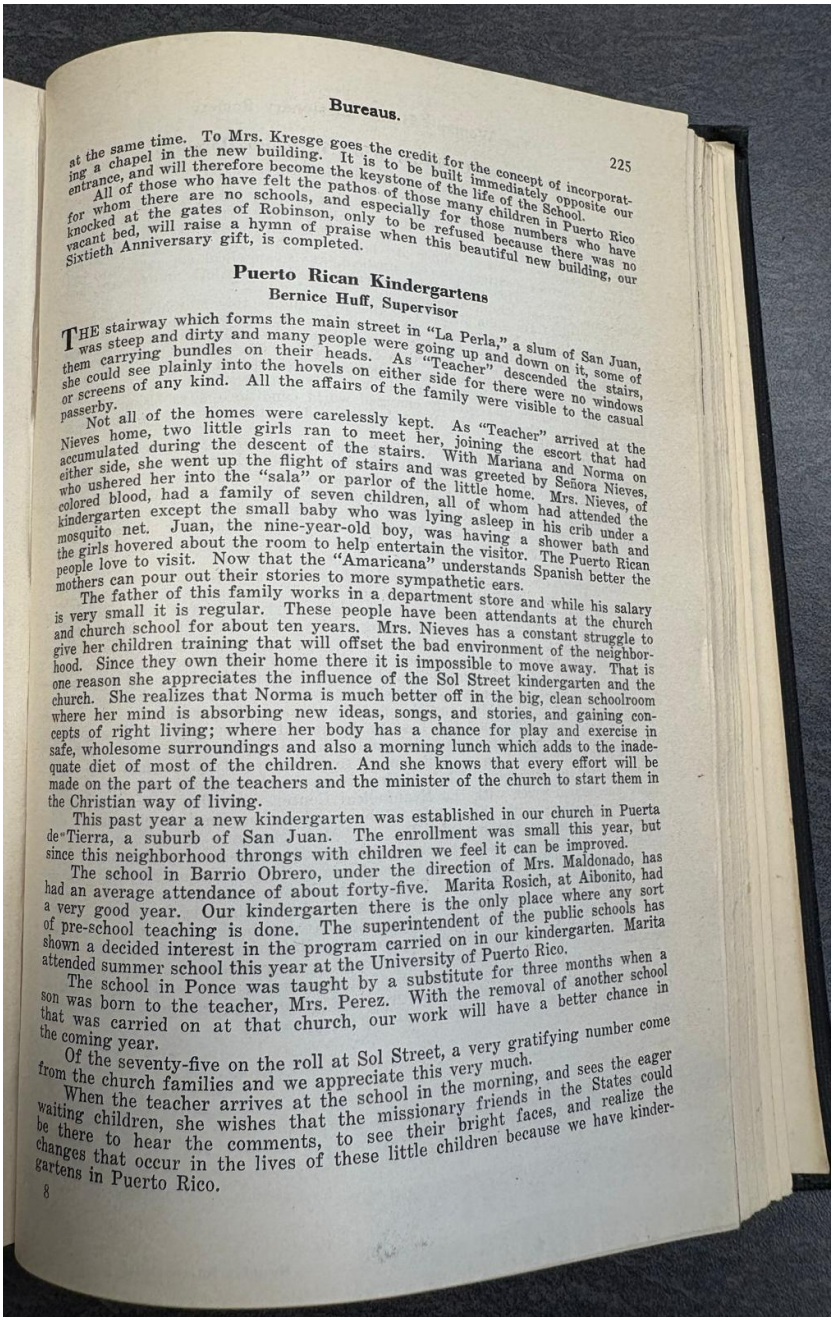
MCKINLEY DAY SCHOOL, SAN JUAN, PORTO RICO

Such we feel is the work of the Woman's Home Missionary Society, the orphanage for the girls and the four day schools for little boys and girls. Since the beginning of our work, twenty years ago, several hundred girls have passed through the doors of our beautiful home, and are to-day making good in many lines of services, some as teachers, some as nurses, some as helpers in homes of friends. Shall we ask, does it pay?

In our imagination, we already see the walls of the new Orvis Building rising—the dream of the years is soon to be realized, when we will not only have fifty of those dark-eyed *senoritas* in our home, but when double the number will be safely housed within its sheltering walls.

To bring this to pass *building fund* is needed. Will not you, dear friends, remember this when making your appropriations for the coming year and pledge most generously?

Huff, Bernice. “Puerto Rican Kindergartens.” *The Woman’s Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Fifty-ninth Annual Report for the year 1939–1940* (1939–1940).



at the same time. To Mrs. Kresge goes the credit for the concept of incorporating a chapel in the new building. It is to be built immediately opposite our entrance, and will therefore become the keystone of the life of the School.

All of those who have felt the pathos of those many children in Puerto Rico for whom there are no schools, and especially for those numbers who have knocked at the gates of Robinson, only to be refused because there was no vacant bed, will raise a hymn of praise when this beautiful new building, our Sixtieth Anniversary gift, is completed.

Puerto Rican Kindergartens

Bernice Huff, Supervisor

THE stairway which forms the main street in “La Perla,” a slum of San Juan, was steep and dirty and many people were going up and down on it, some of them carrying bundles on their heads. As “Teacher” descended the stairs, she could see plainly into the hovels on either side for there were no windows or screens of any kind. All the affairs of the family were visible to the casual passerby.

Not all of the homes were carelessly kept. As “Teacher” arrived at the Nieves home, two little girls ran to meet her, joining the escort that had accumulated during the descent of the stairs. With Mariana and Norma on either side, she went up the flight of stairs and was greeted by Señora Nieves, who ushered her into the “sala” or parlor of the little home. Mrs. Nieves, of colored blood, had a family of seven children, all of whom had attended the kindergarten except the small baby who was lying asleep in his crib under a mosquito net. Juan, the nine-year-old boy, was having a shower bath and the girls hovered about the room to help entertain the visitor. The Puerto Rican people love to visit. Now that the “Amaricana” understands Spanish better the mothers can pour out their stories to more sympathetic ears.

The father of this family works in a department store and while his salary is very small it is regular. These people have been attendants at the church and church school for about ten years. Mrs. Nieves has a constant struggle to give her children training that will offset the bad environment of the neighborhood. Since they own their home there it is impossible to move away. That is one reason she appreciates the influence of the Sol Street kindergarten and the church. She realizes that Norma is much better off in the big, clean schoolroom where her mind is absorbing new ideas, songs, and stories, and gaining concepts of right living; where her body has a chance for play and exercise in safe, wholesome surroundings and also a morning lunch which adds to the inadequate diet of most of the children. And she knows that every effort will be made on the part of the teachers and the minister of the church to start them in the Christian way of living.

This past year a new kindergarten was established in our church in Puerta de Tierra, a suburb of San Juan. The enrollment was small this year, but since this neighborhood throngs with children we feel it can be improved.

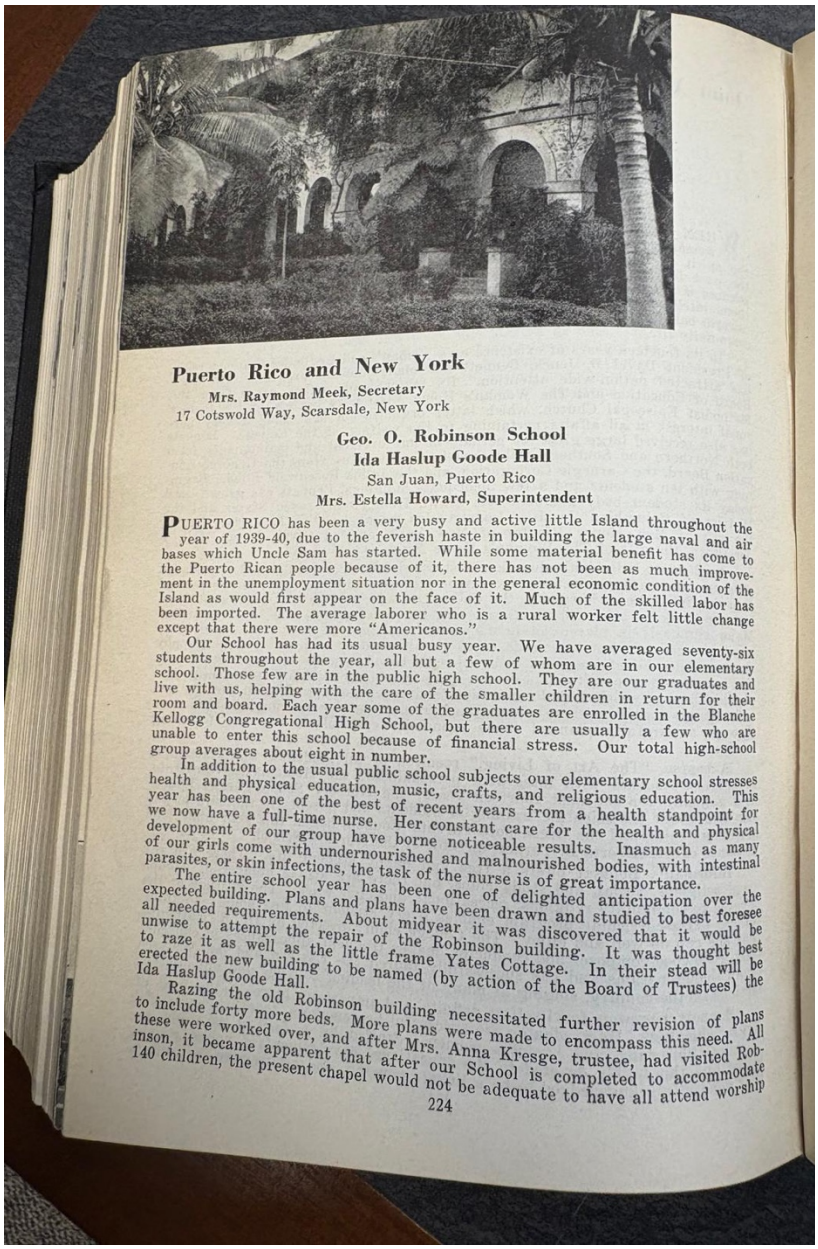
The school in Barrio Obrero, under the direction of Mrs. Maldonado, has had an average attendance of about forty-five. Marita Rosich, at Aibonito, had a very good year. Our kindergarten there is the only place where any sort of pre-school teaching is done. The superintendent of the public schools has shown a decided interest in the program carried on in our kindergarten. Marita attended summer school this year at the University of Puerto Rico.

The school in Ponce was taught by a substitute for three months when a son was born to the teacher, Mrs. Perez. With the removal of another school that was carried on at that church, our work will have a better chance in the coming year.

Of the seventy-five on the roll at Sol Street, a very gratifying number come from the church families and we appreciate this very much.

When the teacher arrives at the school in the morning, and sees the eager waiting children, she wishes that the missionary friends in the States could be there to hear the comments, to see their bright faces, and realize the changes that occur in the lives of these little children because we have kindergartens in Puerto Rico.

Howard, Estella. "Geo. O. Robinson School Ida Haslup Goode Hall: San Juan, Puerto Rico." *The Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Fifty-ninth Annual Report for the Year 1939–1940* (1939–1940).



Puerto Rico and New York

Mrs. Raymond Meek, Secretary
17 Cotswold Way, Scarsdale, New York

Geo. O. Robinson School
Ida Haslup Goode Hall

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Mrs. Estella Howard, Superintendent

PUERTO RICO has been a very busy and active little Island throughout the year of 1939-40, due to the feverish haste in building the large naval and air bases which Uncle Sam has started. While some material benefit has come to the Puerto Rican people because of it, there has not been as much improvement in the unemployment situation nor in the general economic condition of the Island as would first appear on the face of it. Much of the skilled labor has been imported. The average laborer who is a rural worker felt little change except that there were more "Americanos."

Our School has had its usual busy year. We have averaged seventy-six students throughout the year, all but a few of whom are in our elementary school. Those few are in the public high school. They are our graduates and live with us, helping with the care of the smaller children in return for their room and board. Each year some of the graduates are enrolled in the Blanche Kellogg Congregational High School, but there are usually a few who are unable to enter this school because of financial stress. Our total high-school group averages about eight in number.

In addition to the usual public school subjects our elementary school stresses health and physical education, music, crafts, and religious education. This year has been one of the best of recent years from a health standpoint for we now have a full-time nurse. Her constant care for the health and physical development of our group have borne noticeable results. Inasmuch as many of our girls come with undernourished and malnourished bodies, with intestinal parasites, or skin infections, the task of the nurse is of great importance.

The entire school year has been one of delighted anticipation over the expected building. Plans and plans have been drawn and studied to best foresee all needed requirements. About midyear it was discovered that it would be unwise to attempt the repair of the Robinson building. It was thought best to raze it as well as the little frame Yates Cottage. In their stead will be erected the new building to be named (by action of the Board of Trustees) the Ida Haslup Goode Hall.

Razing the old Robinson building necessitated further revision of plans to include forty more beds. More plans were made to encompass this need. All these were worked over, and after Mrs. Anna Kresge, trustee, had visited Robinson, it became apparent that after our School is completed to accommodate 140 children, the present chapel would not be adequate to have all attend worship