

# INTRODUCTION

**C**ongresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, age thirty, represents New York's 14th congressional district, including parts of the Bronx and Queens. The district's population, just short of 700,000, is 50 percent Latino, with Whites, Asian Americans, and African Americans each composing 12 to 18 percent. AOC, as she is known, is a member of the Democratic Socialists of America and has captured national attention as the youngest woman ever elected to Congress. She describes her race as reflecting "many different identities. I am the descendant of African slaves. I am the descendant of Indigenous people. I am the descendant of Spanish colonizers. . . . That doesn't mean I'm Black, that doesn't mean I'm Native. But I can tell the story of my ancestors." AOC was born in the Bronx to a Puerto Rican father also born in the Bronx and a mother born in Puerto Rico, who said AOC grew up speaking her mind in family dinner conversations.<sup>1</sup> In another interview, she said: "We are all of these things and something else all at once—we are Boricua," using a Spanish word to describe the island's Indigenous Taíno people that has long been embraced as a countercultural signifier of Puerto Rican solidarity and political awakening.<sup>2</sup>

Congressman Ben Ray Luján, forty-eight, represents New Mexico's 3rd congressional district, spanning northern New Mexico from Santa Fe to the Colorado border, west to Arizona, and east to Texas. The district's 700,000 people are 40 percent Latino, nearly 20 percent Native American, and 36 percent White. Luján was born in the vil-

lage of Nambé, located in between two of the district's several Pueblo Nations. In the context of New Mexico's racial demography, Luján's ancestors include the Spanish colonizers, Mexican settlers, and Indigenous peoples who until recently vastly outnumbered Anglos, as non-Hispanic Whites are called there. "My grandparents made a place for themselves in New Mexico before it was a state," he told delegates at the 2016 Democratic National Convention, invoking his paternal grandfather, a sheepherder, and his maternal grandfather, who became a union carpenter after returning from World War II with a Bronze Medal. Speaking more obsequiously about race, he said, "I know I might not look like your typical member of Congress—I haven't really gotten the bolo tie look to catch on."<sup>3</sup> The reference was ostensibly to his large, turquoise-and-silver bolo tie, but it hinted at his brown skin, his accent (typical of northern New Mexican Latinos). In New Mexico politics, questions of race are never far from the forefront, as a state GOP press release in December 2019 showed: it criticized New Mexico's three congressional delegates—Luján and two women of color—for their votes in favor of the articles of impeachment, "This is why we must all work hard to change the complexion of our congressional delegation." Luján fired back, "as a Hispanic representative of a majority-minority state, I have a responsibility to speak out forcefully when racism and dog whistles are used to further political attacks against people who look like me."<sup>4</sup>

Despite their different registers, AOC and Luján represent Latinx politicians who came of age when the singularity of Latinos—as distinct from "non-Hispanic Whites" and "non-Hispanic Blacks," to use those ubiquitous, bureaucratic terms—is legible on the national stage.<sup>5</sup> Previous generations of Latinos might have emphasized their national origin, AOC as Puerto Rican and Luján as Mexican American, and may well have adopted an additional identity as White or Black. Charlie Rangel, the longtime New York congressman who was born in 1930, anglicized his Spanish surname (his father was Puerto Rican) and founded the Congressional Black Caucus. Born two years before Rangel, Republican congressman Manuel Luján (no relation to Ben Ray) had a twenty-

five-year political career; he spoke Spanish fluently and was born at San Ildefonso Pueblo (as were his parents), yet insisted he was White.

Rangel and the elder Luján came of age when racial identity in America was a dichotomous choice, at least in the public sphere—where one had to choose White or Black. This is not to claim people had less complicated identities in the past or to deny how racism constrained their choices. It is to acknowledge, however, how utterly different things are today. Few would contest the multiplicity of racial identities and racial categories in contemporary America. It is especially the case that Americans have more choices about how to present their difference, however they define it—how they choose to convey (or veil) their identities in particular situations.<sup>6</sup> Certainly, it has always been the case that race was situational, but the possibilities for public recognition of one's identity are, today, much more open than even forty years ago, when I was in high school. Today the United States has moved from a two-category racial hierarchy—Whites over Blacks, or even White over non-White—to a multi-race hierarchy in which Whites continue to be dominant in terms of wealth, political power, and ideology.<sup>7</sup>

*Inventing Latinos* interrogates the how and why of Latinx identity becoming a distinctive racial identity. To say Latinos have different choices, individually and collectively, is to underline how race reflects two intersecting vectors. On the one hand, one can assert, and so essentially choose, a racial identity; but, on the other, racial identities are given to us by others. We might make a particular choice, but it could be disregarded by anyone—from a stranger to a police officer deciding whether or not you belong in a particular neighborhood to a government clerk filling out race on a death certificate (because she is uncomfortable asking next of kin the question). In other words, one's "choice" is constrained in many ways, just as it is for other identities. But to accurately describe racial identity as situational does not fully capture the social dynamic at the heart of this book, which has as much to do with how racial conventions and racism make some people's race less malleable than others. It is equally the case that not everyone's opinion of your

race is equally relevant; the cop's opinion matters more than the stranger's, although the latter might be a gateway to the former. So far, these examples have focused on individual interactions, or what sociologists call the micro level.

This book's concern is mostly with two additional levels, the meso level and the macro level, and with how the three levels interact together. For instance, if we consider an institutional context like schooling, we know there is a particular set of ideas about race and racial classification, though, to be sure, these ideas vary and circulate in different ways. We know that it is routine in the United States for teachers, parents, and school administrators to talk about race in a demographic register (say, the make-up of the school or community) as well as a cultural register. Most often, the latter treats race in coded ways that value a color-blind notion of race—the notion that race is irrelevant to the content of one's character, viewpoints, and the like. The most abstract level, and sometimes the hardest one to pin down, is the macro, relating to social structure that is immune from individual manipulation. When we think of broad-scale social realities that shape race and racial classification, these are probably macro dynamics; examples would be the way neighborhood boundaries in a large city reflect decades of racial patterns, including explicit rules limiting what racial groups could live in particular areas; decisions by generations of city officials about where to build freeways, refuse centers, parks, and wide boulevards; decisions by private-sector actors like banks, grocery stores, and owners of rental housing about doing business in particular neighborhoods, and so on.

Webster's defines the word "invent" as "to originate or create as a product of one's own ingenuity, experimentation, or contrivance"; for example, to invent the internet. While that definition does not apply here, the successive two dictionary definitions do: "to produce or create with the imagination" and "to make up or fabricate (something fictitious or false)." This book explains how and why Latinos became cognizable as a racial group—a racial group that is other and inferior to Whites. The third definition applies, though not because this book

contains falsehoods. Instead, think of the Latino category as fabricated and flexible rather than as immutable and fixed. Like all racial categories at their origin, “Latino” is a political and social construction rooted in a particular time and place and cognizable only in relation to other, known racial classifications.<sup>8</sup> Yet to say races are invented is not to say they are insignificant or without effect. Race isn’t in our heads because it’s “real,” race is real because it’s in our heads.<sup>9</sup> In other words, what we as interacting humans make up, create, or invent has power in our lives. To put it more bluntly: race isn’t real, but racism is.

This book is less about how individual Latinos express their identity and more about where Latinos are, collectively, in the American racial system. Overall, the system of racial classification, rooted in American history, exists to maintain white supremacy. This has been the case even when the power structure dominated by Whites has bowed to pressure to protect the civil rights of African Americans and other people of color, whether during post–Civil War Reconstruction or during what some call “the second Reconstruction,” the mid-twentieth-century enactment of the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act. Racialization is how society and the state assign individuals to racial groups and the relative position of groups to each other—and it is an important aspect of this story. Racism requires racial categories and mechanisms for sorting people into them. Some mechanisms, like the U.S. census, are formally conducted by the state and tightly regulated by law. Other mechanisms, such as popular culture, are diffuse in terms of production and consumption, but no less powerful. These two examples reflect the two sides of racial sorting: assignment is when institutions classify people into racial categories, and assertion is when individuals racially define themselves.

In fact, assertion and assignment interact with each other in a dialectic process, in which one shapes the other via repetitive interactions over time. In this way, changes in racial classification never begin on a clean slate but, instead, reflect the complex layers of interaction between assertion and assignment that have accumulated previously. When the racial

hierarchy evolves to incorporate new categories, resulting in expanding or contracting groups, assignment and assertion cohere around shared understandings of which groups exist in relative hierarchy to other groups. In essence, these dynamics continually occur, but during periods of particular strain on the racial order, such as the first and second Reconstructions, many factors converge to transform what we might call the common sense of racism. This book's central focus is explaining how the common sense of anti-Latino racism has come to exist today, to be taken for granted as natural in the cosmology of American racism. That includes understanding why "Latinos" as a distinctive racial category came into being at a particular time and putting that moment in the broader context of earlier history and contemporary events.

Race is about power, including the power to decide when and how to classify people into this or that racial category and what those very categories are. We think of race categories as essential and immutable, as reflecting notions of blood, stock, ancestry, and DNA. But they are actually political categories, reflecting the power of one group (Whites) to define other groups as inferior to them, as less than fully human. To be sure, groups contest Whites' power over them, including sometimes advocating for a broadening of the White category to include them.<sup>10</sup> Without races, there can be no logic of racism, defined as when a powerful group designates itself as superior in order to oppress other groups they deem inferior. To speak, then, of our contemporary racial common sense is to invoke historically rooted power struggles. As sociologist Rubén Rumbaut puts it, today's racial dynamics inevitably invoke the past, including "the identities of victors and vanquished, of dominant and subordinate groups, of 'us' and 'them,' with their attendant conceits of superiority and inferiority."<sup>11</sup>

Racial logics, or, different racisms, operate in different and connected ways, but always in ways that protect Whites as the unquestionably dominant racial group.<sup>12</sup> In order to understand and combat racism writ large, we must do two things in coordination. First, we must know the histories of specific racial groups (e.g., Latinos, African Americans,

etc.). Then, we must uncover the connections among racial logics to reveal how they support each other in the service of white supremacy. I primarily compare anti-Latino racism with anti-Black racism, which is well understood in the popular imagination as the archetypal form of American racial subordination. I am cognizant of the reality that individuals and communities identify as both Black and Latino (or Latino and Black) and by no means diminish that. Here, however, I also seek to reveal precisely why we see these groups as separate and apart in the American racial hierarchy. To a lesser extent than the African American case, I compare anti-Native American and anti-Asian American racial logics, acknowledging as well that they overlap in important ways with anti-Latino racism.

The United States is a racial state, which is to say our society is built on racial hierarchy, across time from the founding to today, across space in all regions, and across levels of social interaction, from the personal (micro) to the community level (meso) to the level of structures such as the law (macro). In a racial state, though racial categories and racism evolve, racial hierarchy persists such that Whites remain the dominant racial group. Simultaneously, just who is “White” is continually contested and evolving. This, of course, has implications for the other side of the coin: who is “non-White” likewise evolves and revolves around which such groups are closest to Blacks, always at the bottom of the racial hierarchy.

One of the most insidious facets of the American racial order is its persistence over time, even in the face of legal, political, and social counter-movements. The Emancipation Proclamation, issued by President Lincoln in 1863, was a tremendous blow to white supremacy. It was followed by the passage of three constitutional amendments: the Thirteenth Amendment, which later outlawed slavery for good, the Fourteenth Amendment, which compelled equal protection of all persons by the states, and the Fifteenth Amendment, which protected African American men’s right to vote. Together with the first civil rights laws enacted by Congress with veto-proof majorities, these changes could

have led to a society whose social organization was less centered around race and racial hierarchy. Instead, Southern states developed a legally enforced edifice to keep the newly freed men and women down, from essentially endorsing extra-legal terror in the form of lynching to preventing Black men from exercising the franchise (via violence, literacy tests, poll taxes) to forcing Blacks to labor for Whites (the sharecropping system, vagrancy laws, prison work gangs) to segregating them from Whites as a badge of inferiority.

African Americans resisted continually and mightily, with some voting with their feet to migrate north to escape Southern racism. Of course, none of those mechanisms was unique to the South, and northern and midwestern states proved equally adept at using the law for racial oppression such as segregation from cradle to grave that stamped Blacks with inferiority. By this time, the federal courts repudiated the vigorous enforcement of the Reconstruction Amendments and the nation's first civil rights laws. The U.S. Supreme Court gave its blessing to the post-Civil War regime of white supremacy in 1896 in the now-infamous *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, which allowed racial segregation so long as it was "separate but equal." When the Supreme Court finally reversed that ruling six decades later in *Brown v. Board of Education*, white supremacy again shape-shifted to adapt without disappearing, essentially allowing school districts leeway to continue racial isolation by other means.<sup>13</sup>

There are likewise more mundane examples of the racial state in action that were no less powerful in promoting racism and the racial categories necessary for its operation. By the 1920s, there were more than 6,000 clerks who issued marriage licenses in the United States.<sup>14</sup> Rarely overseen by legislatures or courts, they exercised tremendous power to determine applicants' race and, accordingly, whether they would be allowed to marry. As the marriage license bureau clerk for Los Angeles County in the 1920s, it was Leon Lampton's job to comply with a new state law that barred "negro, mulatto, or mongolian" persons from marrying "white" persons. He sought legal advice about whether Filipinos were "Mongolian" under the law; at first the county attorney

told him they were not, but a few years later the state attorney general said they were. Neither could judges agree: over the course of more than a decade, two judges allowed Filipino men to marry White women because they were not “mongolian,” two judges classified Filipino men as “mongolian” denying their applications to marry White women, and one judge declined to decide the question because he concluded that the “White” woman a Filipino man sought to marry was, in fact, a “Mexican Indian” woman, and thus that the state’s anti-miscegenation law was not implicated at all.<sup>15</sup> In one sense, the matter was settled in 1933, when the state appeals court decided Salvador Roldan, a Filipino man, could marry Marjorie Rogers, a White woman, because he was “Malay” rather than Mongolian. But while he won the battle, he lost the war to white supremacists, who, in the very same year Roldan and Rogers married, amended California’s marriage law to include a ban on Filipinos marrying Whites. Ignoring the new law nullifying their marriage as “illegal and void,” the Roldans raised three children and remained a couple until his death in 1975.<sup>16</sup>

As the example of Filipinos in California illustrates, how groups are defined is subject to negotiation and contestation.<sup>17</sup> For the purposes of this book, Latinos are people who currently live in the United States—whether or not they are American citizens and/or were born in this country—who are descendants of migrants or who themselves migrated from Latin America, and specifically from the former colonies of Spain in the Western Hemisphere. So defined, Latinos are the product two successive waves of colonization, first by Spain and then by the United States, which has significant implications for how they have experienced racism and racialization in the United States.<sup>18</sup> My conception of Latinos necessarily excludes Spanish immigrants to the U.S. and their descendants, who are European. To define Latinos in this way exposes the inherent limitation of the category as one that is legible in the United States rather than globally. It simply does not make sense to speak of “Latinos” or the “Latino population” in a Latin American country or anywhere else in the world. “Latinos” has purchase in the

American racial and cultural landscape and should not be used to refer to persons outside the boundaries of this country.<sup>19</sup>

Fifty years ago it would have been nonsensical to hear anyone refer to “the Latino population.” For one thing, only in 1980 did the federal government begin counting Latinos, and that shift did not immediately trickle down to state and local governments.<sup>20</sup> In 1980, 14.6 million people self-identified as Latino; that number will easily exceed 60 million when the 2020 census results are tabulated.<sup>21</sup> As a proportion of the American population, Latinos have gone from 6.5 to 18.3 percent in the four decades since 1980. Current projections show Latinos will be 30 percent of the nation’s population by 2060.<sup>22</sup>

Until recently, Latinos were seen as regional national origin groups, rather than as a nationwide minority population. Historically, Mexican Americans lived in the Southwest, Puerto Ricans lived in the Northeast, and Cubans lived in Florida. With the exception of Georgia and Illinois, these three regions continue to be home to most Latinos. By the close of 2019, ten U.S. states had more than one million Latino residents: Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, and Texas. At the same time, today’s Latinos live in every state and, between 2000 and 2010, all fifty states and the District of Columbia experienced Latino population growth, including many in the South where the Latino population doubled in the first decade of the new century. Since the Great Recession, the Latino population has grown at a slower pace, but it still has outpaced Whites’ and African Americans’ growth, especially in the South, where the Latino population grew by 33 percent between 2008 and 2018, and in states like North Dakota and South Dakota, where Latinos increased by 135 percent and 75 percent respectively.<sup>23</sup> It is no coincidence that some of the most draconian anti-immigrant state and local laws are coming out of the South, then, where local police are more likely to partner with ICE to detain unauthorized immigrants.<sup>24</sup>

Mexican Americans are both the oldest and largest Latino national origin group in the United States. Their presence dates to the 1846–1848

U.S.-Mexico War, at the conclusion of which 115,000 Mexican citizens received American citizenship. These persons did not cross the border into the United States, but rather, as they say, “the border crossed them” when the United States claimed half of Mexico’s total territory as part of Mexico’s surrender. Nearly 70 percent of Latinos are Mexican American.<sup>25</sup> Another 10 percent of Latinos are Puerto Rican, the second oldest national origin group. After Spain’s withdrawal from Puerto Rico in 1898 after defeat in the Spanish-American War, the United States declared Puerto Rico its colony. Most Central Americans, whose ancestry is from the countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, have migrated here since 1990 and together make up another 9 percent of Latinos. Cubans are almost 4 percent of Latinos and most have come to the United States as political refugees fleeing the communist regime Fidel Castro established in 1959. Dominican Latinos make up just under 3 percent of Latinos nationally and live disproportionately in New York and New Jersey, and the vast majority migrated after 1980. That leaves the remaining Latinos combined with ancestry in one of the remaining fourteen countries of Latin America—less than 4 percent of all Latinos.<sup>26</sup>

At almost 20 percent of the nation’s population, we might expect to see great Latino political power. But Latinos are young relative to Whites and Blacks, including a disproportionate share under age eighteen, such that they are only 11 percent of those eligible to vote.<sup>27</sup> More than 29 million Latinos voted in the 2018 midterm election, up 4 million from the 2016 presidential election. Only a fraction of the increase was due to naturalization by Latino immigrants (less than half a million); instead, the increase reflected the fact that six times as many Latinos became eligible voters in 2018 because they turned eighteen.<sup>28</sup> The diverse migration histories of Latinos shape their participation as American citizens and voters. For example, under the Jones Act of 1917, Puerto Ricans obtained the right to migrate freely between Puerto Rico and the U.S. mainland. While their political rights are limited on the island because of Puerto Rico’s status as a colony, once stateside,

they may vote and fully exercise the rights of American citizenship. As political refugees, Cubans had the right to become naturalized citizens within a year of arriving here. Today they exercise an outsized role in national politics; of four Latinos in the Senate, three are Cuban American and one is Mexican American.<sup>29</sup> Eighty percent of Mexican Americans are U.S. citizens, with the states along the U.S.-Mexico border having large Latino electorates. In delegate-rich California and Texas, 30 percent of voters are Latino. In New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and Colorado, the proportion of Latino voters ranges from 14 percent (Colorado) to 40 percent (New Mexico). In Florida, Latinos are 20 percent of the electorate and now Latino groups other than Cubans make up the majority. In New York and New Jersey, Latinos are likely to exceed 15 percent of those who vote in the 2020 election.

Demographic and voting trends such as these have received a great deal of media attention over the past decade, when it was announced that, by 2044, the United States is on track to become a “majority-minority” nation—that is, a country in which all people of color combined outnumber Whites. According to a national survey conducted in late 2018, twice as many Latinos and African Americans as Whites think a non-White majority will be “very good” or “somewhat good” for the nation. What is more troubling is that three in ten Whites believe the nation’s demographic transformation to a non-White majority will be “somewhat bad” or “very bad” for the nation.<sup>30</sup>

Patrick Crusius, the twenty-one-year-old White man who opened fire with an AK-47 at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, in August 2019 was inspired by what he called “the Hispanic invasion.” He drove ten hours from his home in a Dallas suburb to a city on the Mexican border that is 80 percent Latino, knowing he could stop virtually anywhere in the city to hunt down Latino targets. By the end of the massacre, he had murdered twenty-two people and injured another twenty-four; ten Latinos with American citizenship were among the dead, as were eight with Mexican citizenship. Wikipedia’s post on the tragic killings proclaimed it motivated by “Hispanophobia,” but former presidential

candidate Beto O'Rourke, an El Paso native, was correct to label it what it was: "We have a racism in America that is as old as America itself," he said. Rather than the president seeking to stamp it out, he said, Trump calls people "animals, and predators and killers" and warns of an invasion from the southern border: Crusius repeated "the very words used by the president of the United States to justify this act of terror and hatred and violence and death."<sup>31</sup>

While the El Paso massacre is the most recent fatal attack targeting Latinos, there has been an explosion of anti-Latino racism in recent years, alongside White nationalist attacks on Jews, Muslims, African Americans, and others. Polls of Latinos registered to vote show they are feeling the impact: in one conducted six months before the El Paso massacre, more than half reported that racism against Latinos and against immigrants was a major problem; another poll taken just before the 2018 midterm elections found that nearly half told pollsters their situation had worsened over the past year, up considerably from 30 percent a year earlier.<sup>32</sup> Latinos report an upsurge in discrimination in schools, housing, employment, and the criminal justice system. For example, the Supreme Court overturned a Colorado conviction for sexual assault due to a juror's racist statements about the Latino defendant, including that juror's claim that "nine times out ten, Mexican men were guilty of being aggressive toward women and young girls."<sup>33</sup> There is no doubt Trump's rhetoric has made it more acceptable to target Latinos, but it would be wrong to assume the problem was not serious prior to 2015. This book explains why that is the case.

Conventional wisdom portrays Latinos as an ethnic rather than a racial group. The very fact of our collective unwillingness to name as racism, and instead classify as "Hispanophobia," "xenophobia," or "ethnic prejudice," racist attacks and institutional racism targeting Latinos is itself a reflection of the nature of Latino racialization. For one thing, the tendency to think of Latinos in ethnic terms perpetuates the idea that Latinos are perpetual foreigners rather than bona fide Americans.<sup>34</sup> To speak of the immigrant but never the (native) American is

fundamental to the racial logic of Latino subordination. It is assumed foreignness—inherent in questions like, “Where are you from?” followed up by, “No, really, where are you from?” or “Where are your parents from?”—that marks Latinos as racial others who do not belong, even when their grandparents were born in this country, and marks White immigrants as racial insiders despite their actual foreignness.<sup>35</sup>

Yet racism among Latinos does not affect all Latinos in the same way. The ethnic frame reinforces a national origin hierarchy that largely corresponds to White skin privilege. Those with greater Spanish ancestry have higher status than those individuals with more visible Indigenous and/or African ancestry. Despite the fact that the range in phenotype due to Indigenous, African, and Spanish roots exists in all Latin American countries, some regions are seen as more White and more culturally European than others. Among Latinos, for example, people from Argentina, which has a comparatively larger European-origin population, fare better than those from Guatemala, comparatively more Indian, and the Dominican Republic, comparatively more Black. Four out of ten Argentinian Latinos have at least a college degree, compared to three out of ten Dominican Latinos and one out of ten Guatemalan Latinos. Even among Latinos with ancestry from countries close in proximity and similar by many measures, an emphasis on ethnicity fosters the denigration of those perceived as farther from whiteness. A case in point is the Caribbean, where Spanish colonizers obliterated the Indigenous population and imported large numbers of enslaved Africans; while Dominicans look down on Haitians, with whom they share an island, Puerto Ricans look down on Dominicans, and Cubans look down on Puerto Ricans.<sup>36</sup>

Another problem with viewing Latinos from an ethnic rather than a racial frame is that doing so pits them against African Americans in a way that supports white supremacy. For example, it encourages Latinos to see themselves as distant from Blacks by adopting the dominant racial narrative that African Americans “deserve” their place at the bottom of the hierarchy, while, in contrast, putting Latinos into the domi-

nant ethnic narrative in which striving “immigrants” overcome the odds to assimilate. In this way, the refusal to see and name anti-Latino racism *qua* racism serves to enlist Latinos in policing the White-over-Black color line. The reality is that the ethnic and racial frames are anything but mutually exclusive. That they are overlapping is made visible by the extent to which even Black immigrants to the United States seek to distance themselves from African Americans.<sup>37</sup> In order to understand how various racial logics work in tandem with each other, we must first call out anti-Latino racism.

This book arrives on the scene a century after the United States enacted its modern immigration and naturalization laws—laws intended to preserve a White nation that were in effect from 1924 to 1965. In 1917, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Asiatic Barred Zone into law, seeking to exclude all immigrants from Asia. Less than a decade later, President Calvin Coolidge signed the National Origins Act, which put in place country quotas for immigrants based on the 1890 census—the last before the nation’s transformation by substantial immigration from southern and eastern European countries. Between 1890 and 1920, Italians, Poles, and Jews from Eastern Europe were 88 percent of all immigrants to the United States. In essence, by excluding Asian immigrants and pegging the new national quotas to the 1890 census, American leaders sought to advantage immigrants from the British Isles and northwestern Europe while disfavoring those coming from southern and eastern Europe. In the early 1950s, Congress lifted the ban on migrants from Asian countries and, in 1965, it ended the quota system favoring immigrants from northwestern European countries.

Also in 1965, Congress enacted limits on migration from the Western Hemisphere, making it all but inevitable that large numbers of Latin American migrants would enter the United States without legal authorization. Today’s U.S. population reflects these changes in immigration law as well as fertility trends and labor needs in the United States: half of all immigrants today are from Latin American countries, just over a quarter are from Asian countries, 12 percent are from European

countries, and 7 percent are from African countries. As a proportion of the entire U.S. population, there are fewer foreign born persons living in the nation today than there were in 1910, 1920, and 1930.<sup>38</sup> It is not so much the sheer number of immigrants (or those presumed to be immigrants) that frighten some people, but the fact that today's immigrants are racially distinctive. In 2010, Mexicans were the largest number of foreign-born persons in the country at 29 percent, and the next nine nations in terms of their share of the foreign-born each were less than 5 percent.<sup>39</sup> Ultimately, this book will show that racism continues to shape immigration enforcement and perceptions of who is truly American.

Chapter 1 of this book provides an origin story for Latinos as a racially subordinated group. The starting point is America's long history of empire in North and South America.<sup>40</sup> This history connects Latinos to other subordinated racial groups: African Americans brought here as slaves and Native Americans who, when they were not exterminated, were forced into geographic zones often distant from their homelands. Due to U.S. imperialism, Latinos should be treated as *involuntarily* present in this country, which, in turn, has substantial implications for immigration and naturalization policies. To say this is not to say that, besides African Americans and Native Americans, everyone else came to this country under fully "voluntary" conditions. Certainly, that was not true for Jews who fled Europe, other Europeans who migrated to avoid political persecution or even famine, or those who arrived as indentured laborers from Asia and elsewhere. It is, however, to emphasize the fact of American complicity in why Latinos are here today in large numbers. Due to American imperialism in Mexico, Central America, and the Spanish Caribbean, Latino immigrants from those regions should be provided a path to citizenship and full inclusion in American society. Additionally, future immigrants from these regions should receive legal authorization to enter the United States and collective naturalization or asylum.

Latinos' phenotypical and ancestral diversity is a product of Spanish

colonialism in Latin America. In the first two centuries of colonization of “the New World” (1400–1600), Spanish soldiers and priests encountered an estimated 80 million Indigenous people, only 10 million of whom survived Spanish contact.<sup>41</sup> They died from Spanish military campaigns, contagion from European diseases, and death from enslavement by Spanish priests. This genocide resulted in an acute labor shortage in the Spanish colonies. In order to extract resources such as gold and silver, produce resources such as sugar and coffee, and build colonial cities replete with gold- and silver-decorated Catholic cathedrals, the Spanish crown turned to African slavery. Between 1551 and 1870, Spanish colonizers imported eleven million African slaves to Mexico, the Caribbean, and the Atlantic coast of South America.<sup>42</sup> Chapter 2 considers the resulting *mestizaje*—the social and sexual mixing of Indigenous peoples, Africans, and Spaniards—and its implications for Latinos today. In short, Spain’s colonies, while racist to the core, did not prohibit sexual or marital unions between groups. Mexico’s case is illustrative of the result: marriage between Spaniards, Indians, and Blacks resulted in a quarter-million free *Afro-mestizos* in the 1742 census, very likely an under estimate of a growing population.<sup>43</sup>

In chapter 3, I consider how Latinos’ claim to at least some European (Spanish) ancestry provided a wedge to claim an in-between racial status, with Whites above them and Blacks below them in the American racial hierarchy. Over the course of the twentieth century especially, Mexican American and Puerto Rican Latinos at times received valuable rights—in part precisely to gain their alliance against Blacks—leading them to promote themselves as “White.” This is counter-intuitive, since Latinos are a racially subordinated group, but it can be reconciled by returning to the idea that race and racial classifications are political and social constructs. One result has been that Latinos themselves have strategically claimed whiteness as a shield against discrimination, effectively saying, “We may not be truly White, but we definitely are not Black.” World War II was a catalyst for the beginning of the end of this political strategy, because overt and prolific racism against returning

Latino veterans led civil rights organizations to question the efficacy of claiming whiteness as a way to blunt discrimination. Another key inflection point was the rise of the Boricua and Chicano movements of the 1970s—themselves inspired by the Black Power movement—which reframed *mestizaje* as a point of pride, at least for young Latinos and the generations to come.

The Chicano Power and Boricua Power moments gave way, soon enough, to a more moderate stance that focused on electoral politics and Latino “representation” of various sorts. In chapter 4, I turn to the story of how the U.S. census first came around to counting Latinos in 1980. This had seismic reverberations—in terms of how Americans thought of Latinos—for everything from retail politics to popular culture to how television ads for laundry detergent targeted Latinos to enforcement of the Voting Rights Act. The census has always been a primary race-making site for the racial state. The implications for the 2020 census were numerous, including the Trump administration’s failed bid to include a citizenship question and its rejection of experts’ recommendation to fold the current so-called “Hispanic ethnicity” question into the race question by incorporating a Latino option alongside existing race choices. These issues played out in all three branches of government as the president’s political survival was thrown into doubt by the Mueller investigation and then the impeachment trial, and they will no doubt cast a heavy shadow over the 2020 elections. The 1980 count of Latinos also has fundamentally transformed how they think of themselves and other Americans, a question at the heart of this book.