

# Carey McWilliams, a Forerunner of Cultural Citizenship in the 1940s

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[T]he Mexican in the Southwest will never “assimilate” in quite the same sense that other immigrant groups have been assimilated. They are really not immigrants; they belong to the Southwest in which important vestiges of their culture have survived through the years [...] These tensions will persist until the dominant group is prepared to accept the concept of bi-culturality, that is, until it is willing to let the Mexican alone, to treat him with respect, to recognize his equality, and to sanction the free use of the Spanish language and whatever other cultural traits may survive (Carey McWilliams, *Southern California Country* 320-321).

In the early 1940s, when the Sleepy Lagoon case, and shortly afterwards the zoot-suit riots, brought California to the fore in terms of anti-Mexican racist feeling, Carey McWilliams was one of the most prominent figures to appear in defense of Mexican Americans. This was the beginning of what he later termed the “anti-Mexican riots” and, like all other racial riots in wartime America, they triggered “a new national conscience” regarding the various ethnic groups that evinced the urgency of their integration into U.S. society (“What We Did About Racial Minorities” 89). McWilliams’s documentary studies on farm migration in the Golden State inevitably led him towards deeper research into

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immigration issues and he soon found himself stirring the cultural margins of the political and digging up the subtle forms of traffic among culture, race and citizenship, thus touching the root of ethnic discrimination. Forging a critical position among what he called the tradition of indigenous American radicalism, McWilliams was determined to unravel the complexities of cultural pluralism and racism. To my mind, McWilliams's outstanding characteristic as a cultural rebel was his vision of a "cultural change" that would allow for an emancipatory form of immigrant integration (*Prejudice* 286). Culture was his revisionary tool for attaining new social formulae and new understandings of the nation and of nationhood.

The case of the Mexican community was one of the most illustrative of McWilliams's involvement with the cause of discrimination in California, but in effect McWilliams's activism touched every base, that is, every oppressed group. McWilliams, as a critic has called him, was "a spokesman for all outsiders"<sup>1</sup> and, indeed, from the Mexican Americans indicted in the Sleepy Lagoon case, to the Japanese evacuated to the so-called internment camps, or the abused "dustbowl" migrants, he wrote extensively on basically every discriminated ethnicity; African Americans, Blacks, Jews, Filipinos, Chinese, Hawaiians, Puerto Ricans and Native Americans, all fell under his relentless critical lens.

His first works, *Factories in the Field*, of 1939, and *Ill Fares the Land*, published in 1942, were among the first denunciations of the perils of "agribusiness" and soon turned him into a *persona non grata* among the Associated Farmers. In the late 1930s, the powerful Association elected him "Agricultural Pest No. 1' worse than pear blight and boll weevil" (*The Education* 77). This did not, however, prevent McWilliams from extending and sharpening his cultural critique, as proved by his work as editor of the New York liberal weekly *The Nation* during nearly twenty-five years. William Beyer's biography of McWilliams as "a lawyer by training, an author

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<sup>1</sup> This is Robert Sherrill's expression, in *In Memoriam. Carey McWilliams 1905-1980*, n.p.

by inclination, and a political activist by instinct”, is for me the one that conveys best the welding of fields from which McWilliams harvested his groundbreaking theories (“Searching for *Common Ground*” 332).

McWilliams fits into that genealogy of writers and cultural critics that commented deeply upon, and criticized even more, the American scene, the American Dream, and the American way of life. Facts had to be continuously re-examined, McWilliams warned, and not just historical facts, but also important instruments of history, such as citizenship and nationality, which were stale and outdated and could therefore neither interpret nor solve the complexities of the present. The American scene was not truly “American”; the American Dream was a nightmare for some; the American way of life could be a painful imposition rather than a choice. Only the ideal of democracy stood. And as a matter of fact, in McWilliams’s writings immigrants were brought to center-stage regarding democracy: they were re-introduced into U.S. history as the true engine of the permanent trial and error of the democratic model, its sustaining values, and its mechanisms.

Of his own writing, McWilliams said that it was a way of “push[ing] aside the official stories and [...] examin[ing] the facts” (*Factories* 9) and the “Golden State” in the 1940s, with its generous mixture of ethnicities and its border position between the West and the Pacific, presented him with the ideal laboratory for a revision of social formulae. Out of these re-readings of facts, a new understanding of participation in society that allowed for, and valued, *difference* and *exception* could be discerned, so McWilliams trusted. New Deal politics and the Popular Front focus on labor promoted the ideal climate for revising the “American Dream” from the perspective of workers and immigrants.<sup>2</sup> As McWilliams fell in with the ranks of the Popular Front, he became a leading contributor to what Michael Denning has meantime designated the “laboring of

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<sup>2</sup> As Michael Denning has demonstrated, the Popular Front was a social movement that fused economic, political and cultural organizations and had the industrial unions of the Congress of Industrial Organizations as its base.

American Culture”, a proletarianization of the world of culture that in conveying the idea that the truly modern was the social, shed new light over social relations.

### **The Mexican-Americans explained and the claim to “bi-culturality”**

At the height of the II World War, the Sleepy Lagoon case – the first mass trial in the history of the nation –, led to the indictment for murder of seventeen Mexican Americans (and one Anglo). But the whole trial was led without convincing evidence. The yet more spectacular zoot-suit riots followed shortly, when groups of marines assaulted Mexican American youngsters identified by their dressing style (the zoot-suit), tore off their clothes and severely beat them, while the police looked on.<sup>3</sup>

Following these events, McWilliams produced a report that attempted to discuss the identity of the Mexican-American youngsters involved in the disturbances. Focusing the legal inequality experienced by Mexican Americans, he stressed that failure of integration derived from their ambiguous citizenship status. In essence, he reformulated race into ethnicity, thereby evincing the need to historicize the Mexican Americans’ identity. The core of this historical analysis was to be culture: the role of culture in citizenship practices, as well as in prejudice and discrimination. All in all, McWilliams argued that “[t]endencies towards certain kinds of behavior are to be found, not in the bloodstream of a people, but in their cultural heritage. Cultural conflicts produce certain patterns of behavior, not only in individuals but in groups” (“Testimony...” 152). Dismissing arguments for racism, McWilliams proposed assessing the problem in

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<sup>3</sup> Zoot-suitors adorned their bodies with tattoos and wore long jackets with exaggerated shoulders, pegged pant legs, thick-soled shoes, long watch chains, and wide-brimmed pancake hats worn over duck-tail haircuts. It was the overt sign of a different cultural choice that defined a group apart, so much so that attacks on zoot-suiters often involved the tearing off of the youths’ clothes. David Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors. Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1995) 123.

California as one of *cultural* conflict, both in its sources and in its social and legal consequences.

For McWilliams, what the Hispanic community lacked most was an active citizenship that recognized the right to their culture. Their disempowerment in social and political terms revealed not only that their culture was disauthorized but that it was used against them by mainstream culture and its institutions, often to disguise racial discrimination. He also claimed that Mexican-Americans should be supported in the nourishment of their language and culture. Hence his defense of minorities "as special groups" (*Brothers* 77), an argument aiming at the creation of extraordinary measures to these groups, such as the institutionalization of bilingual education in schools. It is my argument that this project, which McWilliams termed "bi-culturality" anticipates current formulations of cultural citizenship.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Mexicans in the U.S. as a particular sort of "immigration"**

Historicizing the presence of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in the Southwest required first and foremost a reappraisal of the nature of their "immigration" to California. Issues such as race, discrimination and culture were all deeply imbedded in historical and political circumstances that pertained to the joint history of the United States and Mexico in the southwest border. To begin with, one had to distinguish between different groups of people of Mexican origin. That the U.S. did not recognize the group's heterogeneity was a proof of lack of knowledge and interest.

For example, there were those who descended from Spaniards and Mexicans who lived in that northern half of Mexico that the U.S. usurped

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<sup>4</sup> Prior to McWilliams, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and within the confines of the Austro-Hungarian empire, several projects comparable to cultural citizenship were elaborated, notably Otto Bauer's and Karl Renner's. V. Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914* (NY: Vintage, 1989) and Anthony D. Smith, "Nationalism and the Historians", *Mapping the Nation*, ed. Gopal Balakrishnan (London & NY: Verso, 1996) 175-197.

in 1848. In this part of the “empire”, as McWilliams calls it, Mexicans did not feel abroad: “they came ‘north from Mexico’: they are of the Americas” (*Brothers* 117). They were the (Mexican-)American citizens created by default after the conquest (whom the immigrants called *pochos*). But there were also the Mexican immigrants, who came to the U.S. to work (often under the auspices of the several waves of *bracero* programs) but kept returning temporarily to their places of origin, given the proximity of Mexico (they were called *cholos* or *chicanos* by the former group). Finally, there were the second-generation Mexican-Americans, the children of Mexican immigrants or of people of Mexican descent but in any case born in the U.S. Within this group, a subculture developed which revealed the most emblematic instance regarding cultural difference: they were the so-called *pachucos*. Divisions sharpened particularly in the condition of this group, the native-born of native-born parents, because they did not identify either with immigrants or with Americans. This group’s ambivalent experience led McWilliams to consider them a “buffer group”, a minority within a minority (*North* 209).

The most striking difference concerning the *pachucos* was a proud symptom of resentment that McWilliams related to the imperial history of the southwest. The pattern of resentment towards the U.S. was nonexistent among the other ethnicities that chose freely to come to the country (7). Disdain for Mexicans had been present since the times of territorial annexation by the U.S. and the formation of bands of Mexican outlaws, “in a spirit of hatred and revenge” (*SCC* 60), was a response to marginalization. For McWilliams, it was “guerilla warfare” and the heritage of a “deep enmity” between Anglos and Mexicans. This inter-group sentiment completely undermined the conditions for a climate of tolerance necessary for cultural understanding and “some measure of assimilation” (61).<sup>5</sup> Resentment was to influence Mexican culture profoundly, for at the same time it created pride in the group’s cultural difference (317). The

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<sup>5</sup> As McWilliams also stresses, it was not accidental that in the 1850s California ranked first nationally, regarding crimes such as murder (60).

definition of Mexicans and Anglos in opposition to one another was inevitable. But because official definitions of race did not sustain this group opposition (given the many degrees of whiteness under which Mexicans were categorized), the distinction emerged in terms of culture and cultural conflict; that is, culture was racialized. In what pertains to discrimination, including discrimination by the law, it was therefore performed on cultural grounds.

In light of this particular pattern of integration, Mexican immigration demanded a particular approach. Given the fact that the presence of people of Mexican origin in the U.S. had not followed the pattern of any other European immigrant group (while European immigration was the model for assimilation programs, of course), the specificity of Mexican integration was explained by the fact that Mexicans had not encountered a foreign environment. So they maintained their ways of life and traditions: "Mexicans in moving 'north from Mexico'", McWilliams writes,

have always felt that they were moving within an environment that was geographically, culturally, and historically familiar. They have not crossed an ocean to a new and wholly unfamiliar land [...] In one sense, it would not be far-fetched to say that no Mexican is ever an immigrant in the Southwest; he is more like a native returning to his homeland. (*The Mexicans* 4)

Since Mexican culture was essentially a folk culture and people lived in small communities and developed a series of relationships that were only functional within those small networks, when they established in the U.S. they maintained that mode of relation, which in turn was understood as isolationism in the eyes of U.S. society (*North* 213). McWilliams however stresses that this did not derive from a deliberate rejection of the mainstream culture or proneness to treason and conspiracy; it was rather related to the fact that the urban oriented American culture they encountered did not itself accept their difference (212-213). In fact, they were pushed into their own communities, into the *colonias*.

Moreover, because their "roots" stayed close by, Mexicans did not feel the need to integrate in the alien culture. Finally, the particular pattern of seasonal work had promoted the reinforcement of that community-oriented behavior, which in turn also diminished the need for integration in linguistic terms. In what concerned material aspects, Mexican-Americans could be said to be Americanized, since they absorbed easily the utilitarian values of American culture, but "intellectually and emotionally [the group] live[d] in local Mexican traditions" (Manuel Gamio, quoted by McWilliams; *North* 211). Hence, writes McWilliams, the border in the southwest was a very peculiar one; "[it was] one of the most unreal borders in the world; it unite[d] rather than separate[d] two peoples" (*Brothers* 120).

### "Racism"

McWilliams thus argued that it was "[p]ersistent discrimination [that] ha[d] repelled the immigrant from the value-side of Anglo-American culture" (*North* 214). He stresses that second-generation immigrant children were overwhelmed by a permanent sense of difference that was imposed on them by others, not just via attitudes, but also through social conditions, in terms of cultural identification. Thus separated from the dominant group by language, religion, and numerous cultural traits, the youths had keenly resented the discrimination they had encountered and rejected the dominant culture as alien and hostile" (*Southern* 317). The cultural choices they hence made were in the model of a "negative culture".<sup>6</sup> Their notion of difference, both imposed by the Anglos and cultivated by themselves, was at the root of the zoot-suit style as a youth subculture.

Thus race interposed between the Mexicans' will to integrate and the mainstream's reaction. The "degree of color visibility" of Mexican

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<sup>6</sup> McWilliams is here quoting Florence Cassidy from her article in the collection *When People's Meet. A Study in Race and Culture Contacts*, 1942, eds. Alain Locke and Bernhard J. Stern (New York: Hinds, Hayden and Eldredge, 1946).

Americans did not allow them either to pass for whites, or to enjoy the official assertion of their whiteness in the law. The legal construction of whiteness for the peoples of Mexican origin, as stated in the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, could never beat the colonial discourses on the ground, where Mexican Americans went on being looked at as the Other in the stereotype of the “greaser” (“The Legal Constitution of Race” 324-325). As for the law itself, because it could not discriminate openly in terms of race, discrimination came via arguments of *cultural difference* that could only be explained as a sequel of U.S. imperialism, which had created the specific situation of “internal colonialism” they experienced.<sup>7</sup>

McWilliams was influenced by what he called the new realism in race awareness both among the minorities and the majority, particularly through the work of Franz Boas and Gunnar Myrdal. Hence his emphasis on the sociological factors that assisted the construction of race, calling for the exposition of its artificiality.<sup>8</sup> One of the underpinnings of McWilliams’s theory is therefore a distinction between culture and race. He dismantles race as a social construct that can circulate or be maneuvered across distinct social conditions.<sup>9</sup> Race is one of the “‘strategies’ or maneuvers

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<sup>7</sup> For a pertinent view on the role of the Mexican war in the foundation of the U.S. empire and as the first test to nationalism see: Robert W. Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas. The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (NY & Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985). I use the concept of “internal colonialism” as coined by Mario Barreras Barrera, in his study *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality*, where he defines it as “a form of colonialism in which the dominant and subordinate populations are intermingled, so that there is no geographically distinct ‘metropolis’ separate from the ‘colony’” (Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1979) 194.

<sup>8</sup> V. Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma* (New York: Harper and Brothers Pubs., 1944) and Franz Boas, *Race, language, and culture* (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1940).

<sup>9</sup> McWilliams’s is actually close to the notion that Michael Omi and Howard Winant term a “racial formation”, in their study *Racial Formation in the United States. From the 1960’s to the 1990’s* (NY & London: Routledge, 1994).

by which privileged social groups maintain their dominance” in the capitalist system, he asserts, just like assimilation, which he attacked on the same grounds (*Brothers* 317). Moreover, race circulates in what he calls “social relations” *through cultural practices*, and finally it is law that rationalizes it, which amounts to saying that *law is a constitutive element of race*.<sup>10</sup> While he considers that prejudice is the same as passive segregation, he sees legal discrimination as the real trigger of segregation (“Legal Discrimination... 21”). Therefore, he saw law as deeply imbricated in the creation of the system of internal colonialism in the southwest. The distribution of U.S. citizenship in the new territories conquered in the war had been simply tactical: citizenship came as an imposition rather than a choice, a need, or the result of a political consciousness (*The Mexicans* 5).

### **Discrimination and the Law**

McWilliams names “cultural parallelism” the circulation of racial arguments via culture, which affected the different groups of Mexican descent alike. Cases of official discrimination against Mexicans in California were not hard to find, but the workings of cultural prejudice were subtler. Besides open bans on access to public places such as movie-theatres and swimming-pools, a legal case on discrimination against Mexican children in public schools in Texas, in 1930, illustrated well the imbrications of race and the law. Whereas the case managed to rule out discrimination,<sup>11</sup> it maintained segregation on the basis of *linguistic difficulties* and *migrant farming patterns* (“The Legal Constitution of Race” 328).

In fact, both these arguments were common in California schools: bilingualism in particular was a common practice of non-official discrimination. As one of the features most exclusively attributed to the Mexican American group, bilingualism was seen as a handicap connected

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<sup>10</sup> Significantly, this is one of the founding arguments of the Critical Race Theory Group, formed many decades later.

<sup>11</sup> *Independent School District v. Salvatierra*. 33 S. W. 2d 790 (Tex. Civ. App. 1930).

to underachievement (*Culture in American Education* 21), and justified the use of different syllabi for Mexican children ("Knocking on..." 179) as well as of separate school buildings and facilities. The "no-ambition Mexican American type" was supposed to discard the effort of learning English and his/her use of Spanish was a cause of mockery at school. In addition, teachers were often not equipped with knowledge of Spanish nor of Hispanic cultures (*Culture in American Education* 25). Finally, it was not uncommon to have school schedules adapted to the children's work duties ("Knocking on..." 173), for the children's work in the fruit-picking industry was indispensable to the ranchers (180).<sup>12</sup>

### Reforming the System

Finding the ways to counter legal discriminatory practices based on culture such as these played a fundamental part in McWilliams's project for cultural citizenship. He proposed the creation of alternative legal means that would defend the citizen both from discriminatory legislation and from a discriminatory use of the law. On a more immediate level, civil rights could perform that task, for they had the power to prevent the law from being discriminatory on racial grounds. But civil rights would not be enough in themselves; a profound transformation of the U.S. economic structure was needed, in order to purge it of its imperialist heritage. McWilliams laid it plainly:

most Americans fail to see that imperialism can be of two types: the type that carries its exploitative process to remote native countries and the type which draws nonindustrial peoples to it by the promise or hope of a higher standard of living. The latter type is usually less brutal than the former but it is essentially a domestic imperialism. (*Brothers* 130)

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<sup>12</sup> In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* was a landmark case in school desegregation in acknowledging that segregation violated the right to equal education opportunities and created feelings of inferiority. Ref.: 347 U.S. 483, 494.

He argued that while people were not on equal terms to compete, equality and competition were a mockery.

For these to be a reality instead, he proposed the application of a new principle he called “functional equality”. To his mind, social justice could only be achieved if equality was conceived as differential, or “functional”; that is, equality had to correspond to different values, images and elements. It had to adapt to the conditions and needs of each object, instead of expecting the objects/groups themselves to passively converge under the umbrella “equality” (“Equality: a Political Problem” 692). But the application of a principle of difference implied the support of the federal government itself, which he called to intervene in favor of discriminated groups, be it in enforcing civil rights or the creation of specific federal institutions to deal with ethnic issues. He named this practice “positive obligation” and I suggest it can be situated in a genealogy of “affirmative action”.

Civil rights had furthermore to be redefined in a manner that would dare addressing the issue of race directly: “[w]hat we need, above all”, McWilliams argued, “is a new federal civil rights status, cast in the form of a Racial Fair Practices Act and enforced by modern administrative methods as a matter of public policy rather than by individual action as a matter of personal privilege” (“Race Discrimination...” 22). The idea comes quite close to group rights concepts and notions of “differentiated citizenship”, as they are nowadays understood.<sup>13</sup> McWilliams believed that civil rights statutes could be the citizens’ most secure protection against continuing legal discrimination, as shown in the case of the 110,000 individuals of Japanese descent who were brought under the legally defined “protective custody” of the U.S. government and locked in internment camps.<sup>14</sup> This idea of a civil rights statute that was based on

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<sup>13</sup> V. Iris Marion Young’s *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> “Protective custody” was the legal term with which the law sanctioned the forced removal of the Japanese (among which there were in effect many American born citizens) into internment camps.

the right to cultural difference implied the assertion of the right to culture as a human right, as a demand on the state to protect the freedom of its citizens.

### Cultural Citizenship

I understand cultural citizenship as an alternative to monolithic concepts such as “national culture” or “national identity” and weaker, liberal-tolerant notions like multiculturalism. It allows one to revise how we frame discrimination against subaltern communities. Multiculturalist strategies, for instance, offer inclusion against national assimilation and homogenization, but in practice they often degenerate into a defensiveness that obliterates ethnic and cultural conflict or else allows for no true communication or exchange between different communities. The way citizenship, in its classical definition, works within the frameworks of multiculturalism and national identity only facilitates their homogenizing potential. In fact, it has been precisely the classical ideals of universality and equality attached to citizenship (although they were never universally applied) that have been systematically challenged by migration and immigration, transnational movements and displaced minority communities in the past few decades. These groups raise questions of extension of educational and labor rights, respect for culturally different populations and their participation in democratic deliberation. Revisions of the concept of citizenship envision a notion that is able to recognize multiple affiliations and, therefore, multiple ways of feeling, experiencing and expressing, or taking part in, the political imagined community.<sup>15</sup>

Cultural citizenship is therefore a notion that contemplates the situation in which one can have multiple loyalties or affiliations, to a language or place or set of norms, on the one hand, and to the sovereignty

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<sup>15</sup> In this sense, elaborations on cultural citizenship can also be connected to a wider theoretical effort to recover patterns of *affect*, or the individual's *subjectivities* in his/her performance of the political. V. for example, Jürgen Habermas “Citizenship and National Identity: Some Reflections of the Future of Europe”,

of an adopted country, on the other. In aiming at incorporating the cultural elements that filter participation in a community, cultural citizenship also recognizes the importance of everyday forms of living in relation to political participation. Accordingly, this notion embraces a communitarian dimension as well, by valuing the networks that the immigrants establish within their host communities. As Toby Miller summarizes,

[m]ost proponents of cultural citizenship argue that social identity is developed and secured through *a cultural context* where *collective senses of self* are more important than individual ones, and rights and responsibilities can be determined in accordance with *cultural membership rather than the individual* (4) [my emphasis]

and so the political is redirected from an individual to a group or communitarian level.

The use and nurturing of the mother tongue is another key issue in the debate and it can actually constitute a very vivid example of the relationship between culture and citizenship. Language is the vehicle that filters the immigrants' perception of the host culture. This is fundamental for a more successful integration, in the sense that a better understanding of the host culture requires both the immigrant's perception of that culture and of his/her self-representation within that culture, so that it ultimately also sheds light on the immigrant's own identity. Moreover, the right to speak and learn one's mother tongue, or have the state provide services in it, reverts into a *cultural right* when it not only empowers the immigrant, but also prevents state discrimination on grounds of difference.

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*Praxis International* 12.1 (1992): 1-19; Lauren Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy: Hawthorne, Utopia and Everyday Life* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991) and Thomas Scheff, "Emotions and Identity: A Theory of Ethnic Nationalism", *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, ed Craig Calhoun (Oxford UK and Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1994) 277-303.

So, whereas a better understanding of the interdependence of culture, economic factors and social relations may bring to the fore the manufacture of race, gender or sexual orientation, the bestowal of cultural rights on the immigrant immediately calls into question legal categories of exclusion such as “illegal”, “alien”, “deviant” or “noncitizen”, which shape the state’s legal forms of discrimination. For all this, cultural citizenship breaks the monopoly of the state in managing the concept of “citizenship”. The notion of cultural citizenship turns difference into the value of personal creativity and self-expression that permeate the practices of citizenship, at the same time that it holds the promise of correcting unequal relationships.<sup>16</sup>

This framework allows cultural citizenship to appear as the right instrument to fight for minority group rights and when the history of Mexican Americans, as of minority groups in general in the U.S., has been one of subjection and discrimination (in the case of Mexican Americans aggravated by internal colonialism), it should come as no surprise, then, that it was Latino critics who first introduced it in the agenda – Renato Rosaldo put forth the argument in the late 1980s.<sup>17</sup> Rosaldo’s view considers culture in its anthropological sense, as a way of life. Claims to public space figure prominently in his theory, for public space provides the physical and creative forum where Latinos can have their cultural associations, gather regularly and develop cultural activities that pertain to their identity as

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<sup>16</sup> According to the UN Charter, cultural rights include, among other aspects, the participation in the cultural life of the community (Article 27). The UN document also highlights the interdependence of culture, as a form of upholding the dignity and the free development of the individual (that is, culture as a cherished form of creativity and self-expression) and other social and economic rights (Article 22).

<sup>17</sup> Rosaldo coined the term in his study *Culture and Truth. The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989). The concept is more developed in his article “Cultural Citizenship, Inequality, and Multiculturalism”, *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Politics*, eds. William Flores & Rina Benmayor (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997) 27-38.

Latinos ("Citizens..." 263). Cultural citizenship implies moreover a claim to values and so it rejects the principles of assimilation to affirm the right to *difference* instead. One of the aims of cultural citizenship is to reduce prejudice and increase respect for the value of minority groups' cultures.

Within a cultural citizenship framework, cultural difference is then reappraised as a form of inclusion, instead of exclusion, in the common body of the national culture. McWilliams's project of bi-culturality held this promise as well and this was, I believe, one of his most outstanding contributions within the pro-assimilationist paradigm of his times: an understanding of integration as inclusion and without the erasure of difference. It has been established that Carey McWilliams's studies are fundamental rewritings of the history of the American West. It has been my contention in this article that McWilliams's projects spoke to the future as well.

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