

Latino Landscapes: Postwar Cities and the Transnational Origins of a New Urban America

A. K. Sandoval-Strausz

In 1992 *Texas Monthly* magazine commissioned Grover Lewis to write a long article about Oak Cliff, the Dallas neighborhood where he grew up in the 1940s and 1950s. Lewis had made his name as a promising literary talent alongside figures such as Larry McMurtry and Dave Hickey and spent more than a quarter century helping define the New Journalism in such publications as *Rolling Stone* and the *Village Voice*. Lewis was not one to idealize the Oak Cliff of his youth. He entitled his essay “Farewell to Cracker Eden” and described “the ethos of the place” as having been “absolute white supremacy, reinforced by old-time religion and male chauvinist prickism.” But upon revisiting his “boyhood haunts,” he was moved to offer up an elegiac account of past decline and present blight. “The devastation was total,” he wrote, “an entire neighborhood sunk in rot. The surviving houses were vine-choked, boarded up, literally atomizing in a ghastly mockery of the thriving community I recalled.” Walking the length of Oak Cliff’s main shopping street, Lewis continued: “I groped for terms to encompass the scope of the disaster: *systemic collapse, municipal cancer, de facto apartheid, social time bomb, a thousand points of dark.*” A description such as this one could have been written about any number of city districts that hit bottom in the depths of the urban crisis. Oak Cliff, like much of the urban United States, had reached its peak population and greatest prosperity at midcentury and then entered a lengthy period of decline.¹

What Lewis did not know was that he was seeing Oak Cliff in the darkness before dawn. Thanks to a strong, sustained influx of Latinos, the neighborhood had stopped losing residents and achieved significant population growth for the first time since the

A. K. Sandoval-Strausz is an associate professor of history at the University of New Mexico.

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Readers may contact Sandoval-Strausz at aksandov@unm.edu.

¹ Grover Lewis, “Farewell to Cracker Eden,” in *Splendor in the Short Grass: The Grover Lewis Reader*, ed. Jan Reid and W. K. Stratton (Austin, 2005), ix–xiii, 247, 249–51; Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, 1996), 3.

1940s. Many of the newcomers had purchased homes in the area and opened new businesses that were attracting customers and reviving the commercial district. And the streets were becoming safer as the city's crime rate began a dramatic decline that would continue for two decades. Oak Cliff could not escape all of its problems, but it soon began to attract outside capital, draw in curious consumers from elsewhere in town, and eventually garner federal funds for a new streetcar line. Little more than fifteen years after Lewis's mournful article, the city's leading newspaper would celebrate Oak Cliff as "the Latino downtown of Dallas."²

In this article, I argue that the time has come for the next urban history: one that analyzes U.S. cities in their transnational contexts, particularly as they relate to the Americas. Oak Cliff will serve as an example of how this perspective can revise prevailing narratives about cities in the postwar era. I analyze how U.S.-born, immigrant, and migrant Latinos were able to repopulate and revive the area, and how they integrated it into a pan-American urban system in which faraway municipalities became tightly bound to one another. While my focus is on a single neighborhood to provide needed analytical detail, analogous processes of Latinization have taken hold in numerous city districts, including Pilsen–Little Village in Chicago; the North Corona section of Queens, New York; the Mitchell Street area in Milwaukee; Barry Square in Hartford, Connecticut; vast stretches of Central, East, and South Los Angeles; and practically all of Miami. Taken together they represent a transnational transformation of American cities that calls for a new phase in urban history.

The historiography of cities in the postwar United States is superb, but it has reached a chronological and conceptual impasse. We have a broad and sophisticated understanding of the decline of cities and the rise of suburbia thanks to two generations of scholarship, from the foundational works of Kenneth Jackson and Arnold Hirsch in the 1980s to outstanding books published since the mid-1990s. By analyzing dramatic changes in the way Americans structured their built environments and occupied the national landscape, historians have revealed major transformations in the everyday lives and political choices of tens of millions of people.³

But these histories explain an urban America that is no longer the one we see around us. This scholarship developed in an era of urban crisis when attention was focused on white flight, neighborhood abandonment, rising crime, and severe fiscal deterioration. The period was bounded by the Watts riots of 1965 and the Los Angeles riots of 1992, and emblemized by the municipal near-bankruptcies of the 1970s and the crack cocaine and crime epidemic of the years 1985–1991. Due to the early 1990s recession and the time lag in gathering and publishing demographic, economic, and criminological data, the crisis narrative persisted into the mid-1990s, when some of the most recent monographs were conceptualized. It made sense for scholars confronted with urban pathologies to explain their historical origins. By the late 1990s, however, many of the nation's

² William McKenzie, "Five Focus Neighborhoods, One Year Later; The Heart of Oak Cliff: Progress on Education Encouraging, but Retail Options Are Still Inadequate," *Dallas Morning News*, Sept. 20, 2009, pp. 4P–5P.

³ Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York, 1985); Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940–1960* (New York, 1983); Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis*; Becky M. Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920–1965* (Chicago, 2002); Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, 2003); Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley, 2004); Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It* (Chicago, 2005); Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, 2005); Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, 2007).

cities had found paths to recovery (though by no means all of them, and not by every measure, and never without new difficulties). To take just one index of urban well-being, in his hugely influential book *Crabgrass Frontier* (1985), Kenneth Jackson noted that of the twenty-five most populous cities in 1950, eighteen had lost residents by 1980; but if we refer to that same measure today, we find that of the twenty-five biggest cities in 1980, seventeen *gained* residents over the subsequent thirty years. The single largest factor in this reversal has been a rapid increase in the population of Latinos, whose numbers have reached 50 million—one out of every six people in the United States.⁴

These momentous demographic shifts have yet to be incorporated into the paradigms of urban history, in part because the field is still bounded by the nation-state. The post-war historiography remained overwhelmingly domestic until very recently, even as other areas of U.S. history were challenged, and in some cases transformed, by the transnational turn in historical writing. Moreover, in related fields such as urban sociology, geography, and anthropology, much influential research has analyzed cities according to their role in globalization. After forty years in which some of the most important demographic and economic forces acting on cities have operated across borders, urban historians need to reconsider basic assumptions and explanatory frameworks in the field. It stands to reason that this project should begin with the nation's largest transnational population.⁵

⁴ On the riots, near-bankruptcies, and crack and crime epidemics, see Jon C. Teaford, "The Debacle," in *The Metropolitan Revolution: The Rise of Post-urban America*, by Jon C. Teaford (New York, 2006), 125–64. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 4; U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2003; No. HS-7. Population of the Largest 75 Cities: 1960–2000* (Washington, 2003). U.S. Census Bureau, *United States Summary: 2010; Population and Housing Unit Counts—2010 Census of Population and Housing, CPH-2-1* (Washington, 2012), table 37. U.S. Census Bureau, *United States: 2010; Summary Population and Housing Characteristics—2010 Census of Population and Housing, CPH-1-1* (Washington, 2013), table 2. I use the term *Latino* because this article involves communities consisting of U.S.-born citizens of Hispanic heritage; documented, undocumented, and naturalized U.S. residents from Mexico and other nations in Latin America; and the often-mixed-status households in which they live. On the conceptual complexity of the term *Latino*, see Suzanne Oboler, *Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives: Identity and the Politics of (Re)Presentation in the United States* (Minneapolis, 1995); Arlene Dávila, *Latinos, Inc.: The Marketing and Making of a People* (Berkeley, 2001); and Cristina Beltrán, *The Trouble with Unity: Latino Politics and the Creation of Identity* (Oxford, 2010).

⁵ Transnational urban histories include Jesse Hoffnug-Garskof, *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950* (Princeton, 2008); Lorrin Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen: History and Political Identity in Twentieth-Century New York City* (Chicago, 2010); Christopher Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal: Postwar Urbanism from New York to Berlin* (Chicago, 2011); Geraldo L. Cadava, *Standing on Common Ground: The Making of a Sunbelt Borderland* (Cambridge, Mass., 2013); Joshua B. Guild, *In the Shadows of the Metropolis: Cultural Politics and Black Communities in Postwar New York and London* (New York, forthcoming); and Nancy Haekyung Kwak, *Homeownership for All: American Power and the Politics of Housing Aid Post-1945* (Chicago, forthcoming). Transformative transnational histories include Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998); "Rethinking History and the Nation-State: Mexico and the United States as a Case Study; A Special Issue," *Journal of American History*, 86 (Sept. 1999); "The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History; A Special Issue," *ibid.* (Dec. 1999); Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor* (Ithaca, 1999); Organization of American Historians/New York University Project on Internationalizing the Study of American History, Thomas Bender, director, *The La Pietra Report: A Report to the Profession*, 2000, <http://www.oah.org/about/reports/reports-statements/the-lapietra-report-a-report-to-the-profession/>; Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, 2000); Leon Fink, *The Maya of Morganton: Work and Community in the Nuevo New South* (Chapel Hill, 2003); Thomas Bender, *A Nation among Nations: America's Place in World History* (New York, 2006); and C. A. Bayly et al., "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," *American Historical Review*, 111 (Dec. 2006), 1441–64. The globalization literature in these fields includes David Harvey, *The Urbanization of Capital* (Oxford, 1985); Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy* (Los Angeles, 2012); Michael Peter Smith and Luis Eduardo Guarnizo, eds., *Transnationalism from Below* (New Brunswick, 1998); Roger Waldinger, ed., *Strangers at the Gates: New Immigrants in Urban America* (Los Angeles, 2001); and Robert Courtney Smith, *Mexican New York: Transnational Lives of New Immigrants* (Berkeley, 2006). Saskia Sassen's *Cities in a World Economy* has been through four editions since 1994. I use the term *transnational* to describe people and processes that operate between nation-states, are not easily categorized by nationality,

This historical reinterpretation puts Latinos at the center of one of the most interesting and important debates in the profession. In “Nuestra América,” her 2006 presidential address to the Organization of American Historians, Vicki Ruiz emphasized the need for “a fuller recounting” of the Latino past “encompassing both transhemispheric and community perspectives” because, as she put it—echoing José Martí—“Nuestra América es historia americana. Our America is American history.” This need continues to be a central concern for scholars of Latino history, as attested by the participants in the 2010 “interchange” in the *Journal of American History*. Some of them focused on redefining the geographic boundaries of U.S. history. Adrian Burgos stressed the benefits of “thinking about U.S. history in a transhemispheric frame” in a way that “decenters the United States”; Matt Garcia advocated an “approach [that] would encompass the transnational flows of goods, labor, and culture among Canada, the United States, the Caribbean, and Mexico” to create “a more inclusive conception of what we now call ‘American history.’” Another important consideration was the possibility of recasting the national story. As María Montoya asked, “How does Latina/o history help us tell a richer (and more accurate) story about the founding, making, and telling of U.S. history?” Toward the end of the exchange, Garcia summed up the participants’ shared “recognition that Latino history has the power to transform the narrative of ‘American history’” in areas such as “labor history, history of the West, economic history, etc.”⁶

Latino history is the key to rethinking urban history because Latinos have been central to stabilizing numerous U.S. cities that would otherwise have suffered drastic demographic loss. Over several decades, as Mike Davis has noted, Latinos have become the second most urbanized demographic group in the nation (after Asian Americans, whose history is also essential to reinterpreting postwar urbanism), and any attempt to understand the trajectory of the nation’s cities must reckon with the arrival since 1950 of millions of people from elsewhere in the hemisphere. While it would be an oversimplification to say that Latinos saved the nation’s cities, it is difficult to imagine how urban America could have sustained itself without this influx of new city dwellers. To foreground my claims with a single numerical comparison: the great migrations of African Americans that so profoundly influenced U.S. cities and the national culture totaled about 5 million people; the migration and immigration of Latinos to the nation’s cities has involved approximately 25 million people; and these are just a small subset of the 250 million new urbanites in Latin America in the half century after 1950.⁷

and create spaces geographically distinct yet mutually and simultaneously constitutive. *Binational* is insufficient because these communities and patterns of influence involve exchanges among multiple nations and national groups. *Cosmopolitan(ism)* connotes very different scholarly questions involving nationhood, loyalty, belonging, and otherness. See, for example, Martha C. Nussbaum et al., *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, ed. Joshua Cohen (Boston, 1996); and Carol A. Breckenridge et al., eds., *Cosmopolitanism* (Durham, N.C., 2002).

⁶ Vicki L. Ruiz, “Nuestra América: Latino History as U.S. History,” *Journal of American History*, 93 (Dec. 2006), 672; Adrian Burgos Jr. et al., “Latino History: An Interchange on Present Realities and Future Prospects,” *ibid.*, 97 (Sept. 2010), 431, 440, 449, 457. Works in the field that have revised long-held historical narratives include David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836–1986* (Austin, 1987); Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500–1846* (Palo Alto, 1991); David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, 1992); David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley, 1995); Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley, 1997); and María E. Montoya, *Translating Property: The Maxwell Land Grant and the Contest over Land in the American West, 1840–1900* (Berkeley, 2002).

⁷ Mike Davis, *Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the U.S. Big City* (London, 2000), 7; Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait* (Berkeley, 2006), 37–66; David R. Colburn and Jeffrey S. Adler, *African-American Mayors: Race, Politics, and the American City* (Urbana, 2001), 4; Miguel Villa and Jorge Rodríguez,

The impact of Latinos on postwar U.S. cities involves far more than numbers, however. Equally important were the culturally specific ways they occupied and produced urban space: their everyday behaviors, residential practices, ownership and patronage of small businesses, and commitment to public presence. We should focus on how Latinos adapted their spatial preferences to the United States: the way they brought distinctive forms of urbanism from culture hearths in Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. Furthermore, we must recognize this process as a mutually constitutive one that also reshaped landscapes in Latin America. This dynamic became increasingly important because Latinos in effect incorporated U.S. cities into the broader operation of Latin American urban development. In fact, this interdependence grew so markedly—with the timing, volume, geography, and class composition of migrant arrivals and departures determined largely by patterns of urbanization in Latin America—that we need to reinterpret the postwar period in terms of the formation of a hemispheric urban system. While historians have written extensively on postwar deurbanization and suburban growth, a great deal remains to be said about the significant countertrend of Latino urbanization. Indeed, we might even see the existing U.S. historiography as the chronicle of an Anglo exception to the much larger trend of Hispanic urbanization throughout the Americas; and we could further broaden the context to include the post-1950 urbanization of Asia and Africa.

Old Oak Cliff

Oak Cliff lies across the Trinity River from downtown Dallas (see figure 1), about three miles southwest of Dealey Plaza. Once a small agricultural community, Oak Cliff was bought up by developers who incorporated it as a town in 1890; when the area attracted fewer residents than hoped, voters approved its annexation to Dallas in 1903. By 1930 the neighborhood consisted of a few thousand mostly single-family homes centered on a small shopping district.⁸

It was federal spending that led to rapid growth in Oak Cliff. In 1941 the War Department ordered the construction of the Naval Weapons Industrial Reserve Plant, an 85-building, 153-acre manufacturing site just eight miles west of the neighborhood. The plant operated throughout World War II and continued for four decades of the Cold War, producing aircraft, missiles, and other armaments, and providing jobs for tens of thousands of local people. In 1957 the *Dallas Times Herald* reported that the area's population had grown by more than 75 percent between 1940 and 1950, and the *Dallas Morning News* estimated that fifty families were moving in each month. The effect on the urban landscape was remarkable. Aerial photographs from 1942 display only seven or eight blocks of large retail buildings along Jefferson Boulevard and show that a walk of less than ten blocks off this main street would put a person in an undeveloped grassland. Photographs of the same area from 1950 reveal more than twice as many large-scale commercial properties and show numerous roads, house lots, and residences being built on previously open fields.⁹

⁸ "Demographic Trends in Latin America's Metropolises, 1950–1990," in *The Mega-City in Latin America*, ed. Alan Gilbert (New York, 1996), 25–52.

⁹ Bill Minutaglio and Holly Williams, *The Hidden City: Oak Cliff, Texas* (Dallas, 1990), 46.

⁹ "NWIRP Dallas: A World War II and Cold War Aircraft and Missile Manufacturing Plant," n.d., National Park Service Form 10-900-a, National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet (in A. K. Sandoval-Strausz's possession); "Dallas Builder Cites Growth of Oak Cliff," *Dallas Times Herald*, March 23, 1957, p. 1B; "Oak Cliff Get-



Figure 1. This map of central Dallas shows the location of the Oak Cliff neighborhood in relation to downtown and to Little Mexico, the city's previous main *barrio*. Map created by Nic Champagne.

Population growth in Oak Cliff provided a strong base of consumers and proprietors for the Jefferson Boulevard commercial district, which boomed around midcentury. Photographs from the period show a streetscape crowded with pedestrians, lined with automobiles, and served by a streetcar. Well-maintained storefronts sported elaborate signage, and shops displayed an abundance of consumer goods. (See figure 2.) City directories likewise attest to a broadly subscribed prosperity. Jefferson Boulevard was served by a number of leading national retailers, including Sears, J.C. Penney, Woolworth, and Kress, but the real backbone of local commerce was the many independent small businesses that clustered along the street. In 1950, for example, the boulevard was home to twenty-four restaurants, nineteen beauty parlors and barbershops, sixteen laundries and cleaners, fourteen furniture stores, thirteen physicians, thirteen dentists, twelve used car dealers, twelve shoe stores, eleven accountants, nine drug stores, and eight lawyers. Occupancy rates of properties on Jefferson also revealed neighborhood prosperity. The 1950 city directory recorded only 27 vacancies out of 744 available storefronts and dwellings along the boulevard. The 1960 city directory showed an increase to 78 vacancies, but this was still a

ting New Families Each Month," *Dallas Morning News*, April 4, 1957, pt. 1, p. 18; "CXA-4-84," Jan. 28, 1942, photograph, 1942 Section G8a, Aerial Photograph Collection (J. Erik Jonsson Central Library, Dallas, Tex.); "DJU-4G-7," Dec. 11, 1950, photograph, 1950 Section G8, *ibid*.

moderate rate given the 1960–1961 recession. Indeed, the neighborhood's prospects were so strong in the early 1960s that the Oak Cliff Bank & Trust decided to erect an expensive fifteen-story modernist headquarters with a glass-and-steel facade that stood out dramatically from the almost entirely low-rise masonry buildings on and around Jefferson.¹⁰

Oak Cliff had, however, been built on a foundation of racial segregation. The 1940 census recorded that every one of the neighborhood's eleven census tracts was over 95 percent white, and in 1960 all but two of its twenty tracts were over 95 percent white and non-Hispanic. Meanwhile, an adjacent black neighborhood ended abruptly at central Oak Cliff's eastern edge: Ewing Avenue marked the approximate limit of African American settlement, with thousands of black families to the east and very few to the west. These boundaries had been created and maintained by every available means. In the 1910s and 1920s, city officials endorsed restrictive covenants and enacted racial zoning ordinances, and private citizens repeatedly used intimidation and violence to perpetuate residential segregation. These divisions were reinforced in concrete in the 1950s with the construction of Interstates 30 and 35, which cordoned off populations of color to the north and east.¹¹

The decline of Oak Cliff was primarily a story of race, though not exclusively or straightforwardly so. The neighborhood suffered significant economic damage early on: in 1955 the city canceled streetcar service from downtown Dallas, reducing foot traffic along Jefferson Boulevard, and in 1956 a local "dry" vote closed Oak Cliff's drinking establishments and limited the profitability of many other businesses. Regarding race relations, the city achieved peaceful integration in many areas. The "Dallas way" involved the kind of incremental (often token) desegregation seen elsewhere in the upper and outer South, where municipal leaders were keen to avoid the kind of racial violence that could jeopardize efforts to attract outside investment and federal spending. In 1953 the mayor promised to desegregate the state fair, though full implementation required eight more years of protests. In 1956, to avoid a proposed Montgomery-style boycott, city officials agreed to establish equal seating on city buses. And in 1961, after several months of sit-ins, Dallas restaurants were persuaded to serve black customers, and hotels and other public accommodations soon followed.¹²

But the city fathers proved less capable of managing the desegregation of neighborhoods and schools. Decades of white enforcement of the color line had created a severe shortage of decent housing for African American families. When middle-class black peo-

¹⁰ See the scores of newspaper clippings in Oak Cliff folders, Vertical Files, Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division (Jonsson Central Library). Alan C. Elliott, Patricia K. Summey, and Gayla Brooks Kokel, *Images of America: Oak Cliff* (Charleston, 2009); *Cole Directory for Dallas and Vicinity* (Lincoln, 1950), 1102; *Cole Directory for Dallas and Vicinity* (Lincoln, 1961), 269; "Towering over the Cliff Skyline," *Dallas Times Herald*, Aug. 16, 1964, p. 8.

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. Population and Housing. Statistics for Census Tracts. Dallas, Texas and Adjacent Area* (Washington, 1942), table 1; U.S. Census Bureau, *U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960. Census Tracts. Final Report PHC(1)-34, Dallas, Tex. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area* (Washington, 1962), table P-1. All statistics for Oak Cliff are based on census tracts 20, 42, 44–48, 50–53, 62–65.02, 67–69, and 199 (tract 199 was previously designated as D-7). The racial boundary is revealed by the sharp demographic contrast with tracts 34, 41, 49, and 89. Robert B. Fairbanks, *For the City as a Whole: Planning, Politics, and the Public Interest in Dallas, Texas, 1900–1965* (Columbus, 1998), 29–30, 150–52, 191.

¹² "Trolleys to Give Way to Buses in January," *Dallas Morning News*, Sept. 15, 1955, sec. 1, p. 20; "Oak Cliff Rejects Beer," *ibid.*, Dec. 16, 1956, p. 1; Brian D. Behnken, "The Dallas Way: Protest, Response, and the Civil Rights Experience in Big D and Beyond," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 111 (July 2007), 6–15; W. Marvin Dulancy, "Whatever Happened to the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas, Texas?," in *Essays on the American Civil Rights Movement*, ed. John Dittmer, George C. Wright, and W. Marvin Dulancy (College Station, 1993), 78–81.



Figure 2. This photograph shows a view of Jefferson Boulevard, Oak Cliff's principal commercial street, in 1957. Like much of the urban United States, Oak Cliff attained its greatest prosperity around the mid-twentieth century. In that period, however, the neighborhood was racially segregated: it was more than 95 percent white, while the area just to the east was predominantly populated by black people. *Courtesy Texas/Dallas History and Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.*

ple tried to escape the city's increasingly crowded and run-down ghettos, whites responded violently. Between 1939 and 1941 a new black high school in South Dallas drew bomb threats and rock-throwing mobs, and even resulted in the use of dynamite to destroy black peoples' homes. In 1950 and 1951 a few black families who moved into the Exline Park neighborhood faced another wave of harassment, vandalism, and house bombings. And when African Americans began to buy homes in eastern Oak Cliff in the late 1950s and early 1960s, white residents engaged in intimidation tactics such as assembling a hostile crowd in one black homeowner's front yard and preparing to burn a cross on another black family's lawn. Tellingly, the Oak Cliff police substation began training local officers in riot-control procedures.¹³

In the past, the city's white leadership had managed such situations by privately buying out African American families, financing segregated housing developments for middle-class blacks, and securing indictments (though never convictions) of alleged bombers. When it became clear, however, that such half measures could no longer preserve residential segregation, whites began to leave city neighborhoods for racially homogeneous districts in North Dallas and the suburbs. The largest wave of departures came later, though. In 1971, in response to the refusal of Dallas officials to enact meaningful school desegregation, a federal court ordered the implementation of an integration plan that included busing. In 1986 Jim Schutze, an astute observer of race relations in Dallas, concisely described the response: "The whites yanked their kids, took off for the educational hills, and they haven't come back yet."¹⁴

By the time Grover Lewis wrote "Farewell to Cracker Eden" in 1992, few people would have disputed his view that the old neighborhood had fallen on hard times. Lewis was

¹³ Dulaney, "Whatever Happened to the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas, Texas?," 75–76; Jim Schutze, *The Accommodation: The Politics of Race in an American City* (Seacaucus, 1986), 12–19, 110–15. On white neighborhood violence, see Arnold R. Hirsch, "Massive Resistance in the Urban North: Trumbull Park, Chicago, 1953–1966," *Journal of American History*, 82 (Sept. 1995), 522–50; Thomas J. Sugrue, "Crabgrass-Roots Politics: Race, Rights, and the Reaction against Liberalism in the Urban North, 1940–1964," *ibid.*, 551–78; and Kruse, *White Flight*, 42–77.

¹⁴ Brian D. Behnken, *Fighting Their Own Battles: Mexican Americans, African Americans, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Texas* (Chapel Hill, 2011), 207–13; Schutze, *Accommodation*, 156–63.

not unaware that things were changing: he wrote of “the Latino incursions of the 1970s,” spotted a big sign that read “Kars Fur ‘U’—MUCHACHO MOTORS,” and made note of the “mostly Hispanic neighborhoods abutting the business zone.” But he could only see these developments as symptoms of decline: he highlighted the drop-out rate at a heavily Hispanic high school and observed that “the two commonest signs” on the main commercial street “were *Se Habla Español* and *Se Acepta Estampillas* [food stamps].” Lewis knew what the narrative was supposed to be. After all, he was writing in a well-established genre of urban crisis prose that emphasized big-city pathology and found its exemplar in Tom Wolfe’s 1987 novel *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. Yet there were others who already saw something different: the writers of the contemporaneous boom in U.S. Latino literature, whose stories were set in cities such as New York, Chicago, and Miami but unfolded simultaneously in such places as Havana and Santo Domingo. It was they who became the heralds of a new urban America.¹⁵

The Making of *Nuevo Oak Cliff*

The Latinization of Oak Cliff was the most prominent example of the broad transformations that swelled the previously small Hispanic population of Dallas until it surpassed that of both white Anglos and African Americans to become the largest demographic in the city. This process, while initially determined by local decisions, became increasingly driven by factors originating beyond the nation’s borders. Correspondingly, the Mexican Americans who were first involved were soon joined by Latino migrants who made the neighborhood into a major locus of economic, social, and cultural interaction between the United States and Latin America.¹⁶

Before the transformation of Oak Cliff, Hispanic settlement in Dallas was centered in Little Mexico, the area just west of downtown where people from across the border gathered beginning around 1910 and for more than fifty years thereafter. There were other ethnically Mexican neighborhoods in Dallas, but it was Little Mexico that people understood as the heart of the community—the place they referred to as simply “*el barrio*.” It contained the most important institutions, including Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, the main Spanish-speaking commercial district, St. Ann’s School, Crozier Tech High School, and especially Pike Park. Little Mexico was home to the great majority of what was nonetheless a small Spanish-surnamed population, one that as late as 1960 totaled 29,464 people, only 4.3 percent of all Dallasites.¹⁷

The Latino presence in Oak Cliff began in the late 1940s with Mexican Americans coming in from *el barrio* across the Trinity River. Anita Martínez, who was born in Little Mexico in 1925, recalled that after World War II all four of her sisters moved to Oak Cliff. The neighborhood also proved attractive to the owners of El Fénix restaurant—a Little Mexico landmark and the oldest and most recognizable Mexican American business

¹⁵ Lewis, “Farewell to Cracker Eden,” 250, 253, italics in original; brackets added. Tom Wolfe, *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (New York, 1987); Richard Price, *Clockers* (New York, 1992); Brent Staples, *Parallel Time: Growing Up in Black and White* (New York, 1994); Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (Houston, 1984); Oscar Hijuelos, *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love* (New York, 1989); Julia Alvarez, *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* (Chapel Hill, 1991); Cristina García, *Dreaming in Cuban* (New York, 1992); Jaime Manrique, *Latin Moon in Manhattan* (New York, 1992).

¹⁶ Census Bureau, *United States: 2010; Summary Population and Housing Characteristics*, table 10.

¹⁷ Census Bureau, *Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960*, table P-1. On another Dallas barrio, see Shirley Achor, *Mexican Americans in a Dallas Barrio* (Tucson, 1978).

in Dallas; they opened their second location in Oak Cliff in 1948. These and other early arrivals initially made up a very small population: of the 83,000 people the 1960 census counted in Oak Cliff, only about 1,500 had Spanish surnames, and of these Latinos only 130 were foreign-born.¹⁸

The transition of Latinos to Oak Cliff hastened dramatically in the late 1950s and 1960s, when Dallas's entirely white and Anglo leadership ran three highway projects through Little Mexico, displacing or disrupting much of *el barrio*. For Dallas Mexican Americans it is clear what happened. As Ronnie Villareal recalls, "they cut right through the heart of the *barrio* with the Dallas North Tollway. When you cut right through the heart of it, what are you going to do?" He adds: "We were young at that time. . . . We didn't participate in politics, you know, and they just went through. . . . People were, they were good people." At this point his wife, Leonor, breaks in: "No se sabían defender. Eramos tan inocentes y tan buenos." (They did not know how to defend themselves. We were so innocent and so good.) Jesse Tafalla agrees: "Back then we didn't have any recourse . . . we didn't get our first elected officials until the 1970s. . . . We had no representation, we didn't understand the politics. They just kept us in the *barrio*." The gradual dismantling of Little Mexico forced thousands of people to find new places to settle; one result was that during the 1960s Oak Cliff's Spanish-heritage population rose more than sixfold to over 9,500 while remaining overwhelmingly American-born.¹⁹

The era of Latino transnationalism in Oak Cliff, which began around 1970, owed to changing economic conditions in Mexico and to private and public decision making in both countries. The late 1960s crisis in Mexican agriculture caused great hardship in rural areas, setting off an intensified exodus from the countryside. Employers in the United States continued their search for low-wage labor, and the two nations' long history of migration positioned Mexico as the likeliest source of workers. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (also known as the Hart-Celler Act), often understood as a source of increased immigration, actually had a contradictory effect on newcomers. As Mae Ngai has demonstrated, the act imposed the first-ever quota on immigration from Latin America while also making nonquota familial admissions easier. In the short term the law criminalized older patterns of migration; in the longer term it quickened the pace of documented arrivals from the region.²⁰

In the early years of immigration to Oak Cliff, most new arrivals came from small communities in central Mexico. Tereso Ortiz left the town of Ocampo in the state of Guanajuato in 1971 at the age of twenty-one. With only a fourth-grade education, he initially worked as a dishwasher and vegetable packer, then as a store manager and eventually as a construction supervisor. Ortiz also became one of the foremost community leaders in Dallas as the director of Casa Guanajuato, an immigrant service organization headquartered in Oak Cliff. Recalling the early years among his Mexican compatriots, he says: "We came from rural areas, little villages, ninety or ninety-five percent of us, I would say. Very few people came from offices where they used computers, or in those years, typewriters . . .

¹⁸ Anita Martínez interview by A. K. Sandoval-Strausz, July 23, 2010, digital audio file (in Sandoval-Strausz's possession); Census Bureau, *Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960*, table P-1.

¹⁹ Leonor Villareal and Ronnie Villareal interview by Sandoval-Strausz, July 18, 2010, digital audio file (in Sandoval-Strausz's possession); Jesse Tafalla interview by Sandoval-Strausz, July 22, 2010, digital audio file, *ibid.*; U.S. Census Bureau, *Census of Population and Housing: 1970. Census Tracts, Final Report PHC(1)-52, Dallas, Texas SMSA* (Washington, 1972), table P-2.

²⁰ Leslie Bethell, ed., *Mexico since Independence* (New York, 1991), 323–32; Villa and Rodríguez, "Demographic Trends in Latin America's Metropolises," in *Mega-City in Latin America*, ed. Gilbert, 33; Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, 2004), 227–64.

we basically came from the countryside.” The same was true of immigrants throughout the city well into the 1980s. *The Other Side of the Border* (1987), a Dallas Public Television program that examined the origins of Mexican immigrants to the city, documented the rudimentary conditions of rural Mexico using footage of unpaved roads, small adobe dwellings with dirt floors and no running water, and outdoor food markets lacking refrigeration. While these conditions were not representative of Mexico generally, they were not entirely atypical of a country where, as late as 1980, almost half the population lived in localities of fewer than 15,000 people.²¹

These rural Mexicans were joined beginning in the 1980s by migrants from urban areas throughout Latin America, where changes in economic policy, escalating civil conflicts, and financial crises set new groups of people into motion. Claudia Torrescano, a journalist with Univisión in Dallas, was both a participant and an observer in this process. She came from Mexico City in 1989 soon after finishing college, drawn to Dallas by increasing opportunities for bilingual professionals in the business and communications sectors. “Before it was everything rural,” she recalls, but Mexico’s professional classes increasingly emigrated “because they just cannot find jobs in the cities in Mexico.” Torrescano is seconded by Yolette García, who covered Dallas for twenty years as a journalist at the public television affiliate KERA. Agreeing that later Latin American immigrants were “not only the poor” but “middle-class and upper-middle-class people as well,” García points to a “brain drain” of educated urbanites pursuing economic opportunities in the United States. Some of these newcomers were refugees from intensifying civil wars in Central America, where U.S. intervention had helped destabilize the region; Dallas became a major destination for Salvadorans, in particular.²²

These transnational factors caused a marked upsurge in the number of Latinos in Oak Cliff, with Latin American newcomers surpassing U.S.-born Hispanics as the predominant presence. In the 1970s the Latino population rose to over 27,000, of whom slightly under 30 percent were immigrants. These trends then accelerated: in the 1980s Latino numbers swelled to almost 53,000; and by the close of the 1990s they totaled over 86,000, with the foreign-born accounting for over 51 percent, a figure that understates the influence of the immigrants because thousands of Latinos whom the census enumerated as citizens were the immigrants’ U.S.-born children.²³

²¹ Tereso Ortiz interview by Sandoval-Strausz, July 12, 2010, digital audio file (in Sandoval-Strausz’s possession). I have translated into English the quotation from this Spanish-language interview. *The Other Side of the Border*, dir. Ginny Martin (KERA Dallas/Ft. Worth, 1987) (videotape, PBS Video); Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, *Estadísticas históricas de México* (Historical statistics of Mexico) (Mexico City, 1995), vol. 1, table 22.9. See also Manuel García y Griego and Roberto R. Calderón, *Más allá del Río Bravo: Breve historia Mexicana del norte de Texas* (Beyond the Río Bravo: A brief Mexican history of north Texas) (Mexico City, 2013).

²² Claudia Torrescano interview by Sandoval-Strausz, April 20, 2010, notes (in Sandoval-Strausz’s possession); Yolette García interview by Sandoval-Strausz, July 19, 2010, notes, *ibid.* For corroboration, see Gustavo Verduzco Igartúa, “La migración urbana a Estados Unidos: Un caso del occidente de México” (Urban migration to the United States: A case from western Mexico), *Estudios Sociológicos*, 8 (Jan.–April 1990), 117–39; Wayne A. Cornelius, “From Sojourners to Settlers: The Changing Profile of Mexican Immigration to the United States,” in *U.S.-Mexico Relations: Labor Market Interdependence*, ed. J. A. Bustamante, Clark W. Reynolds, and Raúl A. Hinojosa Ojeda (Stanford, 1992), 155–95.

²³ U.S. Census Bureau, *1980 Census of Population and Housing. Census Tracts. Dallas–Fort Worth, Tex. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, PHC 80-2-131* (Washington, 1983), tables P-7, P-20; U.S. Census Bureau, *1990 Census of Population and Housing. Population and Housing Characteristics for Census Tracts and Block Numbering Areas. Dallas–Fort Worth, TX CMSA. CPH-3-125A* (Washington, 1993), table 8; “Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1), QT-3: Race and Hispanic or Latino,” table created from data at U.S. Census Bureau, *American Fact Finder*, <http://factfinder2.census.gov> (table in Sandoval-Strausz’s possession); “Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3), DP-2: Profile of Selected Social Characteristics,” table created from data at Census Bureau, *American Fact Finder*, <http://factfinder2.census.gov>, *ibid.*

These new arrivals were essential to Oak Cliff's viability because they eventually reversed the area's long-term demographic crisis. The neighborhood's growth had stalled after midcentury, a particularly worrisome development because Dallas as a whole nearly doubled its population between 1950 and 1970 and continued to grow in every subsequent decade. Oak Cliff was losing its hold in particular on the white Anglo residents who had made up virtually all of the area's population. The trend began slowly, in the 1950s and 1960s, with the loss of over 11,000 Anglo residents, or 13 percent of the neighborhood. Departures hastened in the 1970s, and by 2000 Oak Cliff had lost 80 percent of its peak population of non-Hispanic whites.²⁴

Yet the neighborhood's demographic history is more complex than can be summed up by conventional notions of white flight or racial succession. Over fifty years, Oak Cliff changed from an almost exclusively white Anglo neighborhood into a majority Latino neighborhood with substantial minorities of whites and blacks. Notably, when the area's population was near its postwar low around 1980, its residents were still mostly (55 percent) white Anglos. Black people had only started moving into the area at the same time as the first immigrant Latinos: while African Americans had accounted for only 0.5 percent of the population of Oak Cliff as late as 1970, their numbers grew substantially thereafter, and by 1990 they composed almost 12 percent of the neighborhood. And although most whites had indeed left, a loyal core of longtime residents remained and were joined by other whites who chose to move in. Meanwhile, the proportion of Latino residents rose from under 2 percent in 1960, gaining in every decade until, by 2000, they made up fully 76 percent of this new *barrio*. The aggregate effect of these shifts was striking. After more than three decades of stagnating or shrinking population, sometime after 1980 the neighborhood began to grow quickly. Its population increased by 10 percent in the 1980s and 22 percent in the 1990s, outmatching even the rapid pace of growth in Dallas as a whole. By 2000, it boasted over 113,000 residents, 30 percent more than at its previous peak in 1950.²⁵

The Latino-led revitalization of Oak Cliff was by no means achieved solely through the force of numbers, however. Just as important were the distinctive urbanistic practices of new residents—the way they socialized, walked, shopped, and dwelled. Their everyday customs were adaptations of long-standing urban behaviors common in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America.

While the claim of a distinctively Latin American urbanism may strike some readers as essentialist, there are good reasons to believe that the Spanish American approach to cities has for centuries been very different from the Anglo American one. In Latin America a particularly urban orientation was built into the region's landscape at least as far back as 1573, when the *Recopilación de leyes de las Indias* (Laws of the Indies) codified rules for constructing colonial settlements, mandating numerous details of city form and rewarding town founders with heritable titles of nobility. The region's leading intellectuals

²⁴ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population, Volume III: Census Tracts Statistics, Part I, Akron-Dayton* (Washington, 1953), table 1; Census Bureau, *U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960*, table P-1; Census Bureau, *Census of Population and Housing: 1970*, table P-1, P-2; U.S. Census Bureau, *1980 Census of Population and Housing*, table P-7; Census Bureau, *1990 Census of Population and Housing*, table 8; "Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1), QT-3."

²⁵ Amanda I. Seligman, *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago, 2005); Census Bureau, *Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960*, table P-1; Census Bureau, *Census of Population and Housing: 1970*, tables P-1, P-2; Census Bureau, *1980 Census of Population and Housing*, table P-7; Census Bureau, *1990 Census of Population and Housing*, table 8; "Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1), QT-3."

likewise counterposed the culture and sociability of the city against the isolation and backwardness of rural life, a trope most clearly expressed in Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's extraordinarily influential *Facundo: Civilización y barbarie* (Facundo: Civilization and barbarism) (1845) and recapitulated many times thereafter. This valorization of city life contrasted sharply with the persistent antiurbanism of English and Anglo-American culture, from the eighteenth-century rural idealization of Daniel Defoe and Thomas Jefferson to the twentieth-century suspicion of urbanism shared by Ebenezer Howard and Frank Lloyd Wright. It is worth noting that Kenneth Jackson and Robert Fishman cite Anglo-American antiurbanism as a key determinant of suburbanization. Moreover, throughout much of the twentieth century, many governments in Latin America explicitly and unequivocally used the power of the state to encourage urban growth, as with Mexico's policy of centralizing industry while burdening agriculture, or the Dominican Republic's decision to simultaneously clear rural areas and subsidize city building. Here, too, is an instructive contrast with the United States, where the federal government provided massive subsidies for suburbanization in the form of mortgage aid, highway construction, tax deductions, and other national policies. In sum, Latin America's tendency toward urban megaloccephaly—with residents of the largest city in a given country regularly accounting for 20 to 35 percent of the entire national population—is neither coincidence nor the result of impersonal globalizing forces. Rather it is a product of deeply rooted cultural preferences and deliberate political decisions.²⁶

This urban tradition had already been exemplified in Dallas's Little Mexico, where the city's ethnic Mexicans had imbued *el barrio* with a strong Hispanic place identity. Nowhere was this clearer than in Pike Park, which residents refashioned into the plaza for the entire city. (See figure 3.) As Daniel Arreola and Chris Wilson have shown, *plazas* have long been vital aspects of Hispanic urbanism as the places where people have manifested themselves as solidary communities through fiestas and everyday sociability. Dallas Mexican Americans used Pike Park in exactly this way. Anita Martínez remembers that the Pike Park "pool was right in the center . . . so the boys would go one way, and the girls would go the other way, and we'd pass little notes to one another," a description that precisely matches the *paseo*, a historically popular Spanish and Mexican courtship activity in which men and women promenaded around the *plaza* in opposite directions. Jesse Tafalla, who lived in the city's El Pozo *barrio* in the 1950s, similarly recalled the park as

²⁶ James R. Scobie, *Argentina: A City and a Nation* (New York, 1964); Jorge Hardoy and Richard Schaedel, *Las ciudades de América Latina y sus áreas de influencia a través de la historia* (Latin American cities and their areas of influence across history) (Buenos Aires, 1975); Jorge Hardoy, *Urbanization in Latin America: Approaches and Issues* (Garden City, 1975); Richard M. Morse and Jorge E. Hardoy, *Repensando la ciudad de América Latina* (Rethinking the Latin American city) (Buenos Aires, 1988); Philip II, *Ordenanzas hechas para los descubrimientos, nuevas poblaciones y pacificaciones. Bosque de Segovia, 13 de julio, 1573* (Ordinances for discovering new settlements, and pacifications, Bosque de Segovia, July 13, 1573), esp. ordinances 33, 37, 39, 89–92, 99–107, 110–35, sourced and partially translated in Zelia Nuttall, "Royal Ordinances Concerning the Laying Out of New Towns," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 4 (Nov. 1921), <https://archive.org/stream/jstor-2505686/2505686#page/n11/mode/2up>, pp. 743–53; Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Facundo: Civilización y barbarie* (Civilization and barbarism) (Santiago, 1845); José Luis Romero, *Latinoamérica: Las ciudades y las ideas* (Latin America: Cities and ideas) (Buenos Aires, 1976); Ángel Rama, *La ciudad letrada* (The lettered city) (Hanover, 1984); Morton White and Lucia White, *The Intellectual versus the City: From Thomas Jefferson to Frank Lloyd Wright* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962); Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*; Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York, 1987); Gilbert, *Mega-City in Latin America*, 1–21, 173–83; Hoffnung-Garskof, *Tale of Two Cities*, 36–38; Thomas W. Hanchett, "The Other 'Subsidized Housing': Federal Aid to Suburbanization," *Journal of Housing and Community Development*, 58 (Jan.–Feb. 2001), 18–29.



Figure 3. Dancers in this photograph are celebrating the renovation of Pike Park, Little Mexico, in 1978. For much of the twentieth century, Pike Park was Dallas's plaza, serving as the leading gathering place for the city's Mexican American community. In both everyday use and aesthetic character, the park represented an adaptation of Latin American urbanism to Anglo America. Mexican American civic organizations and city planners worked together to renovate the park and install the Mexican-inspired *kiosco* pictured here. *Courtesy Jay Godwin/Dallas Morning News.*

the most important destination for young people out socializing. Decades later, people spoke of Pike Park in the same terms. At a public hearing in 1975 Mexican American participants called the park “a form of downtown . . . a center for our people,” asserted that “people all over come to Pike to see what’s happening among us Mexican Americans,” and affirmed that “if a person is new in town and wants to get to know people he soon comes to Pike.” In 1975, in response to Mexican Americans’ requests for “a more Mexican kind of park,” the Dallas Planning Department partnered with more than two dozen Hispanic civic organizations in a major renovation that refurbished Pike Park’s community clubhouse in a Mexican architectural style, replaced the pool with an actual *plaza*, and installed a *kiosco*, a type of open pavilion or bandstand that has for 150 years been one of the characteristic landscape elements of the Mexican *plaza*. These efforts to create a distinctively Hispanic urbanism were unmistakable gestures of cultural ownership.²⁷

As Mexican Americans settled in Oak Cliff and Latin American immigrants came to the neighborhood, they re-created a new Latino urbanism. The most basic element of this

²⁷ Daniel D. Arreola, *Tejano South Texas: A Mexican American Cultural Province* (Austin, 2002), esp. 78–80, 117–19; Chris Wilson and Stefanos Polyzoides, eds., *The Plazas of New Mexico* (San Antonio, 2011); Martínez interview; Tafalla interview; Dallas Department of Planning, *El Barrio Study Phase 1: City of Dallas* (Dallas, 1978), 32, 54, 56; Texas Historical Commission, official Texas historical marker report for Pike Park, July 1981 (in Sandoval-Strausz’s possession).

transformation involved an affinity for walking. Compared with most Dallasites, Latino immigrants were avid pedestrians. As Tereso Ortiz put it recently, one of the reasons he and his compatriots were attracted to Oak Cliff in the 1970s was its scale and compactness, which made it accessible on foot. "You could play in the street, in the parks," he noted, "not like North Dallas, where you never got out of your car." A similar note is sounded by Rosario Gaytán, an American-born Oak Cliff bank officer who came to the neighborhood in 1974. Contrasting the customs of newer Latino residents with what she saw decades ago, she observes: "Walking, I mean, it's a culture thing to me. Around here, everybody, they'll walk to the bank, they'll walk down the street. And growing up, Anglos didn't." These recollections are substantiated by census data. In 1990, when Oak Cliff was 57 percent Latino, in every tract in the neighborhood Hispanic households owned substantially fewer automobiles per person than did white Anglo households. The tract-by-tract disparity ranged from a low of Anglos having almost half again as many cars available to a high of almost two and a half times as many. Such differences should be unsurprising given the history of the automobile in the Americas. Mexicans who settled in Oak Cliff had grown up in a nation where private car ownership was relatively uncommon until the 1970s. Moreover, most of these immigrants had come from rural areas, where automobiles were least common. For example, in the village of Tzintzuntzan, Michoacán, none of the 246 inhabitants owned a car or truck in 1945, only one of 320 (0.3 percent) did in 1960, and just eleven of 360 (3.1 percent) did in 1970. Considering that historians grant the automobile a virtually unparalleled degree of influence on the decline of center cities and the rise of suburbia in the United States, the propensity of immigrant Latinos to move about on foot should be accorded tremendous significance in the morphology of late twentieth-century cities.²⁸

A related element of Oak Cliff's Latino urbanism involved changes in the ownership, scale, and location of businesses. A leading symptom of the U.S. urban crisis was the gradual relocation of retailing from city centers to suburban malls, which severely damaged neighborhood viability and municipal tax bases. In Oak Cliff this trend was countervailed by Latinos, who served as both customers and proprietors of local shops. Nick Cordova, the Anglo owner of Charco Broiler restaurant, recounts how his family's decades-old business on Jefferson Boulevard nearly had to close in the early 1990s. "I think the Hispanic crowd is what saved us," he explains. "There's people in this area, Hispanics mainly, who walk. They walk up to the dollar store, they walk up to Famsa to buy furniture, but then they gotta walk by us, and they're gonna get a steak or a burger or chicken or whatever . . . I mean, it's just a difference—not everybody's driving everywhere like your Americans are used to." The same dynamic benefitted many other Anglo-owned businesses: for example, the Oak Cliff Bank & Trust tower became home to a Bank of America branch

²⁸ Ortiz interview; Rosario Gaytán interview by Sandoval-Strauz, July 22, 2010, digital audio file (in Sandoval-Strauz's possession). See also Achor, *Mexican Americans in a Dallas Barrio*, 71; tables 42 and 44 divided by tables 6 and 7 for the Oak Cliff census tracts (20, 42, 44–48, 50–53, 62–65.02, 67–69, 99), in *1990 Census of Population and Housing*, by Census Bureau; Joyce Dargay Dermont Gately, and Martin Sommer, "Vehicle Ownership and Income Growth, Worldwide, 1960–2030," *Energy Journals*, 28 (2007), 146, 147; Robert Kemper, *Migration and Adaptation: Tzintzuntzán Peasants in Mexico City* (Beverly Hills, 1977), 25; Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*; Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias*; Clay McShane, *Down the Asphalt Path: The Automobile and the American City* (New York, 1995); Owen Gutfreund, *Twentieth-Century Sprawl: Highways and the Reshaping of the American Landscape* (New York, 2004); and Michael Mendez, "Latino New Urbanism: Building on Cultural Preferences," *Opolis*, 1 (no. 1, 2005), 33–48.

that began to offer services in Spanish in the 1980s and prospered by catering to a mostly Latino clientele.²⁹

As older neighborhood businesses closed, a wide variety of operations owned by American-born, and especially immigrant, Latinos sprang up in their place. City directories reveal that Spanish-surnamed proprietors operated only a single business on Jefferson Boulevard in 1970 and a mere handful in 1980; but they accounted for dozens of stores in 1990 and by 2000 represented the overwhelming majority of shopkeepers. A few of these grew into large-scale concerns, most notably Gloria's Restaurant, which was opened in 1985 by Gloria Rubio, who was then an undocumented immigrant from El Salvador who came to the United States in 1983 after fleeing her homeland's civil war. From operating a single Oak Cliff location that catered to other Salvadoran expatriates, Rubio expanded her business to twelve locations eventually serving a more Anglo than Latino clientele. Much more common, of course, were smaller businesses of the kind familiar in Latino neighborhoods: *bodegas* (small groceries), *panaderías* (bakeries), *taquerías* (taco shops) and other restaurants, insurance agencies, *botánicas* (shops selling alternative medicines and religious items), jewelers, travel agencies, *quinceañera* (sweet fifteen party) and bridal shops, and international money transfer agencies. Establishments such as these became mainstays of Oak Cliff retailing.³⁰

This rapid growth in Latino small businesses took place in a climate of shrinking opportunities for English-speaking local entrepreneurs. Beginning in the 1980s, transformations in information technology, pricing practices, and organizational theory increasingly favored large-scale corporate retailers over family-run stores and other small proprietorships. Latino businesses remained viable in Oak Cliff due to the culture of the area's immigrant population. Foreign-born Latinos were accustomed to operating and patronizing neighborhood businesses because before the 1990s, retailing in Latin America was far less consolidated than in the United States, and microentrepreneurship became a common economic strategy across the region in the 1980s. This corresponded well with the early twentieth-century commercial streetscapes of Jefferson Boulevard and Davis Street, where small storefronts once run by independent Anglo shopkeepers were now occupied by Hispanic proprietors. And because they could cater to a Spanish-speaking clientele in their native language, these businesspeople retained their customers while Anglophone mom-and-pop operations were being driven out of business by big-box stores.³¹

The neighborhood's commercial expansion proceeded in tandem with residential growth. The Latinos who moved into Oak Cliff saved it from the kind of mass abandonment that elsewhere in America emptied out block after block and turned so much housing stock into derelict or burned-out husks. The multigenerational and multifamily living

²⁹ Lizabeth Cohen, "From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America," *American Historical Review*, 101 (Oct. 1996), 1050–81; Richard Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920–1950* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998); Nick Cordova interview by Sandoval-Strausz, July 19, 2010, digital audio file (in Sandoval-Strausz's possession).

³⁰ *Cole's Directory, Cross-Reference Directory Greater Dallas, 1970 Issue* (Dallas, 1970), 335–36; *Cole's Cross Reference Directory, Greater Dallas, 1980 Issue* (Dallas, 1980), 426–27; *Cole's Cross Reference Directory, Dallas and Suburbs, 1990–91 Issue* (Dallas, 1990), 474–75; *Cole Cross Reference Directory, Greater Dallas and Vicinity, 2000 Issue* (Dallas, 2000), 479–80; Gloria Rubio interview by Sandoval-Strausz, July 19, 2010, digital audio file (in Sandoval-Strausz's possession).

³¹ Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Retail Revolution: How Wal-Mart Created a Brave New World of Business* (New York, 2009), esp. 46–69; Alejandro Portes and Kelly Hoffman, "Latin American Class Structures: Their Composition and Change during the Neoliberal Era," *Latin American Research Review*, 38 (Feb. 2003), 59–62.

arrangements common among local immigrants generated marked increases in the neighborhood's population density. While this often indicated overcrowding, density has also been used as a rough proxy for viable urbanism in the United States. From 1950 to 1980 the population density of Oak Cliff hovered around 5,600 to 5,800 people per square mile before immigration drove that number much higher: 6,173 in 1990 and 7,558 in 2000. This dense settlement pattern was specific to Latin Americans across the Dallas region: census plots of foreign-born Mexicans and Central Americans in 1990 correspond very closely to the most densely populated census tracts in the metropolitan area—and notably, there was no such strong correlation with census plots of immigrants from Europe, Asia, or Africa.³²

Moreover, by the late 2000s, Oak Cliff's nearly 100,000 new Latino residents collectively devoted millions of hours of labor and billions of dollars to the upkeep of houses and grounds; and because so many of them were employed in construction, landscaping, and housekeeping, they brought specialized knowledge of materials and techniques to the task. The aggregate effect of these efforts was remarkable. In the 1960s and 1970s the median value of owner-occupied property had fallen in, respectively, seventeen and sixteen of Oak Cliff's twenty census tracts—this at a time when property values in Dallas as a whole were rising. But beginning in the 1980s these values in Oak Cliff increased in every single tract, climbing far faster than in the city as a whole. Median gross rents in the neighborhood had remained fairly stable in the 1960s but had fallen in sixteen out of the twenty tracts during the 1970s; starting in the 1980s they rose in all tracts but one, far outstripping the citywide rate of increase.³³

Just as importantly, Oak Cliff's newest residents occupied their dwellings in culturally particular ways conducive to neighborhood improvement. The *Dallas Morning News* columnist Tod Robberson has noted that the most visible change in the built environment was the appearance of fences around many front yards. Front-property enclosure was the most common feature of what geographers and urbanists first identified in the 1980s as a Mexican American residential form that combined the freestanding Anglo dwelling with the Mexican courtyard house. This hybrid homescape extended the social space out of the house, onto the porch, and into the front yard to a chain link or wrought iron fence at the property line. In contrast with the archetypal Anglo front yard—well kept but empty of people—this Latino domestic space saw constant use, with family and friends sitting on porches or stairs, supervising small children who could play safely inside the fence line. (This use of *la yarda*, as many Spanish speakers called it, also had implications for street life and safety, as we shall see shortly.) In 1991 the urbanist and planner James Rojas interpreted this homescape as a deliberate departure from the bourgeois household's emphasis on indoor areas and backyards, which he saw as increasingly privatized spaces that implicitly turned away from neighbors and the street. It is thus not surprising that the rising number of immigrants in Oak Cliff was accompanied by conflicts over the proper use of public space. Anglo overreactions to peaceable streetside gatherings were so frequent that in 1993

³² See, for example, Robert Bruegmann, *Sprawl: A Compact History* (Chicago, 2005); U.S. Census data for Oak Cliff tracts 20, 42, 44–48, 50–53, 62–65.02, 67–69, and 199 compiled using, “U.S. Demographic Maps, 1790–2010,” *Social Explorer*, <http://www.socialexplorer.com/pub/maps/home.aspx>.

³³ “U.S. Demographic Maps, 1790–2010.” Census Bureau, *Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960*, table H-2; Census Bureau, *Census of Population and Housing: 1970*, tables H-1, H-2; Census Bureau, *1980 Census of Population and Housing*, tables H-1, H-8; Census Bureau, *1990 Census of Population and Housing*, tables 9, 33. All figures adjusted for inflation using the value calculator at <http://measuringworth.com/uscompare/>.

a Latino commentator for the *Dallas Morning News* repeated a popular joke that “the definition of a ‘gang’ by law enforcement officials is any gathering of five or more Hispanics.”³⁴

The Latino landscapes of Oak Cliff were not simply the result of cultural diffusion from Latin America—they also developed in constant interaction with the newest residents’ towns and cities of origin, with decision making in each location increasingly predicated on the other. Some of the best evidence of the way immigrants integrated their Dallas neighborhood into a transnational urban system lies in the reciprocal changes in their home communities. This can be seen most clearly through the methodology of the architecture scholar Sarah Lynn López, whose fieldwork in Jalisco, Mexico, led to her concept of “remittance space”—the various built environments created by migrants as they move between Mexico and the United States. My own research indicates that in Oak Cliff this process began with migrants who devoted income they earned in Dallas to reshaping the landscape in their hometowns. César Valenciano Vázquez, the president of the local Casa Durango (a service organization run by and for people from the state of Durango), recalls that “as soon as we established ourselves in Dallas and managed to get steady jobs . . . we set about finding ways to build or renovate our homes in Mexico.” Community projects soon followed: “We started inviting friends, neighbors, and relatives,” and in this way the city’s *duranguenses* “organized migrant clubs and neighborhood associations . . . and started pooling our money to pave the streets of our towns, fix up the schools, provide electricity, and paint our churches.”³⁵

Grassroots efforts such as these attracted the attention of government officials, who responded by fostering new forms of cooperation with migrants. In Mexico in 1992, the state governor of Zacatecas, Mexico, established Dos por Uno (Two for One), a program under which the state provided double matching funds for hometown infrastructure and development projects. Dallas’s Zacatecas joined the program in 1997 by establishing the U.S. nonprofit organization Federación de Clubes Zacatecanos del Norte de Texas (FCZNT) (Federation of Zacatecan Clubs of North Texas). Its first president was Manuel Rodela, who came to the United States from Zacatecas in 1971 at the age of twenty-nine and settled in Oak Cliff in 1985. Rodela maintains an archive of correspondence, official paperwork, photographs, newspaper clippings, posters, and reports that document the organization’s more than fifteen years of coordinating its many constituent clubs. These usually hometown-based clubs had financed projects in the years before Dos por Uno—an era with no matching funds that some migrants jokingly refer to as “Cero por Uno”—but with the support of state and municipal authorities they multiplied their initiatives, which included a medical clinic, a church, and a rodeo ring.³⁶

³⁴ Tod Robberson interview by Sandoval-Strausz, Jan. 15, 2010, notes (in Sandoval-Strausz’s possession); Daniel D. Arreola, “Mexican American Housescapes,” *Geographical Review*, 78 (July 1988), 299–315; James Rojas, “The Enacted Environment: The Creation of ‘Place’ by Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Los Angeles” (Master’s thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1991), esp. 89–92; Michael Anthony Mendez, “Latino Lifestyle and the New Urbanism: Synergy against Sprawl” (Master’s thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2003). See also Victor M. Valle and Rodolfo D. Torres, *Latino Metropolis* (Minneapolis, 2000); Daniel D. Arreola, ed., *Hispanic Spaces, Latino Places: Community and Cultural Diversity in Contemporary America* (Austin, 2004); David R. Diaz, *Barrio Urbanism: Chicanos, Planning, and American Cities* (New York, 2005); and Edward T. Rincón, “Police Invasion of Oak Cliff Dampens Hispanic Fete,” *Dallas Morning News*, Oct. 21, 1993, p. 23A.

³⁵ Sarah Lynn López, “The Remittance Landscape: Space, Architecture, and Society in Emigrant Mexico” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2011); César Valenciano Vázquez to Sandoval-Strausz, e-mail, Dec. 1, 2012 (in Sandoval-Strausz’s possession). See also Natasha Iskander, *Creative State: Forty Years of Migration and Development Policy in Morocco and Mexico* (Ithaca, 2010).

³⁶ Michael Peter Smith and Matt Baker, *Citizenship across Borders: The Political Transnationalism of El Migrante* (Ithaca, 2008), 31–41; Manuel Rodela interview by Sandoval-Strausz, March 6, 2013, digital audio file (in Sandoval-Strausz’s possession); Federación de Clubes Zacatecanos del Norte de Texas, *Zacatecas, patrimonio cultural de la humanidad* (Zacatecas, world cultural heritage) (Dallas, 2002), 10, 11, 22 (in Manuel Rodela’s possession).

The Mexican government adopted *Dos por Uno* at the national level in 2002 as *Tres por Uno* (Three for One), a program in which federal, state, and municipal governments each matched migrants' spending on local projects. This additional funding further intensified the Zacatecans' efforts. The FCZNT's archive contains numerous examples of the Mexican government's official forms certifying each new club that joined the organization to qualify for matching funds, and its collection of photographs documents a wide variety of activities in the following years. Hundreds of images show FCZNT officers attending national conferences that brought together Zacatecan clubs and federations from across the United States; official visits to Dallas by Mexican state and federal delegations; and the fund raising for, the sculpting of, and the transportation from Zacatecas to Dallas of the *Monumento al Migrante Caído* (Monument to the Fallen Migrant), a memorial to those who lost their lives going from Mexico to the United States. These photographs also depict many trips home to Zacatecas to unveil *Tres por Uno* projects: in one, Rodela stands in front of a poster announcing the 2005 construction of new classrooms in the tiny town of El Fuerte; in another, FCZNT members cut the ribbon and open the main valve of a new water well they financed in the *municipio* (roughly equivalent to a U.S. county) of Tepechitlán. But perhaps the clearest evidence of what these projects meant to the *zacatecanos* comes from the *anuarios*, the federation's yearly publications. (See figure 4.) In addition to letters of greeting from state officials and advertisements for Zacatecan-owned local businesses, the *anuarios* contain numerous announcements of the projects completed that year by Dallas clubs. These public notices demonstrate the migrants' pride in their contributions to improving infrastructure and institutions in the small towns and cities of Zacatecas.³⁷

Dallas-based migrants from many other Mexican states and towns also registered clubs and federations and began undertaking projects as part of *Tres por Uno*. The records of the Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (Secretariat of Social Development), the federal agency responsible for coordinating these initiatives, display the tremendous variety of projects initiated from Dallas: these included the construction, extension, or renovation of roads, housing, drainage systems, electrical grids, street paving, potable water pipes, lecture halls, community centers, streetlights, schoolyards, shelters, chapels, athletic fields, public resorts, a town cemetery, and a water park. By decade's end, Dallas's Mexican migrants were starting dozens of projects every year, setting into motion tens of millions of pesos in construction funding annually. Moreover, their compatriots in other U.S. cities were doing the same. Within two years of the introduction of *Tres por Uno*, the Secretaría de Desarrollo Social had registered projects by migrant clubs in dozens of cities ranging in size from Watsonville, California, to Racine, Wisconsin, to Portland, Oregon, to Los Angeles and New York City. In its first ten years, the program grew from twenty clubs and just over 100,000 pesos to 795 clubs and more than 546 million pesos in annual spending. Between 2002 and 2012, 12 billion pesos were invested in Mexico through *Tres por Uno*.³⁸

³⁷ Smith and Baker, *Citizenship across Borders*, 31–41; Federación de Clubes Zacatecanos del Norte de Texas archive photo collection (in Rodela's possession); Federación de Clubes Zacatecanos del Norte de Texas, *Zacatecas, X Aniversario* (Zacatecas, tenth anniversary) (Dallas, 2007); Federación de Clubes Zacatecanos del Norte de Texas, *Zacatecas, XII Aniversario* (Zacatecas, twelfth anniversary) (Dallas, 2009); Federación de Clubes Zacatecanos del Norte de Texas, *Zacatecas, XV Aniversario* (Zacatecas, fifteenth anniversary) (Dallas, 2012).

³⁸ Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (Department of Social Development) spreadsheets from 2004, 2009, 2010, and 2011 from Roberto Joaquin Galíndez, Secretaría de Desarrollo Social Eastern Zone representative, e-mails to Sandoval-Strausz, Nov. 26, Dec. 10, 2012, Jan. 9, 2013 (in Sandoval-Strausz's possession); Secretaría de Desarrollo Social, *Logros Programa 3x1 para Migrantes* (Achievements of the 3x1 Program for Migrants) (Mexico City, 2012), 3 (in Sandoval-Strausz's possession). The peso-dollar exchange rate in this period varied from about 9:1 to 13:1. See Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, "Foreign Exchange Rates - H.10: Historical Rates for the Mexican Peso," http://www.federalreserve.gov/releases/h10/hist/dat00_mx.htm.



Figure 4. The cover of the 2009 annual publication of the Federación de Clubes Zacatecanos del Norte de Texas (Federation of Zacatecan Clubs of North Texas) featured the monument to fallen migrants that had been recently installed in Dallas. Inside the *anuario* were announcements of various public projects that the city's Zacatecans financed using remittances earned in the United States. Migrants and immigrants have played the leading role in creating a transnational urban system that links together communities across the Americas. *Courtesy Manuel Rodela Rodriguez/Federación de Clubes Zacatecanos del Norte de Texas.*

Meanwhile, other governments across Latin America established closer cooperation with their citizens abroad and instituted their own migrant building programs. Dallas's Salvadorans, the second largest group of Latino migrants in the city, formed the Asociación Salvadoreña Americana (Salvadoran American Association) in 1991 and began to sponsor public projects in their hometowns. The association started channeling remittances through the government as part of relief efforts after the 1998 hurricane and the 2001 earthquakes, and in 2004 the government of El Salvador established Unidos por la Solidaridad (United for Solidarity), a program modeled upon Tres por Uno. Similar programs were launched by Colombia, Ecuador, and Guatemala; Honduras and Nicaragua have also made initial efforts in this direction. In the broadest sense, then, transnational migrants initiated a sustained exchange of people, money, and construction that officially linked communities and reshaped built environments throughout the hemisphere.³⁹

³⁹ Nicolás Argueta, former Asociación Salvadoreña Americana (Salvadoran American Association) president, to Sandoval-Strausz, e-mail, March 13, 2013 (in Sandoval-Strausz's possession); Secretaría de Desarrollo Social, *Memoria del Programa 3x1 para Migrantes, 2007–2012* (Report on the 3x1 Program for Migrants) (Mexico City, 2012),

This emergent transnational urban system was also crucially shaped by government action in the United States. The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, which immigrant Latinos call *la amnistía* (the amnesty), offered permanent-resident status to those who had entered or remained in the country illegally before 1982 and maintained continuous residence; this amnesty provision ultimately allowed 3 million people to regularize their status. In Oak Cliff the IRCA was a transformative event because it allowed immigrants to invest in their neighborhood in a way they could not when they were undocumented. “The key was when they passed the amnesty for so many people,” Gloria Rubio remembers, “and the people who were here, we started investing, started buying homes, started opening second businesses, third businesses, and so all those people, just like us, that’s what they did, and that’s what made Oak Cliff improve.” Similarly, Alberto López, for over twenty years the owner of a large jewelry store on Jefferson Boulevard, observes that while business dropped off right after the IRCA because many newly regularized residents went home to Mexico for extended visits, spending recovered when they returned to Oak Cliff and began to buy houses, cars, and other goods; he also emphasizes the importance of Mexican investment capital in his and other businesses.⁴⁰

The precise role of the IRCA is important to a debate more than a decade old: in the *Journal of American History*’s 1999 special issue on transnationalism, Jorge Durand, Douglas Massey, and Emilio Parrado asserted that “IRCA inaugurated a new era of Mexico–United States migration” because “it was instrumental in transforming a predominantly rural, male, and temporary flow of migrant workers into a feminized, urbanized, and permanent population of settled immigrants.” According to this argument, while *la amnistía* allowed many immigrants to stay permanently, millions who were not eligible were trapped inside the country by increased border enforcement. The evidence from Oak Cliff additionally foregrounds the new legal residents created by the IRCA: people whose regularized status allowed them to establish or expand transnational travel, business, informational, and family linkages. The creation of a cross-border transit network between Dallas and Mexico provides one example. As late as the mid-1980s, the city’s Mexican immigrants still relied upon an unlicensed fleet of large vans called *camionetas* to carry them to and from their homeland. After the IRCA, however, Latino entrepreneurs built larger, more durable, and more professional transport businesses. Seven firms still in business in 2007 were established between 1986 and 1989, another thirteen in the 1990s, and fourteen more after 2000. These newer companies—of which “none had officially existed before the 1986 IRCA legislation”—added full-size motor coaches and computerized ticketing, and eventually offered passengers continuous carriage without the need to transfer to Mexican-registered buses. They provided direct service to scores of cities, and even small *municipios* such as Ocampo had Dallas-based bus lines. Oak Cliff emerged as the most important travel hub, boasting “the greatest number and highest concentration

sec. A2 *ibid.*; Carolina Stefoni, “Migración, remesas, y desarrollo: Estado del arte de la discusión y perspectivas” (Migration, remittances, and development: State of the art of the discussion and perspectives), *Polis*, 30 (2011), 5; Manuel Orozco, “Migration and Development in Central America: Perceptions, Policies, and Further Opportunities,” Nov. 2013, *Inter-American Dialogue*, http://www.thedialogue.org/uploads/IAD9337MigrationEnglish_v6.pdf, pp. 22–25.

⁴⁰ On the Immigration Reform and Control Act, see Wayne A. Cornelius, “Impacts of the 1986 US Immigration Law on Emigration from Rural Mexican Sending Communities,” *Population and Development Review*, 15 (Dec. 1989), 689–709; and Helene Hayes, *Immigration Policy and the Undocumented: Ambivalent Laws, Furtive Lives* (Westport, 2001). Portes and Rumbaut, *Immigrant America*, 142. Rubio interview. I have translated into English the quotation from this Spanish-language interview. Alberto López interview by Sandoval-Strausz, July 20, 2010, digital audio file (in Sandoval-Strausz’s possession).

of Hispanic transportation firms” in the metropolitan area. Indeed, travel between parts of Mexico and Dallas even spawned a transnational television program. *Me voy pa'l Norte* (I'm off to the North), a weekly show about small communities in Guanajuato state and the lives of migrant *guanajuatenses* there and in the United States, was produced in Guanajuato and broadcast there and in Dallas.⁴¹

Looking at *nuevo* Oak Cliff more broadly, we can see how its new residents initiated a large-scale process of urban reinvestment: Latinos not only devoted a great deal of economic capital to their homes and businesses but they also built up social capital in the neighborhood. In her enormously influential book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), Jane Jacobs wrote at length of the importance of “eyes upon the street”—casual surveillance by people sitting on stoops, looking out of windows, and minding stores—in keeping order in urban neighborhoods. In Oak Cliff the Latinos who socialized in front of their homes and ran storefront and sidewalk businesses accomplished precisely that kind of neighborhood monitoring. Their participation in local clubs and transnational hometown associations further fostered street presence and civic engagement. There is good reason to believe that these practices made the neighborhood safer. The National Neighborhood Crime Study's multicity dataset for the 1999–2001 period reveals that even though virtually every Oak Cliff tract was more socioeconomically disadvantaged than the median Dallas tract, the neighborhood's murder rate was statistically significantly lower than in similar areas. The fast-growing immigrant population may also have been a factor in the broad-based decline in crime throughout Dallas, where the number of homicides per year peaked at more than 500 in 1991 before falling almost every year thereafter to 133 in 2011, the safest year since 1967. Sociologists increasingly agree on the causal link between immigrant Latino population growth and a decrease in crime. The Harvard University criminologist Robert J. Sampson has demonstrated that immigrants are less likely to break the law than native-born Americans and that concentrations of Hispanic immigrants in a neighborhood consistently reduce rates of violent crime; other studies echo these findings. Indeed, researchers have identified a “Latino paradox” in which Hispanics “do better on a wide range of social indicators . . . than one would expect given their socioeconomic disadvantages.”⁴²

These conclusions raise questions about whether the classic literature on urban space and social capital is contradicted by neighborhood life among transnational Latinos. For

⁴¹ Jorge Durand, Douglas S. Massey, and Emilio A. Parrado, “The New Era of Mexican Migration to the United States,” *Journal of American History*, 86 (Sept. 1999), 535, 527. See also Douglas S. Massey, “Understanding America's Immigration ‘Crisis,’” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 151 (Sept. 2007), 309–27. Robert V. Kemper et al., “From Undocumented *Camionetas* (Mini-Vans) to Federally Regulated Motor Carriers: Hispanic Transportation in Dallas, Texas, and Beyond,” *Urban Anthropology*, 36 (Winter 2007), 382–84, 405, 409–10; Smith and Baker, *Citizenship across Borders*, 61. On *Me voy pa'l Norte*, see *ibid.*; and Mary Sutter, “Mexican Added to DTV,” *Variety*, July 27, 2005, <http://variety.com/2005/digital/news/mexicanal-added-to-dtv-1117926644/>.

⁴² Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York, 1961), 35–36, 53–56, 77–78; Ruth D. Peterson and Lauren J. Krivo, “The National Neighborhood Crime Study (NNCS), 2000,” available at *Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, University of Michigan*, <http://thedata.harvard.edu/dvn/dv/icpst/faces/study/StudyPage.xhtml?studyId=45870&tab=catalog>; Public Safety Committee, *Dallas Police Homicide Report*, Jan. 9, 2012, http://dallascityhall.com/committee_briefings/briefings0112/PS_DallasPoliceHomicideReport_010912.pdf; Robert J. Sampson, “Rethinking Crime and Immigration,” *Contexts*, 7 (Winter 2008), 28–33, esp. 29; John Hagan and Alberto Palloni, “Sociological Criminology and the Mythology of Hispanic Immigration and Crime,” *Social Problems*, 46 (Nov. 1999), 617–32; Tim Wadsworth, “Is Immigration Responsible for the Crime Drop? An Assessment of the Influence of Immigration on Changes in Violent Crime between 1990 and 2000,” *Social Science Quarterly*, 91 (June 2010), 531–53. On the National Neighborhood Crime Study, see Christopher J. Lyons, María B. Vélez, and Wayne A. Santoro, “Neighborhood Immigration, Violence, and City-Level Immigrant Political Opportunities,” *American Sociological Review*, 78 (Aug. 2013), 604–32.

more than thirty-five years, scholars have decried the loss of community, the rise of privatized sociability, and the decline of civic participation in the postwar United States. From Richard Sennett's influential *The Fall of Public Man* (1974) to Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (2000), a rising chorus of alarm has been raised about the state of the public realm. This narrative may accurately describe changes among non-Hispanics, but it does not fit places such as Oak Cliff, where immigrants have made constant use of public space and maintained exceptionally strong associational connections locally and with their home communities. (See figure 5.) Because the experiences of this fastest-growing group of new Americans so sharply diverge from existing accounts, we will need to reconsider our assumptions about civil society in the United States.⁴³

Desde Latinoamérica (From Latin America)

The Latino landscape of *nuevo* Oak Cliff formed one part of an emergent pan-American urban system. Transnational immigrants accomplished much of the work of creating this system by extending the range of urban migration beyond Latin America to include cities outside the region's borders. Interpreting this process in a hemispheric context allows us to decenter the United States by recognizing Latino urbanization as a transnational process that in most respects began in Latin America and only gradually came to involve U.S. cities.

North of the Rio Grande, the major demographic trend in the postwar period involved cities losing population to suburbs and exurbs; but in these same years, Latin America experienced a half century of stupendous urbanization. The demographers Miguel Villa and Jorge Rodríguez have estimated that between 1950 and 2000 more than a *quarter billion* people moved to or were born in Latin American cities—a process epitomized by the growth of Mexico City in these years from 3 million to 18 million people; of Lima, Peru, from 645,000 to over 7 million; and of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, from 180,000 to 1.85 million, to give just three of many available examples. In other words, for each new Latina or Latino in an urban area in the United States in these decades, there were *ten* new urbanites in Latin America. The fast-growing Hispanic presence in U.S. cities must therefore be reinterpreted not simply in a national framework as the result of rising immigration but also in transnational terms as part of a far larger move to urban areas.⁴⁴

Scholars have long recognized Latin America's postwar urbanization as consisting of a period of rapid growth from 1950 to 1980 followed by ongoing but slower growth thereafter. In the first period, a number of Latin American governments achieved greater prosperity and economic independence by embracing import-substitution industrialization, which drew rural people into cities. In the 1980s, however, the increasing influence of neoliberal economic ideas (this trend itself an example of transnationalism, since it most famously involved Latin American students pursuing economics degrees at the University of Chicago and then returning to their home countries) led many governments to adopt export-oriented policies that slowed the pace of urban growth. Many researchers have posited a direct link between neoliberalism and specific socioeconomic changes in this

⁴³ Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York, 1974); Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York, 2000); Fink, *Maya of Morganton*, 4, 145.

⁴⁴ Villa and Rodríguez, "Demographic Trends in Latin America's Metropolises," 25–52.



Figure 5. The 2013 Cinco de Mayo parade proceeds along Jefferson Boulevard in this photograph. Like many other parts of the country, Oak Cliff has been Latinized over the course of recent decades. This process has involved massive re-investment in both the urban United States and in small towns and cities in Mexico and other parts of Latin America. *Courtesy Louis DeLuca/Dallas Morning News.*

era. The sociologists Alejandro Portes and Kelly Hoffman, for example, have asserted that a decline in economic opportunity throughout urban Latin America led more people to emigrate. Cutbacks in public sector jobs, “which constituted the backbone of the urban middle class in many countries,” drove even middle-class and professional city dwellers, who would not previously have considered leaving, to resort to the “exit option.” In addition to a large upsurge in emigration from Mexico, “sizable immigrant communities from countries that exported few or no migrants prior to the 1990s have emerged in the United States.” More recently, Rubén Hernández-León has focused on Monterrey, Mexico, “a prime destination of internal migratory flows” in the 1950s. He has found that the decline of heavy industry, with its stable employment, high wages, and solid benefits packages, “has driven urban households . . . to increasingly deploy the labor of their members internationally.” This trend makes clear why immigrant Latino populations in the United States grew so much more quickly in the 1980s and 1990s than in previous decades: Latin American cities could absorb fewer rural migrants and offered less opportunity to existing urbanites.⁴⁵

Like many other U.S. neighborhoods, Oak Cliff became part of a hemispheric urban system as migrants established and intensified personal, economic, and infrastructural connections with towns and cities across the Americas. The area became Dallas’s destination of choice for Mexicans, Salvadorans, and other border crossers. They gradually transformed landscapes by importing key features of Latin American urbanism to Texas

⁴⁵ Gary S. Becker, “Latin America Owes a Lot to Its ‘Chicago Boys,’” *BusinessWeek*, June 9, 1997, p. 22; David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford, 2007), 7–9. Portes and Hoffman, “Latin American Class Structures,” 46, 48, 74, 70; Rubén Hernández-León, *Metropolitan Migrants: The Migration of Urban Mexicans to the United States* (Berkeley, 2008), 3–5, esp. 4, 3.

while using remittances to reshape their home communities. These exchanges mostly linked Oak Cliff with small towns, especially in Mexico. In part, this simply reflected the geographic origins of most newcomers; but even with a rising proportion of people from larger cities, migrants' primary loyalties still attached to the small pueblos where their journeys began. These were the places where the most migrants traveled regularly, spent extended holidays, and often planned to retire. And it was small towns such as these that received the great majority of remittances and matching funds. Notably, migrants frequently undertook such efforts precisely to preserve the viability of their pueblos, many of which had been emptying out as the cities filled up. This kind of tight geographic integration was characteristic of the new transnational urban system: Latino migrants from rural backgrounds used money they earned in U.S. cities to maintain small towns that had suffered disinvestment and were threatened by ongoing processes of migration and urbanization. In these migrants' wake followed other connections between Dallas and larger cities. For example, when the U.S.-based, Hispanic-serving supermarket chain Fiesta Mart opened a huge store on Jefferson Boulevard in 1993, it followed the Latin American practice of allowing small vendors to ply their wares out front, creating the most lively marketplace in the neighborhood; in the following decade, the Mexican furniture retailer Grupo Famsa also crossed the border, opening thirty-seven U.S. stores, including one in Oak Cliff. These transnational influences ultimately operated at the largest macrogeographic level: as U.S. cities became increasingly Latinized, Mexican cities adopted components of the U.S. landscape, from greater automobile ownership (often made possible by migrant earnings) to the growth of low-density peripheral urban development.⁴⁶

The idea of an urban system becoming pan-American in this way has gone unrecognized even though the trend is, in a way, implicit in existing research on migration, culture, and trade between cities in the hemisphere. Scholars in Latino history have shown how people from Mexico and the Caribbean created transnational communities as they sought out economic opportunity, confronted the challenges of acculturation, and engaged in political activity; these communities were shaped by the ongoing exchange of people, culture, and money between very different locations. Similarly, anthropologists have explored how diasporic and transnational migrants from Latin America have created cultural meaning, renegotiated gender and selfhood, and organized civic and religious associations in ways that simultaneously transcend and reinscribe national borders and loyalties. But these scholars' main interests and analytic frames have involved identity, community, economics, culture, and politics rather than the morphology of cities or the Latino built environment.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Manuel Orozco, "Hometown Associations and Their Present and Future Partnerships: New Development Opportunities?," Sept. 2003, report commissioned by the U.S. Agency for International Development, <http://www.thedialogue.org/PublicationFiles/final%20USAID%20HTA%20Report.pdf>, p. 17; Sarah Lynn Lopez, "Migrant Remittances and the Mexican State: An Emergent Transnational Development Model?," July 2009, *Institute for the Study of Social Change*, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/58k8g8zm>, pp. 17, 25, 31; Teresa Gubbins, "How Supermarkets Cater to the Neighborhood," *Dallas Morning News*, Sept. 29, 1993, p. 1F; Teresa Gubbins, "Special Extras," *ibid.*, 6F; Waltrina Stovall, "Global Groceries," *ibid.*, July 31, 1994, Dallas Life section, p. 10; Jenalia Morena, "Retailer Pushes North," *Houston Chronicle*, Aug. 20, 2006, p. 1B; Jaime Sobrino, "Patrones de dispersión intrametropolitana en México" (Intrametropolitan dispersion patterns in Mexico), *Estudios Demográficos y Urbanos*, 22 (Sept.–Dec. 2007), 583–617; Lawrence A. Herzog, *Global Suburbs: Urban Sprawl from the Rio Grande to Rio de Janeiro* (New York, 2014).

⁴⁷ Virginia E. Sánchez Korrol, *From Colonia to Community: The History of Puerto Ricans in New York City* (Berkeley, 1983); George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945* (New York, 1993); Alejandro Portes and Alex Stepick, *City on the Edge: The Transformation of Miami* (Berkeley, 1993); María Cristina García, *Havana U.S.A.: Cuban Exiles and Cuban Americans in South Flor-*

From the standpoint of urban history, however, the development of a hemispheric system of cities is the crucial point because it challenges some of the most influential approaches to studying globalization. The global cities interpretation pioneered by the sociologist Saskia Sassen emphasizes the central role of international capital in restructuring urban environments, with investment flows managed by technocratic elites preeminently responsible for determining which cities grow and which ones decline. This analysis has markedly improved our understanding of cities by placing them in a transnational context, emphasizing dramatic shifts in the allocation of capital among different economic sectors, and proposing how those changes articulated with the concentration of both high-wage employment and low-wage service jobs in major metropolises. It is not without its problems, however. As Michael Peter Smith has argued, Sassen's framework (as well as those used by David Harvey, Manuel Castells, and other theorists of globalization) assigns too much influence to capital markets and neglects the agency of the vast majority of the world's people. Sassen has revised her analysis to incorporate a broader range of urban phenomena, most notably by adding a chapter on immigration starting with the 2006 edition of *Cities in a World Economy* and calling for more research on specific instantiations of the global city idea. But her approach remains fundamentally economic, and while it helps us comprehend some of the conditions necessary for migration, it is not sufficient to explain the historical decision making of U.S. Latinos. Discourses of globalization alone cannot account for the rapid growth and social vitality of the Hispanic communities in countless cities and towns far distant from circuits of international capital; and more broadly they largely ignore alternative origins of transnational city systems. The approach proposed in this article, by contrast, emphasizes social history by demonstrating how Latinos—who were neither wealthy nor corporate, but who became exceptionally numerous and highly mobile—restructured everyday life in cities and pueblos alike by using their labor, their culture, and various forms of capital to build a hemispheric urban system from the bottom up.⁴⁸

Conclusion

This transnational history of Latino Oak Cliff suggests the need for a substantial revision of the story of postwar urban America. The transformation of a single Dallas neighborhood might seem like a thin reed to carry so much interpretive weight, but the Latinization of the national landscape is no longer the exception; it is increasingly the rule. Of the twenty-five biggest U.S. cities, twelve have populations that are more than

ida, 1959–1994 (Berkeley, 1996); Carmen Teresa Whalen, *From Puerto Rico to Philadelphia: Puerto Rican Workers and Postwar Economies* (Philadelphia, 2001); Hoffnung-Garskof, *Tale of Two Cities*; Gabriela F. Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916–39* (Urbana, 2008). The anthropological and sociological literature includes Smith, *Mexican New York*; Gina M. Pérez, *The Near Northwest Side Story: Migration, Displacement, and Puerto Rican Families* (Berkeley, 2004); Arlene Dávila, *Barrio Dreams: Puerto Ricans, Latinos, and the Neoliberal City* (Berkeley, 2004); and Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas, *National Performances: The Politics of Class, Race, and Space in Puerto Rican Chicago* (Chicago, 2002).

⁴⁸ For example, Saskia Sassen's predictions of disarticulation between world cities and declining industrial centers are difficult to square with the kind of intranational networks described in Marc Simon Rodriguez, *The Tejano Diaspora: Mexican Americanism and Ethnic Politics in Texas and Wisconsin* (Chapel Hill, 2011). For a detailed survey of this literature, see Michael Peter Smith, *Transnational Urbanism: Locating Globalization* (Oxford, 2001). David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Malden, 1990); Manuel Castells, "Space and Society: Managing the New Historical Relationships," in *Cities in Transformation: Class, Capital, and the State*, ed. Michael Peter Smith (Beverly Hills, 1984), 235–60; Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity* (Oxford, 1997); Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy*.

one-quarter Hispanic, including eight over one-third and two that are majority Latino. Moreover, many smaller cities with no previous history of Hispanic settlement have been similarly repopulated, including Wichita, Kansas (population 382,000, 15 percent Latino in 2010), Allentown, Pennsylvania (population 118,000, 43 percent Latino), Dalton, Georgia (33,000 people, 48 percent Latino), and Woodburn, Oregon (24,000 people, 59 percent Latino). And the same linkages with Latin America that have transformed urban areas have also begun to influence inner suburbs and small towns nationwide.⁴⁹

The next urban history, once contextualized in a pan-American geography and a time frame that extends beyond the U.S. urban crisis, will look rather different from existing narratives of domestic decline. It will make clear how postwar cities became integrated into a hemispheric urban system in which millions of people moved back and forth across borders, and in which Latin American and U.S. landscapes increasingly shaped one another. It will also underscore how the distinctive spatial cultures and everyday behaviors of millions of migrants helped pull many U.S. cities out of a decades-long period of depopulation and neglect. These transnational connections did not help all of urban America: some of the most steadily shrinking cities, including Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and other rust belt municipalities, remained mostly untouched by Latino urbanism—though not for a lack of trying to attract immigrants through efforts such as Global Detroit and the Global Cleveland Initiative. Moreover, even neighborhoods that benefited most from migrant resettlement have by no means fully recovered their lost prosperity. Even before the great recession, the continued hollowing out of well-paid industrial and public sector employment and the persistence of educational inequality had reduced the opportunities available in urban America. And we must not forget that reurbanization has come at great cost to Latino working people, who have endured low pay and outright wage theft, suffered elevated rates of employment-related injury and death, experienced abuse by law enforcement, and been demonized by cynical politicians.⁵⁰

While this article has focused on the influence of Latinos, the next urban history must equally account for migrants and ethnocultural landscapes from beyond this hemisphere. A comprehensive transnational revision must recognize that in most of the world, as in Latin America, the second half of the twentieth century was a period of unprecedented urbanization. I have suggested that white flight from U.S. cities was for at least three decades remediated by Hispanic flight *to* cities; but we must also consider the influence of millions of people from East Asia, South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, in particular by analyzing how they adapted their respective urbanisms to the United States and reconnected them with their homelands. Indeed, with so many native-born city dwellers being

⁴⁹ Census Bureau, *United States: 2010; Summary Population and Housing Characteristics*, table 26; Michael Jones-Correa, "Reshaping the American Dream: Immigrants, Ethnic Minorities, and the Politics of the New Suburbs," in *The New Suburban History*, ed. Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue (Chicago, 2006), 183–204; Audrey Singer, Susan W. Hardwick, and Caroline B. Brettell, eds., *Twenty-First Century Gateways: Immigrant Incorporation in Suburban America* (Washington, 2008); Michael Rios and Leonardo Vazquez, *Dialogos: Placemaking in Latino Communities* (New York, 2012); "Latino Urbanism: Placemaking in 21st-Century American Cities," special issue, *Journal of Urbanism*, 5 (July–Nov. 2012).

⁵⁰ *Global Detroit*, <http://www.globaldetroit.com/>; *Global Cleveland*, <http://www.globalcleveland.org/about/initiatives/hispanic-initiative/>; Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, "Let's Welcome Latinos to Pittsburgh," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Sept. 18, 2005, p. K3; Miguel Pinedo, Xóchitl Castañeda, and Suzanne Teran, "Occupational Health and Safety among Latinos in the United States," Nov. 2011, fact sheet, Health Initiative of the Americas, University of California, Berkeley, School of Public Health, http://www.lohp.org/docs/pubs/Occupational%20Fact%20Sheet_HIA.pdf; Mark Hugo Lopez and Gretchen Livingston, "Hispanics and the Criminal Justice System: Low Confidence, High Exposure," April 7, 2009, *Pew Research Center: Hispanic Trends Project*, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2009/04/07/hispanics-and-the-criminal-justice-system/>.

succeeded by new immigrants, the time has come to ask different questions about urban history. As Scott Kurashige has put it: “Instead of continually lamenting the population loss created by white flight, [we should focus] attention on the residents who remain tied to the central cities.”⁵¹

Studying the origins of this “new urban majority” through Latino and transnational history also offers the opportunity to extend the reach of these fields and refine their approaches. In Latino history it could encourage scholars to build upon the strengths of the field—identity, community, labor, colonialism, and resistance—by exploring the role of everyday spatial practices and place-making. It should certainly recommend greater emphasis on the recent past, which remains noticeably understudied. For transnational history, this article seeks to continue moving the field beyond its still-predominant transatlantic orientation, to emphasize the ongoing importance of state power in shaping transnationalism, and to avoid reinscribing top-down analysis and oversimplified accounts of domination and resistance. It shows instead how hemispheric mobility, urban interpenetration, and government policies created complex relationships and symbiotic spatialities.⁵²

In a period of economic retrenchment and persistent anti-immigrant hostility, surely the time is right for the historical profession to reclaim its proper role in understanding the urban present and future by challenging narratives of globalized capital and financial elites, and instead recentering the field on the historical experiences of the working people who have most dramatically transformed their lives and neighborhoods.

⁵¹ Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton, 2008), 288.

⁵² See, for example, Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848–1930* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979); Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930–1950* (Albuquerque, 1987); Matt Garcia, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900–1970* (Chapel Hill, 2001); Monica Perales, *Smelertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill, 2010); Lilia Fernández, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago* (Chicago, 2012); Angharad N. Valdivia and Matthew Garcia, eds., *Mapping Latino Studies: An Interdisciplinary Reader* (New York, 2012); and Michael Innis-Jiménez, *Steel Barrio: The Great Mexican Migration to South Chicago, 1915–1940* (New York, 2013).