

# Racial Ambiguity to Racialized Identity

## Race Relations in the Texas Borderlands

Andrew Eckhoff

### *Faculty Introduction*

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Andrew Eckhoff's article explores the evolution of race relations along the Texas borderlands and the ways in which national and regional trends and events swayed these relationships. He builds on the scholarship of historians whose works have moved beyond debates between Texas traditionalists and revisionists regarding ethnocentrism, sexism, warfare, racism, and regionalism. The work debunks the notion of Texas exceptionalism as the explanation for the state's success, and challenges the popular binary tropes in Texas history of Native American versus White, Latino versus White, and Black versus White. Instead, as argued by Eckhoff, Leiker, and SHSU professor of history Robert T. Cashion, a conglomeration of groups and experiences contributed to the development of Texas and the United States and in multiple ways.

### *Abstract*

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This paper focuses on the concept of racial ambiguity and the shifting "racial border," a phrase used by historian James Leiker. The study relies on primary documents, from a forty-five year period, including Texas laws and statutes, regional newspapers and editorials, and census data. The documents identify the trend of the shifting racial border, its effects on the transformative racial and ethnic relations historically, and how these groups interacted in the evolving Texas frontier. The trends discussed illuminate how race relations evolved in the state, as well as explain later patterns of structural occurrences. Texas is thus an integral actor in the history of the United States predicated on physical and cultural boundaries.

*“If history is to be creative, to anticipate a possible future without denying the past, it should, I believe, emphasize new possibilities by disclosing those hidden episodes of the past when, even if in brief flashes, people showed their ability to resist, to join together, occasionally to win. I am supposing, or perhaps only hoping, that our future may be found in the past’s fugitive moments of compassion rather than in its solid centuries of warfare.”<sup>1</sup>*

In 1528, Spain sent an expedition led by Pánfilo Narváez to what is now modern-day Florida. Narváez had been sent to conquer the lands of the indigenous people on the peninsula. Tragedy befell the expedition early, as the ships were assaulted by hurricanes, disease, famine, and mutiny by the time the group made landfall. This would be the last time anyone saw Narváez alive; this period also marks the beginning of the first cross-cultural experience involving Indigenous Americans and Europeans in Texas,<sup>2</sup> as survivors of the expedition made their way to the Texas coast. Washed up in Galveston Bay, the ill-fated expedition’s treasurer, Cabeza de Vaca and his fellow survivors, made contact with the Native Americans of the Isla de Malhado, or Isle of Misfortune (today Galveston Island). After a spring illness decimated the remaining crew, only four men remained, including Cabeza de Vaca, Alonso, Dorantes, and Dorantes’ slave, Estavanico.

The Spaniards would survive by becoming the slaves of the Coahuiltecan ethnic group, after they had witnessed the stranded Europeans commit cannibalism. This first instance of European and American worlds colliding initiated the trend of racial conflict and discrimination that would become prevalent in the region. Contemporary historians focus on the construct of race in Texas in a similar light to that of the Southern United States, usually by only pointing out the Black-White binary and its impact on society today in the twenty-first century. Texas, however, holds a deeper, more complex racial heritage, both good and bad.

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<sup>1</sup> Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States*, 5th ed. (New York: Harper Perennial, 2003), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Native Americans came from an admixture of cultures, which were reflected in their multiple life exchanges over the course of several thousand years.

Texas, a unique historical place, has witnessed the intermingling of several races and nationalities over the last 500 years. This paper will examine the changing racial and ethnic dynamics in what ultimately became the Lone Star State and the ambiguity that persists amongst the Anglo, Tejano and Hispanic national, Native American, and Black populations of Texas, particularly the earliest groups, from Texas' time as a part of indigenous America to the collapse of the Confederacy.

## **First Contact: Indigenous Texas, 1526-1821**

The adventures of Cabeza de Vaca in precolonial Texas marks the first time that the native people of Texas interacted with people both of African and European descent. On the Isle of Misfortune, the native people cared for the lost Spanish explorers after their craft had become stranded. Initially, they behaved compassionately toward the Spaniards, but a series of events that occurred on the isle including the act of cannibalism by the Spaniards ultimately caused the native populace to turn on de Vaca's group. A member of an indigenous tribe intervened on behalf of the Spaniards, sparing them from execution.<sup>3</sup> Though rescued from death, Indians enslaved de Vaca's expedition party. The slavery they experienced differed from the European notion of feudal servitude. More comparable to indentured servitude, their employers expected them to pay off a debt to the original settlers instead of serving under them as permanent chattel or their inferiors. Cabeza de Vaca served the Coahuiltecan during this time as a traveling merchant and learned about the land and the nearby indigenous populations. Several months later, de Vaca's group would escape the ethnic group in an attempt to trek back to the Spanish-controlled portion of what is now modern-day Mexico. This trek lasted four years, from 1532 to 1536.

De Vaca's expedition showed the first example of not only cross-cultural interaction, but also a contrast of differing racial views.

<sup>3</sup> Anthropologist Ivan Van Sertima wrote *They Came Before Columbus: The African Presence in Ancient America* (New York: Random House, 1974) and argued that West Africans from the Empire of Mali immigrated to what later became Mexico in the fourteenth century. The evidence, according to Sertima, can be found in the artifacts such as San Lorenzo Tenochtitlán; Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *The Journey of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and His Companions from Florida to the Pacific, 1528-1536*, translated from his own narrative by Fanny Bandeur, ed. Ad F. Bandelier (New York: Allerton Book Co., 1904), from Brigham Young University Library, accessed December 5, 16, <https://archive.org/details/journeyofalvarnu00n>.

Throughout de Vaca's account of the group's travels across native territory, he refers to the collective group as the Christians and makes mention of Estavanico in a completely separate context. Dorantes, a fellow Spaniard, owned Estavanico. Despite Estavanico's conversion to Christianity, de Vaca always mentions him in the text as an independent existence from his band of Euro-Christians. Being a Moor originally, Estavanico acted as the middleman between the Spaniards and indigenous people, but again, the other Spaniards treated the African as a completely separate entity to their group. Whether this was truly a reality of de Vaca's expedition, or a purposeful omission from his later writings, is unclear. Yet the estrangement of Estavanico by de Vaca's expedition shows the evident persistence of the Spanish racial hierarchy during their eight-year trek in the Texas wilderness. Native Americans, on the other hand, did not particularly treat the Spaniards with any profound prejudices. They included them in their traditions and showed them compassion when individuals fell ill, until they upset the indigenous people's sensibilities and caused them to grow suspicious of the explorers' motives. As well, Dorantes and the Viceroy of New Spain bartered the former Muslim North African, Estavanico. Despite his contribution to the important expedition as a survivor, fervent Christian healer, and later, a scout, Estavanico knew the Spanish—through their culture and lifestyle—would always see him as an inferior, subservient human being. Estavanico ultimately stayed in Mexico to serve as a guide for future Spanish expeditions. He served in a semi-independent role from his Spanish supervisors, regularly keeping a group of indigenous people in his company whilst ranging ahead of the Spanish expedition. In spite of this, Zuni Indians of present-day Arizona murdered Estavanico in 1539 due to anxiety surrounding the threat of a perceived Spanish invasion.<sup>4</sup>

Following the events of de Vaca's adventures in Texas, the next generation of Spanish settlers established missions in the 1580s. The Spanish Crown, through royal-appointed priests and viceroys, controlled institutions through the conversion of Native Americans, negotiated with any hostile groups, and held the lands for the country of Spain.<sup>5</sup> These missions established a more permanent environment

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<sup>4</sup> Alwyn Barr, *Black Texans: A History of African Americans in Texas 1528-1995* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 2-3.

<sup>5</sup> Robert A. Calvert, Gregg Cantrell, and Arnaldo de León, *The History of Texas* (Wheeling: Harlan Davidson Inc., 1990), 18.

for Indigenous Americans, Spanish, and African interaction. The interactions between the Spanish and indigenous people typically resulted in violent clashes, such as the action of Bartolomé de Las Casas and Diego de Landa. The Spaniards' conquest ultimately claimed the lives of around three million indigenous people over the course of fourteen years.<sup>6</sup> The Spanish attempted to impose their influence by transforming the area of South Texas and northern Mexico into a series of settlements that heavily resembled the towns of Spain. These missions and attempted settlements would allow for people of African descent to escape and assimilate into the cultures of native peoples and Mestizos,<sup>7</sup> living along the Rio Grande Valley.<sup>8</sup> The missions of the Spanish, though spread throughout the Rio Grande River Valley, did not offer a solid grasp of the land that the Spanish had laid claim to at this time.

A century later, French explorers also made contact with indigenous peoples of Texas. The expedition of Robert De Salle, in spite of being a failure, caused great concern amongst the Spanish government. The Spanish responded to the French by launching a new campaign of expeditions into Caddo-controlled Texas, which is now the modern-day eastern portion of Texas, in the late 1680s.<sup>9</sup> These acts of conquest by the Spanish, and their attitudes toward race, would set up the future conflict that would define the Mexican revolution.

## **Racial Ambiguity: Tejano Texas, 1820-1836**

Throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Spanish held the regions of Mexico and much of the Southwest. During this time, they fought and subjugated several groups of native people for the sake of establishing new missions in areas of modern-day Texas, New Mexico, and California. The Spanish racial hierarchy became prevalent in the portions of Mexico and southern Texas, also known as New Spain, by the beginning of the 1800s. The people of

<sup>6</sup> Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, 7.

<sup>7</sup> People of mixed-racial identities, either of Indigenous (American Indians and Pacific Islanders) and European, especially Spanish or Portuguese; or Indigenous, European, and African heritage.

<sup>8</sup> Barr, *Black Texans: A History of African Americans in Texas 1528-1536*, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Calvert, Cantrell, and León, *The History of Texas*, 20-21; Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, (Seville: N. P., 1552); Diego de Landa, *Relación de Las Cosas de Yucatán* (Spain, N.P., 1566); and Zinn, *A People's History of The United States*, 7.

Spanish descent were at the top of this system followed by Mestizos, native peoples, and slaves of African origin, in that order. The Mestizo population came about in the region following the settlement of the Spanish and their sexual intermingling with indigenous peoples. The Mestizo population grew to be the dominant majority in New Spain.

The system of racial superiority in the Spanish colony eventually inspired the work of Fathers Hidalgo and Morelos, who orated and helped to foster the growth of the Mexican War for Independence.<sup>10</sup> Their speeches consisted of fiery denunciations of Spanish domination over Mestizo and native peoples alike, ideals highly inspired by the rhetoric found in American writings regarding equality. These speeches formed the framework of the Mexican ideals and issues that would be debated over the next several decades, most notably the issues of slavery and the power of the national government. Mexico, which formally broke away from Spain on September 16, 1810, fought in the Mexican War for Independence for the next eleven years, from 1810 to 1821. The years of bloody warfare that followed created an environment of political instability that lasted for several decades in Mexico following the War for Independence. Much like the Spanish before them, the Mexican government had difficulties holding the northernmost territory of Mexico, Coahuila, and Texas.

## **The Mexican Constitution and the Roots of the Texas Revolt**

Though the Mexican government had predominantly negative feelings toward the practice of slavery, Stephen F. Austin managed to negotiate with the state governments to tolerate the Anglo practice of slavery in Mexico-controlled Texas. The need for Mexico to place settlers into the Texas region took precedence over their political ideals on the matter of slavery, especially since the promise of cheap acreage proved to be an alluring prospect for Anglo settlers. These subsequent laws eased the process for the migrants to assimilate into the state of Texas and stated that slaveholders “shall obey the laws already established, and which hereafter may be established on the subject.”<sup>11</sup> The

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<sup>10</sup> Gray Clayton Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas: Ethnic Cleansing in the Promised Land 1820-1875* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005), 43-44.

<sup>11</sup> Rafael Ramos y Valdez, “Law for Promoting Colonization in the State of Coahuila and Texas,” *Decree No. 16*, March 24, 1825 (Texas State Library and Research Commis-

Mexican government was not comfortable with the Anglo practice of slavery that was becoming an extension of the Antebellum South. Most Mestizos viewed slavery as contemptable, since it was one of the predominant issues of the Mexican War for Independence. The relationship between the Anglo immigrants in Texas and the Mexican government proved to be rather strenuous. The Anglo communities in the United States and Texas constantly read speculative and inflammatory articles aimed at the Mexican government's stance on abolition, in the hopes of discouraging other U.S. citizens from moving to the region. Ultimately, on September 15, 1829 Vicente Guerrero declared that the institution of slavery was outlawed in the territories of Mexico.<sup>12</sup> Despite the fact that the government of Mexico had no way of enforcing the decree on the northern territory, the decree and the imprisonment of Stephen F. Austin in 1833 caused unrest amongst the Texas settlers.

By this time, the cotton industry had already taken hold in the Texas territory, so much so, that it was no longer attached to the identity of Mexico. Despite the institution of slavery and its trade being outlawed in Mexico, Spanish critics of slavery could do little to prevent slave culture from permeating into the northern territory.

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Anglo settlement became the dominant culture in Texas, removing traditional Catholic and Mexican government influence from the region in place of an extension of the United States' Southern plantation economy. Being a witness to this movement, General Manuel Terán became so distraught by this trend that he committed suicide in 1832 in San Antonio, impaling himself with his own sword. In his last written letter, Terán stated simply that Texas will become “whatever God wills.”<sup>13</sup>

Though most Mexican citizens had views that differed from the Anglo immigrants, a certain group of Mexicans born in Texas, commonly known as Tejanos, sided with the Texian revolutionaries. Despite the fact that certain Tejanos and native groups respected Anglo

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sion, Austin, Texas): 105.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew J. Torget, *Seeds of Empire: Cotton, Slavery, and the Transformation of the Texas Borderlands, 1800-1850* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2015), 143-144.

<sup>13</sup> Torget, *Seeds of Empire*, 156-157.

immigrants, the Anglos of Texas would, after the Texas Revolution, which lasted from early October 1835 to April 21, 1836, separate themselves from all non-Whites and find conflict amongst other culturas, including Tejanos who ironically aided them. These events would lead to the rise of the Texian revolutionaries and the foundation of the Republic of Texas in 1836.

## **The Racial Border Fluctuates: The Republic and State of Texas, 1836-1860**

At the time the Republic of Texas formed, cotton-based slave labor grew as did the use of chattel slaves in other realms of the fledgling nation-state's economy. An examination of slavery along the East Texas-South Texas border especially helps investigators understand the rise of cotton-based plantation slavery and the state's fascinating multiracial, multi-ethnic diversity. According to records, Bexar County compromised one of Texas' earliest slave holding counties. Having a large Hispanic population and being considerably more arid compared to East Texas, Bexar County only had three slaves in the entire county in 1836.<sup>14</sup> The county of Matagorda, which is located near the Gulf Coast on the edge of both East and South Texas, was a large slave-holding county. Though no census data is available before 1850, the county had a slave population that easily surpassed its Anglo population by almost three hundred people. Comparatively, Refugio County, which is located even further south along the Gulf Coast, had a slave population of only nineteen by 1850.<sup>15</sup> By 1860, this trend of separate regional trends in slavery breaks down in interesting ways. The slave population of Matagorda County remained the majority, though the Anglo population managed to lessen the disparity amongst them. Refugio County's slave population increased to 234. This was a drastic increase, but it still only accounted for less than 10 percent of the population. Bexar County, over the course of twenty-three years, saw an increase of the slave population to around 1,405, a 468 percent increase in the slave population.<sup>16</sup> This data shows the gradual spread of the southern system of slavery across a selection of counties in

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<sup>14</sup> Andrew J Torget, *Texas Slavery Project*, accessed December 5, 2017, <http://www.texaslaveryproject.org>.

<sup>15</sup> Bureau of Census, *Seventh Census of the United States: 1850, Non-population Census Schedules, Slave Schedules* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1850).

<sup>16</sup> Bureau of Census, *Eighth Census of the United States: 1860, Non-population Census Schedules, Slave Schedules* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1860).



Texas. Counties in the east were quick to adopt the practice in order to accommodate cotton agriculture, but counties to the West and South, though seeing increases in the slave population over time, kept their slave populations at around a 10 percent and generally had more diverse ethnic populations.

The groups that inhabited Texas in the nineteenth century included the diverse groups of Native Americans. These groups included the Apache, Comanche, Caddo, Karankawa, and Tonkawa peoples. The Spanish governor, Antonio Cordero, once commented on the ways of the native people after a meeting in 1807. Cordero spoke of the Americanindians in a manner of respect for their ways of peace and resented that that the public defined them as savages.<sup>17</sup> Yet, by the 1820s, a majority of the native populace had already been displaced or killed by disease or violence. Laws forced Apaches, for example, towards New Mexico, and, ironically, the group offered services to Anglo settlers against Comanche people. The groups that inhabited the Gulf Coast, the Tonkawas and Karankawas, had been so devastated by diseases that they could not offer any resistance against Anglo settlement and were ultimately displaced and removed entirely from the region. Additionally, indigenous peoples that had been displaced and forcefully relocated into Texas became locked in conflict with the Native American Indians of the area. These people, which included Cherokee, Creeks, and others, were already familiar with U.S. views and culture. As such, Anglo Texans had racist inclinations and viewed the Texas groups as savages, which ultimately caused conflict amongst the different native peoples and between white Texans and Americanindians.<sup>18</sup>

Anglo views on the First Americans can be traced back to the writings of influential people of the late eighteenth century. Thomas Jefferson wrote one of the first major writings on American Indians and described them as noble but simple. Several writers furthered this perspective, but the author John Filson instead challenged these with condescending beliefs. For example, when discussing Daniel Boone's frequent conflict with First Americans, Filson personifies them as backwards and brutal.<sup>19</sup> Because of these prevailing attitudes, members of the Texas Rangers frequently and violently clashed with First

<sup>17</sup> Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas*, 22.

<sup>18</sup> Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas*, 24-27.

<sup>19</sup> Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas*, 37-38.

Americans. The rangers were rarely composed of individuals that did not have violent histories and tendencies. Quite often, these rangers led violent raids on members of the indigenous population, giving little regard to the wellbeing of anyone caught in the crossfire. These attacks by the rangers would then cause a retaliatory attack by the Americanindians, which ultimately reinforced the racial stereotype that Anglos of the time had developed toward indigenous peoples.

Despite these tensions, Texas' President Sam Houston led a platform of native cooperation that had varying degrees of success. Houston's successor Mirabeau Lamar would lead a series of devastating campaigns against Native Americans of Texas. These actions shocked Houston, and, after his return to the presidency in 1841, he attempted to reconcile with indigenous peoples. During the negotiations, Houston attempted to settle boundary disputes between the native peoples and convince Comanche communities to raid Mexico after Santa Anna raided San Antonio. These negotiations were ultimately unsuccessful due to the fact that the issue of a defined border in Texas was not made, and would remain so until after the annexation of Texas in 1845.<sup>20</sup> The issue of a defined border would ultimately cause an increase in the conflicts amongst Anglos and native peoples, which would ultimately reinforce expansionist rhetoric. After the annexation of Texas, the Americanindians would be constrained into reservations.

Despite the constraint of the native populace into a confined space, the violence between indigenous peoples and Anglo settlers would continue, such as the raids of Satanta, of the Kiowas, and roaming Anglo vigilantes that attacked groups indiscriminately. The end of potential cooperation came with the assassination of Robert Neighbors in 1859, who was the last official in the office of Indian Affairs in Texas.<sup>21</sup> Despite the violence on the western territories of Texas settlements, the cotton economy of the newborn state flourished.

## **The Racial Border Shifts: Texas as a Slave State, 1845-1861**

While Texas's southern border comprised people of Mestizos extraction and western Texas still had American Indians, in the east,

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<sup>20</sup> Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas*, 210-211.

<sup>21</sup> Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas*, 314-326.

mainly because of the rising cotton-based slave economy, Blacks made up a considerable number of the East Texas population in the mid-nineteenth century. After Texas joined the Union in 1845, even African-descent people made up the majority of a few counties serving as 10 to 40 percent of the total population in many places. The antebellum South's cultural influence extended over a majority of the inhabited Texas frontier through slavery and the cotton industry. This identity was so set in the minds of its representatives that, in a

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letter appealing toward the annexation of Texas, a list of demands sent to the U.S. government included a stipulation that called for the respect of the Texas citizens to own slaves.<sup>22</sup> This demand held similar urgency with the guarantee that the state would maintain its autonomy in the Union. Although antebellum laws corroborate this desired societal choice, newspapers also confirm the importance of slave labor in Texas and the anxiety of Whites towards free Blacks and their threat to their livelihood. An interesting case involved runaway slave John Vose. A newspaper ad, posted by the owner, Edmund Andrews, gives some insight into African American agency during the era of slavery and White fear. Apparently, Vose kidnapped a free woman by the name of Rebecca Ellis, probably in the attempt to give Whites the idea that he and Ellis lived as a free couple.<sup>23</sup> This particular instance is intriguing because the slave holder does not mention the race of the slave or say anything racial. He points out that the runaway had broken the law and needed punishing. Interestingly, the runaway advertisement also expresses criticism toward the runaway due to his decision to include an innocent free Black in his actions. The ad suggests that the slave's actions equated to the illegal enslavement of a free-born person. In contrast, a second advert involved Joe, a Brazoria County slave owned by planter John Jones, who placed a reward for the capture of

<sup>22</sup> David Burnett to James Collinworth and Peter W. Grayson, May 26, 1836, reprinted by H. P. H. Gammel, *The Laws of Texas, 1822-1896* (Austin: Gammel's Book Store, 1897), in George Garrison, ed., *Diplomatic Correspondence of the Republic of Texas*, Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1908 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911) Texas Slavery Project, accessed December 5, 2016, <http://www.texasslaveryproject.org/>.

<sup>23</sup> Edmund Andrews, “Notice,” *Telegraph and Texas Register*, September 27, 1836, <http://www.texasslaveryproject.org>.

the runaway, who traveled with a Mexican accomplice.<sup>24</sup> The runaway in question is actually a slave named Joe, who was the slave owned by William Travis. Captured by Santa Anna after the Battle of the Alamo, Joe eventually secured his release but never returned to his master. Instead, according to some sources, he fled to Alabama.<sup>25</sup> Even slaves who had served in the Texan Revolution were in the good graces of the Anglo population, similar to the Tejanos. The typical assumption of the annexation of Texas is that northern politicians staunchly opposed it on the grounds that it would shift power into the hands of the slave states, but a certain few members of the northern Democrats feared the migration of slaves to the North. In a bid to solve the issue of wayward former slaves, the Northern Democrats hoped that the inclusion of Texas into the Union would serve to attract members of both free and enslaved African Americans to the South.<sup>26</sup> Slaves and free Blacks throughout the country, but particularly in the slaveholding South, faced so many uncertainties. Sometimes this nervous anxiety heightened racial bigotry toward African-descent peoples.

Making up a large portion of the Texas population, Tejanos were an integral part of the Texas Revolution and its success. Yet despite their contributions, the Tejano populace would soon be the targets of paranoia and discrimination by the Anglo masses. The famous battle cries of the Texas revolutionaries during the battle of San Jacinto ultimately result in negative attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, in spite of their previous affiliations. The most famous of these Tejanos was Juan Seguin. Seguin held a prominent place in the Revolutionary Army and was a successful politician during the days of the Republic, but was eventually driven out of Texas in 1842. Additionally, expeditions held against Mexico, such as the Santa Fe Expedition, and the raid on San Antonio by Santa Anna cause mistrust to form amongst the two populations of Texas. An example of formal prejudice against Tejanos can be seen in the following excerpt:

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<sup>24</sup> John Jones, "Fifty Dollars," *Telegraph and Texas Register*, June 8, 1837, <http://www.texasslaveryproject.org>.

<sup>25</sup> Ron Jackson, "In the Alamo's Shadow," *True West Magazine*, <https://www.tamu.edu/faculty/ccbn/dewitt/adp/history/1836/blacks/jackson.html>.

<sup>26</sup> Neil Foley, *White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California press, 1999).

MATAGORDA. - The people of Matagorda county have held a meeting and ordered every Mexican to leave the county. To strangers this may seem wrong, but we hold it to be perfectly right and highly necessary; but a word of explanation should be given. In the first place, then, there are none but the lower class or "Peon" Mexicans in the county; secondly, they have no fixed domicile, but hang around the plantations, taking the likeliest negro girls for wives; and, thirdly, they often steal horses, and these girls, too, and endeavor to run them to Mexico. We should rather have anticipated an appeal to Lynch law, than the mild course which has been adopted.<sup>27</sup>

Forced migration of Mexicans in Texas became common in the years following the revolution. Yet, the Anglo communities met heavy resistance from German residents, who opposed the forced migrations of Mexicans.<sup>28</sup> Following the annexation of Texas in 1845, conflict along the U.S.-Mexico border caused further violence amongst Mexican and Anglo populations. With the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the violence amongst Mexican and Anglo citizens took focus on the issues of land ownership, due to the vagueness of the treaty's guidelines. Prior to the Civil War, Anglo citizens in Texas became increasingly wary of the possibility of a Mexican-backed slave uprising. Fears were realized after slaves were found in possession of weapons in Colorado County. As a result, several Mexicans were accused of treason and forced either to leave the county or face execution.<sup>29</sup> Along the Rio Grande, the border area between Texas and Mexico was an area where the Mexican peón system collided with the slavery of Texas. This area became a traffic zone between both Mexicans attempting to flee peonage to Texas and slaves fleeing into Mexico for similar reasons. This traffic caused serious debate about extending the influence of peonage or slavery, but was ultimately ended by the beginning of the Civil War.

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<sup>27</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey through Texas; or, a Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier* (New York: Dix, Edwards & Co., 1857).

<sup>28</sup> David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans In the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 28-29.

<sup>29</sup> Neil, *The White Scourge*, 24-25.

## The Racial Border Readjusts: The Confederacy and Its Downfall, 1861-1865

In 1861, Texas joined the series of states seceding from the Union. Ultimately, the statewide vote was predominately in favor of secession, but notably there were select communities in Texas that staunchly abstained from joining the Confederacy. The counties that abstained from secession were four German-populated counties. These counties were not necessarily against the stances made by the Confederacy, though they historically made stances against slavery, but were more concerned at the risk of raids by native tribes due to the lack of federal troops monitoring western forts. This led to discrimination against Germans in Confederate Texas under suspicion of treason, and even extrajudicial execution of German Unionists.<sup>30</sup> The concern of Indian attacks in the west was also shared by the new governor of Texas, Edward Clark. The new governor believed that Texas did not need to support Confederate conflict in the East. Pressure from the other Confederate States, however, caused the governor to form a reserve unit to preserve order in the East. Also, to prevent conflict in the West, the Texas government signed a treaty with native tribes to feed them in exchange for an end to attacks on Texas settlements.<sup>31</sup> Along the border, Mexican ports were the only markets available to the Confederate cotton markets that bypassed the Union blockade. While Mexico allowed Confederate merchant marines access to their ports to buy and sell commodities, Mexicans under the guidance of Juan Cortina led campaigns against the Confederates with support from the federal government.<sup>32</sup> Texas remained relatively unscathed by the conflict of the Civil War outside of conflict around Galveston and the Nueces River. In the end, the Confederacy surrendered and the Union proclaimed the end of slavery on June 19, 1865, also known as Juneteenth, in the port of Galveston.

In spite of the end of institutional slavery, a numerous number of slaves were not given their freedom immediately. Several slaveholders in the former Confederate states sent their slaves into Texas to prevent the Union from setting them free. Most slaveholders in the state of Texas attempted to delay the time in which they would free the slaves,

<sup>30</sup> Calvert, Cantrell, and León, *The History of Texas*, 139-145.

<sup>31</sup> Anderson, *The Conquest of Texas*, 333-334.

<sup>32</sup> Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans In the Making of Texas*, 47.

some taking until the end of a growing season; others waited for years to relinquish ownership. In order to exert some form of control over the former slaves, the state legislature enacted black codes in 1866.<sup>33</sup> The formation of the Freedman's Bureau in 1865 could not prevent the overall discrimination that freedmen would come to face. The end of the Civil War, and the lack of labor left by the void of slavery, saw the return of Mexican people to the cotton regions of Texas.<sup>34</sup> Tejanos and Mexican nationals also worked cotton lands as migratory laborers and sharecroppers in West, South, and Central Texas.

In conclusion, the race relations in Texas over the course of its history existed as a complicated affair. The particular relations and trends of a given group are punctuated by the situations in which they find themselves. More often than not, these groups are brought into conflict for the sake of progress, and vice versa. All of these ethnic groups find themselves in conflict with one another at various times, and more often than not these conflicts define the way these groups interact. Contemporary Texas, therefore, owes its continued group conflicts to this past. Only with a clear understanding of the past and a sincere desire to improve relationships will these challenges die with the rise of future generations. ■

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<sup>33</sup> Calvert, Cantrell, and León, *The History of Texas*, 153-154.

<sup>34</sup> Foley, *The White Scourge*, 25.

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## *Student Biography*

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Andrew Eckhoff is a senior in the Sam Houston State University History Department. He is involved in the Episcopal Student Center on campus. Andrew began his research on the topic of Texas Race Relations for a project in an upper-level history course at SHSU. During his time researching the topic, he presented at the National Convention of Black Studies and at the Texas A&M History Conference. Advised by Dr. Pruitt, Andrew plans to graduate in the fall of 2017 and possibly enroll in graduate studies at the University of Texas where he hopes to continue his research.