

**“Ten Dollars to Hate Somebody”: Hispanic Communities and the
Ku Klux Klan in Colorado, 1917-1925**

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ABSTRACT

The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s far exceeded its traditional Southern base. Historians agree that much of the Klan's efforts were put toward harassing European-born Catholics and Jews, as well as African Americans. However, Colorado was a unique setting for the Klan in terms of location and population. Colorado met World War One's demands for both soldiers and goods with patriotic fervor. As there was an increase in demand for both, Colorado companies looked to Mexicans and Hispanos to fill in the gaps. Recruiters set out in Mexico and the Southwest to find people to work in industries previously dominated by European immigrants. As more and more started to immigrate to Colorado, Anglo residents raised complaints. The racial tensions were then coupled with those brought on by the first Red Scare of 1919 and 1920. The Red Scare created an environment ripe for nativist and one hundred percent American sentiments, and cemented an intense fear of "radical aliens" in Anglo-Coloradans' minds. Nonetheless, Mexicans and Hispanos continued to be recruited and immigration to the state further increased. These communities were often associated with crime and faced heavy discrimination throughout the state.

By 1921, the Ku Klux Klan surfaced in Colorado under Grand Dragon John Galen Locke. Over the next four years, the Klan came to dominate the political scene throughout Colorado, as they promised reform and safety. Many of the Ku Klux Klan rallies and demonstrations were held in cities and towns with large Hispanic communities. This thesis analyzes the growth of Mexican and Hispano communities in Colorado in relation to the success of the Ku Klux Klan in the early 1920s.

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Introduction

Philip Hernandez's grandparents arrived in Colorado in the early 1900s. They came to the United States to escape the upheaval occurring in Mexico and because of the economic opportunities promised. Hernandez described the upheaval caused by the Mexican Revolution, as "so violent that it is the only country that experienced a revolution when the country actually lost population. So it gives you a feel for the violence that was occurring in Mexico at that time. There was a push and a pull to migrate to the United States."¹ His grandfather worked in the mines around Trinidad, and in northern mines near Boulder during the winters. During the summers, he and his entire family worked in the fields. His father was born in Longmont, his mother in Grand Junction.

Hernandez's grandparents, like thousands of others, were drawn to the United States in hopes of prosperity. Out of desperation, they left everything familiar behind and travelled thousands of miles by train in hopes of finding work when they arrived. Once in Colorado, families lived in dismal conditions, often crammed in shacks located next to livestock. They would have to leave their segregated communities to go into town, where they were often greeted with signs of "No Mexicans Allowed." As Hernandez describes, "I would say the social condition for us at best was 'we're invisible,'" and as long as they stayed invisible, they could keep trouble at bay. As more immigrants moved into the area, however, it became harder to remain invisible and Anglo residents started to complain. Things worsened, and by the early 1920s, large groups of men, clothed in white, hooded robes, would gather outside communities like the one where Hernandez's family lived. They would surround a seven-foot blazing cross, their hatred as palpable as the thick smoke floating into the air above it.

¹ Philip Hernandez, interviewed by Eualdo Valdez, July 17, 2013, Maria Rogers Oral History Program, Boulder Public Library, accessed March 20, 2017, <http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh1857/>.

These men were Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. The “second wave” of the Ku Klux Klan, as historians have deemed it, was founded by Colonel William Joseph Simmons of Alabama on Thanksgiving Day in 1915. As Imperial Wizard, Simmons travelled throughout the U.S. to recruit men to lead local Klan chapters (klaverns). While Simmons helped to find the leaders, and collected a portion of initiation fees, most klaverns operated independently. In the case of Colorado, Simmons met with the soon-to-be Grand Dragon, John Galen Locke, at Denver’s Brown Palace Hotel in early 1921. Locke was an authoritative leader; through his charismatic motivation and manipulation, the Klan came to dominate Colorado politics, with members controlling most important political seats. When the Klan reached its peak in 1924 after fierce recruitment drives, there were approximately 35,000 members throughout the state.² However, when Locke was arrested in 1925, he was expelled from the national Ku Klux Klan. He attempted to create his own group, the Minute Men, which fizzled rapidly. Without his leadership, the various KKK factions eventually wilted. However, the discrimination promoted by Klan activities continued to thrive.

There are several arguments for why the Klan succeeded in the Centennial State. The first and most prominent argument, which came about in the 1960s, is that the tensions brought on by the First World War allowed for the rise of the Klan. Following World War One, there was much unrest in Colorado, as there was throughout the United States. In Colorado, frustrations caused by the Great War led to mob violence and labor unrest. Despite state law enforcement's best efforts, violence and crime were rampant throughout the state. Much of the crime wave was based on recently established Prohibition laws. The Ku Klux Klan of Colorado advertised themselves as a force to stop the violence and crime. The “Kluxing of Colorado” and its

² “The *Denver Press* states that he was the most powerful man in Colorado and declared that his powers were those of an absolute dictator.” Kenneth Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pg. 220.

relationship to post-World War strife are well researched. Kenneth T. Jackson argues in *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (1967) that the rise of the Klan across the United States was due to tensions within communities undergoing the process of urbanization. Jackson looks at how the Klan targeted the minority groups in Denver, including African-Americans, Jews, and Catholics. He explains, “more important than the white supremacy or anti-Semitism was prejudice against the Catholics and foreign born.”³ However, Jackson focuses mostly on Catholics of European heritage. He looks at how the Klan affected urban life in Denver during the 1920s and the reasons behind people joining. He demonstrates that many people who became Klansmen thought it was their patriotic duty, almost as if they were going to join in the Great War.

Robert Goldberg looks at Colorado specifically in *Hooded Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado*, published in 1981. He gives a clear description of the second wave of the Ku Klux Klan and then goes into further detail about the Colorado Klan under direction of Grand Dragon John Galen Locke. The main hub of power, he describes, was in the urban center, Denver. From there they targeted people across the state with their slogan of safety. Colorado, like many states of the time, was undergoing urbanization and labor unrest. Violence throughout the streets and the lack of a sufficient police force to combat it made the Klan attractive. In addition to their protection, membership rose because people viewed the Klan as an alluring club. U.S. citizens felt a strong unity following World War One, and many sought to keep hold of such feelings, so the exclusivity of the Klan was attractive. Goldberg, like many other historians, goes into great detail about the political power that the Klan manifested. He claims that they did not target the Republican or Democratic Party, they focused their efforts on manipulation, and it was the

³ Jackson, 218.

Republican Party that opened its doors.⁴ As Locke described, “We are not Democrats, we are not Republicans, we are Klansmen.”⁵

In the following decades, historians have taken a broader look at the Klan movement. Instead of focusing on small-town or rural areas, they have turned their efforts to regions, states, or communities that demonstrate the Klan’s social or populist aspects. Thomas R. Pegram’s *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s* (2011) synthesizes newer Klan scholarship. He provides examples of Klan activities throughout the country, including Colorado, and emphasizes the variability of the movement, depending on its local. Pegram demonstrates that the Klan’s demise in Colorado had much to do with their failure to “mount effective offensives” against those they had promised to attack, including Prohibition violators.⁶ Other historians have focused on gender, economics, and religious means to study the Klan.

The Klan also owed its success to unrest brought on by the Red Scare of 1919 to 1920. Tensions in the U.S. were further intensified by the perceived threat of Communism. As the Bolshevik party under Vladimir Lenin gained power in Russia through violent revolution, fear of a Communist takeover reverberated throughout the world. The U.S. government became especially wary of Mexico, as it was also in the throes of revolution. Newspapers throughout the U.S. made claims that Mexico was turning toward Communism. The United States government also played a large role in spreading dread, in particular Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer. Fear and unrest were expressed through general strikes and violence. The Scare dwindled in 1920, but its impact on Americans was significant. There was an intense dread of nonconformity,

⁴ Robert A. Goldberg, *Hooded Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado* (Chicago, IL: University of Iowa Press, 1981).

⁵ Edgar I. Fuller, *The Visible of the Invisible Empire* (Denver, CO: Maelstrom Publishing Co., Inc., 1925), pg. 76.

⁶ Thomas R. Pegram, *One Hundred Percent American: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s* (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, 2011).

intolerance toward “aliens,” and a heightened nativist sentiment. A widely-shared desire for “one hundred percent Americanism” further cemented racial discrimination. As a result, the Ku Klux Klan and other nativist groups were able to rise quickly and gain support among the masses in the years following the Red Scare.⁷

In Robert Murray’s book *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* (1955), he discusses the development of the Red Scare, and more importantly, the rise of nativism. He explains that after World War I Americans wanted to return to normal, though the war flipped “normalcy” on its head. They could not turn back the social/ political clock so they became frustrated. The book also addresses the Bolshevik party and their rise, as well as the rise of the Communist Party in the United States. The Communist Party grew in the poorer sections of major cities, where communism seemed more appealing. Local and state governments also enacted laws that restricted, fined, and jailed citizens for partaking in perceived radical activities. Murray also links the rise of the Klan and their crusade of one hundred percent Americanism to the broader Red Scare. Similarly, John Higham explores the rise of nativism, including during the Red Scare, in *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1924* (1992). His nationwide study of nativism shows how it affected the government’s policy choices when it came to immigration. He also discusses the rise of the Klan and their drive for one hundred percent Americanism. As all of these books show, in the case of research done on the Ku Klux

⁷ For information on conditions that led to the Klan’s rise, see Atchison, Carla Joan. “Nativism in Colorado Politics: The American Protective Association and the Ku Klux Klan,” (master’s thesis, University of Colorado at Boulder, 1972); Abbott, Carl. *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State* (Boulder, CO: Colorado University Press, 1976), pp. 220-227; Philip J. Cook, “Red Scare in Denver,” *Colorado Magazine* 1966 (Fall 1966): pp. 309-326.

Klan and the Red Scare, much of the focus is on how European immigrants, not Mexican immigrants, were treated.⁸

In Colorado, much of the discrimination directed at Mexican and Hispano communities began well before the KKK years.⁹ Anxieties continued to hike during the prewar years as thousands of Mexicans, facing minimal immigration restrictions, were moving into the States, thus adding to the population of Hispanos already living here. This went on despite anxieties expressed by Anglo communities. Throughout the Great War and afterward, Colorado companies and the President of Mexico, Venustiano Carranza, eagerly urged Mexicans and Hispanos to move to Colorado as a labor source. Prior to World War One, Mexican labor had been seasonal, but as the war progressed, Mexicans became permanent residents and took jobs outside of traditional agricultural work. The majority worked in beet fields, for the expanding railroad system, and in industrial jobs that were located in more urban areas.¹⁰

Mexican labor was highly prized during and after World War One. In part, this was because the citizen labor force was being shipped off to war. Additionally, the Immigration Act of 1917 restricted the number of Europeans moving to the U.S., but not the number of Mexicans. Farmers also preferred Mexican and Hispano labor because such workers were not paid as much as their European counterparts, and because they were considered incapable of upward mobility. However, as their work transitioned from seasonal to year-round, Mexicans were not necessarily

⁸ Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1955); John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1924* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

⁹ Mexicans are here understood to be immigrants from Mexico, while Hispanos are people of Spanish descent from the Southwest and were considered U.S. citizens following the Treaty of Hidalgo-Guadalupe. Based on Ruben Donato's definitions in *Mexicans and Hispanos in Colorado Schools and Communities, 1920-1960* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).

¹⁰ For information on the progression of labor, see Mark Reisler, "Always the Laborer, Never the Citizen: Anglo Perceptions of the Mexican Immigrant During the 1920s," *Pacific Historical Review* 45, no. 2 (May, 1976): pp. 231-254; Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge. Culture, Class and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

welcomed as neighbors. They were housed in segregated communities throughout the cities and rural areas; Anglo-Americans were still not comfortable with their presence. By the early 1920s “it became virtually impossible to hold back the influx of both legal and undocumented workers and ‘illegal aliens.’”¹¹ The majority of Mexican immigrants and Hispanos, who were of Catholic heritage and had darker skin, became clear targets for the Klan. The harsh environment and existing tensions created the perfect breeding ground for the Klan and their call for “one hundred percent Americanism.”

Research on Mexican immigration takes several forms, including demographic and social approaches. Historians writing in the 1970s paid particular attention to the negative view of Mexicans living in the Southwest. Mark Reisler has studied how Mexicans were treated once in the States in his book *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940* published in 1976. Reisler asserts that nativists from the 1920s argued that Mexicans, with their “excessive fecundity,” threatened to dilute the true Anglo-American bloodline, and that therefore immigration to the U.S. from Mexico should be restricted. He also describes that in general people thought that (Indian) Mexicans were the result of intermingling between black slaves and Anglo ancestors. Therefore, the racist thought process of “race biology” was applied to Mexican Americans as well as African Americans. This included the assumption that they were lazy, while at the same time they were meant for hard labor, and that they were unintelligent.¹²

Sarah Deutsch's book *No Separate Refuge* (1987) looks at Mexicans' immigration to and Hispanos' living in Colorado, and at how the Anglo residents reacted. She briefly touches on the KKK, though her comments are limited to one page. Similarly, in *Mexicans and Hispanos in*

¹¹Ricardo Romo, “Responses to Mexican Immigration, 1910-1930,” *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, no.2 (Summer 1975): pg. 183.

¹² Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940* (London: Greenwood Press, 1976).

Colorado Schools and Communities: 1920-1960 (2007), Ruben Donato addresses the Ku Klux Klan in the chapter “The Kolorado Klan.” He points out that the Klan rallies were often held in Hispanic-dominated communities in rural areas. However, his analysis is brief, with only four pages dedicated to the topic, and speaks mostly to the events in sugar beet towns. He also divulges that there were far more Mexicans and Hispanos in Colorado than were reported. The book explains how many Mexican laborers were recruited to work on sugar beet fields, having started drives in 1915. Donato also speaks to the discrimination toward these communities throughout the state.¹³

Both the second wave of the Ku Klux Klan and early twentieth-century immigration have been well researched by historians. Research focuses on nationwide patterns, as well as localized systems. The Klan of Colorado has been observed in depth through a lens of politics, socioeconomics, and even gender. However, historians have done minimal research on the relationship between the Klan and Mexicans and Hispanos. By looking at the role of existing tensions between Anglo residents and Mexican and Hispano communities in Colorado, we can better understand why the KKK thrived in Colorado in the 1920s. With the aim of investigating the relationship between the previously mentioned groups, we may ask the following questions: How were Mexican and Hispano communities in rural and urban areas treated by their Anglo neighbors? Was there heightened violence or intimidation towards Mexican and Hispano communities after the Klan gained political power? And lastly, was the Klan able to gain so many members because the leadership recognized that, by targeting existing social tensions, they could garner support?

¹³ Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge. Culture, Class and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Ruben Donata, *Mexicans and Hispanos in Colorado Schools and Communities: 1920-1960* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).

In this thesis, I aim to do a comprehensive study of the intersection of the second coming of the KKK with Mexican and Hispano experience in Colorado during the 1920s. To better understand the rising tensions, it is necessary to begin with the United States entering World War One. At this time, Mexican labor became the dominant source of labor in the sugar beet fields of Colorado, which led to rising tensions with Anglo residents. Tensions increased when the war came to a close but immigration continued. Following total war, the nation was blanketed by the Red Scare, only furthering anxieties felt toward the growing Mexican and Hispano communities. By the time the Ku Klux Klan came to Colorado, there was already a discriminatory groundwork on which they could lay their tracks. Newspaper articles, oral histories, and other written sources from the time provide abundant evidence that the KKK used existing tensions to further their cause and gain white-hooded followers throughout the state. While there are ample resources on the Klan, there is a limited number of primary documents that come from the Mexican and Hispano communities. Nevertheless, while it is clear that the Ku Klux Klan did exceptionally well in Colorado in the 1920s, it is also clear that they did so in part because Mexicans and Hispanos served them especially well as a target.

Chapter One: World War One, the Rise of Americanism, and Mexican Immigration

I was refused service at a hamburger stand. Yet I was drafted into the United States army. I don't blame the Americans for their discrimination against some Mexicans but they should not discriminate against all Mexicans. The Americans hate the Mexicans when they have no work to give them.

- *Unnamed Mexican-American*¹⁴

Both the United States and Mexico saw enormous changes between 1910 and 1920. These changes encompassed their relationship as neighbors, as well as their individual cultures. As war erupted in Europe, the U.S. agricultural industry flourished. Immigrant workers dominated fieldwork, though the Immigration Act of 1917 created a shift in labor demographics. Despite changes in the labor force, the broader perception that whiteness was superior persisted, and was echoed in the rise of nativism and Americanism. In Mexico, a revolution rocked the nation, sending thousands north to avoid the conflict. The revolutionary events also created strain between Mexico's fragile government and the U.S. However, it is necessary to observe the events of the decade as a whole in order to understand the events that came afterward. Colorado is an example of how these pieces fit together. The state mimicked the political and cultural shifts of the early twentieth century, while at the same time it was distinctive. The economy so heavily relied on coal production and agriculture that it depended on outside sources of labor, primarily Mexicans and Hispanos.

Colorado and the Great War

Colorado was no stranger to the many changes the United States encountered in the early 1900s. The state underwent a crisis as it transitioned from being a rural to an urban state with over 50 percent of its people living in cities.¹⁵ Like other cities, Denver as the capital showed “an

¹⁴ Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States Valley of the South Platte Colorado* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Publications in Economics, 1929), pg. 224.

¹⁵ Carl Abbott, *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State* (Boulder, CO: Colorado University Press, 1976), pg. 260.

inability to deal with the basic problems of urbanization.”¹⁶ Local businessmen, who came to be known as the “bosses” of the state, were able to control the political scene to benefit their companies to the detriment of workers and the conditions in which they labored. Tensions between unions and business leaders grew. In April 1914, tensions erupted when 1,200 striking coal miners and their families, who were living in a tent colony outside of Trinidad, were attacked by company guards and state troops at an event that came to be known as the Ludlow Massacre. During the event on April 20, 1914, five strikers, one militiaman, two women and twelve children died.¹⁷ Ten days of civil war followed as 1,000 armed miners fought against the company guards and troopers. President Wilson sent in 1,600 federal troops to stop the fighting.¹⁸ As the Great War approached, anxieties over the Massacre resonated with Colorado residents. By the mid nineteen tens, the urban center of the state was in crisis. The agricultural sector, however, was thriving.

The war in Europe rippled across the Atlantic, even before the United States’ entry on April 2, 1917. There was a great demand for American-made products including munitions as well as agricultural goods. The need for products “grew with the passing of the months, showering prosperity on farmers, stock raisers and manufacturers alike.”¹⁹ Between 1910 and 1919, wheat acreage in the state was tripled in order to keep up with the increasing demand. The price of wheat rose from eighty cents to two dollars a bushel.²⁰ Thousands of acres in cities were dedicated to wheat; in one town, 20,000 acres produced 300,000 bushels.²¹ In addition to wheat, one of the most sought-after Colorado products was the sugar beet. Due to their need for

¹⁶ Ibid., 166.

¹⁷ Abbott, 156.

¹⁸ Ibid., 157.

¹⁹ Charles S. Thomas, “Fifty Years of Political History,” in *History of Colorado*, vol. 3, ed. James Baker (Denver, CO: Linderman Co., Inc., 1927), pg. 947.

²⁰ Abbott, 176.

²¹ Manly D. Ormes, “Colorado in the Nation’s Wars,” in *History of Colorado*, vol. 3, ed. James Baker (Denver, CO: Linderman Co., Inc., 1927), pg. 1005.

irrigation, sugar beet farms were more or less restricted to the area along the South Platte River. Therefore, factories sprouted up along the river, including the Great Western Sugar Beet Company in what became Longmont. For some, war meant extra profit; for others, it was a chance to escape poverty.

Colorado residents were by far some of the most eager to join the war. As described by James H. Baker, the president of the University of Colorado from 1892 through 1914, “[Colorado] promptly and cheerfully met every demand and requirement of the national authority whether for men, money or sacrifice.”²² For example, on March 31, 1917, “10,000 Denverites gathered for a ‘vociferous, unanimous upheaval of frenzied patriotism.’”²³ Four days after war was officially declared by the U.S. government, the Colorado National Guard was mobilized. Governor Julius Gunter formed a State Council for Defense, the nation’s first. Gunter also called for an extra legislative session, which started on July 18, 1917. Of the bills drafted in this session, all but one were passed. Of these bills, one provided a bond issue of \$2,500,000 or as much as needed for defense through the “Defense Fund: National Defense Bonds, series 1917.”²⁴ Additionally, special taxes were levied and war bonds sold throughout the state, and many private groups set out to raise funds including the Young Men’s Christian Association and the American Red Cross. In addition to funds and agricultural goods, the state also provided manpower. Some 43,000 men served in the military. Of those, 1,009 were killed and 1,759 wounded.²⁵ These men were said to be “unsurpassed [in] physique, hardy and enduring.”²⁶ To them the loss of life was worth the greater cause.

One reason for the local government’s and the volunteers’ haste in joining the war was

²² Thomas, 948.

²³ Abbott, 261.

²⁴ Baker, 993.

²⁵ Ormes, 1013.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1009.

the need to prove the validity of Colorado's statehood to the rest of the nation. Additionally, there was a fear that Colorado provided ideal targets for alien saboteurs, despite the state being landlocked. Baker emphatically describes the fears of the time by saying, "Colorado with its irrigation reservoirs, tunnels, bridges, trestles, manufacturing plants, etc., was peculiarly open to danger from alien enemies."²⁷ Guards were set up throughout the state to protect its assets, especially the coal mines. These mines were on most Americans' minds when they thought of Colorado. With the Ludlow Massacre still fresh, Coloradans felt a need to prove they were worthy of statehood: to wipe clean the slate and prove their maturity. By entering the war with such fervor, Coloradans set out to demonstrate their responsibility to the rest of the States. Such responsibility and loyalty to the nation ran deep in American culture.

"America for Americans" and the Immigration Act of 1917

In addition to the war frenzy, a drive for "one hundred percent Americanism" emerged. This term carried implications of nativism and the desire for Americanization, both of which remained ingrained in U.S. citizens' thinking well beyond the war, serving to unify millions of people. Nativism was certainly not new to Colorado, let alone to the United States in the early twentieth century. Defined by American historian John Higham as an "intense opposition to an internal minority on the basis of its foreign, i.e.... 'Un-American' connection,"²⁸ American nativism implied that the "Anglo-Saxon 'race' was...the source of national greatness."²⁹ Nativism manifested equally intense Anti-Catholic, xenophobic, and anti-radical beliefs. Americanism, described as "an attitude of mind upholding certain principles,"³⁰ dealt mostly with the rising issue of assimilation. Indoctrination of this type was considered central to the

²⁷ Thomas, 992.

²⁸ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1924* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1992), pg. 2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁰ Winthrop Talbot, *Principles of Americanism* (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1917), pg. 1.

process of “Americanizing” immigrants, though not all could qualify. While nativism was not directly studied at the time, one hundred percent Americanism had many defenders. These sentiments were generally directed at German-Americans due to the war, but immigrants as a whole were targeted.

Through Americanization, Grover G. Huebner claims that the United States could assimilate and transform the immigrants “into Americans... [by] raising...the immigrant to the American economic, social and moral standard of life.”³¹ There were several pieces written in the mid-1910s that sought to define Americanism. While they mostly claimed that Americanization was necessary to break down race prejudice, the language used in these writing made clear the difficulties faced by immigrants in the United States. In the collection assembled by Winthrop Talbot in 1917, the essays included discuss what people thought it took for Americanism to work. The majority argued that in order to “assimilate” immigrants needed to forgo their own culture. For instance, David Jayne Hill explains that newcomers are expected to “sacrifice every interest you have, and your life itself, if your country calls upon you to do so,” and admonishes that “they are bound to be loyal whether they are pleased or not.”³² This also meant that speaking English was a requirement, and “Councils of Defense in heavily Hispanic southern Colorado pledged ‘to promote the establishment of the English language in the country.’”³³ Immigrants, Mexicans included, were meant to give up their culture in order to work in the U.S.

In addition to giving up their cultural heritage, immigrants were supposed to show complete loyalty to the United States. This was emphasized by a speech given by Woodrow Wilson in 1915, who preached Americanism during his presidential campaign. He argued that

³¹ Grover G. Huebner, “The Americanization of the Immigrant,” in *Americanization: Principles of Americanism*, ed. Winthrop Talbot (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1917), pg. 174.

³² David Jayne Hill, *Americanism: What is it?* (D. Appleton & Co., 1916), pg. 31.

³³ Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pg. 111.

“certain men, born in other lands, have in recent months thought more of those lands than they have of the honor and interest of the government under which they are now living.”³⁴ It was through this question of loyalty that the issue of “hyphenated-Americans” became prominent. If those from outside of the U.S. desired to express their heritage through hyphenation, it was seen as an act of disloyalty and thus they were not true Americans. Theodore Roosevelt insisted in a speech that “the hyphenated American of any type is a bad American and an enemy to this country.”³⁵ He further declared, “We must unsparingly condemn any man who holds any other allegiance.”³⁶ In defense of Americanization, the authors sought to prove American greatness. One way they accomplished this was by comparing the U.S. to other nations.

In many cases, the authors turned to Mexico as an example. To the prominent sociologist Franklin H. Giddings, “It is plain that the United States is neither such a despotism as Mexico was under the rule of Diaz, or such an anarchy as Mexico has been since the power of Diaz was overthrown.”³⁷ The authors not only faulted President Diaz for Mexico’s supposed failures, but the system and people as a whole. David Jayne Hill stated, “What is lacking to their country? It is the spirit of personal renunciation of arbitrary power in the interest of the public well-being. Rich in natural resources, situated in the most favorable geographical environment, and not wanting in capable men, Mexico is doomed to stagnation, poverty, and discredit.”³⁸ To Hill, despite having every opportunity available, Mexico was predestined to decay because Mexicans did not honor their leaders. Thus, the argument that Americans should be completely loyal to the

³⁴ Woodrow Wilson, “The Meaning of Citizenship,” in *Principles of Americanism*, ed. Winthrop Talbot (New York: The H.W. Wilson Co., 1920), pg.78.

[https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.\\$b269728;view=1up;seq=149](https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.$b269728;view=1up;seq=149)

³⁵ Theodore Roosevelt, “Fear God and Take Your Own Part,” in *Principles of Americanism* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1915), pg. 362.

[https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.\\$b269728;view=1up;seq=108](https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.$b269728;view=1up;seq=108)

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Franklin H. Giddings, *Americanism in War and in Peace* (Worcester, MA: Clark University Press, 1917), pg. 12.

³⁸ Hill, 69.

U.S. government if they want to succeed.

In order for Americanism to be achieved, the “one hundred percenters” sought political strength. After having gained allies due to a generalized enemy during a time of war, the one hundred percenters gained a stronger voice in Congress and pushed for stricter legislation on immigration. The Immigration Act of 1917, enacted in February, was passed in order to limit the number of immigrants coming into the United States. The law prohibited entry of “aliens” who could not read English or another written dialect, or who could not pay the eight-dollar head tax if over the age of sixteen. This law was the first to restrict Mexicans from immigrating to the United States. While the law had little effect on the flow of Mexicans into the state, it was still urged by nativists that once the war ended, it would act as a good deflector of immigrants, especially because of the language requirement.³⁹ However, when war came to the U.S., not only was there a demand for men of fighting age to go to war, there was also a wartime increase in food production. This meant that agricultural goods from Colorado were in high demand, with a corresponding need for agricultural workers. However, with the halt of European immigration, workers were in short supply. This led to less emphasis being placed on enforcing the Immigration Act when it came to the U.S. - Mexico border.

Sugar beet companies in Colorado pleaded with the U.S. government to limit the power of the Immigration Act because they needed the labor to keep up with the demand for sugar beets. After this exigence was made clear, the federal government agreed to make the law more lenient, despite the anger of one hundred percenters. On May 23, 1917, Secretary of Labor William B. Wilson ordered that the literacy test, the head tax, and the contract labor clause be waived when it came to the temporary admission of Mexican laborers.⁴⁰ The amendment was

³⁹ Higham, 202.

⁴⁰ Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), pg. 27.

soon changed so Mexicans could only stay in the country to work for six months. By limiting their stay, Secretary Wilson and other government officials felt they could “minimize any permanent race problem.”⁴¹ Furthermore, the Labor Department, in an attempt to halt permanent immigration, created a wage-withholding scheme. Under this system, Mexicans were intimidated into returning to Mexico after their labor period in order to receive full payment for their labor. In January 1919, Wilson issued an allowance of Mexicans to enter without restriction to work in beet fields until the end of June, 1919. After further insistence by agricultural lobbyists, the act eventually became so lenient that it did little to restrict Mexican immigration.

The Mexican Revolution and the United States’ Attempts at Intervention

From 1876 to 1910, Mexico was led by President Porfirio Diaz. At the cost of peasants’ livelihoods, President Diaz took great measures to modernize Mexico. Life under Diaz was especially difficult for the lower classes. They were paid low wages for difficult work, and there was an increasingly high cost of living. As an example, in 1910 Mexican laborers, in comparison to their U.S. counterparts, worked fifteen times as long to afford a sack of flour, twelve times as many hours to afford a sack of corn, and nineteen times as long for textiles.⁴² Diaz’s “modernization campaign” encouraged foreign investors to build railway lines and to create large, commercial- scale agriculture. In fact, “by 1914, \$7,567,000,000 worth of foreign capital had flooded the Latin American economies,”⁴³ with over \$1.5 million held by U.S. investors. In the autumn of 1910, Francisco I. Madero, after running against Diaz for the presidency and being exiled, declared the revolution. After uprisings throughout the country in support of Madero’s cause, Diaz resigned and Madero took his place. Despite the uprisings, this transition of power was relatively bloodless, though this was not a characteristic of the following decade. Upon

⁴¹ Ibid., 28.

⁴² Reisler, 14.

⁴³ Friedrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pg. 3.

Madero's assassination one year after his election, the country fell into a state of chaos.

Victoriano Huerta, having led a successful coup against Madero, took power in 1913 following the murder of Madero and his family. Soon after, Venustiano Carranza, a wealthy politician from central Mexico and leader of the Constitutionalist army, declared Huerta a traitor.

President Wilson wanted a Constitutionalist to be put in power in order to protect the U.S. oil interests in Mexico. The connection between the U.S. and Carranza grew stronger, and the U.S. started attempting to interfere in the decision of who should become President after the removal of Victoriano Huerta. Promoting Carranza as the candidate of choice, the United States even went so far as restricting the arms trade with Francisco Villa, who was in the process of breaking with Carranza. In return, Carranza made promises to protect the U.S. oil fields from Federal attacks. He wrote his Plan of Guadalupe in March of 1913, which named him the "First Chief" of the Constitutionalist army as well as interim president until actual elections could be held. The promises made by both U.S. representatives and Carranza were voiced in early 1914 when the fighting between factions came dangerously close to U.S. oil rigs located in various places throughout Mexico including Tampico and Veracruz. After the other rebel groups from northern Mexico, including Villa and Álvaro Obregón, agreed to the plan, Carranza effectively became the leader of the rebellion against Huerta. Wilson aimed for a liberal-capitalist community of nations, and he wanted Mexico to be included; this meant that Huerta needed to be removed since he was leaning toward dictatorial status. When Carranza declared Huerta to be a murderer, Wilson eagerly agreed and declared that it was the right of the United States to investigate the constitutional legitimacy of Huerta's power.

In April of 1914, Huerta's soldiers arrested several American sailors while the

Constitutionalist troops “[stood] aloof to the controversy.”⁴⁴ The conflict occurred in Veracruz, near which were oil fields, to which U.S. investors laid claim. Thus, to prove her might and to protect her interests, the United States invaded the port city of Veracruz. U.S. troops occupied the city from April to August, 1914. Despite Carranza negotiating with U.S. officials and the eventual end of the occupation, tensions were very high between the two governments. Relations were damaged further in 1917. Carranza’s ultimate goal was to maintain sovereignty, which proved especially difficult as foreign governments tried to influence Mexican politics. In the spring of 1917, less than two months after the U.S. withdrew from Veracruz, the German foreign secretary looked to Mexico for an alliance. As German U-boats grew increasingly aggressive in the Atlantic, it was clear that the U.S. would soon join the war. German officials knew they could not win based on a sea campaign, so they looked to Mexico to invade by land. Arthur Zimmerman, the German Foreign Secretary, sent a telegram to the German ambassador in Mexico who was then to deliver it to Carranza. The Zimmerman Telegram included a promise that Mexico would regain its lost territory in the U.S. Southwest.⁴⁵ Whether or not the telegram had been intercepted by the U.S., Carranza had no plans of joining the war. This, however, did not stop the U.S. from joining, or relations between the nations from souring further.

To make matters worse, the Bolsheviks were just finding their footing in Russia by the end of 1917, following a bloody civil war. The leader of the Bolshevik party, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, or Lenin for short, called for a worldwide revolution and sent Communist missionaries to other nations, including Mexico. Despite Bolshevik efforts, the movement was weak and communism was never adopted in Mexico. However, at the same time as the Bolshevik takeover, Carranza established the Mexican Constitution of 1917. In part, the constitution was born out of

⁴⁴ Secretary of State William Byran to Special Agent Carothers, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Government Documents*, Woodrow Wilson 1913-1921, William A. Wise Library, pg. 480.

⁴⁵ Deutsch, 110.

Mexico's nationalism, which had grown stronger against the United States as ties to the Porfirio regime held. By U.S. standards, the Mexican Constitution was very radical, and was said to correspond to Communist ideals. Additionally, companies in the U.S. were up in arms about Article 27. This article called for a revision or nullification of claims on the land and resources acquired by foreign investors during the reign of Diaz.⁴⁶ Carranza wanted to return to Mexicans the lands and resources that had been sold during the Porfirio era, thus benefitting his own nation.

Under Porfirio Diaz, small, family-owned farms were bought up by wealthy landowners and international investors, who created *haciendas* throughout the country. Millions lost their land holdings, and by 1910 ninety percent of *campesinos* (peasant farmers) were landless.⁴⁷ Their options were to become paid laborers on haciendas, or to work industrial jobs if the latter were available. Additionally, high birth rates meant a larger labor pool, so wages dropped. Worse still, there was widespread famine because most food was exported, raising the cost of domestic consumption. Savage fighting in cities and rural communities victimized both revolutionaries and civilians. It has been said that millions of Mexicans "went missing" over the course of the revolution. Many emigrated, many were killed in fighting as both civilians and soldiers, and many died from the Spanish influenza that wiped out millions of people across the world in 1918-1919. No matter the cause, the population of Mexico dropped considerably over the course of ten years.⁴⁸ The bloodiness and uncertainty brought on by revolution pushed Mexicans from the interior northward for safety and work. In 1910, 224,275 Mexicans immigrated to the United

⁴⁶ Gary D. Williams, "The Red Scare and Mexican- United States Relations: 1919-1930," (master's thesis, University of Montana, 1973), pg. 4.

⁴⁷ Marjorie K. McIntosh, *Latinos of Boulder County, 1900-1980* (California: Old John Publishing, 2016), pg. 31.

⁴⁸ For more information on demographics, see Robert McCaa , "Missing Millions: The Demographic Costs of the Mexican Revolution," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 19, no. 2 (Summer 2003): pp, 367-400.

States, but by 1920 this number increased to 651,596.⁴⁹ These data are estimated, as Mexicans were classified as “white” in census records. Therefore, historians are not clear on the exact numbers, though estimates are becoming more accurate.⁵⁰

The hundreds of thousands who migrated to the U.S. did so because wages looked more attractive as the revolution wreaked havoc on an already fragile system. For instance, between 1917 and 1920, wages were increased by 50 percent to entice Mexican and Hispano laborers to the Great Western Company.⁵¹ What had been a seasonally-based migrant system transitioned into permanent settlements of Mexicans and Hispanos. In Colorado, these communities developed around sugar beet processors, including those in Longmont, Greeley, and other places along the South Platte. These communities and those living within them “carried the opprobrium of illegitimacy and inferiority” due to their “foreignness,” which was a “racialized concept that adhered to all Mexicans.”⁵² Furthermore, despite their heritage, place of birth, or race, all were deemed “Mexican” and were a “one-dimensional commodity function and utility,” and were therefore disposable.⁵³ Their classification as “Mexican” also “stripped [them] of the claim of belonging that they had had as natives, even as conquered natives.”⁵⁴ Out of their lack of claim and fear of assimilation, they lived in segregated communities. They faced segregation similar to that encountered by African-Americans in the Jim Crow South.

While many companies were encouraged to provide housing in order to cut down costs, housing was often located in cattle-feeding corrals or cheaply built shacks. Little water was provided throughout the workday and people often had to travel long distances for it. The Great

⁴⁹ Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), pg. 52.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁵¹ *May*, 405.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 132.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 133.

Western Sugar Beet Company encouraged their fellow beet-growers to treat their employees better, especially in terms of housing. This was done by building small colonies near the fields, so Mexicans and Hispanos could live in better conditions, though it created further segregation from their Anglo counterparts. However, the communities were lacking in businesses, churches and schools, so full segregation was impossible.⁵⁵ As a drought hit in 1916, and was followed by postwar economic depression, Hispanics were forced to integrate with the Anglo economy for survival.⁵⁶ As Mexicans and Hispanos became more prominent in the Anglo-American communities, complaints started to be raised that sugar beet companies were bringing “undesirables” into their towns. Anglo-American townsfolk went so far as to ban Mexicans and Hispanos from entering their shops or restaurants, and posted signs saying “White Trade Only” and “No Mexicans Allowed.”⁵⁷ They were also restricted from certain jobs. For instance, a help-wanted advertisement requesting a housemaid in the *Denver Post* said, “Mexicans or colored need not apply.”⁵⁸ Mexicans were continuously excluded from mainstream American society. Being distanced from the Anglo culture, they were more easily stereotyped, discriminated against, and labeled as Un-American- and therefore as subhuman.

Conclusion

Colorado experienced World War One even before the United States officially entered. With war came high demand for agricultural goods, and Colorado was a prime resource for Great Britain and its allies. By the time Congress declared war against Germany, Colorado residents were already in the process of preparing for war. People eagerly volunteered and offered their skills to the war effort. The local government raised thousands of dollars through taxes for the

⁵⁵ Ruben Donato, *Mexicans and Hispanos in Colorado Schools and Communities, 1920-1960* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), pg. 38.

⁵⁶ Deutsch, 121.

⁵⁷ Donato, 41.

⁵⁸ “Wanted- For General Housework,” *Denver Post*, 4 November 1919.

war effort. And farmers continued to meet the high demands throughout the war.

However, postwar deflation hit the urban centers and rural areas all the same. Following the war, Coloradans saw high inflation, unemployment, and growing resentment of aliens. Nativism and Americanism peaked during the war, but these sentiments continued to be felt as the years progressed. Both ideologies heightened fear and hatred of immigrants and emphasized the importance of assimilation. But for Mexicans and Hispanos, assimilation did not come easily. Their communities were segregated, and they had limited prospects for social mobility. Nonetheless, companies such as the Great Western Sugar Beet Company recruited Mexicans and Hispanos. In part, this was because of the Immigration Act of 1917 that restricted European immigrants who had previously dominated the sugar beet labor. Additionally, Mexicans and Hispanos were seen as ideal laborers because they were thought to be docile and were paid little. Therefore, the population grew, despite Anglo anger and rising tensions. As the war drew to a close, many people feared that there was a new radical enemy within the nation's borders.

Chapter Two: The Red Scare, 1919-1920

Since the coming of the Mexicans the country has been a less desirable place to live. It would be better to have fewer people and less money here than to have sugar beets and Mexicans...We wish the Mexicans were not here.
 - Unnamed Farmer⁵⁹

Following the Great War, the nation faced unrest in urban and rural areas. The men returning from war were eager to return to their lives, which had been put on hold by trench warfare. As they and those waiting at home soon discovered, there was no returning to how things had been. Labor markets became overwhelmed and Anglo war heroes pushed thousands of men, Mexicans and Hispanos included, out of jobs. Post-war inflation made the cost of living nearly unbearable for millions of Americans. Labor unrest and high costs led to nationwide strikes in the coal and steel industries. In rural areas, the agricultural depression forced thousands of farmers into foreclosures. Life, to put it simply, was dismal and people sought something, or someone, to blame. Enter the Bolsheviks. Having established a firm hold in Russian politics, the leaders of the movement called for a worldwide revolution. In the United States, Colorado included, the fear of a Bolshevik takeover, and thus the Red Scare, flared widely. The Scare furthered the one hundred percenters' cause, and nativist movements thrived. All the while, the Mexican and Hispano population continued to grow in Colorado. To hyper-patriotic and nativist groups, Mexicans and Hispanos became clear scapegoats for social issues in the United States.

Post-World War One Unrest

Men returning victorious from war were in high spirits and were eager to return to a consistent life, after having experienced a war unlike any other. Similarly, those who aided war efforts on the home front expected normalcy. Unfortunately, no matter how many people longed for familiarity following the Great War, it was more or less unattainable. The war changed the

⁵⁹ Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States Valley of the South Platte Colorado* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Publications in Economics, 1929), pg. 221.

world by various means, so those who wanted to return to the “good ol’ days” were frustrated to find they could not turn the clock back. As historian Robert K. Murray explains, “[The United States] was ill-equipped to meet the simple basic challenge of democratic action, let alone solve successfully the many complex postwar problems that confronted her.”⁶⁰ These problems included glutted labor markets and spiraling agricultural and industrial prices. Furthermore, less expensive imported ores from places like China and the Congo replaced Colorado ores. Additionally, war-inflated prices of copper and zinc dropped, stopping many mining operations. Miners and laborers joined soldiers and sailors in the glutted labor market.

Having to re-assimilate thousands of men into the postwar economy as quickly as expected proved difficult. The men, endowed with new skills and pride, expected to pick up their careers where they had left off or desired to start new jobs. However, the industrial sector was not prepared to transition from war production to something else quickly enough to accommodate the influx of workers. As a result, jobs were scarce and unemployment skyrocketed in early 1919. At the same time, purchasing power of the U.S. dollar decreased while food costs increased eighty-eight percent.⁶¹ So for the average American family, the cost of living increased by nearly one hundred percent compared to five years earlier.⁶² In addition to the high costs of living, the Spanish Influenza hit Americans when men returned from war with the strain. In Colorado, people were urged to breathe clean air and stay away from crowds. Schools closed and churches cancelled services, though these efforts did not save everyone. Almost 8,000 people had died from the flu by January 1919.⁶³ When their only wish was normalcy, people were instead met with further death and suffering.

⁶⁰ Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), pg. 4.

⁶¹ “Cost of Food in U.S.” *Denver Post*, 29 November 1919.

⁶² Murray, 7.

⁶³ Carl Abbott, *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State* (Boulder, CO: Colorado University Press, 1976), pg. 269.

In an attempt to battle the high cost of living, labor unions tried desperately to hold the power they had gained throughout the war years. However, businessmen were equally eager to thwart any sign of labor militancy. Due to high tensions and unrest, labor strikes emerged throughout the country, totaling 3,600 strikes in 1919.⁶⁴ In Colorado, battles between the two-year-old Amalgamated Association of Street and Electrical Railroad Employees and the Denver Tramway Company erupted in August of 1920. Unionists organized a walkout after wages were cut in the summer of 1920. The Denver Tramway Company imported strikebreakers to drive in place of the striking employees, though violence soon erupted. On August 5, strikebreakers shot two nineteen-year-olds who were running away from the gunfire. The following day, strikebreakers opened fire on a crowd, killing five and wounding eleven others, some of whom were children.⁶⁵ The strikers sacked the *Denver Post* building and killed two people. On the seventh day, martial law was declared in the city and federal troops broke up the strike.

While the city streets were fraught with unrest, the rural areas faced their own struggles. The farmers had fervently increased production to meet the demands of war. However, their focus on one-crop production in a region with poor land quality meant they needed to stretch their farms' acreage further. So long as the wartime prices held up, the system was sustainable. In order to expand, many farmers took out loans without the worry of prices falling. The most was borrowed in 1920 due to "the unusual expense of putting in the crops for that year."⁶⁶ However, prices did fall, and fast. Within three years of the war, grain and livestock prices fell sixty percent.⁶⁷ Many small farmers were forced into foreclosure because they could not pay back the immense loans they had taken out. The sharp deflation ultimately led the agricultural

⁶⁴ Murray, 9.

⁶⁵ R. T. Laugen, *The Gospel of Progressivism: Moral Reform and Labor War in Colorado, 1900-1930* (Boulder, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2010), pg. 65.

⁶⁶ Claude L. Benner, "Credit Aspects of the Agricultural Depression, 1920-1921," *Journal of Political Economy* 33, no. 1 (February 1925): pg. 101.

⁶⁷ Abbott, 267.

sector into a depression from 1920 to 1921. As the *Fort Collins Courier* reports, “the depression is the most severe in the history of American farming and it will take five years for agriculture to recover.”⁶⁸ Following the Great War, when men and women were desperate for normalcy, they instead faced hardships and grim predictions for the future. Americans, Coloradans included, were eager to find a scapegoat for the economic hardship.⁶⁹

The Red Scare and “Alien Radicals”

In the spring of 1918, the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Leon Trotsky withdrew from the First World War through the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. This greatly upset their allies in the war, including the United States. Public support and encouragement gradually led President Wilson to send small forces to northern Russia and Siberia. By late 1918, there were approximately 7000 U.S. troops stationed in Russia. In part, the troops were acting as a front against German activity in Russia, though the intervention was inherently anti-Bolshevik. However, the soldiers in Russia were prohibited from interfering with Russian internal affairs, so the incident had minimal effect through the end of the war. Following the end of the Great War, U.S. allies including Japan and France encouraged the U.S. to continue the intervention. Thus, a portion of troops remained in Siberia and became a menace to the Bolsheviks through 1920. However, U.S. troops did little to halt the Bolsheviks from winning the Civil War and Lenin continued to champion his cause. Inveterate propagandizers, the Bolsheviks called for a worldwide revolution, in which capitalism would be overthrown. The United States became especially scared of these “radicals.” Related social fears that swept throughout the United States became known as the Red Scare, which lasted from 1919 to 1920. The spark that officially started the Red Scare was on February 6, 1919 when a general labor strike erupted in Seattle, Washington. Prior to the Seattle strike, there

⁶⁸ “Depression is Most Severe in History of Farming Wallace Says,” *Fort Collins Courier*, 29 November 1921.

⁶⁹ Murray, 7.

was no significant threat of radicalism on U.S. soil. When the strike erupted, public suspicion focused on labor issues and their connection to radicalism.⁷⁰

In 1919, the General Intelligence Division within the Bureau of Investigation estimated that ninety percent of radicals in the U.S. were foreign born. Justified by the Immigration Act of 1917 and the Immigration Act of 1918, passed to suppress anarchists, U.S. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer called for mass raids to root out radicals and deport them. Some 400 arrests were made in eighteen cities in November 1919 after Palmer's orders.⁷¹ Additionally, in a letter to Palmer dated December 1919, Secretary of Labor William B. Wilson expressed his desire to issue 3,000 more warrants for arrests of radicals.⁷² These warrants and arrests further aroused the nation's fears. Following the success of Palmer's November raids, the nation prepared for another round of arrests in January 1920. In Colorado, there were eight arrests made on January 2nd. However, the arrests only deepened fears and in April the *Denver Post* warned "Reds Planning to Overthrow U.S. on Mayday."⁷³ Additionally, Attorney General Palmer predicted that twenty top officials were going to be assassinated. Despite the hype, May 1st passed with no disturbances. State governments reacted to the Scare by producing legislation to counteract Bolshevism. In many cases, the legislation pushed a nationalist agenda, and focused on education for immigrants or limiting the display of radicalism.

In Colorado, legislation was passed preventing the display of a red flag in public as it was "the emblem of anarchy" and "encourages riots and lawlessness and inculcates disrespect for the laws of the United States and the state of Colorado."⁷⁴ In September of 1919, leaders and laborers of the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W) joined in a steel and coal strike across

⁷⁰ Murray, 58.

⁷¹ Ibid., 196.

⁷² W. A. Gengarely, "Secretary of Labor William B. Wilson and the Red Scare, 1919-1920," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 47, no. 4 (October 1980): pg. 320.

⁷³ Philip J. Cook, "Red Scare in Denver," *Colorado Magazine* 1966 (Fall 1966): pg. 321.

⁷⁴ Abbott, 267.

the nation. On November 24, Denver police arrested six men who were distributing Industrial Workers of the World literature, and four days later several I.W.W. members were given ten hours to leave the city or face fines. In order to limit I.W.W. and similar groups' propaganda and radicalism, Governor Oliver Shoup encouraged the passage of the Act for the Suppression of Anarchy and Sedition, which passed in December of 1919. The Act prohibited distributing or exhibiting documents that encouraged the overthrowing of constitutional government. The punishment for offenders was up to twenty years in prison and a fine of \$10,000. This, however, did not appease the intense fear of radicals, and the public became increasingly convinced and fearful of its supposed evils.⁷⁵

In addition to fostering a widespread terror of radicalism, the Red Scare strengthened support for Americanist organizations, including the one hundred percent networks. Following the war, there was a feverish drive for unity in the United States. In alignment with the intense need for conformity and absolute loyalty, xenophobes set out with intensely nationalist motives. The Americanization movement incorporated groups such as the ultra-patriotic National Security League. In part, their hope was that Americanism, which sought to assimilate immigrants, could weed out radicals. The League proclaimed, "The battle to make the country safe again is not won...the enemy but wears a different guise."⁷⁶ The group organized hundreds of speakers who sought out alien communities to whom they would give talks on patriotism and disseminate anti-radical propaganda. Additionally, the Americanization movement went to great lengths to teach English to immigrants. Mexican laborers, who were not subject to the literacy test when crossing the border during the war, were ideal candidates for English classes. In Colorado, Americanization teachers had a difficult time reaching out to adults; as one teacher explains, "I

⁷⁵ Cook, 321-322.

⁷⁶ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1924* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1992), pg. 256.

held Americanization classes but only one Mexican came. Probably since he saw no other Mexican there he never came again.”⁷⁷ This shows that despite Americanizers’ best intentions, immigrants did not have the same drive for Americanization as Anglo-Americans. Therefore, the drive to assimilate the foreign-born faded in 1920, while the desire to reject immigrants altogether became the prominent ideology of the one hundred percenters.

Other groups that emerged around the same time as the League sought different outcomes when it came to immigrants. The Ku Klux Klan, which had resurfaced in 1915, started gaining support throughout the nation. Additionally, in May of 1919 the American Legion was founded. While the National Security League focused on Americanization, the Legion and the KKK promoted fear of radicalism. Many of the members of both groups were extremely patriotic Great War veterans, and the group succeeded because of their patriotic ties. By the end of 1919, the Legion’s membership surpassed one million.⁷⁸ To Legionnaires, Bolshevism was the ultimate enemy in the United States, especially after the perceived betrayal of the Brest-Litovsk treaty. Unlike the League, who sought education for immigrants to avoid radicalism, the Legion called for immediate deportation of individuals “who defamed the American way of life.”⁷⁹ Similarly, the KKK declared all aliens to be “agents of Lenin.”⁸⁰ Both groups continued their crusade well beyond the Red Scare years. As the drive for Americanization dwindled after the Red Scare, the need for conformity did not. The terror of the foreign born still thrived, so nativists focused on racial bias to emphasize the image of radical aliens. The Klan, in its undemocratic and insidious ways, was far more dangerous to immigrant communities.

⁷⁷ Taylor, 227.

⁷⁸ Murray, 88.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 91.

Mexicans and Hispanos in the Red Scare

The Mexican and Hispano population continued to grow in Colorado. By 1920, there were 37,676 Mexicans living in Colorado.⁸¹ The return of men from war put thousands of Mexican laborers out of work. However, there was continuous demand for Mexicans and Hispanos in agriculture, transportation, and mining. Additionally, the exclusion clause of the Immigration Act of 1917 continued to expand, allowing more Mexicans to enter the States. Moreover, Mexican “breeding habits” became a concern for many nativists. C.M. Goethe, the President of the Immigration Study Commission out of California, warned, “The average American family has three children. Mexican laborers average between nine and ten children to a family. At the three-child rate, a couple would have twenty-seven grandchildren. At the nine-child rate 729 would be produced.”⁸² Whether this account is accurate or not, the Anglo communities started taking notice of the rising Mexican and Hispano population, and tensions between the nations rose further following the war.

With the Mexican Constitution of 1917, the Zimmerman Telegram, and border unrest fresh in their minds, American stakeholders became highly skeptical of the Mexican government during the Red Scare. Following the Great War, Mexican President Carranza faced two main enemies: the United States to the north, and internal enemies including the powerful Álvaro Obregon, who wanted to succeed Carranza as president in 1920. American and British oil and land investors, concerned about the deteriorating system in Mexico, urged Carranza to neutralize the 1917 Constitution. Carranza, not wanting to diminish Mexico’s sovereignty, tried to maintain peace with the United States without giving in to the investors. He even went so far as to reject an invitation to join the League of Nations. In Carranza’s message to the Mexican National Congress dated September 1919, Carranza explained that Mexico would not be entering the

⁸¹ Hamilton, 406.

⁸² Reisler, 155.

League. He emphasized that because the foundations of the League “do not establish, as regards either its organization or its operation, a perfect equality for all nations and races... and that no person within a state may invoke a privileged situation or protection by reason of foreign citizenship or for any other reason.”⁸³ While trying to limit foreign intervention and maintain Mexico’s sovereignty, Carranza tried to justify himself to Wilson’s government by saying he was the least radical option in Mexico.⁸⁴ However, U.S. oil and land investors went to great lengths to accuse the Mexican government of being Communists to encourage government intervention.

The Communist movement in Mexico was minimal, and was in fact led by an American, Linn Gale. Despite this, the movement, coinciding as it did with the Red Scare, was enough to create a sensation in the U.S.⁸⁵ Additionally, after Americans living in Mexico lost land or died during the Mexican Revolution, the U.S. Senate established a subcommittee to investigate events in Mexico. The hearing lasted from August 1919 to May 1920, and testimony generally maintained that radicalism was the cause for the unrest in Mexico. Special interest groups, including oil magnates, used testimony to raise similarities between Mexico and Russia, often mentioning Bolshevism. Local newspapers took notice; the *Denver Post* noted that oilmen were accused of aggravating the situation.⁸⁶ Eber Cole Byam, a U.S citizen who worked in Mexico, testified, “The Mexican revolutionists have called themselves ‘liberals’ when in point of fact they are socialists, and we know to-day that socialism does not differ greatly from bolshevism. Socialism is the theory, bolshevism the fact.”⁸⁷ Major John G. McDonnell, a representative for the National Association for the Protection of American Rights in Mexico, expressed similar sentiments. He explained, “Bolshevism was transplanted from Mexico to Russia, where it is now

⁸³ Venustiano Carranza to Mexican National Congress, September 1919, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Woodrow Wilson 1913-1921, William A. Wise Library, pg. 542.

⁸⁴ Williams, 10-11.

⁸⁵ Williams, 23.

⁸⁶ “Oil Men Accused of Aggravating U.S. - Mexico War,” *Denver Post*, 19 August 1919.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

bearing its perfect fruit. From its original source in Mexico the evangelists of anarchy hope to introduce it in the United States.”⁸⁸ The fear of Mexico being a Communist nation was manifested in many different forms.

Not only were there associations between Mexico and Russia as revolutionary and volatile states, Mexicans and Hispanos living in the United States, including those in Colorado, were linked to the unrest. Over the course of the Red Scare, the Mexican and Hispano communities, once regarded as an annoyance in Anglo neighborhoods, came to be seen as menacing. The rampant fear of Bolshevism in the U.S. because of the Red Scare, and the continuous association of Mexicans with radicalism, led many Americans to panic. For example, the *New York Times* reported that Senator and KKK member James E. Watson of Indiana gallantly saved the U.S. from Bolshevism. As the article explains, Watson alerted members of the American Club that “The Carranza Government...is about to deliver Mexico into the hands of the revolutionists who have been organized by the Russian Soviets. Mexicans and Russians are to attack these States and overthrow our Republic; but the aggression will not come from the frontiers...but from a centre of disaffection in Colorado.” Watson went on to claim that “Colorado is to be set up with the first Soviet government, allied with Mexico and Russia,” and that “an army of 60,000 men will set forth from Colorado to conquer the rest of America for Bolshevism.”⁸⁹ There were further accusations against Carranza’s government in Colorado newspapers. The *Herald Democrat* warned, “Radicals plan to make Mexico a Red Republic...Federal Agents secure astonishing evidence that high Carranza officials regard socialism with favor.”⁹⁰ In both cases, the white U.S. official is the savior, while Mexicans are inherently unintelligent and susceptible to Bolshevik takeover.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁸⁹ “Saved by a Senator,” *New York Times*, 27 November 1919.

⁹⁰ “Radicals Plan to Make Mexico a Red Republic,” *Herald Democrat*, 12 January 1920.

Furthermore, compared to other immigrants, Glenn E. Hoover, a professor of economics at Mills College in California, explained that “the Mexican peon is among the most unassimilable...measured by the percentage of those who learn English, become citizens, or adopt American ways, his record is a poor one.”⁹¹ There was a great distaste for commingling between the races, which further limited their ability to assimilate. As Hoover explains, even though “interbreeding cannot be prevented,” intermarriages were looked down on because “competent and impartial observers who consider the peon inferior to whites...find him below par physically, and in intellectual capacity about equal to the American Indian.”⁹² Additionally, after observing results of an intelligence test through the American Association for the Advancement of Science, sociologist Kimball Young asked, “Does not the evidence accumulating...point conclusively to the fact that a continued deluge of this country of the weaker stocks...ultimately affect the average intelligence of the population of this country?”⁹³ Stereotypes of racial inferiority created an image of Mexicans and Hispanos as docile and indolent, as well as backward.⁹⁴ This was in part how the labor recruiters convinced Congress to relax the Immigration Act. Since they lacked self-discipline and thrift, Mexican workers did not save money and therefore would not move up in social status.⁹⁵

Due to their perceived placid nature, Mexicans and Hispanos were also regarded as a threat to the health and welfare of communities. As Goethe explains, “But sooner or later we pay, in ways that are important, for our cash saving in the matter of the daily wage. The peon...is undesirable...he threatens our hard-won standards of sanitation.”⁹⁶ Since Hispanos and Mexicans

⁹¹ Glenn E. Hoover, “Our Mexican Immigrants,” *Foreign Affairs* 8, no. 1 (October 1929): pg. 103.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 104.

⁹³ Kimball Young, “Intelligence Tests of Certain Immigrant Groups,” *The Scientific Monthly* 15, no. 5 (November 1922): pg. 431.

⁹⁴ Reisler, 128.

⁹⁵ May, 408.

⁹⁶ C.M. Goethe, “Peons Need Not Apply,” *World’s Work*, November 1930, pg. 48.

were thought to be disease ridden, many Hispanic colonies were separated from Anglo communities. Not only were the colonies themselves distanced from white towns, public spaces often barred Mexicans and Hispanos. Even Hispanic schoolchildren were segregated from the others. As one superintendent declared, “the respectable white people of Weld County do not want their children to sit alongside of dirty, filthy, diseased, infested Mexicans in school.”⁹⁷ Mexican and Hispanic laborer's daily wages barely covered food and shelter for their families. Goethe derogatorily described a situation in which “Disease spreads among the undernourished, thoroughly exploited peon population.”⁹⁸ Many ‘Americanized’ Mexicans were criticized by their compatriots. As one laborer described, he “would rather cut [his] throat before changing [his] Mexican nationality.”⁹⁹ Additionally, many Mexican immigrants opposed intermarriage, just as their Anglo counterparts had. Men would return to Mexico to find wives, and women would return home to birth their children.¹⁰⁰

As was usually the case with immigrant groups, Mexicans immigrated to the U.S. to make a better living, with the expectation of returning home. Economic pressures led to longer stays in the U.S. However, even if they were interested in assimilation, immigrants were not encouraged. As one man described it, “They talk to us about becoming citizens, but if we become citizens we are still Mexicans. They look at our hair, and listen to our speech and call us Mexican.”¹⁰¹ Residents of Mexican communities, who saw themselves as temporary visitors to the U.S., were not eager to claim loyalty to the nation, especially when they were seen as lower class. Hispanos, wrongfully classified as Mexican, despite being U.S. citizens, held similar sentiments. In the South Platte Valley in Colorado, one public school teacher explained, “The

⁹⁷ Taylor, 216.

⁹⁸ Goethe, 48.

⁹⁹ Reisler, 114.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 113.

Mexicans are patriotic, but they are patriotic for Mexico. This is true even if their children are born here. They don't know why they hate the United States, perhaps because they are Indian."¹⁰² In part due to racial tensions, the Anglo community continued their abusive campaign of one hundred percent Americanism, based on nativist sentiment. Many believed that because Mexicans were of an Indian background, they could never integrate. If they did, the result would be an inferior, mongrel race. Samuel J. Holmes, a zoologist from the University of California at Berkeley, warned that because of the lenient immigration laws and family growth, "to a greater or less extent we are going to be replaced by Mexicans."¹⁰³ Some nativists even went so far as to claim that Mexicans were attempting to reclaim lost land, and warned that without proper barriers the invasion would continue.

Despite nativist pleas, the "invasion" did continue. As more Mexicans and Hispanos moved northeast into the U.S., discrimination flourished. Even in *Through the Leaves*, the magazine produced by the Great Western Sugar Beet Company that advocated for good treatment of immigrants, language was used which implied that Mexicans were invading, thus providing a negative connotation. One article is titled "Mexican Invaders Relieving our Farm Labor Shortage," and observes that "there is no record of this strange invasion in the offices of the United States Immigration Department, [because] the newcomers have not come by the official doorways into the Land of Refuge."¹⁰⁴ In this case, the insult is twofold. First, Mexicans are described as invaders, limiting their chance of laying claim to their position in the U.S. As invaders, they can merely occupy a space for a time; there is no implied chance of success.

¹⁰² Taylor, 213. It was a common misconception among nativists and others that Mexicans were the "product" of intermingling between white Europeans, Native Americans, and black Africans. Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), pg. 156.

¹⁰³ Reisler, 155.

¹⁰⁴ "Mexican Invaders Relieving our Farm Labor Shortage," *Through the Leaves*, September 1921. pg. 520.

Second, the passage expresses the theory that Mexicans are lawless. Goethe also promotes this idea when he says, “Into the population mass of the United States...is pouring a flood of Mexican peon blood...the greater part of the influx takes place without the law- and also without any appreciable effort on the part of the government to stem the tide.”¹⁰⁵ In fact, it often was the case that “illegal immigrants” crossed the border without paying the head tax or taking the examination. This, as Goethe suggested, created an image that Mexicans did not abide by U.S. laws. In some cases, it was seen as the fault of the U.S. government because of the lax immigration laws.

Conclusion

The United States was successful in World War One, but post-war unrest limited long-term celebration. Men and women expected to return to their normal lives, but this was not possible. Instead, they faced inflation, glutted labor markets, and nationwide strikes. The state government failed to ease these tensions. Governor Shoup was urged to fight the crisis, but the government failed to ease tensions.¹⁰⁶ While Americans were facing such hardships, the Bolsheviks started their campaign for a worldwide revolution. Fear of the “Reds” swept across the U.S., further adding to the social unrest. The Red Scare allowed nativist movements to thrive. Nativist groups targeted immigrants as scapegoats for the issues facing the nation. Included in this group were Mexicans and Hispanos. The Hispanic population continued to rise in Colorado, due to ongoing recruitment efforts, continuous unrest in Mexico, and growth of families. Anglo Americans, grouping them as “Mexicans,” discriminated against the growing minority. The public grew increasingly uneasy about their Mexican-American neighbors. These intense social anxieties, built on post-war unrest and increase of immigrants, were not appeased by the local

¹⁰⁵ Goethe, 47.

¹⁰⁶ “Special Session Urged on Governor Shoup to Fight Crisis of H.C.L.,” *Denver Post*, 5 August 1919.

government. Therefore, people sought a group that could deal with their problems. In Colorado, this group was the Ku Klux Klan.

Chapter Three: The “Kolorado” Klan and Mexican and Hispano Communities

“The Klan is fighting for our freedom...

*Let the today politician soon begin to read his fate,
we are fighting men of courage now to man the Ship of State,
no matter how the traitors scheme or manifest their hate;
They will vote for freedom’s reign.*

*With foreign immigration, they would soon control the town,
though our bill has passed way up the line, Rome tries to scowl us down.”*

-To the Tune of “Battle Hymn of the Republic”¹⁰⁷

When the Red Scare came to a close, fears and angst still existed. What many Americans sought was a group to blame for the troubles they faced. The Ku Klux Klan offered solutions to those issues. The second wave of the Ku Klux Klan was started in Atlanta, Georgia in 1915. Following the Red Scare of 1919 to 1920 the Klan’s popularity and membership increased significantly throughout the United States. By the middle of decade, the membership reached between three and six million members.¹⁰⁸ Colorado is considered to have had one of the most successful Klans, due to the immense political strength it gained. Led by John Galen Locke, the most intensive recruitment campaign was conducted along the Front Range because of the close proximity of cities and towns to one another. The Rocky Mountains hampered recruiters for a short time, though the Western Slope was not spared the Klan’s grasp. The Klan offered one hundred percent Americanism, Protestantism, fraternity, racial purity, and law and order. Following World War I and the Red Scare, thousands of Coloradans were attracted to these attributes. This was especially true as Mexican and Hispano communities started to grow throughout the state. Mexicans and Hispanos were viewed through a discriminatory lens as

¹⁰⁷ Pat Malone, “We’ll Fight for Freedom,” *Patriotic Songs*, comp. Pat Malone (no publication information given), [10] accessed March 17, 2017, <http://images.library.wisc.edu/WI/EFacs/WiscKKK/RiverFalls/KlanEphem/reference/wi.klanephem.i0007.pdf>.

¹⁰⁸ Robert A. Goldberg, *Hooded Empire: The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado* (Chicago, IL: University of Iowa Press, 1981), pg. 5.

lawless, drunks, and racially inferior. In southern cities and towns that grew up around sugar beet farms and factories, in which Mexicans and Hispanos had larger communities, the Klan held its largest rallies and had thousands of members. The Klan was able to play on tensions between Anglo communities and their neighbors, leading to their great success.

“Second Wave” of the Ku Klux Klan

On the evening of Thanksgiving Day, 1915, sixteen men ascended Stone Mountain just outside of Atlanta, Georgia. They proceeded to set fire to a large wooden cross, giving heat to the wintry air. This night marked the rebirth of the Invisible Empire.¹⁰⁹ One of the men was the founder, William Joseph Simmons of Atlanta, Georgia. Thanks to his vision, the “second wave” of the Ku Klux Klan swept across the nation with fervor. Simmons is said to have been inspired by the recently released masterpiece *Birth of a Nation*, a film based on the novel *The Clansman* by Thomas Dixon, Jr. The film dramatized the division and then reunion of the U.S. over the course of the Civil War. Directed by David W. Griffith, it was a technological triumph and drew in millions of viewers across the U.S. While gawking at Griffith's talent the viewers also became witness to the undeniably romantic vision of the white-robed Klansmen saving the day.¹¹⁰ As word spread that Simmons had revived a new order of the KKK, the film encouraged people to join.

Unlike the original Klan of 1866 and the third wave of the 1950s, the second wave of the Invisible Empire did not fit the stereotypical image of a Southern, rural, and violent mob. Instead, the members embraced nativist sentiments, targeting people based on religion and place of birth. Imperial Wizard Simmons developed a ritual for the order and established the

¹⁰⁹ Shawn Lay, *The Invisible Empire of the West: Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1922), pg. 6.

¹¹⁰ Charles C. Alexander, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1966), pg. 1.

organization and chain of command that included the klaffis, kludds, kligrapps, and klaverns.¹¹¹

The Klan received a charter from the state of Georgia on December 4, 1916 as a “patriotic, secret, social, benevolent order.”¹¹² In other words, Simmons advocated fraternal rituals, Protestantism, nativism, and white supremacy. When Simmons gained access to the Southern Publicity Association, its effective businessmen turned the Klan into a well-oiled machine. They hired hundreds of full time kleagles or official Klan recruiters. Kleagles traveled throughout the South to start, and they worked so effectively that between 1920 and 1926, the Klan claimed over two million members.¹¹³

Williams, a heavy drinker and inept financier, was replaced by Hiram Wesley Evans, a successful dentist from Dallas in 1922. Evans’s aim was to create “a great militant political organization.”¹¹⁴ In some cases, political power was the prize, but the majority of scattered klaverns were relatively independent. As one Colorado Klansman explained, “We knew that the Klan came out of Georgia, but we never thought of them being at the head of it. As far as we were concerned, Denver was the head of it.”¹¹⁵ Beyond funneling money back to the Imperial headquarters, klaverns received little direction from the central power. They were able to establish their own motives and goals. Some local Klans thrived, while others failed. However, core central beliefs shared among the various klaverns enabled them made to survive the distance, even in the Rocky Mountain west. The Klan’s Imperial documents, including their constitution, dictated that the “Knights of the Ku Klux Klan” would protect what is “held sacred by us as a precious heritage, which we shall jealously preserve, forever maintain and valiantly

¹¹¹ Lay, 6.

¹¹² Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pg. xii.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Lay, 9.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Thomas R. Pegram, *One Hundred Percent Americanism: The Rebirth and Decline of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s* (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, 2011), pg. 16.

protect from profanation.”¹¹⁶ The precious heritage was the condition of being Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and one hundred percent American. They were inherently anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic, anti-foreign, and anti-lawbreakers. In post-World War I and Red Scare America, these ideas seemed ideal to many people, as they provided someone to blame for their woes.

The “Kolorado” Klan

The Colorado Klan was one of the most powerful, yet one of the shortest lived. The Colorado Klan’s success was due to four variables: local tensions, governmental responsiveness, the quality of Klan leadership, and community perceptions.¹¹⁷ Metropolitan Denver, being the largest urban area between the Missouri River and the Pacific Ocean, had no economic rival within five hundred miles in terms of size or importance. The Klan came to Colorado in 1921, when Imperial Wizard Simmons scouted talent in Denver. At a fateful meeting at the Brown Palace, Simmons sought leaders for the Klan. Included among the attendees was the talented physician John Galen Locke who became the leader of the Colorado Klan.¹¹⁸ By June 21, 1921 the Klan was prepared to announce its establishment. After a demonstration in Denver later in June and the promise of hundreds of recruits within ninety days, anti-Klan sentiment grew quickly. Republican Mayor Dewey C. Bailey ordered an investigation into the Klan, and they were momentarily forced underground in the state capital. Nevertheless, recruitment efforts continued, and in 1922 kleagles headed throughout the state with the goal of “uniting white male Gentile native born citizens of the United States into a fraternal, militant society, having as its

¹¹⁶ *Constitution and Laws: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (Incorporated)* (Atlanta, GA: Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, 1921), pg. 3, accessed March 7, 2017. https://archive.org/stream/ConstitutionLawsKnightsOfKKK/constitution%20laws%20knights%20of%20KKK_djvu.txt.

¹¹⁷ Goldberg, *Hooded Empire*, 10.

¹¹⁸ KOA Radio and State Historical Society of Colorado, “The Rise and Fall of Dr. John Galen Locke,” including interview with John Galen Locke, Collaborative Digitization Project, Special Collections, University of Denver Library, accessed March 7, 2017, <https://specialcollections.du.edu/islandora/object/cdpsm:48>.

ideals and objects to [sic] support and maintenance of the principle of true Americanism.”¹¹⁹

Under the authoritarian leadership of Grand Dragon Locke, Colorado’s Ku Klux Klan became the strongest in the West, in both political strength and membership. By 1925, one in every seven Denverites was a member of the Klan, which totaled approximately 50,000 members.¹²⁰

Their vision was one hundred percent Americanism, and their weapons were propaganda and intimidation. What the Klan offered was reform, of which major cities were in desperate need. Throughout the state there was depression, crime, and a Mexican “invasion,” and both the police and government seemed incapable of handling the ongoing issues. Much of the increase in crime was due to Prohibition. Moonshiners and bootleggers operated throughout the state, and local police forces did little to stop them. As in *Birth of a Nation*, Klansmen in Colorado portrayed themselves as heroes, prepared to take on evildoers like those in the Mexican-American settlements north of Capitol Hill in Denver.¹²¹ For those who wanted political reform, the Klan offered a way to mobilize. For those who wanted religious revival, the Klan offered “old time religion.” And for those who wanted less crime, the Klan offered vigilante law enforcement.

In addition to their ostensible power to fight crime, the Klan also promised a return to moral traditions of Protestantism. For those still seeking normalcy following the Great War and Red Scare, traditions were increasingly important. This was especially true in the 1920s, which brought a wave of new social norms. The culture of the United States started shifting from Victorian values to those of the roaring twenties. People were searching for mass entertainment that involved smoking, drinking and sex. Young people especially took on new roles, drastically different than what their traditionalist parents wanted for them. This shift in culture, plus the

¹¹⁹ “Ku Klux Klansmen of Denver,” *Denver Post*, 7 March 1922.

¹²⁰ David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1981), pg.126.

¹²¹ Goldberg, *Hooded Empire*, 7.

turmoil felt by those involved in the war, created a call for conservatism, which was where the Klan came in. For example, as part of their quest for one hundred percent Americanism, they revered Anglo-Saxon traditions, including Protestantism. The Klan also used religion as a means of distinguishing a friend from an enemy. They pulled from nativist roots and proselytized anti-Catholicism. The desire for a Protestant nation alienated Mexicans and Hispanos, as their predominant religion was Catholicism. Combining this with the Anglo-Saxon ideals, the Klan successfully targeted many social anxieties of the time.

Their propaganda and intimidation paid off by 1923, with the election of Democrat Benjamin Stapleton as mayor of Denver. Despite Stapleton's objections to being tied to the Klan throughout the campaign, he was in fact Klansman number 1,128. Regardless of the Klan's role in getting Stapleton elected, the mayor never fully followed Locke's orders. When Stapleton repeatedly refused to name a high-ranking Klansman as chief of police, Locke circulated a recall petition as a threat to the new mayor. At the same time, anti-Klan Denverites started their own petition. Locke offered his ample resources to keep Stapleton in office, though he warned, "If you ever go back on us again, God help you."¹²² In March of 1924, a petition to recall Stapleton with over 26,000 signatures was filed with the city clerk, the election to take place on August 12, 1924. From the temporary Klan headquarters at the Brown Palace, Grand Dragon Locke organized a campaign to save Stapleton, whose Klan connections were now clear to all. At a rally in July, Stapleton promised to "give the Klan the kind of administration it wants."¹²³ Eighty thousand persons cast their vote, and Stapleton was retained in office with 55,635 votes in his favor, 24,277 against.¹²⁴ With Stapleton under their thumb, the Klan set their sights on additional seats of power. At its political peak in 1924, the Klan had members serving as state

¹²² John Galen Locke quoted in Goldberg, *Hooded Empire*, 32.

¹²³ Jackson, 224.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

representatives, state senators, the city attorney, and the manager of public safety, the police chief, the police inspector, the secretary of state, at least four judges, and 75% of the police department as well.¹²⁵ As was the case in Denver, klaverns thrived throughout the state, with Klans in every county.

Kleagles wasted no time in moving throughout the rest of the state. They headed south and hit the next largest cities, Colorado Springs and Pueblo. Pueblo, the second largest city in Colorado at the time and its chief industrial center, was full of people prime for the Klan's picking. Instead of targeting the Jewish or Catholic population in Pueblo, Kleagles focused on exploiting the perceived connection between foreign-born communities and lawlessness. Under the direction of Exalted Cyclops George F. Lowe, the Klan excelled in Pueblo. They looked to pre-existing groups to find members, including the Masons, the American Legion, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Unlike Pueblo, Colorado Springs was no success story. Strict law enforcement and minimal crime in Colorado Springs restricted the Klan's efforts and lessened their appeal. There was the usual anti-Jewish and anti-Catholic sentiment, but the lack of urgency in regard to crime proved detrimental to their success. However, Kleagles did not limit their efforts to large cities. They targeted towns throughout the state, including those along the Front Range such as Greeley, Fort Collins, Loveland, and Longmont; they also thrived in southern cities like Trinidad. It took until 1924 to cross the obstacle that is the Rocky Mountains, though they gradually emerged in Grand Junction as well.¹²⁶

Klan members in Denver accounted for half of the state's membership. A socioeconomic analysis done by Robert Goldberg has shown that the initial joiners, about 1,000 men, were

¹²⁵ Robert R. Maiden, interview by James Harlan Davis, 1963, Collaborative Digitization Project, Special Collections, University of Denver Library, accessed January 24, 2017, <https://specialcollections.du.edu/islandora/object/cdpsm:50>.

¹²⁶ Goldberg, *Hooded Empire*, 5.

affluent, and that many of these had lived in their communities for an extended period of time.¹²⁷ The men in leadership roles were just a rung below Denver's most elite, making the Klan seem attractive to new recruits. Similarly, the twenty-six Klan leaders in Pueblo were relatively well-off and had lived in the city for an average of 14.8 years.¹²⁸ As the Klan recruited more members, they often attracted more affluent community members, further enhancing their reputation. The late joiners, those who were naturalized¹²⁹ after May 1924, differed in socioeconomic status and fraternal membership from the earlier elites. Nevertheless, there were no tensions between the groups based on status, making the Klan more attractive to later joiners.¹³⁰ Under Dr. John Galen Locke, the Klan spread like a brushfire, fueled by hate. Of course, the members were what Locke and the other Klan leaders thought "were the only good citizens...the Americans. The white, Anglo-Saxons and they were thoroughly against the Catholics, colored people in all hues."¹³¹ In Colorado, the largest minority group that fit both Catholic and non-white categorizations were Mexicans and Hispanos. As Denver Juvenile Court Judge Lindsey describes, "they paid ten dollars to hate somebody...and they were determined to get their money's worth."¹³²

The Kluxing of Colorado

The 1920s saw enormous growth of Mexican and Hispano communities throughout

¹²⁷ Robert A. Goldberg, "Beneath the Hood and Robe: A Socioeconomic Analysis of Ku Klux Klan Membership in Denver, Colorado, 1921-1925," *Western Historical Quarterly* 11, no.2 (April 1980): pp. 188-189.

¹²⁸ Goldberg, *Hooded Empire*, 64.

¹²⁹ The "naturalization" ceremony was similar to a baptism and was how people became full-fledged members of the Ku Klux Klan--after applying and paying the ten-dollar fee, of course. The process is described, rather mockingly as "The candidate is an 'alien' until he has been bored to death to the extent of about thirty pages, whereupon he is made "a citizen" of the "Invisible Empire" through the process of "naturalization." Henry P. Fry, *The Modern Ku Klux Klan* (Boston, MA: Small, Maynard, and Co., 1922), pg. 86.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 175.

¹³¹ "The Rise and Fall of Dr. John Galen Locke," including interview with John Galen Locke, Collaborative Digitization Project.

¹³² Edgar I. Fuller, *The Visible of the Invisible Empire* (Denver, CO: Maelstrom Publishing Co., Inc., 1925), pg. 78.

Colorado. In 1921, 63,786 Mexicans were admitted into the United States legally. But the federal government acknowledged that “It is difficult, in fact impossible, to measure the illegal influx of Mexicans over the border, but everyone agrees it is quite large.”¹³³ By 1924, the number of legally admitted immigrants was nearly 90,000, surpassing the wartime amounts.¹³⁴ In northern Colorado, the number of Mexican and Hispano residents more than tripled between 1920 and 1927. On the western side of the Rocky Mountains, the Mexican population in Mesa County expanded 600 percent between 1920 and 1930.¹³⁵ Much of the migration was owed to the Great Western Sugar Beet Company’s resurgence of recruitment after the depression started to lift in 1922. They provided twenty thousand jobs each season, while the state’s railroads provided five thousand jobs, and coal mines provided about three thousand.¹³⁶ In Fort Collins, a sugar beet town, the Hispano community grew from ten families in 1921 to over two hundred in 1927. In Denver, the number of Mexican and Hispano residents jumped from two thousand to eight thousand. And in Pueblo in 1920, Mexicans and Italians comprised the city’s two largest ethnic groups.¹³⁷ Newspapers throughout the state responded with headlines such as “Open Door for Aliens.”¹³⁸ The aliens, however, were restricted based on nationality.

While there was an ever-increasing number of immigrants from Mexico, Congress proceeded to pass two laws that further restricted immigration. The Quota Acts of 1921 and 1924, each of which decreased the number of European and Asian immigrants allowed to enter the country, created further emphasis on the need for Mexican labor. The Great Western Sugar

¹³³ *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration to the Secretary of Labor* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), pg. 16.

¹³⁴ Mark Reisler, “Always the Laborer, Never the Citizen: Anglo Perceptions of the Mexican Immigrant during the 1920s,” *Pacific Historical Review* 45, no. 2 (May, 1976): pg. 232.

¹³⁵ Goldberg, *Hooded Empire*, 150.

¹³⁶ Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pg. 129.

¹³⁷ Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, “Home-Grown Racism: Colorado’s Historic Embrace--and Denial--of Equal Opportunity in Higher Education,” *University of Colorado Law Review* 70, no. 3 (1999): pg. 735.

¹³⁸ “Open Door for Aliens,” *Herald Democrat*, 25 February 1923.

Company continued their recruitment efforts, bringing thirteen thousand Mexicans annually to work in the beet fields in Colorado.¹³⁹ When the war boom ended and the agricultural depression hit in 1921, thousands lost their jobs and unemployment was at its highest in U.S. history. Mexicans and Hispanos moved to Denver looking for work, living in the vicinity of West Colfax. It was reported that the city was “crowded with Mexicans who were near starving,” and that seventy percent of “the 5,000 Mexicans... [were] without means of support and must be fed by charity.”¹⁴⁰ Hundreds were jailed on vagrancy and other charges. They were said to be menaces to the communities of Denver. The jails became overcrowded, and Anglo residents were not appeased by the arrest efforts. The state asked the federal government for aid to start deportation efforts, though the government chose to do nothing.¹⁴¹ Neither governmental body offered a solution for the “Mexican problem.”

Racial tensions continued to rise throughout Colorado. For instance, as the *Longmont Daily Times* reported, “Always smoldering race prejudices and hatreds sprang into flame in Adams County.... Open warfare between white and Mexican laborers was feared. The district immediately around Brighton was confronted with a shortage of field laborers...as one result of a street fight in Brighton.”¹⁴² And in Loveland, 150 white men gathered to protest against the employment of Mexican laborers, and threatened riots and to forcibly eject the Mexicans.¹⁴³ There were tensions in southern Colorado as well. For instance, in 1919 two Mexican men, Jose Gonzalez and Santos Ortez, had been arrested on murder charges and were sitting in their cell in Pueblo on a rainy night in September. They were set upon by a mob that pulled them out of the

¹³⁹ Zaragosa Vargas, *Crucible of Struggle: A History of Mexican Americans from Colonial Times to the Present Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2011), pg. 195.

¹⁴⁰ Deutsch, 124.

¹⁴¹ Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), pg. 54.

¹⁴² “Brighton Riot Spreads Race Warfare Fears,” *Longmont Daily Times*, 17 August 1925.

¹⁴³ “Jobless Demand Employment on Loveland Roads,” *Longmont Daily Times*, 21 January 1925.

prison, put nooses around their necks and threw them over the edge of a bridge.¹⁴⁴ In another example, Salvador Pares, also of Pueblo, was shot three times by a Detective Charles Beaty, who claimed that Pares and other Mexican townspeople were harassing him.¹⁴⁵ Crimes like these, in addition to widespread bootlegging done by immigrants, eroded Puebloans' confidence in the police force. In December of 1921, a letter was sent to the city's Postmaster, with instructions to give it to the proper authorities. The letter demanded that city officials remove "all Mexican residents from the city within ten days," and went on to warn, "Woe unto the Mexican if this order is not put forth and printed."¹⁴⁶ The letter was signed "K.K.K."

A bolded headline of the *Denver Post* from the summer of 1921 read, "Ku Klux Klan Organized in Denver, Americanism is its Main Precept."¹⁴⁷ Within four years, thousands of Coloradans would be preaching these sentiments, using Denver as a model for their efforts. The Klan promised to assist the police department and government in clearing the streets of "crime, lawlessness, and immorality, and to assist the authorities in ridding...Denver of criminals and undesirables."¹⁴⁸ At the same time they promised to uphold wider KKK beliefs. An article in the *Herald Democrat* reads that in addition to upholding Protestant values, "[The Klan will] maintain white supremacy 'everlastingly' over all other races, whether black, brown, or yellow."¹⁴⁹ Even though the Hooded Order receded from the spotlight for a brief time following the government's initial investigation, their recruitment efforts were not stalled. District Attorney Philip S. Van Cise, who started the investigation of the Klan in March of 1922, received a letter from the "Dickey Brothers," encouraging Van Cise to "read [the letter], you poor fish, and get

¹⁴⁴ "Mexico Wants Lynching Investigated," *Herald Democrat*, 27 September 1919.

¹⁴⁵ "Another Greaser Bites the Dust," *Aspen Democrat-Times*, 27 March 1920.

¹⁴⁶ "Wants Postmaster to Move Mexicans from Pueblo," *Herald Democrat*, 8 December 1921.

¹⁴⁷ "Ku Klux Klan Organized in Denver, Americanism is its Main Precept," *Denver Post*, 8 July 1921.

¹⁴⁸ Goldberg, *Hooded Empire*, 22.

¹⁴⁹ "Ku Klux Klan Terrorism," *Herald Democrat*, 19 September 1921.

wise.... The Klan begins where the law leaves off.”¹⁵⁰ With this display of determination, kleagles rippled outward from Klavern No.1, in Denver. While they had a total of eighty-one klaverns, some of their more elaborate and larger events were held in towns where there were large Mexican and Hispano populations, including Pueblo, Loveland, Longmont, Fort Collins, and Greeley. In doing so, they were able to target existing tensions in those communities, and to play on discrimination to gain power.

In Denver, Stapleton appointed a new chief of police after Locke’s coercion. The new chief, William Candlish, made the police department an instrument of the Klan. In January of 1922, a article reported that Denver’s “Mexican problem is again acute, according to Police Chief Williams. Hundreds of Mexican laborers are flooding the city.”¹⁵¹ The Klan policemen set out to harass minorities in the city. Chief Williams claimed that “[of] the 3,000 to 3,500 Mexicans in Denver, almost as much crime [was] developing...we estimate two crimes committed daily are committed by Mexicans.”¹⁵² By promising to rid the streets of crime, Klansmen had to grapple with the “Mexican problem” in the state’s capital. With Denver as a role model, Kleagles were sent throughout the state. The *Fort Collins Courier* reported its puzzlement in April of 1922, when a posting appeared throughout the city saying “We are coming to Fort Collins. K.K.K.”¹⁵³ In other cases, the Klan was encouraged and welcome to a town. For instance, the *Longmont Ledger* reported that “eight hooded and robed members of Boulder Klan No.3...stopped a meeting of the Salvation Army on the Streets of Boulder...[and] left fifty silver dollars on the drum”; the paper quipped that “If they want to call on the Ledger office that way, they are welcome.”¹⁵⁴ Whether it was for the money or to join the Klan ranks,

¹⁵⁰“Ku Klux Klan to Carry On,” *Denver Post*, 9 March 1922.

¹⁵¹ “Acute Mexican Problem,” *Daily Journal (Telluride)*, 23 January 1922.

¹⁵² “Mexican Army of Unemployed Roams Denver,” *Fort Collins Courier*, 20 January 1922.

¹⁵³“Ku Klux Klan Records Said to Show Much,” *Fort Collins Courier*, 28 April 1922.

¹⁵⁴ Untitled article, *Longmont Ledger*, 1 December 1922.

Anglo residents of Longmont were eager for the Klan to reach them.

The Klan thrust southward. In April of 1923, Pueblo Klan No.5, which had secretly formed the year before, interrupted a sermon at the Broadway Christian Church to make a donation. One week later 1,000 hooded Klansmen burned a forty-foot cross on the north side of Pueblo.¹⁵⁵ The Pueblo klavern thrived by associating immigrants with the breakdown of law and order. The Commissioner of Public Safety George J. Stumpf explained, “Our greatest handicap... [in fighting crime]is our great foreign population, as most of the lawbreakers are aliens.”¹⁵⁶ One of the Klan’s main pledges was to fight against mayhem, and Mexicans and Hispanos were commonly associated with lawlessness. Colorado became legally dry on January 1, 1916. Mexico, however, did not adopt the same legislation. As journalist C. M. Goethe explains, “The ‘wet Mexicans’ slip across the river at night, keep traveling for a time, and lose themselves.”¹⁵⁷ In Colorado, one white farmer who preferred German-Russian laborers described his experience: “The Mexicans are not very reliable...they left to get drunk and then came back to finish the beans after the beans were too old for picking.”¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, American journalists charged Mexicans with carrying drugs across the border into the United States. The *Denver Post* reported, “Most Deadly Mexican Drug is Discovered in the City” when marijuana was found on Enrique Gutierrez, a Mexican.¹⁵⁹ Another article read “City Dope Traffic Gallops On, Police Experts Unable to Cope with the Ever Present Scourge.”¹⁶⁰ Nativists claimed that due to Mexicans’ lack of education, they more easily fell prey to vice. Klansmen offered themselves as instruments of justice, who could deal with the issue of upholding Prohibition laws. In

¹⁵⁵ Goldberg, *Hooded Empire*, 60.

¹⁵⁶ Goldberg, *Hooded Empire*, 61.

¹⁵⁷ C.M. Goethe, “Peons Need Not Apply,” *World’s Work*, November 1930, pg. 47.

¹⁵⁸ Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States Valley of the South Platte Colorado* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Publications in Economics, 1929), pg. 149.

¹⁵⁹ “Most Deadly Mexican Drug is Discovered in the City,” *Denver Post*, 7 November 1919.

¹⁶⁰ “City Dope Traffic Gallops On,” *Denver Post*, 21 August 1921.

Walsenburg, halfway between Trinidad and Pueblo, Klansmen marched silently with signs saying “The Bootlegger Must Go,” “America for Americans,” and “We’re for Restricted Immigration.”¹⁶¹ The promise of upholding the law attracted many recruits to the Klan, as they were in pursuit of safety and the Klan seemingly offered immediate action, unlike local authorities.

By 1923, as the economy started turning around, Mexican immigration also increased, surpassing the wartime rate.¹⁶² The Klan was starting to become more visible in cities throughout the state. They started to take action to change existing legislation that aided Catholics or immigrants. According to Henry W. Toll, a Colorado State Senator, “There was a law in the books, in some southern part of the state...[that] came in with the, a lot of the, Mexicans,” which stated that the jury could operate with Spanish speakers.¹⁶³ However, “They were all Mexican, and the Mexicans were all Catholics and so they were doubly unacceptable to the Klan,”¹⁶⁴ so the Klan tried to repeal the law. The law that Toll could be describing was enacted in 1879, following the *Town of Trinidad v. Simpson* trial. The Colorado Supreme Court ruled that neither court nor judge “should discriminate against, reject or challenge any person...on the account of such person speaking the Spanish or Mexican language.”¹⁶⁵ Toll says that attempting to repeal this law was a symbolic gesture done by the Klan, though it still demonstrates whom they were targeting.

The Ku Klux Klan also targeted Mexicans and Hispanos based on their religion. Since the Klan coveted a Protestant nation, much of the hostility toward Mexicans and Hispanos was

¹⁶¹ Goldberg, *Hooded Empire*, 66.

¹⁶² Deutsch, 125.

¹⁶³ Henry W. Toll, interview by Jim Davis, 2004, University of Denver Special Collections, accessed March 12, 1917, <https://specialcollections.du.edu/islandora/object/cdpsm:40>.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ L. B. France, *Report of Cases Determined in the Supreme Court of the State of Colorado* (Chicago, IL: Callaghan and Co., Publishers, 1882), pp. 65-70.

based on their being Catholic. The predominant religion in Mexico was Catholicism, so it was assumed that the majority of Mexicans and Hispanos living in Colorado were Catholic. In this case, their allegiance must not be with the United States; instead, it must be with the Roman Catholic Pope. The *Rocky Mountain American*, a Klan paper, proclaimed,

“I would rather be a Klansman in a robe of snowy white,
 than to be a Catholic Priest in a robe as black as night;
 For a Klansman is American and America is his home,
 but a priest owes his allegiance to a Dago back in Rome.”¹⁶⁶

Catholics living throughout the state took much of the grief dispensed by the Klan between 1921 and 1925. Targeting of Catholics was also seen at a national level in the Klan’s distaste for immigration. Hiram Wesley Evans, the Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, asserted, “Up to 1880 fully 95 per cent of our immigration was of Nordic types, the kindred, desirable, easily assimilable kind. By 1910 it was an overwhelming flood of inferior foreign elements...I need only to remind you that last year more than ten percent of all aliens coming to us were from Mexico.”¹⁶⁷ In addition to being Catholic, Mexicans were seen as unassimilable.

Mexicans and Hispanos were seen as unassimilable not just by the decree of the Imperial Wizard, but also based on the way their communities grew separate from Anglo cities-- although segregation was forced by Anglo-Americans more than by Mexicans and Hispanos. This white enforcement of segregation was noted by the prominent social scientist Paul Taylor in his 1929 study of Mexican labor in the U.S. Taylor quoted a citizen from a small town in northern Colorado who said, “The Mexican town is about half a mile from the main town because the

¹⁶⁶ *Rocky Mountain American*, 24 April 1925, as quoted in Marjorie K. McIntosh, *Latinos of Boulder County, 1900-1980* (Old Springs, CA: Old John Publishing, 2016), pg. 31.

¹⁶⁷ Hiram W. Evans, *The Menace of Modern Immigration* (Dallas, Texas: October 24, 1923), pg. 29. <http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/AmRad/menacemodernimmigration.pdf>

townspeople won't let the Mexicans come any closer."¹⁶⁸ This happened in Pueblo as well, where the Mexican and Hispano community was two miles outside of town. Native-born Puebloans saw the isolation as the Mexicans' and Hispanos' attempt to avoid assimilation.

The Klan capitalized on this misconception and actively called for an end to immigration as part of its propaganda campaign throughout Colorado. The *Routt County Centennial* reported on the remarks of Bishop Bridewell, a Klan member in Denver, who spoke on behalf of the Klan about patriotism, love for country, and the restriction of immigration.¹⁶⁹ And the *Fort Collins Courier* quoted Dr. G. C. Minor, an officer of the KKK and a minister, as saying that the Klan "stands for law enforcement, supremacy of the white race, the protection of womanhood, [and] the limitation of immigration."¹⁷⁰ In particular, the Klan warned against "inferior" and unassimilable immigrants. In Colorado, this especially meant Mexicans and their descendants.

Race played an enormous role in the Klan's efforts and successes in Colorado, especially in its promise to halt immigration. Imperial Wizard Evans called for a complete halt of immigration and pointed toward Mexicans specifically. He declared, "America must close the door to the diseased minds and bodies and souls of the people of foreign lands. To the South of us thousands of Mexicans...are waiting for a chance to cross the Rio Grande."¹⁷¹ Grand Dragon Locke agreed with Evans and made clear his position on immigration. Locke proclaimed, "A band of patriots have raised their heads and have seen that this country of ours is not a nation of Americans, but a conglomerate mess of aliens, alien in thought and act." Further, stated Locke, it

¹⁶⁸ Quoted in Taylor, 209.

¹⁶⁹ "Bishop Talks on Klan and Good Citizen," *Routt County Sentinel*, 30 May 1924.

¹⁷⁰ "Ku Klux Klan Official Gives Address on Klan, Defending it from Charges of Violence," *Fort Collins Courier*, 25 June 1923.

¹⁷¹ Hiram W. Evans, *The Attitude of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan toward Immigration* (pamphlet, 1925) quoted in Ruben Donato, *Mexicans and Hispanos in Colorado Schools and Communities, 1920-1960* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), pg. 52.

was up to the Ku Klux Klan to “make America safe for Americans!”¹⁷² The Klan’s solution to the perceived problem of immigration, as told by Dr. S. H. Campbell, national lecturer on the Ku Klux Klan, during a presentation in Boulder was to “build a wall around America, exclude undesirable immigrants, and restrict the number of immigrants entering the United States.”¹⁷³ Dr. Campbell gave this lecture in October of 1924, five months after the Quota Act of 1924 was passed. The Act limited European and Asiatic immigration, but not Mexican immigration.

The year 1924 brought the highest influx of Mexicans ever to come to the United States, amounting to nearly 90,000 legal immigrants. This was also the year that the Klan held their largest rallies and demonstrations, many of which took place in sugar beet towns and cities with large Mexican and Hispano populations. On July 2 of 1924, a masked parade marched through Brighton, which had been home to a sugar refinery since 1917. In August of 1924, KKK parades were held in addition to fireworks shows in both Loveland and Grand Junction. To bolster numbers, Denver Klansmen attended the Grand Junction parade as well, pushing the total to a thousand Klansmen.¹⁷⁴ And in early September, a masked parade in Greeley drew 20,000 participants and spectators.¹⁷⁵ In addition to parades, Klansmen also used burning crosses as a means of intimidation. Some were used to mark the edges of Hispanic colonies. Remarking on his experience as a twelve-year-old in 1925, Greeley resident Alvin Garcia explained that “The men in white robes came at night and set fire to a cross in front of the house [where he lived]” in a Spanish part of the city.¹⁷⁶ The Klan in Greeley did exceptionally well. When a representative came on behalf of Imperial Wizard Hiram Wesley Evans, he found that the Greeley Klan’s

¹⁷² John G. Locke, “A Klansman’s Obligation as a Patriot to His God, His Country, His Home, and His Fellowmen,” Address at the Meeting of Grand Dragons, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in Asheville, North Carolina, July 1923. <https://digital.lib.ecu.edu/11176>.

¹⁷³ “Klan Principles made Public,” *Craig Courier*, 30 October 1924.

¹⁷⁴ “1000 Klansmen Parade in Grand Junction,” *Aspen Daily Times*, 18 August 1924.

¹⁷⁵ Observations of Ku Klux Klan meeting, Robert R. Maiden Papers, box number WH229, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library.

¹⁷⁶ Quoted in Ruben Donato, pg. 53.

combination of property and funds were ranked as the second largest in the state.

Other crosses were burned in the yards of Catholics or those who supported them. For instance, Ralph Miller of Lafayette recalled, “[the] KKK burned crosses at Henning house because Mr. Henning stood up for Catholics in Louisville. [The] KKK singled out Catholics and Spanish-speaking people.” Louisville, according to Miller, had issues with racial prejudice in the 1920s and 1930s that the Klan exemplified. There were “Segregated parts of town...the WPA built a swimming pool where park is now on Baseline. Wouldn't let Mexicans swim in it...Lafayette was white Anglo-Saxon Protestant. Louisville was more a ‘melting pot.’ In Lafayette, the Mexican people lived on the north side of the tracks in the S.E. part of town. Lafayette was prejudiced against Louisville because of the Catholics. The Ku Klux Klan activity [was] mostly in Louisville.”¹⁷⁷ By acting on existing tensions, the Klan succeeded widely in these towns.

In 1925, Klan members welcomed in the New Year with cross burnings throughout the state. The *Daily Times* of Longmont reported that the Longmont Klan “again put in its appearance New Year’s Eve when [a burning cross] blazed forth from the steeple of the Pillar of Fire church, at Sixth and Main Street. The Cross is still in place and blazes forth each night.”¹⁷⁸ Ku Klux Klan efforts continued into 1925; however, their failure to act on their promises under Locke’s leadership led to the demise of their political power. By April, Klansmen started losing seats in town governments. The *Steamboat Pilot* reported, “The Ku Klux Klan suffered crushing defeats yesterday thruout Colorado...Colorado Springs, Trinidad, Aurora, Arvada, Littleton,

¹⁷⁷ Ralph C. Miller interviewed by Anne Dyni, 1988, Maria Rogers Oral History Program, Boulder Public Library, accessed March 15, 2017, <http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh0376/>. Miller is describing what he remembers of his experience in the 1930s and possibly stories told to him by family members who lived through the 1920s.

¹⁷⁸“Klan Cross Blazes from top of Church,” *Longmont Daily Times*, 2 January 1925.

Alamosa and all other towns heard from elected visible government tickets.”¹⁷⁹ In part this was due to the Grand Dragon’s illegal activities. First, Locke was arrested after kidnapping a high school student, Keith Boehm, and forcing him to marry a woman who was four months pregnant.¹⁸⁰ In May, 1925 the Grand Dragon officially lost hold of the Klan after Federal officials announced that they were investigating Locke’s failure to file income tax returns. As a result, the Colorado Klan splintered into various factions throughout the state. Locke resigned at the Imperial Wizard’s insistence, though he started his own group called the “Minute Men,” which failed within a year. To describe the Minute Men group, Judge Charles A. Morning evoked Shakespeare, saying “a rose by any other name would smell as sweet. Conversely, we might say that a thing obnoxious would be just as obnoxious under any other name,” and therefore could not garner support.¹⁸¹ Similarly, other Klan groups entered a period of decline in late 1925 and the majority were completely diminished by 1930. Despite the Klan’s ultimate demise, discrimination against Mexicans and Hispanos continued.

Conclusion

The Ku Klux Klan did exceedingly well throughout the United States following World War One and the first Red Scare. Second-wave Klan propaganda turned white Protestant men against those of other religions, races, and moral views. Social unrest, crime, and immigration created the perfect cocktail for the Klan’s success, especially in Colorado. Grand Dragon Locke’s KKK was a poster child for the organization, through its demonstration of political strength. It built that strength by targeting the Mexican and Hispano communities that grew rapidly throughout Colorado, especially in sugar beet towns. Many Anglo residents felt anxious about Mexicans and Hispanos and the Klan manipulated those anxieties to form support. By

¹⁷⁹“Colorado Towns Turn from Klan Control in Tuesday’s Election,” *Steamboat Pilot*, 8 April 1925.

¹⁸⁰“Judge Lindsey Sets Dr. Locke Case Jan. 20,” *Longmont Daily Times*, 10 January 1925.

¹⁸¹ Charles A. Morning, “The Ku Klux Klan,” *Routt County Centennial*, 31 July 1925.

1924, immigration hit its highest point since the war. At the same time, the Klan was at its strongest in Colorado. Tensions rose between Anglo communities and the growing Spanish colonies. This gave the Klan the ammunition it needed to gain strength throughout the state. Mexicans and Hispanos were labeled as disloyal to the United States, Catholic, and prone to unlawful behavior.

The Klan promised to eradicate these issues. The image of Mexicans and Hispanos as drunks was already well established, and in southern cities like Pueblo, Mexicans and Hispanos were easily blamed for bootlegging. In sugar beet towns such as Greeley, Brighton, and Longmont, tensions among laborers thrived, and the Klan held their largest rallies in these areas. The Klan promised a white, Protestant, and safe nation. However, their intimidation tactics did not succeed in solving problems. When John Galen Locke fell from power, the feeling of unity that the Klan had provided dissipated. Yet nativism and discrimination continued to thrive. Racist signs still graced many windows throughout Colorado well into the 1940s. In public places, Mexicans and Hispanos were segregated from other audience members, or forced to use a backdoor entrance, if they were allowed in at all. Even without the white robes, there was still hate.

Conclusion

Emma Gomez Martinez was born in Aguilar, Colorado in 1928. Her father emigrated from Mexico to Colorado in the early 1920s; her mother was from Northern New Mexico. Her father worked in the Erie mines in the winter, the fields in the summer. Her mother stayed home with their six children. When recounting her childhood, Emma tells a story in which her father took her to Longmont. There were beat-up trucks and cars, filled with Mexicans and their belongings. As she explains it,

“Anglos in the community had decided that the Mexicans were not welcome, and they were escorting them out of the town. They had, from what my father said, they had hired Anglos from other countries to replace the Mexicans from the farms, and they didn’t need them any longer... they were just supposed to get out of Longmont and they were heading south. And the chatter around there was, ‘Go back to Mexico where you came from...’ I was made aware that Mexicans were not wanted. And over the years, I would observe discrimination, and since I was very young, there wasn’t too much one could do about it, but my mother and father did do some assistance in these moments of such hurtful discrimination.”¹⁸²

The discrimination and intimidation tactics that the Klan initiated were carried on well beyond its fall. Some Mexican and Hispano communities fought against discrimination. By the late 1920s, the large Mexican and Hispano community in Greeley took legal action against the local government to remove the discriminatory signs from the windows. Additionally, they refused patronage to stores, theaters, or public spaces that enforced segregation. However, only limited information was gathered from the Mexican and Hispano communities themselves. Many

¹⁸² Emma Gomez Martinez, interviewed by Eualdo Valdez, Maria Rogers Oral History Program, Boulder Public Library, accessed March 23, 2017, <http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh1893/>.

of the oral or written accounts are from Anglo men and women who lived in Colorado. Even without this information, it is clear that discrimination against minority communities had been well established and maintained throughout Colorado's history.

To see a crowd of thousands of KKK members and observers gathered in any town would have been an intimidating sight to those who bore witness. The massive amount of hooded men and women marching would have been especially so for those who could not fit into the category of one hundred percent Americanism. The drive for one hundred percent Americanism became especially prominent during World War I. The supposed disloyalty of "hyphenated Americans" was stressed and assimilation efforts fell short in many cases. While the United States was in a war frenzy, Mexico was in the throes of revolution. Life for peasants was dismal. Many moved north out of necessity, to avoid warring factions or starvation. As the number of immigrants from Mexico increased, not hindered by the Immigration Act, Anglo citizens started to raise complaints. Following the war, when Americans wanted to return to normalcy, they instead faced labor and cultural unrest. Many sought a scapegoat for the nation's ailments. Following the war, the Red Scare reverberated throughout the United States. Nativist movements, including the KKK, found their footing at this time. Anxieties about nonconformists and "aliens" were further heightened. Nevertheless, recruitment of Mexican workers and immigration continued to rise. By 1921, the Ku Klux Klan was present in Colorado, people were often eager to join, as the Klan promised to fix the state's ailments. Much of the anxiety the Klan played on to garner support was based on race relations among Mexicans, Hispanos, and Anglo-Americans. By manipulating growing tensions--those brought on by the Great War, the Red Scare, and race issues--the Klan became highly successful in the state. The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s offered people the opportunity to express their anger and hatred, and they carried on doing so well beyond the Klan years. The ten-dollar initiation fee paid for decades of discrimination.

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