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PRAGMATISM IN  
THE AMERICAS

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minorities, which are especially vulnerable and exposed to the homogenizing tendencies of global markets and to the global injustices and disparities created and enhanced by these markets. Not only transnational institutions but also transnational cultural practices (artistic, academic, economic, political, and so on) are needed to respond properly to these challenges and opportunities. It is in this sense that it is of crucial importance today for individuals and groups to get to know themselves as they get to know the neighboring communities and cultures with which their lives are entangled. It is particularly important and urgent today to keep our global cultural dialogues *polyphonic*, fighting homogenizing and normalizing tendencies that erase or marginalize differences. This sense of importance and urgency is what the pragmatic pluralism articulated and defended here tries to convey.

## FOURTEEN

PRAGMATISM, LATINO INTERCULTURAL  
CITIZENSHIP, AND THE TRANSFORMATION  
OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

José-Antonio Orosco



In his recent study of the interconnections between globalization and violence, *Fear of Small Numbers*, Arjun Appadurai draws a distinction between the civic and the political patriotism expressed by many immigrants living within the United States. Especially for those immigrants coming from the Global South, there is a sense of “surviving in a moral cocoon within the belly of the beast” when it comes to describing life in America.<sup>1</sup> These immigrants, both legal and undocumented, treasure the idea of taking advantage of the freedoms and liberties that come with citizenship. Nonetheless, they feel contempt for the “American way of life” that they associate with crime, sexual immorality, political corruption, and racism against nonwhite people. They have patriotism for the political ideals of the United States, but are disgusted by its civic life, its popular culture, and the moral hypocrisy of its citizens. They love America, but don’t care much for Americans. Such conditions are ripe for frustration and political violence, according to Appadurai.

For over twenty years, the Latino Cultural Studies Working Group has tried to capture this sense of being within, yet not of, American society with its concept of "Latino cultural citizenship." Drawing on ethnographies of Latino/a communities throughout the United States, Renato Rosaldo and William V. Flores structure the notion of cultural citizenship as "the right to be different (in terms of race, ethnicity, or native language) with respect to the norms of the dominant national community, without compromising one's right to belong, in the sense of participating in the nation-state's democratic processes."<sup>2</sup> In places ranging from San José to Los Angeles, California to San Antonio, Texas to East Harlem, Latinos struggle to integrate themselves into major social, economic and political institutions, while at the same time trying to make room in the public sphere to maintain and honor their culture, language, and community values such as *respeto* (respect).

In this essay I examine this connection between culture and democracy with an eye toward developing a foundation for American citizenship that is informed by the experiences of Latinos/as in the United States. I begin by surveying arguments from philosophers within the American pragmatist tradition that correlate the stability of a democratic political regime with the habits, tastes, and attitudes of a given people. These thinkers, namely Horace Kallen, Jane Addams, and John Dewey, have developed two models to conceptualize the relationship of immigrant communities to democratic citizenship and governance: cultural pluralism and multiculturalism. I intend to demonstrate that Latino cultural citizenship is a form of cultural pluralism and, as such, does not seek to transform liberal representative democracy in any deep, significant sense. We can see this when we hold up Latino cultural citizenship to the radical challenge posed by progressive thinkers, such as W. E. B. Du Bois and Martin Luther King Jr., who argued that social justice in the United States cannot be achieved unless we move beyond liberal multiculturalism, and the idea of what it means to be an American is altered to reflect the experiences of non-white peoples. I then propose to look at the movement of "interculturalism" among indigenous activists and intellectuals in Latin America as a model for understanding how Latino/a cultural

sensibilities might transform American democracy. As a movement, interculturalism does not simply seek the assimilation or integration of nonwhite immigrants into the mainstream, but to activate a broader revolution of values and institutions that can "decolonize" the notion of social justice away from a liberal democratic emphasis. I maintain it might inform American civic and political life in such a way as to reduce the distance between the kinds of patriotism Appadurai elucidates in his study.

### *Culture and Democracy*

Does culture matter to the functioning of a democratic political regime? Within democratic theory, the connection between the stability of democracy and a society's social traditions, habits, attitudes, and manners can at least be traced back to the famous "Funeral Oration" as recounted by the historian Thucydides. The statesman Pericles describes the power and grandeur of ancient Athens as resting on the various character traits of its citizens—their courage, generosity, appreciation for beauty, and willingness to engage in deliberation and public affairs. Democracy is seen as the system of government that is most likely to allow these moral virtues to flourish in individuals.<sup>3</sup> Numerous ancient sources reiterate the Athenian idea that a democratic society is a community designed to nurture the moral excellence of citizens by encouraging their habitual participation in institutions that express their self-determination and commitment to justice.<sup>4</sup>

More recently, John Dewey argued that democracy refers to more than just the periodic election of representatives, but is, in fact, "a way of life" which signifies "the possession and continued use of certain attitudes, forming personal character and determining desire and purpose in all the relations of life."<sup>5</sup> For Dewey, a robust democratic regime depends on a citizenry that maintains a kind of civic faith in each other's equality and intelligence, along with a basic dedication toward cooperating and learning from one another. Robert Putnam's classic work on American community echoes Dewey. The efficacy

and stability of democratic politics, Putnam argues, appears to be tied to a society's social capital—the thickness of a given society's networks of voluntary association that build trust, cooperation, civic skills, and habits of public concern among citizens.<sup>6</sup>

For others, the connection between culture and democracy is much more specific and grounded in historical traditions. Samuel Huntington maintains that American democracy is built around the idea of an American creed that consists of the Protestant work ethic, individualism, an appreciation of liberty, the rule of law, and a devotion to English.<sup>7</sup> This creed is the result of hundreds of years of Anglo-Protestant history that was transplanted to the New World and reaffirmed by new waves of immigrants. Political commentator Patrick Buchanan, however, denies that the principles of liberal democracy are enough to bind Americans together through political patriotism: "Democracy is not enough. If the culture dies, the country dies."<sup>8</sup> He cites the example that prior to the Civil War, both the North and South subscribed to the same form of government, but it was their distinct cultures that drove them apart. For Buchanan, a rooted civic patriotism—"Language, faith, culture, and history—and yes, birth, blood, and soil"—constitute a nation.<sup>9</sup>

Immigrants of the sort reported by Appadurai are a direct threat to the well-being of the United States, according to neonativists such as Huntington and Buchanan, precisely because they misunderstand, and see themselves apart from, the culture that secures its political institutions. Refusing to assimilate into this common culture is not a benign way of life to which immigrants are entitled by some multicultural interpretation of fairness or equality. Instead, the neonativists hold that a concept such as Latino cultural citizenship is one that threatens the very unity of society by preventing people from literally being able to engage with one another in public dialogue about matters of common concern.

#### *Cultural Pluralism*

Horace Kallen would have recognized these nativist concerns against Latino cultural citizenship as part of what he called "the new racism."

Writing in 1956, at the beginning of American desegregation efforts, Kallen believed that racism based on skin color was waning in the United States. However, racism based on culture was growing. This new racism claimed "that the American Idea and the American Way were hereditary to the Anglo-Saxon stock and to that stock only; that other stocks were incapable of producing them, learning them, and living them. If, then, America is to survive as a culture of creed and code, it can do so only so long as the chosen Anglo-Saxon race retains its integrity of flesh and spirit and freely sustains and defends their American expression against alien contamination."<sup>10</sup> Kallen traced this viewpoint to what he called cultural monism. For the cultural monist, the idea of the "melting pot" ought to be the model for dealing with newcomers to American culture. Immigrants must conform to the native way of life, assimilate, and drop their foreign heritage: "The American man would be a blended man wherein all the later and lesser colors would be lost in the initial one."<sup>11</sup> Cultural monism insists on this assimilation only because it maintains that the one native culture is superior to that of the newcomers. Thus, to demonstrate sincere loyalty to America, immigrants must give their "willing and obedient conformation" to American culture in "all the dimensions of the common life—civil, industrial, religious, aesthetic, intellectual."<sup>12</sup>

In a series of essays in *The Nation* magazine some forty years earlier, Kallen had suggested, in an argument that anticipates Charles Taylor's politics of recognition, that cultural monism is immoral because it inflicts a kind of harm upon immigrants.<sup>13</sup> The melting pot ideal insists that newcomers shed their old-world identities and cultures to be accepted. Kallen did not think that it was possible to erase one's heritage so easily or without real loss. One's family history and sense of place constitute a "psychophysical inheritance." This inheritance deeply conditions how one interprets the social world and understands one's own possibilities within it. Indeed, one's own sense of happiness depends, in part, on how one has been brought up by family, friends, and neighbors to experience concrete joy, hope, and sadness: "Men may change their clothes, their politics, their wives,

their religions, their philosophies, to a greater or lesser extent: they cannot change their grandfathers. Jews or Poles or Anglo-Saxons, would have to cease to be. The selfhood which is inalienable in them, and for the realization of which they require "inalienable" liberty, is ancestrally determined, and the happiness which they pursue has its form implied in ancestral endowment."<sup>14</sup> For Kallen, expecting a person to assimilate is to force her to deny this rich symbolic background, one's own familial and historical inheritance, and pretend to be less than a human person and more like a blank slate upon which American culture can begin to inscribe a new, and better, way of life. Thus, this lack of recognition constitutes what Taylor views as a kind of injustice against a person's sense of dignity, and the imposition of American culture through nativist efforts or what Iris Young would call "cultural imperialism."<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to the logic of the melting pot, Kallen argued for the idea of cultural pluralism, which he felt was more consonant with the ideal of American democracy. The aim of our liberal democracy, he maintained, is to serve as an instrument for the liberation and protection of human capacities. One of these capacities is the ability to take on, articulate, and develop a cultural or ethnic identity as part of the project of the "pursuit of happiness." Hence, instead of seeking to erase the culture of immigrants, American democracy ought to find a way to allow different cultural groups to retain their languages and to pursue their own unique ways of life, all the while cooperating through participation in the political and economic institutions of the nation. This would require, of course, that immigrants learn English as their public language, and become conversant with the political traditions of the United States. Yet, American culture would not replace their immigrant heritage or be understood as superior to their ways of life. Instead, it would be a new vocabulary and set of relations to allow multifarious groups to work together to build a community dedicated to helping one another realize their culturally defined capacities. Kallen compared this image of cultural pluralist democracy to an orchestra.

As in an orchestra, every type of instrument has its specific timbre and tonality, founded in its substance and form; as every type has its appropriate theme and melody in the whole symphony, so in society each ethnic group is the natural instrument, its spirit and culture are its theme and melody, and the harmony and dissonances and discords of them all make the symphony of civilization, with this difference: a musical symphony is written before it is played; in the symphony of civilization the playing is the writing, so that there is nothing so fixed and inevitable about its progressions as in music, so that within the limits set by nature they may vary at will, and the range and variety of the harmonies may become wider and richer and more beautiful.<sup>16</sup>

In this ideal, Kallen blurs two very different forms of cultural pluralism in an uneasy balance.<sup>17</sup> The first kind emphasizes nondiscrimination. It maintains that minority groups should be protected against discrimination and prejudice and be free to keep their heritage, consistent with the rights of others. However, the efforts to preserve minority culture should be private and not supported by the state. Clearly, Kallen rejected attempts to Americanize immigrants by public agencies and felt that they should be allowed to pursue their own cultural organizations and protect their language and traditions within American cities.

The second kind of cultural pluralism emphasizes "group rights." It maintains that the state has an obligation to enact measures that would protect or preserve minority cultures, such as by granting exclusive language rights, school curriculums, or regional autonomy to minority groups. By talking about democracy as a tool for the liberation of human capacities, Kallen seems to suggest that there is indeed a role for public agencies to play in helping minority individuals to keep alive their "psychophysical inheritance" that goes beyond merely protecting them against discrimination.

Latino cultural citizenship bears quite a bit of resemblance to Kallen's complex form of cultural pluralism. On the one hand, it seeks to affirm the membership of Latinos/as in American society and to protect them from discrimination. Renato Rosaldo and William Flores's ethnographic work reveals that Latinos/as have developed a

unique interpretative framework and vocabulary for understanding the prejudice and discrimination directed at them by dominant society. Latinos/as, therefore, seek to claim physical spaces such as neighborhoods, community centers, and parks where they can build "sacred places . . . that acquire a distinct Latino quality of life, a Latino flavor, *un ambiente Latino*."<sup>18</sup> In such spaces, they create places where they can feel comfortable and safe to express their identities and cultural traditions and develop Latino/a sensibilities and aesthetics. Thus, the idea of Latino cultural citizenship strongly emphasizes the first kind of cultural pluralism: non-discrimination as part of the project for American society.

Yet there also appears to be something like an element of pluralism for the group in Latino cultural citizenship, as well. Flores points out that the struggle for citizenship by minority groups in the United States has, in part, been a fight to include them in the body politic. But it has also been a struggle to assert new justice claims. Women, for instance, have struggled for full political enfranchisement, but along the way to gender equality have also developed new claims about the integrity of their reproductive choices and about the need to recognize protection from sexual harassment. Similarly, Flores argues, Latinos/as have asserted justice claims to bilingual education, ballots, and the ability to speak Spanish at the work place. Along the way, they have also asserted the claim to extend voting rights to undocumented immigrants on the grounds that "the undocumented are 'members' of Latino communities and should have the rights of any other such members."<sup>19</sup> For example, some communities have extended limited voting rights to noncitizens so that they may vote in community school board elections to elect the officials who will be making decisions about the education of their children in public schools. Of course, not all Latinos/as defend rights for undocumented immigrants. Yet, Flores maintains that for many Latinos/as, these new rights are important because they believe that the harsh treatment of undocumented immigrants is a barometer of what is to come for the greater Latino/a population: "Each stricture against the undocumented diminishes the rights of all Latinos, because as a group Latinos are targeted. Border patrol officials make few distinctions

between Latinos who are born here and those who are not. We are all suspect. This realization fuels the creation of a Latino consciousness. It coincides with a strong desire to create a distinct Latino social space and to claim rights as Latinos."<sup>20</sup>

As Latino cultural citizenship appears to be a version of cultural pluralism, it would appear to be susceptible to the same critiques. Michael Walzer argues that Kallen did an effective job in demonstrating the shortcomings of nativist thought, but his own proposals for a pluralistic public sphere reveal an "unexamined liberalism."<sup>21</sup> In Walzer's view, Kallen never explains the basis on which different groups will harmonize with one another politically or what exactly citizenship will require in a culturally pluralist state. Kallen's contemporary, John Dewey, raised this concern to Kallen in a letter:

I quite agree with your orchestra idea, but upon the condition we really get a symphony and not a lot of different instruments playing simultaneously. I never did care for the melting pot metaphor, but genuine assimilation *to one another*—not to Anglosaxondom—seems to be essential to America. That each cultural section should maintain its distinctive literary and artistic traditions seems to be most desirable, but in order that it might have more to contribute to others. I am not sure that you mean more than this, but there seems to be an implication of segregation geographical and otherwise. That we should recognize the segregation that undoubtedly exists is requisite, but in order that it may not be fastened upon us.<sup>22</sup>

#### *Multiculturalism and Liberal Democracy*

Jane Addams echoed Kallen and Dewey's concerns with the assimilationist message behind Americanization efforts, but her work sought to find some basis by which to harmonize a culturally pluralist state. In her 1908 essay on the treatment of immigrant children by public schools, Addams called it a "disservice" to immigrant students to teach them that the culture and practices of their parents, or of their former countries, are inferior to the way of life in the United States.<sup>23</sup>

Such a method simply teaches the children to look upon their ancestors with derision and poorly prepares them for their adjustment to American society. Addams counseled that teachers instead ought to open immigrant children to the “beauty and charm” of the old country life and see how richly it compares with American life. She thought it important for children to see the similarities and the differences of human cultures and not try to rank them or reduce them to one another. Rather, the point of such study is to help the student develop a “universal standard” by which to view human communities.<sup>24</sup> In another essay on Americanization, she recommends that our approach to immigrants should not be to instill American nationalism, but to get them to appreciate the diversity of our society and be able to appreciate human life “sub specie aeternitatis,” that is, from the standpoint of an eternal, God’s-eye view.<sup>25</sup>

Unlike Kallen’s cultural pluralism then, Addams’s approach might be called “multiculturalism.” Kallen seeks to have a society in which different cultures are recognized as distinct from one another, but those differences should not prevent cooperation for mutual political benefit. Addams, on the other hand, emphasizes that we not only should just recognize the diversity of cultures in American society, but seek to learn about them and become culturally competent in negotiating those differences, and even perhaps, in blending those differences together. Addams, for instance, encouraged different immigrant groups to attend each other’s cultural events at Hull House, a settlement house cofounded in 1889 by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates. In this way, groups can inform one another and learn to develop new ways of living together. Indeed, in her work *Newer Ideals of Peace*, Addams recommends studying the everyday life of immigrant groups in major American cities.<sup>26</sup> In this way, we learn how cultures adjust to one another. She believed that new methods of conflict resolution and prosperity could develop out of the conversations between native citizens and immigrants, learning about each other’s history and how these narratives can be resources for new strategies and visions of American urban life. Ultimately, the point of such study is

not to dwell on the differences, but to help cultivate a more “cosmopolitan” outlook that is not rooted in any one narrow nationalism or the limited provincialism of one culture, American or otherwise.

Addams’s multiculturalism, while an improvement over cultural pluralism in theorizing the harmonizing relationships within a diverse society, is susceptible to another critique. Her multiculturalism is a surprisingly “unrooted” cosmopolitanism. Different cultures are not so much homes in which to dwell but springboards from which to leap into a kind of moral universalism, the God’s-eye perspective from which all human cultures can rightly be appreciated. Yet in between one’s parochial culture and the universal point of view lie many levels of association and systems of governance. For instance, lying between the Polish and Italian neighborhoods with which Addams was familiar and the cosmopolitan viewpoint come the state institutions of American liberal democracy.

As Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman point out, quite a bit of democratic theory simply takes for granted liberal representative democracy as the starting point for imagining the contours of civic life and responsibility.<sup>27</sup> There is never any critical examination of liberal democratic institutions themselves since the activity for preserving minority groups is mostly non-governmental work, such as Hull House, occurring in what we might now call civil society. Kallen and Addams are no different in this sense—they never imagine alternatives to liberal representative democracy, but are instead concerned with how immigrant cultures can be best integrated into, and take their place within, an already existing system of governance (albeit one that is less dominated by white, Anglo cultural norms).

Latino cultural citizenship is no different in this regard. Flores admits that the notion does not directly challenge liberal democracy or free market economic institutions.<sup>28</sup> When he talks about Latino cultural citizenship redefining justice and claiming new rights, the examples he adduces involve expanding existing political rights, such as voting rights, to previously excluded groups, such as undocumented immigrants. Such a process fits the classical account of T. H. Marshall’s theory of evolving citizenship rights, and thus, rather than

being critical of it or trying to redefine it in significant ways, Latino cultural citizenship is firmly situated within the tradition of liberal democratic rights discourse.<sup>29</sup>

The trouble with the cultural pluralist and multicultural paradigms relying on transformation within civil society is that they fail to take into account how pervasive state power can be in constraining the democratic possibilities of civic groups. As Walzer explains: "The state itself is unlike all other associations. It frames both civil society and occupies space within it. It fixes the boundary conditions and the basic rules of all associational activity (including political activity). . . . A democratic state, which is continuous with other associations, has at the same time greater say about their quality and vitality."<sup>30</sup> For example, through various forms of regulatory, zoning, taxation, or immigration policies, the state can make it difficult for a civic group to offer services or organize immigrant communities. Additionally, not all civic groups are made equal. Some wield much more economic and political influence than others and can influence the state to further restrict the actions of immigrant communities. In such cases, civic groups that are not engaged in political networks with the state can be at a severe disadvantage, for they risk losing the protection that state agencies might have to offer. Again, Walzer points out: "For civil society, left to itself, generates radically unequal power relationships, which only the state can challenge."<sup>31</sup>

#### *The Limits of Pluralism and Multiculturalism*

Some thinkers associated with the American pragmatist tradition point to a more insidious problem with simply taking liberal representative democracy and rights discourse for granted. They suggest that it may be difficult or impossible for some groups to express their justice claims within liberal rights discourse. Some minority group claims are precisely about trying to find room for values or traditions that are not usually addressed by liberal state institutions.

W. E. B. Du Bois is best known for analyzing the phenomenon of "double consciousness"—the sense of knowing oneself as a Black

person and as an American citizen, and knowing how these identities are not easily reconcilable. Throughout most of his long life, Du Bois organized to achieve civic and political equality for African Americans and felt that the struggle for civil rights and full integration ought to be above the simple demand for Black economic self-sufficiency offered by figures such as Booker T. Washington. However, Du Bois was not content to imagine that the struggles of African Americans should end with integration into a liberal democratic state and a full extension of civil and political rights to Blacks. In a poignant essay in 1926, Du Bois writes:

What is this thing we are after? . . . We want to be Americans, full fledged Americans, with all the rights of other American citizens. But is that all? Do we want simply to be Americans? Once in a while through all of us there flashes some clairvoyance, some clear idea, of what America really is. We who are dark can see America in a way that white Americans cannot. And seeing our country thus, are we satisfied with its present goals and ideals? . . . Pushed aside as we have been in America, there has come to us . . . a vision of what the world could be if it were really a beautiful world . . . a world where men know, where men create, where they realize themselves and where they enjoy life. It is that sort of a world we want to create for ourselves and for all America.<sup>32</sup>

Here Du Bois articulates a utopian vision that highlights certain values, such as knowledge, creative freedom, self-realization, and pleasure, as guiding principles for a restructuring of American institutions and the conception of citizenship. These are not meant to refer to abstract, universal ideals, but to ones that emanate from, and are informed by, the specific historical experiences of African Americans. This minority culture is to be the ground for a new interpretation of culture and national destiny, placed in the language of social goods and sentiments of life, not individual rights discourse.<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, Martin Luther King, Jr. is often taken to be calling for a multicultural society in which African Americans are integrated into mainstream culture and accorded the same rights as other citizens. In particular, his remarks in the 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech about



judging people not on their skin color but by the "content of their character" give some the impression that King sought a completely colorblind society in which we all would see beyond the narrow provincialism of race and through the eyes of humanity. Yet King was clear that integration, for him, did not simply mean assimilation into the American cultural and political status quo. In one of his final works King wrote: "There is a need for a radical restructuring of the architecture of American society. . . . Let us, therefore, not think of our movement as one that seeks to integrate the Negro into all the existing values of American history. Let us be those creative dissenters who will call our beloved nation to a higher destiny, to a new plateau of compassion, to a more noble expression of humaneness."<sup>34</sup> For King, American society needed to confront the structural injustices of racism, militarism, and materialism and, in his view, this would only happen by giving expression to the unique perspectives of the African American community. King made it clear that he did not think African Americans were inherently morally superior to whites, but he did think, like Du Bois, that the historical experience of the African American community had given it an ability to comprehend better the revolution of values needed to move the nation toward a kind of social justice beyond liberal multiculturalism: "After all, no other minority has been so constantly, brutally and deliberately exploited. But because of this very exploitation, Negroes bring a special spiritual and moral contribution to American life—a contribution without which America could not survive."<sup>35</sup> King thought this history would guide changes in the way American citizenship is conceived to provide for "more effective participation in major decisions" as well as a redesign of major political and market institutions that would alter fundamental power imbalances in these systems.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, King did not live long enough to provide more substance to this progressive challenge to liberal democratic multiculturalism, but he did indicate that social justice today would require envisioning alternatives to our notions of state institutions and citizenship.

### *The Intercultural Alternative*

In *The Idea of Latin America*, Walter D. Mignolo charts the growth of a cultural and political movement that directly challenges cultural pluralism and multiculturalism. I argue that it might offer a model for conceptualizing the politics of a diverse society. In Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, *interculturalism* is the name given to the recent efforts of indigenous activists to create a political alternative to official state policies of bilingual education, or ethnic multiculturalism. For these activists, multiculturalism means that "hegemonic principles of knowledge, education, the concept of the state and government, political economy, morality, etc., are controlled by the state, and below the control of the state, people have 'freedom' to go with their 'cultures' as far as they do not challenge 'the epistemic principles' grounding politics, economy, and ethics as managed by the state."<sup>37</sup> This point echoes those made by Kymlicka and Walzer that cultural pluralism and multiculturalism do not attempt to reorganize the state or economy but instead try to find ways to accommodate minority cultural expression within the confines of liberal democratic government.

Interculturalism, like the aspirations of Du Bois or King, does not merely seek inclusion into already existing systems of governance, political rights, and cultural understandings. Rather, indigenous intellectuals and activists are trying to build the foundations for a "plurinational" state in which indigenous cosmology and languages exist alongside the mainstream European-based perspectives and are used as equally valid resources for the construction of new systems of state, economy, and culture. As Enrique Dussel notes, a pluri-national state "institutionalizes the lives of many nations," meaning that new institutions and forms of politics must be created to represent the diversity of ethnic groups within one country.<sup>38</sup> For instance, in some Latin American countries, new political and legal forums have been created that allow indigenous communities to promulgate laws, or conduct legal proceedings, according to their own traditions or their

own understandings of democratic representation and procedure. The goal is not to build subaltern counterpublics that operate in the margins of liberal democratic society, but to engage indigenous and mainstream ways of thinking in transformative dialogue about what is needed to concretize the vision that King called for in his revolution of values.

One of the more developed examples of this effort is the attempt by the Zapatista rebels to build an alternative system of government, called *juntas de buen gobierno* or “councils of good government,” in Zapatista-held territory in southern Mexico. The *juntas* are founded on indigenous principles of consensus decision making and they base economic distribution within these communities on ideas of reciprocity rather than on individual competition. These councils operate in different towns and villages and associate with one another in a larger federation called *Caracoles* or “snail shells.” As Mignolo points out, the *Caracoles* recreate a “cellular” association—a horizontal ordering of interconnected and reciprocal cells or nodes—that existed among some of the indigenous people of Latin America before the imposition by the Europeans of a hierarchal, or centralized, model of the state.<sup>39</sup> Mignolo calls this Zapatista experiment a “counterstance”: “It is more than an oppositional or resisting consciousness. It is a practice of disengaging and looking forward toward a future in which ‘other worlds are possible,’ as the World Social Forum has it, or ‘toward a world in which many worlds can co-exist’ as the Zapatistas have taught us to think.”<sup>40</sup> The point of building the *Caracoles* is not to try to create opportunities for direct democracy that can exist underneath, or be linked to, the federal Mexican government. Rather, the idea is to disengage from a system of governance that many indigenous communities find corrupt and unresponsive, and experiment with an alternative that recuperates their lost traditions, combining them with radical politics oriented toward a globalizing world.<sup>41</sup> Put another way, the Zapatista effort might be called “decolonial”—an attempt to loosen the grip of European ideals of state and society on the imagination of indigenous people and create working models of

governance that find their origins in worldviews other than the dominant mainstream.

Mignolo finds evidence of this decolonial imagination among U.S. Latino/a theorists, particularly the work of Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa.<sup>42</sup> Anzaldúa’s work indicates that there are resources within Chicano/a culture for attempting an intercultural counterstance within the United States. I want to offer a couple of examples that might underscore such an effort.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Chicano civil rights leader Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales advocated for community organizations that would allow Mexican Americans to have meaningful control of education, economic investment, and political representation within their own neighborhoods. He also called for public works programs that would reconfigure public housing and parks in Chicano/a *barrios* to reflect specific cultural attitudes toward communalism and family leisure.<sup>43</sup> Gonzales was not alone among Chicano/a intellectuals in calling for the development of alternative democratic institutions that would work to express the particular justice claims of Mexican American communities in the Southwest.<sup>44</sup> In addition, Devon Pena has detailed the preservation of indigenous and Spanish water conservation practices, antedating the American occupation of the Southwest, in Colorado and Northern New Mexico.<sup>45</sup> In these areas, some Mexican American villages maintain communal decision-making systems about the distribution and use of irrigation water that were formally overridden in the late nineteenth century by the American legal system’s emphasis on individual property ownership and appropriation. Through a process of historical memory, some Latino/a communities in the Southwest continue practices that are conceptually at odds, though not technically illegal, with dominant American legal standards about water rights and land usage. These practices are about building ties of mutual trust and responsibility among water users, as well as inculcating an ethic of sustainable water usage, even when the dominant legal system could allow the community members to disregard the water commons if they so desired.

*Conclusion*

American pragmatism is a tradition that has rejected the simplistic model of the "melting pot" for understanding the relationship of immigrant communities to mainstream society. Instead, thinkers such as Kallen and Addams attempt to theorize ways in which immigrants might catalyze a new understanding of American democracy and citizenship, one that is more participatory and deliberative than the representative republic of the Framers. However, I have argued that within the pragmatist tradition, from thinkers such as Du Bois and King, comes a challenge to reconsider our commitment to liberal representative democracy and rights discourse in a manner that Kallen and Addams do not. These figures maintain that there are justice claims, emanating from the historical experience of oppressed minority communities, that cannot be expressed completely in terms of individual rights or through the chambers of parliamentary government. I indicate an alternative model for theorizing the relationship of minority communities to the mainstream that is more in the spirit of Du Bois' and King's ideals: interculturalism. This model suggests that immigrant and minority cultures not only organize within nongovernmental groups to nurture aspects of their culture and push for nondiscriminatory legislation, but also to consider ways to reconstitute institutions of governance and democratic community building. I have offered some examples which illustrate the existence of values and practices within Latino/a communities in the United States that attempt to raise issues of alternative public institutions, conceptions of public space, and communal decision making, and that might be useful resources for engaging the pragmatist imagination in rooting interculturalism in North American soil. My hope is that serious consideration of the intercultural challenge might reduce the distance between the civic and political patriotism that many new immigrants experience in the United States and thereby lessen the possibility of political violence that potentially attends such alienation.

## FIFTEEN

UNDERSTANDING IMMIGRATION AS LIVED  
PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Daniel Campos



The process of immigration is one of the most transformative phenomena in the Americas today. In its personal, social, political, and cultural dimensions, it affects the lives of individuals, communities, societies, and nations throughout the American continent.<sup>1</sup> In this essay I attempt to give a philosophical account of the personal experience of immigration. I propose to examine the experience of South-North immigration in the Americas, with careful consideration of the reflections that some Anglo- and Latin American thinkers make possible for us regarding this issue. Charles S. Peirce's philosophical account of the evolution of personality undergirds the conceptual structure of my exposition. Accordingly, I will describe the experience of immigrating as one in which individuals undergo deep transformations at the affective level of feeling, emotion, and sentiment (firstness), relations to people and places (secondness), and goals, aims, and objectives (thirdness as guiding *telos*) in their personal lives. Since I consider the view that one's beliefs should be informed and evaluated by personal experience to be a hallmark of