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**Comparative Representations of**  
**Vermont Migrant Latino Farmworkers**

Kerry Martin | University of Vermont '15  
Senior Honors Thesis | English Department  
Advisors: Hilary Neroni | John Waldron | Teresa Mares

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## Introduction

### Comparative Representations of Vermont Migrant Latino Farmworkers: Picking from Problematic Portrayals

“Vermont must rise above the ugly rhetoric that taints so much of the immigration debate as the state considers a federal request to temporarily house undocumented children waiting to be processed by federal authorities... We must never forget that we are dealing with the lives of children and resist giving in to fears driven by ignorance and xenophobia. Vermonters are better than that.”

—Aki Soga, “Rise Above the Ugly Immigration Rhetoric”  
*The Burlington Free Press* (2014)

“They wanted us to work from 3:30 am to 9:00 at night. They didn’t even give us an opportunity to eat. It was really hard there. They were paying me like \$5 an hour and I was working 90 hours a week, sometimes 95...The only thing I asked for was time to make food and they said no.”

—anonymous Vermont dairy worker, “Support the Milk With Dignity Campaign!”  
Migrant Justice flyer (2014)

“In the 2000, 95% of dairy farm workers were Americans, now they are 40% Mexican Illegals and we know why. Traitors bringing them in and purposely displacing Americans. Disgusting and appalling. While our American children/soldiers are bleeding and dying half way, around the world, they have Traitors giving their country away to Mexico. American Justice, when it comes, it will be swift and complete.”

—Pamela, in comments section of “Shumlin Supports Driver’s License Program For Farm Workers,” VPR (2012)

My generation grew up subject to a market of mass media that, perhaps more than ever before, has gorged itself on the social, racial, economic, and military anxieties of the US people. We were young (I was eight) on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, when attacks on our soil cleaved our image of the world in two and triggered an unhindered outpour of racial and religious hatred, not only towards Muslims here and abroad, but towards practically all immigrants, regardless of race, faith, or nationality. Tensions over immigration, largely centered on immigrants from Latin America, had been boiling throughout the 1980s and 90s, with bigger walls being built along the US-Mexico border, California passing aggressively anti-immigrant provisions, and mass media fueling a national fervor over “floods,” “infestations,” and “armies” of immigrants (Santa Anna 2002). But the 9/11 attacks and their aftershocks marked a permanent setback for pro-

immigration advocacy and reform (Weinberg conv. 2015), kicking immigrant discrimination and exclusion into gear with, among other changes, the foundation and expansion of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS, headquartered in Williston, Vermont of all places) and its various agencies—Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Citizenship and Immigration Services (ICE and CIS respectively, both headquartered in South Burlington), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and Border Patrol (all of which collectively employ thousands of Vermonters). A resurgence of xenophobia and nativism swept the country, threatening anyone seen as belonging to our largest immigrant category, Latinos<sup>1</sup>. Riding the boom of mobile technology, online information media, and social media, an explosion of fiery anti-immigrant media and ideology worked to validate and normalize immigrant exclusion and exploitation. In the decade and a half since 9/11, media coverage of episodes in the immigration debate—among others, the founding of DHS, proposed extensions of the border wall, the Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 (H.R. 4437), Mexico’s Drug War, comprehensive immigration reform, Arizona’s S.B. 1070, Obama’s actions, and last summer’s influx of unaccompanied Central American minors at the border—has too often presented the only alternative to aggressive enforcement as an overflow of unsanitary Mexican bandits, here to breed, steal jobs, sell drugs, form gangs, and ally with radical Islamic terrorist organizations.

But there were many people who saw (or experienced first-hand) the harm of the media’s prejudiced fear-mongering, either as symptomatic of the government’s mechanisms of immigrant exclusion and exploitation or as an additional exclusionary mechanism in and of itself. And these

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<sup>1</sup> In Spanish grammar, the terms “Latino” and “Latinos” are masculine, referring respectively to a man from Latin America and a group of men (or a group containing at least one man) from Latin America. By the logic of prescriptive grammar, using the masculine terms to describe people of Latin American origins as a whole either excludes women entirely or subordinates them. While some people have begun writing more inclusive forms of the word, like Latino/a(s) or Latin@(s), others have sought to decouple “Latino” from its grammatical masculinity and use it to equally describe all people and genders of a Latin American background, even arguing that using Latino/a or Latin@ reinforces the gender binary. In my writing I employ the second approach, using “Latino” and “Latinos” as gender-neutral terms. I apologize for any sense of exclusion felt by those who still find these terms biased or insufficiently inclusive.

people—who politically speaking constitute what could be called an opposition movement, and among which I place myself—have not been voiceless. In 2006, millions of people across the country—documented and undocumented immigrants from Latin America and elsewhere, US-born Latinos, and allies of every background, almost all descendents of immigrants somehow—took to the streets to demand (successfully) that the Senate not pass the House-approved H.R. 4437, to decry deportations and immigration enforcement, and call attention to the degradation, exploitation, and fear in which millions of immigrants to the US live. But this opposition, while vocal, still remains outside the system, largely unaccounted for by our two-party ideological order that, more often than it has acknowledged or confronted immigration advocates head-on, has swept them under the rug. While the individual speech acts of immigrants and immigration advocates may not necessarily be policed, they have for the most part gone unpublished and unconsidered by mass media, and their campaigns for rights and reforms (of which their speech is symptomatic) have been barraged by enforcement and disappointment. Some theoretical perspectives would consequently conclude that Latino immigrants to the US and their allies have not been allowed to truly *speak*, if speaking denotes being heard.

Under Bush and even more so under Obama, undocumented immigrants (and even people who resembles them) have faced persecution by police, immigration officers, and legislators and judges at all levels. Federal reform has been slim: Obama's 2012 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and its (stalled) 2014 update, Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA) and a DACA extension, hang in the shadow of the unpassed Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act (S. 744), a comprehensive immigration overhaul which the Senate approved in 2013 but the House has yet to bring to a vote. States have responded to federal gridlock with their own reforms, some states

answering the calls of immigration advocacy organizations and movements with laws allowing their undocumented residents health care, drivers' licenses, in-state tuition, and protections from state police, other states cracking down, many passing laws based on Arizona's now-ruled-*unconstitutional* S.B. 1070, which permitted racially-biased police stops and required immigrants to carry their papers. What has emerged is a patchwork of state laws and attitudes towards immigrants, where state legislatures now regularly exchange ideas on immigration policy and experimenting with new ones, enabling the experiences of immigrants of similar backgrounds and professions in different states to be completely distinct (Preston 2015). This decentralization of US immigration policy has given rise to a more nuanced landscape of ideologies and attitudes of how best to accommodate (or eradicate) undocumented immigrants. This has concurrently triggered a debate in some places—a transformation in others—over how Latinos and Latino immigrants should be represented in the media, or whether they should even be represented as a group at all. As such, during this discussion of contemporary US attitudes and representations of Latino immigrants, the role of *federalism* is crucial, especially inasmuch as ideology is tied with the projects of government and political rule. In a federalist system like ours, political stances and paradigms are complexly split between state and national official ideologies, especially regarding immigration policy. For many people, while state politics (and consequently, local news media) may more personable and adaptable to a region's unique ideological persuasions, the Federal government (and therefore, national media) retains the final say; for other people, the Federal government is too out of touch, and state reforms (and local media representations) offer a way to slip free of the national ideological hold; and for opposition movements (in which, regarding immigration policy at least, I place myself), neither national nor state governments offer sufficiently inclusive ideological outlets, yet the wide variety and limited scale of state

politics offers certain strategic opportunities for pro-immigration perspectives to be heard and to further decentralize and destabilize our anti-immigrant national edifice. On a limited scale indeed, Vermont presents one of these opportunities.

Originally, I approached this project as an attempt to situate the state of Vermont within this national patchwork of immigrant experiences, less a question of policy or media representation than an attempted sociological measure of cultural, racial, and socio-economic acceptance. My earlier ideas of how to do this—“document the experience of migrant Latino dairy farmworkers in Vermont,” as one of my first thesis proposal drafts read—proved impossible: at best, *documenting their experience* was a far more ethnographic project than I, an English undergrad, was qualified to take on; at worst, the idea of *documenting any experience* is problematic, rooted in the fantasies of domineering, Western social scientists who boil populations down to their most measurable traits and patterns. I eventually realized the futility of accurately representing human experience and situated that futility at the heart of all human striving and creativity. Even in our own heads, we cannot really *know* our own experience, only seek to represent it with the tools we are given—above all else, words. Humans only understand themselves as the sum of the representations, from others and self, that they deem most important. Therefore, in getting to the heart of what makes Vermont immigrant relations distinct, I shifted away from “documenting their experience” and towards analyzing the variety of written representations of immigrants, Latinos, and specifically migrant Latino dairy farm workers living in Vermont. Written representations of people also reveal much about political representation, since both forms of representation perform the same function of forming comprehensible and governable bodies out of inextricable infinity of the human condition. Relating specifically to Vermont migrant dairy farmworkers, I saw their linguistic representations as coming from three

main sources, all of which are crucial to understanding how Vermonters view and treat immigrants and how immigrants to Vermont view and treat themselves: the Vermont media, the organization of Vermont migrant dairy farmworkers called Migrant Justice, and the farmworkers themselves.

My attempts to study and compare the representations from these three sources led me in unexpected directions. First, I craved historical context, feeling knowing the country's and the state's centuries-long backdrops of immigration sentiment would serve this study better than simply a higher volume of contemporary examples. This precipitated the valuable but time-consuming process of researching and writing Chapters One and Two: first, a historical overview of US exclusion, exploitation, and the resulting representations of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, arguing that this history has had considerable influence over how Vermonters view and treat Latino immigrants, Mexican or otherwise; and second, an overview of how Vermont has represented and excluded its (largely non-Latino) immigrants to the state, arguing that these mechanisms of exclusion and the consequent styles of immigrant representation now work against Latino farmworkers. Without these first two chapters, I would have found it impossible to write Chapter Three about Vermont media representations of Latinos and migrant Latino dairy farmworkers, where I feel my central argument resides. I must confess that all this left me with little time for comparative readings: while my analysis of *The Burlington Free Press* is, I hope, quite revealing of Vermont's ideology and representations about immigration, even demonstrating towards the end how Migrant Justice has represented immigrants differently and has begun to render the *Free Press* more inclusive, I was left little time for in-depth study of Vermont media outlets other than the *Free Press*, of Migrant Justice's farmworker representations independent of the *Free Press*, or of farmworker self-representations independent

of Migrant Justice. Also, other than time, one key reason for letting that last pillar of my project (farmworker self-representations) fall through, even after getting human subject approval from UVM's Institutional Review Board and conducting two revealing semi-structured interviews with farmworkers, was that I came to witness and deeply respect how much Migrant Justice values and puts forward the farmworker voice. While Migrant Justice's methods and motives for doing so remain problematic (as I will discuss in the Conclusion), I found no reason why my motives and methods of discovering farmworker self-representations would be any better. I will only reference those two interviews for narrative enrichment, without holding them in high esteem as pieces of scholarly evidence. However, if I were to revisit and expand this project, I would definitely dig deeper into Migrant Justice's written representations, those of other Vermont news sources, public perspectives posted on social media and in comments sections, and the types of images and non-textual depictions of farmworkers used in tandem with text.

Here, finally, is this project's central argument: representations of Latinos and Latino immigrants in Vermont's widest-read newspaper *The Burlington Free Press* are symptomatic of the state's unique legacy of immigrant exclusion, drawing from and contributing to the state's self-image of serene, scenic, and sanitized whiteness, thereby rendering invisible and unheard the state's approximately 1,700 migrant Latino farmworkers<sup>2</sup> even while preaching diversity and equality. A theoretical analysis of the previous two centuries of immigrant exclusion on the state and national scales allows a conscious separation within contemporary news media between the relics of age-old attitudes and the evidence of real newness and change. As such, the past five years (2010-2015) mark an ideological shift away from the nativist resurgence of the previous

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<sup>2</sup> 1,500-1,700 is the estimated range of Vermont migrant Latino dairy farmworkers that Migrant Justice has been using in recent months. However, an exact number remains difficult to pin down, with estimates ranging from 500 to more than 3,000. As Migrant Justice works more directly with this population than any state agency, research institution, or other entity, and as their number appears more as a safe, average estimate rather than a strategic overstatement, I am inclined to trust their 1,700 number.

decade (2000-2010, especially after 9/11); since 2010, *Free Press* representations of migrant Latino farmworkers and Latinos as a whole have become significantly more inclusive and positive, even while still problematic. This shift has coincided with the foundation and growth of Burlington-based farmworker rights organization Migrant Justice. I argue that Migrant Justice's newsworthy efforts, as well as its own written representations of its farmworker members, have not only helped bring the farmworker population and the issues they face to much greater public attention but made the tones and implications of this acknowledgement far more positive. In other words, by reporting on and sometimes directly citing Migrant Justice's farmworker advocacy efforts, the *Free Press's* representations of farmworkers have become much less degrading, xenophobic, and stereotyped. While farmworker representations by Migrant Justice remain problematic—boiling down the farmworker population to a rather homogenous community of 1,700 able-bodied hard workers, mostly single men, for whom simple legislative and corporate reforms would make immediate and invariable impact—these representations have nonetheless challenged and arguably transformed the former Vermont ideology that justified immigrant exclusion and exploitation. By publicizing farmworker representations that are imperfect yet less steeped in a history of racist, nativist, and classist exclusion than their *Free Press* counterparts, Migrant Justice has resisted and reformed the state's exclusionary official ideology, achieving greater acknowledgement and inclusivity for farmworkers. Such inclusivity, limited as it remains, marks a hard-fought prerequisite for Migrant Justice's legislative successes, farmworkers' improved livelihoods, and Vermont's surviving self-image of liberal openness.

Migrant Latino dairy farmworkers are far from the only immigrant group in Vermont, and therefore only one of many possible foci for a study of immigrant inclusivity in Vermont. Although Vermont nationally holds the highest rate of immigrants from Western Europe and

Canada whose exclusion likely does not constitute a human rights concern, Vermont is also a well-known and highly-regarded host of refugees from conflict zones in South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Balkans, as well as immigrants and asylum seekers from those and other regions without official refugee status. A study of how Vermont has treated and represented these immigrants and refugees would be fascinating but unfortunately falls outside my project's limited scope. Suffice it to say that refugees in Vermont have faced unspeakable hardship, prejudice, exclusion, exploitation, and cultural isolation. However, their experience has diverged from migrant farmworkers' in several crucial ways—having green cards and a path to citizenship, accessing social services, living in urban areas, and generally being viewed as living here out of extreme life necessity—which, while perhaps not making their lives measurably better than migrant farmworkers', prevent simple comparisons between their two situations. (A comparison between refugees and their non-refugee immigrant compatriots, on the other hand, would be achievable and revealing, but again is outside my project's scope.) The effects that non-Latino immigrants and refugees in Vermont have had on treatment and representations of migrant farmworkers is potentially substantial but difficult to gauge; I have left the topic out of this project in order to avoid inaccurate conjecture.

There also exist many Latino and Latino immigrant experiences outside of the dairy industry. While Migrant Justice estimates that 90 to 95% of Vermont's *undocumented* immigrants are Latinos largely from Mexico and Central America who work on dairy farms, that does not cover the more than 9,000 Vermont Latinos counted in US Census figures. While some of these are *documented* Latinos who also work on dairy farms, the vast majority are Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and other immigrants and non-immigrants of Latin American origin, concentrated in the state's urban areas, some highly-educated and paid professionals, others

working in industries like food service, custodial service, and construction, and still others studying in our colleges, grade schools, and nurseries. As Chapter Three will argue, these Latinos, even US-born ones, still suffer the brunt of ideological exclusion, exploitation, prejudice, and stereotypes. In no way at all do I mean to invalidate or devalue their experience. With full respect to diversity of Vermont immigrant backgrounds and experiences, I have nonetheless decided to focus my project specifically on the Latino immigrants working in Vermont's dairy industry, who are either undocumented or conceptually grouped in with the undocumented by Vermont ideology. I find this focus most pertinent to national debates and anxieties about immigration, which tend to center around undocumented immigrants. Their situation is also particularly notable from a human rights perspective, since compared to other Vermont immigrant groups, dairy farm workers have proven disproportionately vulnerable to rights abuses. On a similar note, my farmworker focus also proved fruitful for my theoretical argument, as it demonstrated the full force of the state's ideological and representation exclusion and exploitation—and its capacity for change.

While focusing on representations, it is crucial to keep in mind that there is no such thing as true representation. There is no “best way” to represent anyone, and even the union of all representational media—words, sounds, images, etc.—can never be anything but misrepresentation of an unknowable “reality.” Our toolbox of signifiers is insufficient to fully describe individuals or groups and will always be problematic, even the terms I use to argue in favor of radical inclusion and diversity. The phrase that I and that Migrant Justice most commonly uses to describe the population on which this study focuses—migrant Latino dairy farmworkers, or some combination of those words—ignores the diversity within that group and within its specific identities, homogenizing the very people we seek to dignify. But I will argue

that these terms, while problematic, can still be used to resist and replace far more derogatory and exclusionary language. Given our inescapable reliance on the insufficient system of language, the best thing we can do is to treat linguistic and representational rules not as disposable, but as dynamic and in constant need of revision. I can only hope that the still-problematic terms I use here will soon prove outdated and be replaced with more inclusive alternatives.

The rest of this introduction will explain my project's theoretical construction of US capitalist-state power, first by elaborating on a personal narrative, then through a literature review. It will also explain how exactly representation functions to define and reproduce exclusive ideologies, validating my focus on representations of Latinos and Latino immigrants in the mass media and elsewhere. It will conclude with a preview of the chapters to come, some disclaimers about problems with my theory and methodology, and an attempt to locate myself in regards to the ideologies I discuss.

A pause tended to follow the question, "If you had to describe yourself in a few words, how would you do it?" My only two interviewees, both migrant dairy farmworkers from southern Mexico, would confront the impossibility of self-representation and overcome it by selecting the traits most important to them. Choosing words carefully, one young farmworker-turned-activist José (a pseudonym) described himself as having "a strong spirit, for living so far from home...with dreams to keep discovering many things."

But then, when asked how he views himself within society, he replied without hesitation, "Well, as a minority" (José interview 2015). Although he did not mean it negatively and later affirmed, when asked, that his own self-perception is indeed more important to him than how

others perceive him, he nonetheless carries this identity “minority,” an ideological mark of difference cast by dominant Vermont forces. In the contexts of the United States and Vermont specifically, to be marked as a minority affects each day and, ultimately, a whole life’s worth of possibilities.

José has experienced discrimination and racism ever since he immigrated to Vermont from Tabasco, Mexico four years ago, at the age of 18. From rural Vermont farms to the Montpelier statehouse, he has heard his fair share of “ugly things” spoken to or about him and other migrant farmworkers, based on a widespread disdain for their foreign language, appearance, and presence here. Nine percent of migrant farmworkers in Vermont report being verbally abused by their bosses (Migrant Justice survey 2014), and that number is probably an underestimate given the language barrier and the casual prejudice that unconsciously inflects Vermonters’ every encounter with migrant Latinos. Until very recently, if migrant farmworkers, in the isolation that defines many of their lives here, were to look through Vermont media for any welcoming portrayal (or any acknowledgement whatsoever) of their being here, they would have been quickly disappointed.

But what has done the most harm to José and other Vermont Latinos is not so much this negative language and representation, but the anti-immigrant state mechanisms of which this language is symptomatic. As this project analyzes media representations of Vermont Latinos and migrant Latino farmworkers over the past 15 years, it does so not so much to police specific language-acts as to decipher the exclusionary state structures and apparatuses that (re)produce this language and (re)produce themselves through this language. My project focuses on the textual representation of Latinos—ranging from blind to problematic to downright hateful—in order to call attention to the capitalist-state structures on whose shoulders these representations

stand. To pretend that language is the entire problem would be ignorant and impractical. The human rights abuses that many farmworkers face require reforms far more pressing than prettier language. Even as I attempt to read indications of ideological change and reform in a newspaper, the newspaper itself is doing little to *initiate* that change other than to *acknowledge* it. When Vermont migrant farmworkers organize themselves to fight for justice, therefore, they target their lawmakers, milk purchasers, and corporations far more than journalists or publishers. For instance, racial discrimination by Vermont police and collusion with Border Patrol officers became such a threat to Vermont migrant farmworkers that a campaign was launched—and won—to enforce a statewide policy that state troopers cannot act as immigration officers or ask for identification from non-offenders whom they suspect of being in this country illegally (Gram 2014a).

Still, biased racist enforcement continues, which I learned in a messy way. On one frigid winter morning, as a volunteer driver for Migrant Justice, I drove north to pick up Roberto (another pseudonym) from the farm where he works, not far from the Canadian border, in order to bring him to the Northeast Organic Farm Association conference in Burlington. There, he would have joined other farmworker activists in their first public announcement of Migrant Justice’s Milk With Dignity campaign. But about a half hour from Burlington, I got pulled over for speeding. The cop walked to my window, requested license and registration, and told me I had been going fifteen miles an hour over the limit. But soon, he seemed more interested in Roberto than me, and despite my protesting to the officer that he had no legal right to ask Roberto for identification, he asked anyway, jeeringly repeating the question, “Do you belong here?” Roberto had no ID: he had missed his first driver’s license appointment at the DMV because his volunteer driver became unavailable, and he was waiting on another appointment a

few weeks away. Citing a need to make sure that Roberto was not a criminal, the cop called Border Patrol, who arrived an hour later to question and handcuff a terrified Roberto, drove him in their backseat to their holding center, questioned him for several hours, and later released him, deeming his record clean and saying he may or may not receive a call to appear in court, for the federal offense of living here. Driving him back home, I apologized for all that had happen, bought him a Subway sandwich, and swore that the cop had broken the law. As of now, three months after the incident, Roberto has to my knowledge had no further contact with immigration officers, and Migrant Justice is in the process of filing a complaint against the police officer. I received only a traffic warning.

To me, the cop's question has an obvious answer: of course Roberto belongs here, he's lived here for more than three years, all the while working more than 60 hours a week, milking cows, keeping farms in business, and driving Vermont's economy. But to the average Vermonter, the question of Roberto's or any other migrant's *belonging* might seem reasonable. Determining *who belongs* is the core project of the nation-state, and the mechanisms with which it determines belonging (territory, race, dialect, citizenship, legality, morality, productivity, etc.) find their expression, justification, concealment, and means of reproduction in information media. The result of the state's efforts to (re)produce itself and (re)produce the conditions of its production and, in the US case, of its expansion, is *capitalist-state ideology*.

I use the word *ideology* to refer to the beliefs and convictions that individuals hold onto, while also calling attention to these beliefs' source outside the individual and the individual's (often undetected) subjectivity to the motivations, calculations, and whims of their ideological source. Anyone can produce ideology, but since ideology affects absolutely everyone, what may feel like individual production is actually ideological self-reproduction. Most people are most of

the time unaware of how ideology acts on them; ideology is not a blinder, but rather a lens placed and replaced on the subjects of an ideological order, who then play out this ideology unconsciously. This process functions to preserve and strengthen and ideological order, constituting its power and making collective sense of the order's own existence and practices. Within society exist an infinity of ideologies, whose scale and strength can be measured based on the size of they ideological orders they sustain. By *ideological order* I mean any human collective centered around a single or a group of ideas (however vague), whose continuation and expansion relies on perpetuating the faith, loyalty, and participation of its members. Individuals may be the subjects of multiple ideologies, but strongest are those ideological orders with which the greatest number of individuals chooses to identify and align their lives. I have consciously chosen to identify myself with opposition ideology, only because I have come to see the ideology in which I grew up as harmful and I wish to reduce the harm I personally inflict; however, I will probably never complete my slow, sloppy, and sticky disalignment from the ideology in which I have spent my entire life unconsciously steeped, and which certainly still and will always act on me in ways I either cannot detect or cannot resist. This most powerful and pervasive of ideologies I call *capitalist-state ideology*, on which the state of Vermont and the US as a whole are both firmly founded. In its modern form, capitalist-state ideology merges the standards for political inclusion with market forces, (re)producing and expanding nationalist and capitalist ideology into an inescapable network whose conformers find success and whose opponents estrange and exclude themselves.

Exactly what defines an ideology can be as simple as defining what it is *not*. The strongest and most cohesive ideological orders, then, rely heavily on exclusion, discrimination, “othering,” and ideological border enforcement to maintain and expand their powerful

membership. In the case of US capitalist-state ideology, immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants, are often caught on the wrong side of an expansive capitalist-state ideology that relies on them simultaneously as an unentitled opposite of citizenship and, consequently, an exploitable resource of labor. The core ideology that (re)produces the entire capitalist-state itself simultaneously hinges on the permanent exclusion and benefits from economically exploiting their position of exclusion, subordination, and desperation. The codifications of our territory, citizenship, and rights, which draw a social contract around *We the people*, inherently exclude those who fall outside of US capitalist-state ideology's membership requirements—which then conveniently justifies their exploitation.

The question of why ideological orders must reinforce themselves by contrasting themselves with other ideologies and subjects is what led me to Derridean theory. French linguist and critical theorist Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), considered a founding father of deconstruction and postmodern theory, argued that the meaning on which state power rests is illusory, forged by signifiers (words) with no inherent meaning of their own except in their distinction from other signifiers. Drawing from phonetic theories on the arrangements and distinct meanings of sounds, Derrida identified the arbitrary differences between signifiers not just as language's consequence, but also as the driving force of all language and meaning. Arbitrariness triggers reactions that create meaning through difference while also *deferring* any ultimate, "real" signification. He labels this process *différance*, exposing meaning as a "systematic play of differences," not a firm concept but a mere "possibility of conceptuality" (Derrida 286). Derrida's application of linguistic theory to the very concepts on which state institutions are founded has left a permanent mark on studies of life, language, literature, and culture: he writes, "Whether it is a question of verbal or written signs, monetary signs, electoral delegates, or

political representatives, the movement of signs defers the movement of encountering the thing itself, the moment at which we could lay hold of it, consume or expend it, touch it, see it, have a present intuition of it” (284). By this logic, all meaning—be it of sounds, words, laws, or entire nation-states—is sustained only by the play of contrasting meanings, *différance*, a process of differentiation which any self-conscious ideological order must sustain in order to survive.

How exactly states performed and sustained this differentiation was a concern of one of Derrida’s students, the French theorist Louis Althusser (1918-1990). He addresses the need for states to “reproduce the conditions of its production at the same time as it produces...It must therefore reproduce: 1. the productive forces, 2. the existing relations of production” (Althusser 1336). Althusser reads state power as physically and ideologically preserving itself in contrast to an (oftentimes imagined) other—disorder, the “state of nature,” other lesser countries, communism, etc.—reliant on the reproduction of an ideology cohesive enough to continue opposing itself to other states. Althusser divides the mechanisms that teach and enforce state meaning into Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) like schools, churches, the arts, etc. and Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) like the police and the military; these work in tandem to define the boundaries of state power and perpetuate the conditions that enable those boundaries.

Citizenship law is one of the primary mechanism, or state apparatus, by which we define people from the US in contrast to those who are not. US citizenship law also outlines personal, somewhat invasive requirements for naturalization that show the extents to which the US will go to define what it is and is not. The USCIS website states:

To become a citizen at birth, you must:

- Have been born in the United States or certain territories or outlying possessions of the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction of the United States; OR
- had a parent or parents who were citizens at the time of your birth (if you were born abroad) and meet other requirements

To become a citizen after birth, you must:

- Apply for “derived” or “acquired” citizenship through parents

- Apply for naturalization (USCIS 2013)

By citing birth within US territory as the primary citizenship criterion, USCIS imbues its territory with an almost supernatural power of granting US citizenship, a power which sets US territory apart from the rest of the world, an imagined power only made real by our belief in it. US citizenship law also makes a strong case for expanding on Althusser's theory of ISAs and RSAs to emphasize the capitalist-state's control over not just territory and its breathless inhabitants, but over our very bodies and brains. In other words, citizenship law is a strong expression of the state's *biopower*, a concept elaborated by Italian theorist Giorgio Agamben (1942-present). Citizenship law is the capitalist-state's way of defining and preserving itself by selecting its most ideologically and biologically loyal and promising members. Disguised as a privilege, to be granted citizenship is to submit to its declaration of ideological control and biopower. To be a citizen is to be a subject, and (revisiting USCIS's language) "To become a citizen at birth" is a natal declaration of state dominion, echoing of Althusser's and others' observations of our "always already" subjectivity, ideological, biopolitical, and repressive. And rather than expressing leniency, the provision of parental citizenship for being born abroad acknowledges the extraterritoriality of "the jurisdiction of the United States" and the true scope of US biopower. Indeed, the law that anyone born to at least one US citizen parent in any corner of the world is automatically a US citizen is a biopolitical claim whose boldness is perhaps historically unmatched.

USCIS's clauses on how non-citizens do or do not become US citizens further reveal the biopower implicit to citizenship and our invasive, exclusive standards for belonging. The first means of becoming a citizen *post natus* are through family connections: "Apply for 'derived' or 'acquired' citizenship through parents." This focus on a bloodline connection to citizenship shuts the door on many would-be citizens, as one might do to friends with the phrase *it's a family*

*affair*. It also implies a national familial bond, which we might call *strengthening the nation-state* while ignoring how it deepens our state subjectivity and exclusivity (not to mention its implications of homogeneity). Without a bloodline connection, the only option for non-citizens is “naturalization,” a word with many implications: first, that non-citizens must become something that they are not in order to be citizens; second, that they must be biologically brought into the fold of the nation-family, knowing that they aren’t actually blood-relatives but that the family has deemed them worthy; and third, that they must submit their natural bodies to the US biopolitical order. The naturalized citizen will never actually be *from* the US and will never merit the privileges of true, inherited citizenship, but will still have to submit to the biopolitical order that we all do.

Still, in theoretical and practical terms, it is much better to be a “naturalized” subject of US biopolitics than to be an unnatural invader, an “illegal alien” as some people say. Non-citizens living on or within our borders suffer the simultaneous brunts of biopolitical invasion, representational exclusion, and economic exploitation. Their position is well described in theories of “dissensus” and the “part of no part” by Althusser’s student Jacques Rancière (1940-present). In Rancièrian undocumented immigrants fall outside the *consensus*, the limited range of bodies, backgrounds, and beliefs sanctioned by capitalist-state ideology. Whereas naturalized US citizens have at least partially been brought into the biopolitical and ideological order, their lives and speech now (even repressively) recognized by the state consensus, non-citizens—the undocumented most acutely, but also people with visas and other non-permanent residency status—remain outside the consensus, unacknowledged and unrepresented, “the part of no part” to borrow Rancière’s signature term. Crucial to understanding Rancière’s theories and how they position immigrants in regards to the state is his definition of politics: “Politics is not the exercise

of power,” he says, but rather it is the resistance against that system of power, which he calls *dissensus* (Rancière 27). In other words, politics only occurs when dissensus challenges the state consensus, when a person unaccounted for by the state and deemed unworthy of rule “speaks when he is not to speak...is the one who partakes in what he has no part in” (32). The part of no part, therefore, refers to those groups who operate within the state but are not recognized by it or deemed worthy of rule; undocumented immigrants are one of the clearest US examples. A true democracy, therefore, would have to house “the very institution of politics itself” by institutionalizing dissensus, giving power and voice to those from whom it has been withheld, allowing all parties their say, disrupting the logic of domination.

Yet true democracy is impossible, Rancière concludes: “democratic” nation-states like ours have cultivated the illusion of democracy by framing a limited political discussion (a consensus) within a dominant structure of capitalist-state ideology, but to truly acknowledge all people and ideas would blur the contrasts with which the state defines itself, undermining national distinction and identity. Dissensus, then, refers to those unacknowledged people’s demands for acknowledgement and threat to the consensus’s cohesion. It stands to reason that every self-conscious ideological order will always try to muffle dissensus because, occurring within the state, “Dissensus is not a confrontation between interests or opinions. It is the demonstration (manifestation) of a gap in the sensible itself” (Rancière 38). Dissensus disrupts the systematic play of differences” on which state meaning is founded and sustained by calling attention to the true, immeasurable diversity people and ideas within the state. Dissensus must be kept at bay to prevent exposure of acknowledgement of the terrifying, ungovernable social infinitude whose impossibility of representation undermines the state’s self-definition and purpose. Insofar as a nation-state must maintain a cohesive meaning and an ability to contrast

itself with other nations, no consensus can fully absorb its dissensus and survive; it must identify and sustain dissensus as an outside contrast, even when that dissensus exists within its own territory and populace. True democracy is therefore impossible, because total inclusivity would cause state institutions as meaningful entities to collapse. What might look like democracy in the US is simply a consensus widened just enough to give the appearance of democratic inclusion while excluding enough other groups to maintain a cohesive and privileged national identity and to justify those groups' exploitation.

Undocumented immigrants—as opposed to other “parts of no part,” like women, the homeless, the disabled, African-Americans, veterans, felons, etc.—are in a particular precarious position because the state can actually *blame them* for being here, accusing them of criminally threatening national cohesion rather than feeling pressured for having too limited a national identity. So, as the “democratizing” state struggles to maintain its self-definition and right to rule as it expands its consensus to include previously excluded groups, it can continue to cast undocumented immigrants (and people who look like them) as an undeserving other or foreign infiltrator, citing and punishing the illegality of their presence here in order to sharpen the lines between belonging and unbelonging. In fact, as “democratization” continues—really just an extension of capitalist-state ideological subjectivity over a greater number of people that, even as it appears more inclusive, will always require a fresh supply of national opposites which it can use for self-definition and economic exploitation—the pressure on the state to more harshly distinguish their part from the part of no part, even within its own territory, will only grow. The same capitalist-state apparatuses that corral their ideological subjects into the state's definition and territory equally corral non-subjects/non-citizens out of the state that does not recognize them, territorially or ideologically or both, using a number of mechanisms: deportation,

incarceration, ruralization, non-education, overworking, underpaying, intimidation, pacification, and misrepresentation. In those moments when anxieties of the US people about their own inclusion and entitlement are most acute, the state publically lauds its mechanisms of immigrant exclusion in order to reaffirm the privileges of US citizenship and of capitalist-state ideological subjectivity.

Rancière was once a student and writing partner of Althusser but later became one of his harsher critics. Rancière found the notion of political consensus and dissensus incompatible with Althusser's bifurcation of state power into ISAs and RSAs. Rancière does not see the worth in dividing ideology from repression when the state employs both so congruently to the same ends. It is true that Althusser does make a limited concession to their interconnectivity, admitting that ISAs can be repressive and RSAs can be ideological—"There is no such thing as a purely repressive apparatus" (Althusser 1342)—but he draws this division nonetheless. Rancière is right to toss out his former teacher's binary, because it fails to account for the ideological *and* repressive subjectivity of the people who populate and perpetuate both ideological *and* repressive institutions, as well as the multiple roles that each of these institutions play. The ideological and biopolitical subjects of US capitalist-state consensus unconsciously contribute to reproducing the state as well as the conditions that make the state possible, aligning subjects' actions and attitudes with a consensus that acknowledges no dissensus except outside of themselves.

Therefore, given this theoretical construction of meaning, state power, and ideology, when the cop asked Roberto "Do you belong here?," he spoke as not just a law enforcement officer but as a subject of law enforcement, as a former public school student, as a customer and consumer of mainstream media, as a *democratic citizen* anxious about his position in the

capitalist-state consensus and that consensus's position at the center of the world. To give meaning to any and all of those roles, the answer must be "no."

What kind of a system is that?

Understanding that the consensus's methods of ideological expression and repression are intricately intertwined (if not synonymous), we can practice reading one in all. For example, just as I read the USCIS web content as simultaneously legal and ideological, so too can we read the media as a tool of both information and control. Media is indeed a far more accessible and people-based expression of consensus ideology than the law, since the average person is more likely to watch or read the news than sift through volumes of legal code. Media is the skin of the system, the way the inner-workings of institutions are presented, consumable by being always already accounted for by the state consensus. And at every stage of media's production and consumption, ideology is in charge: it controls how media outlets deem certain topics and stories important, how reporters view and contextualize what they are reporting on, and how consumers buy, read, and retell the information within. Therefore, news media's language, tone, and logical assumptions are revealing of the core ethic of the capitalist-state consensus. News is where consensus ideology most affectly addresses its subjects via the market of ideas. As such, the ways in which the news media portrays certain people and groups has staggering consequences for the treatment these people receive from lawmakers, law enforcers, employers, community members, strangers, and even their own friends, families, and selves—or at least, news media portrayals are directly symptomatic of this treatment. Either way, official media representations can gauge how their ideological order (de)values certain people.

Discussions about media portrayals of disenfranchised, ideologically excluded groups—women, immigrants, the lower and working classes, racial minorities, LGBTQ people—seriously took off around the time of the Civil Rights Movement and have become one of the primary outputs of oppositional, dissensus ideology, especially as technology has helped realize media’s ubiquity. Conversations linking media representations to systems of structural oppression have gone on for decades, inside and outside of academia. Palestinian-American historian Edward Said wrote eloquently of the mutual support and validation between colonizing powers and their popular “discourse” on colonized people, exposing the fatal danger of ill-representation. In the specific context of European colonization of the Middle East but with global implications, Said identified Western representation of colonized peoples as a justifier and perpetuator of their subjugation, tracing the tradition of Western ideological derision from before the colonial period to the modern day: “From the beginning of Western speculation about the Orient, the one thing the Orient could not do was to represent itself. Evidence of the Orient was credible only after it had passed through and been made firm by the refining fire of the Orientalist’s work” (Said 1978). With dominating powers’ informational authority always already resting in itself, it stands to reason that it would use that authority derisively to justify its projects. Said is considered one of the founders of postcolonial and subaltern theory, and the following decades of discussion on the dangers of representations of the oppressed by their oppressors owe much to his work. His theories and methods have been adopted in the name of colonized peoples across the globe.

“Subaltern,” a word not used as much by Said as by many of his followers, refers to those against whom (often privileged and Western) citizenship is defined, those who are not allowed to speak, whose political action is unaccounted for and therefore always constitutes dissensus. (For purposes of my argument, it can more or less stand in for Rancièrè’s notion of “the part of no

part.”) In reaction against the oppressive colonial representations of subaltern groups, much concern has arisen over the “silence” of the subaltern, with academics and activists alike hoping to “give voice” to the subaltern and consequently resist their structural oppression. Out of this concern has formed a debate between, on one side, those who believe that uplifting the voices of subaltern people (through people’s histories, *testimonio* narratives, and other “democratic” media) can fight back against oppression, and on the other side, those who believe that this “uplifting” will always be problematic representation that subjects subaltern people to consensus ideology and strips them of their subalterity (Acosta 2014). Ultimately, it is a question of whether representations function simply as a *discourse*, a collection of texts and ideas to be counter-represented (as Said and Michel Foucault would imagine it), or whether representations are symptoms of capitalist-state ideology and, to be improved, must reform and restructure the capitalist-state itself, not just reword its writing. This latter, more Derridean explanation is the subject of Indian theorist Gayatri Spivak’s signature essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988). Spivak concludes that the subaltern is defined by its being unheard, by its voice being nothing more than background noise, and that as soon as it is “given voice” and allowed to be heard, it is no longer subaltern, despite how little change occurs in its material position or that of the group it represents. Ergo, no, the subaltern cannot speak, she declares. Those who are heard by the consensus must always already be accounted for. The only subaltern who can speak is one who does something to *qualify* for the consensus’s standards of inclusion, and is therefore no longer subaltern. Therefore, Spivak suggests, the truest oppression is not (as Said argues) targeted violence and derision—which, counterintuitively, constitute acknowledgement and ideological inclusion—but rather, the truest oppression is complete non-acknowledgement and exclusion, to be rendered unheard and invisible. By Spivak’s logic, democratic citizens are defined not in

contrast to their enemies abroad, but in contrast the people they know they have never heard of, the subaltern, the voiceless.

While this conclusion throws much-needed criticism at those who speak for subaltern people, even if they be members of subaltern groups themselves, it far from halts the attempts to “give voice” to the oppressed. Indeed, nothing ever can halt these attempts; politically, sociologically, grammatically, and ontologically, we have an imperative to represent different groups of people. Spivak importantly points out that these representations will always be ideological and therefore problematic, but she (like many other theorists) does little to propose an alternative to representation or how best to navigate the always-problematic world of representational possibility (i.e. ideology). As formal and informal discussions and media portrayals of subaltern groups only grow more abundant and pervasive, of greater value than condemning all representation would be a discussion of the negative ways in which consensus ideology taints these representations and how dissensus ideology can alter consensus ideology and representations for the better.

The US media churns out problematic coverage of oppressed people, tugged by countering influences: first, the growing awareness that we have done many people wrong in our history, that we still do, and that our representation of these people is partly responsible; and second, a crisis of identity and self-definition, an unprecedented angst about securing the US ideological and military edifice in the face of the most dangerous, globalized world we’ve ever known. While preaching liberalism, multiculturalism, and a break from our past, the US consensus continues to reinforce the exclusionary mechanisms that set us apart from the rest of the world, like our military industrial complex, our global economic lordship, our entrenchment in capitalism and neoliberalism, our strong borders, our qualifications for citizenship, and our

xenophobia. The state-sponsored myth of our historical-moral teleology that came to a height during the economic prosperity of the post-Civil Rights era (or “post-racial”) Clinton and Bush years overshadowed efforts to criticize the divisiveness and discrimination of mass media representations of certain groups. 9/11 was such an identity crisis (“security crisis” in official language) for the nation that it validated even the ugliest misrepresentations of other groups for the sake of national self-definition, to the point that those who criticized these portrayals were even tagged as “un-American.” As the myth of our national progress, the economic growth that validated it, and the wartime anxieties that required it have all begun to unravel, the forum for debating our representations of certain oppressed groups has been reopened (at least to the extent that advocacy organizations are no longer unequivocally blacklisted as terrorist sympathizers). But since all representations are inherently problematic, generalizing, presumptive, and ideological, we must proceed with caution to pick the least problematic of portrayals that can never be fully or sufficiently true.

Even as conversations about representations of certain groups have shifted in their acceptability, the main groups of focus have also shifted, from women to Jews to African-Americans to Muslims to homosexuals. The past year’s international attention towards police shootings of unarmed black males and have brought out emotional debate over the US media’s portrayal of African Americans. The objectification of women in the media is a source of constant controversy, usually directed at the entertainment and pornography industries, with few positive results. The same goes for discussions of Islamophobia: they occur, but they do little to temper media hawks who must fuel the fire of our War on Terror.

Marginal at best are critical discussions of representations of Latinos and Latino immigrants. Some might argue that discussions of Latino media portrayals are not worth

exploring because we just don't portray them very much. If this is the case, it is problematic for a number of reasons: first, because Latinos have become the US's largest minority group, now comprising over 15% of the population, and to simply not portray them would be an enormous and dangerous exclusion; and second, to that same point, when this enormous chunk of our population inevitably shows up in the news, their representations will suffer from ideological assumptions, stereotypes, and markers of difference, given their prior exclusion from media and public consciousness. While there do indeed exist plentiful representations of Latinos in the US media as well as a fruitful discussion about these representations, I still believe that both of these forces are at play, i.e. an under-acknowledgement of Latinos that limits their media representations and exoticizes the representations that do exist. The media does not treat Latinos as the huge portion of the US population that they are, with even casual representations of Latinos feeling the need to question, qualify, or criticize their presence here—in Vermont, where Latinos comprise such a small percentage of the population, this is especially true.

There are some scholars who have whole-heartedly and revealingly confronted the representations of Latinos and Latino immigrants by the US media. The rise in immigration in the late 1980s and 1990s brought on new anxieties, laws, and structures (both physical and institutional) towards immigration and immigrants, precipitating much ugly media rhetoric that few people criticized as much as ethnolinguist Otto Santa Ana. His book *Brown Tide Rising: Metaphors of Latinos in Contemporary American Public Discourse* (2002) is a systematic study of the specific metaphors used to describe immigrants and immigration in hundreds of *Los Angeles Times* articles about Proposition 187 reveal a largely unchecked pattern of racist, breathless, and threatening portrayals of immigrants. He shreds the *Times* for their depictions of immigrants as *tides*, *armies*, *infestations*, and so on, criticizing specific words and phrases that

the media still uses to talk about immigration (Santa Ana 2002). His engagement of cognitive metaphor theory—describing how humans construct and understand through metaphors, how all words are essentially metaphors, and how literal metaphors have tremendous influence over how we view and treat other people—could be considered a social science adaptation of Derridean theories of signifiers. While my methods are not nearly as systematic as Santa Ana’s, his keen attention to the specific words, phrases, and metaphors the media uses to describe immigrants had huge influence over my reading process.

In her book *Latino Spin: Public Image and the Whitewashing of Race* (2008), Arlene Dávila investigates the ideological baggage behind seemingly “positive” or “celebratory” portrayals of Latinos. She makes the case that “Latinos are being characterized in a more marketable, sanitized, and compensatory way” (Dávila 1), scrutinizing the specific roles that these representations lay out for immigrant and non-immigrant Latinos. She convincingly explains how “the pressure to look good—as a profitable and attractive people/constituency—has shaped a ‘people’ and their place in US racial hierarchies” (Dávila 6). The “positive” image of Latinos that she identifies conforms to the contemporary values of the capitalist-state consensus, and the representations she describes, while not overtly offensive, helped me understand the modern-day consensus prerequisites for immigrant inclusion, especially in an allegedly liberal and accepting state like Vermont.

In his book *Citizenship Excess: Latinos/as, Media, and the Nation* (2013), Hector Amaya takes on Latino representations in the media with a critical theory approach more akin to my own. Amaya explains how citizenship and the “excessive” traits that the media ascribes to it acts against Latinos and immigrants “as both a pushing down (racism) and a pushing away (xenophobia) that...preserves the ethno-racial character of the nation-state” (Amaya 3). His

further elaborations on citizenship as a mechanism for preserving and enforcing state signification inspired many of my own explanations of how the capitalist-state consensus (re)produces itself, and how the mass media's derisions of non-citizens and the Latinos who are grouped in with them help to prop up white American citizens. It is only his consolidation of all exclusionary mechanisms within *citizenship* (and the lack of historical background that enables him to do so) that I take issue with; apart from that, Amaya's work proved a critical precursor to mine.

Despite these crucial examples, I believe that the media's portrayal of Latinos and Latino immigrants deserves much more critical attention, as well as different approaches that connect current representations of Latinos to history's main driver of immigrant exclusion, namely, the capitalist-state consensus's need to define and reproduce itself. My study aims to provide this attention, scrutinizing media representation of Latinos with theoretical and disciplinary perspectives not typically applied to the issue. Specifically, my study of the nation's history of immigrant exclusion and the mechanisms it has variously employed to exploit or erase Latino immigrants highlights the deep-rootedness of exclusive institutions and ideologies often dismissed as merely situational in the news media. In describing this history, my focus on these exclusive mechanisms as crucial to the definition and preservation of the state itself further testifies to the extreme reconceptualizations required to dismantle exclusionary institutions and the media language through which they are most visibly expressed. Furthermore, my project is original in applying this theoretical reading of history—and this theoretical-historical reading of newsprint—to a region of the country not normally associated with immigration, Latino or otherwise: northern New England, specifically Vermont, sometimes called the whitest state in the Union. And finally, I offer an alternative to immigrant representations by consensus

ideology, pointing instead to written representations of immigrants by the organization Migrant Justice as much more inclusive and less problematic than their newsprint counterparts, which have managed to reform mass media representations without demanding dramatic, immediate social upheaval.

Chapter One is a theoretical reading of the history of US relations towards Mexico, Mexicans, and Mexican-Americans over the past two centuries, showing the diverse mechanisms by which we have excluded and exploited them and the shifts in ideology or ideological output that have thickly layered immigrant exclusion over time. Its basic argument is that Mexican-Americans fit Rancière's notion of the part of no part, supported by the contrasts between the US's out-of-touch representations of Mexican-Americans and these people's actual (covert) experiences and contributions to the US consensus.

Chapter Two applies the same theoretical reading to the state of Vermont, fleshing out particularities of our state's history and ideology including our forgotten history of immigrant exclusion. It also identifies reasons why this history is left out of our state's self-conception and the dangerous implications that oversight has for our treatment of current immigrants.

Chapter Three explores Vermont's changing dynamic of immigrant exclusion through a close reading of representations of Latinos and migrant Latino farmworkers in *The Burlington Free Press*, Vermont's largest newspaper. Looking at articles from the past fifteen years, I show how the exclusionary mechanisms built over two centuries are still hard at work—and also how farmworker organizing over the last five years have posed a challenge to this history.

The Conclusion briefly examines the written representations of Vermont migrant Latino farmworkers by the local nonprofit Migrant Justice. As a grassroots organization that employs farmworkers and respects the decisions of a committee of other farmworkers, its representations

are less problematic not just for being more authentically self-representative and void of cultural stereotypes, but also for expressing a community far less hierarchical and profit-driven than the Vermont capitalist-state consensus.

A disclaimer about exclusivity in my study: among Vermont migrant Latino farmworkers there are very few women. But there are some, and they are drastically under-represented, in the *Free Press* especially but also somewhat by Migrant Justice, which intrinsically seeks to represent Vermont migrant farmworkers as a young, single, mobile, male workforce asking only for a little dignity, not for social services or a place to raise a family. As such, the *female* Vermont migrant Latino farmworkers that exist and work just as hard as the men, even while joining the fight for worker and human rights, nevertheless remain excluded. They are perhaps the truest “part of no part” within an entire population that already qualifies as such. Even as my research revealed a shift towards migrant farmworker inclusion, it is a conditional inclusion that continues to ignore female farmworkers. Women’s nearly total absence from *Free Press* farmworker representations should be read as a problem for both the state of Vermont and for Migrant Justice: they ought to stretch their consideration of migrant farmworkers inclusion to encapsulate all gender difference. In this setting, female (not to mention queer and non-gender-conforming) farmworkers not only remain stuck in a legacy of straight male subordination, but even suffer it more acutely given their definitive gender minority status.

Another disclaimer about my theoretical approach: ultimately, the Ranciorean model did not leave me satisfied. Too often it falls into binaries that erase more diversity than it acknowledges, telling a story with two characters: the voice and the voiceless, the oppressor and the oppressed, consensus and dissensus. After using this structure of state power to inform the

bulk of my argument and evidence, my project confronted this model's limits. If dissensus, true politics, can only occur in resistance to consensus ideology and processes, then do migrant farmworkers really become subjects of consensus ideology as soon as they successfully campaign for reform within the system, as opposed to its total overthrow? Can the consensus really extend its stretch and control over a marginalized group by acknowledging it and granting it basic rights, even as that group continues to fight against the capitalist and nationalist exclusion on which the consensus is founded? If the ideological contrasts to the consensus—people who quite legitimately stand against nationalism, capitalism, consumerism, neoliberalism, party politics, US supremacy, and the core ideas by which the state defines itself and rewards its subjects—are allowed to operate within society and even impact it, then how exclusionary really is (or must be) the consensus? If the subaltern truly cannot speak, then are now-acknowledged farmworkers truly not being heard, or are they just as bad as the corporate shills who hear them, or is a more flexible theoretical model called for than this to describe their situation? These are the questions I will revisit in my conclusion, once Rancière's theories have been allowed to run their course and, within the consensus-dissensus structure, once Migrant Justice will appear to have marked a serious historical shift. To determine whether or not our capitalist-state ideological order is becoming genuinely more inclusive, or to better theorize a system that perhaps all along has been more permissive of inclusion than I insinuate, I will conclude by proposing theoretical alternatives to Rancière's model, which wore itself out before the end.

All this begs another question: who am I, and what is my ideology? Answering this question, again, confronts the limits of Ranciorean theory: I stand and agree with the country's supposed ideological opposite, advocating for including the immigrants on whose exclusion the whole system allegedly relies, and yet I am entirely permitted to do so, to speak, write, and act

against capitalist-state ideology without facing enforcement or inclusion. Does this mean that I am far more subject to the system than I suspect? Possibly: after all, I still mostly answer what US ideology demands of me, by going to an expensive college, consuming commodities, obeying the law, working to improve my career prospects, and generally conforming to behavioral expectations of young, white, upper-middle-class US males. Whatever dissensus I might imagine in myself could simply be the left side of consensus ideology, my thinking and acting “against the system” could have been always already accounted for by the system and therefore not true politics. But I believe that to dismiss myself and many other far-more-accomplished activists as trapped within the capitalist-state consensus starkly exposes the limits of Rancière’s thought: it minimizes the possibility for enacting real change and reform without total systemic upheaval; it ignores the incredible impacts of people who have accepted (even begrudgingly) the system’s foundations in order to alter its specific policies and powers. In Rancière’s (and Spivak’s) construction, capitalist-state ideology functions almost as a cliff off which those who fall are entirely and eternally lost; as I ask myself where my own ideology lies and I find a multifaceted, contradictory brain that seeks the advancement of untraditional, anti-establishment ideas through established means, Rancière’s cliff between consensus and dissensus now seems completely insufficient. He fails to present ideological subjects as lacking, desiring, split subjects who can be subjects of multiple ideologies (not to mention their own experiences and emotions). I defend my use of Rancière’s model to the extent that ideological orders have an incentive to present themselves as whole, unsplit, and non-contradictory. While the model cannot describe individual ideologies, the idea proves useful for states, capturing the top-down, autocratic, capitalist ideal of “you’re either with us or you’re not,” regardless of this ideal’s true achievability.

One last point before diving in: why do I care about all of this? I am not Latino, I am not an immigrant, I am not even a grandson of immigrants. As far as the consensus goes, I'm almost as American as they come, except for a few years of my childhood in Belgium and a couple college semesters spent poking around the developing world, in Argentina and Tanzania. In those countries I met many brilliant people who, for countless reasons, wanted to come to the United States—to live and raise a family, to work and send money home, to visit the Grand Canyon or the Statue of Liberty, to escape poverty or conflict, to go to school, to get better healthcare, or to give their children or grandchildren the opportunity to do what I was doing, going to another country not out of necessity, but curiosity. Most days abroad I grew more bitter, surrounded by people who dreamed of my country, a country that would forever try to keep them out; I, as a “cultural ambassador,” brought nothing to these people but false hope.

There were others I met, too, who resented the United States for its empire, influence, and exploitation. If only they could come, if only they could come and share their critiques and insights with US people who need to be made aware, or if they could team up with the US citizens already working to wield their national power in more inclusive and effectively altruistic way. If only they could come here, and get a better shot at being the change they wish to see in the world.

The Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition, who first got me involved with this movement, works for just that—to help New Americans fearlessly engage with our society, understanding that the American Dream has only ever been as achievable as our country's newest residents and hardest workers are permitted to pursue it. Migrant Justice understands and works towards this too; over the past nine months, the organization has taught me more than any class could about the power and necessity of community organizing and inspired me to fight

against capitalist-state mechanisms of exclusions and exploitation. For the foreseeable future, the fight for immigrant rights and representation has found an ally in me. Therefore, this project has a personal matter: to better know, while resisting immigrant exclusion, discrimination, and abuse, the powerful forces that stand in true inclusion's way.

## One

### Forced out of Land, Written out of Law, Jeered Out of Print: How Mexican-Americans Became the Part of No Part

“Prejudice is not simply a peculiarity of *certain* nations; it is a phenomenon of *expansive* nations.”

—Philip Nicholson, *Who Do We Think We Are?* (1999)

“The dramatic territorial shift wrought by the Mexican[-American] War—cutting Mexico in half and adding five and a half large states to the United States—has tended to overshadow other realities of the period, realities that have lasted into the present. The war crystallized points of contention between two cultures, exaggerating their differences and deepening their prejudices...”

—Jerome Adams, *Greasers and Gringos* (2006)

“Yo soy Mexicano, mi tierra es brava.  
Palabra de hombre que no hay otra tierra  
más linda y más brava que la tierra mía.  
Mi orgullo es ser charro valiente  
y bragado. Mi orgullo lo tengo de ser  
Mexicano. México lindo y querido,  
si muero lejos de ti, que digan  
que estoy dormido  
y que me traigan a ti.  
Yo le escribo a tus volcanes,  
a tus praderas y flores que son como  
talismanes del amor de tus amores.  
Lástima, México lindo y querido,  
tan lejos de Dios y tan cerca  
de los Estados Unidos.”<sup>3</sup>

—Jaime Trejo, *Estamos Aquí: Poems by Migrant Farmworkers* (2007)

Before digging through modern media for symptoms of the ideological exclusion of migrant Latino farmworkers, it is essential to illustrate how this ideology came to be. For this, we must plunge back in time. The world is not reborn anew each morning; rather, people carry over the same lives, languages, inventions, buildings, geographies, and ideologies that they built years ago. While they may imagine these things differently as time goes by, their structure and

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<sup>3</sup> “I am Mexican, my country is brave,/ On my word, there is no other country/ more gorgeous or fearless than mine./ My pride is to be a brave/ and agile horseman. The pride I have/ is being Mexican. Beloved, beautiful Mexico,/ if I die far from you, let them say/ that I am sleeping/ and bring me back to you./ I write to your volcanoes,/ to your meadows and flowers,/ talismans of love from your loves. Too bad, my beloved, beautiful Mexico,/ that you are so far from God/ and so close to the United States.” The last three lines are a quote from famous Mexican writer José Vasconcelos. The poet is a farmworker from upstate New York.

mechanics remain the same until we tear them down and build them anew. It is difficult to accept that in 2015, many of the ideas on which people base their lives are hundreds of years old, rooted in the capitalist-state structures inaugurated centuries ago. Any radical reconceptualization of how people treat themselves and their fellow humans—in this particular case, of how US people treat Mexicans and Mexican-Americans—requires a recognition and interrogation of the structures that originally produced and continue to reproduce themselves through ideology. To that end, I will perform a critical reading of the history of US capitalist-state ideology in regards to Mexico, Mexicans, and Mexican-Americans, from an outside perspective of opposition ideology that, while problematic in its own ways and perhaps impossible to fully extract from the capitalist-state, can better identify and dismantle state structures of exclusion and exploitation. Not only will this history provide a testing ground for the critical theory outlined in my introduction, it will also demonstrate the core ethic of US capitalist-state ideology: entitled expansionism. Also, since most of this history had already taken place by the time the first migrant Latino workers arrived in Vermont, it will also map out the mediated prejudices through which Vermonters made sense of their first encounters with their new neighbors from Mexico.

It is something of a US tradition to treat history like a long log of mistakes that we know not to repeat. For us, the Constitution signifies our moral teleology, where our mistakes and oversights have been “amended” by code of law, on an unstoppable historical path towards social justice. But this sense is just the *affect* of United States ethical entitlement and expansionism, an ideology that tells its own history as a wholesome collection of legal and military fables. Still firmly entrenched, this ideology blinds people to prejudices and atrocities past and present, aggressions and micro-aggressions. In trying to find less problematic ways to represent Mexican-Americans, or anyone for that matter, it is essential to dissect how and why

capitalist-state ideology has concealed the dirty majority of history. If US representers—meaning all subjects of capitalist-state ideology, but especially those appointed to produce information media—do not actively study and confront their position in social history, they fall victim to the ideological assumptions and oversights that (re)produce oppressive and exclusive power structures.

The entire history of US relations with the people of Mexico reveals the friction at the capitalist-state consensus's ideological borders, friction caused not just by the nationalist projection of difference or antonym needed to sustain state signification, but also by territorial, political, and capitalist expansionism that took our projection of Mexican difference as a justification (or invitation) for invasion and exploitation. This ideological legacy lasted past the point where Mexicans mostly lived across the border, into the current age where Mexicans and Mexican-Americans (as well as many other immigrant groups) are cast as a contrast to citizenship and privilege *within* our borders, readily exploitable, but threatening for their numbers and their potential destabilization of the state-capitalist consensus and self-definition. For the state to consider as subjects those who do not fully act within its power—particularly those who were foreign-born and may not have always already been US subjects—would threaten national cohesion, and undermine the ethic of expansionism which has steadily been grafted to the meaning of our country.

Therefore, a theoretical reading (or sampling) of the history of US-Mexican relations will situate our present day in a multi-century dynasty of racist, classist, expansionist, capitalist-state ideology. By now, not only have the exclusionary mechanisms of state capitalism stretched their tendrils to incredible lengths, but these tendrils have strengthened the bonds between the

different state apparatuses, giving today's consensus a biopolitical scope, surveillance, and selectivity of historically unprecedented scale.

But what exactly do I mean by *history*? My notion of history falls somewhere in between the grade school definition (history as “the stuff that really happened”) and the logical extreme of deconstructionism (history as the sum of the most dominant (mis)representations of the past). I certainly invoke the latter: history is largely just *the story we tell*, whatever the winners decide make them sound best, with no honest obligation to empirical reality. Yet I find it difficult and useless to deny that events and changes actually do occur, regardless of how we imagine them; to view history purely as the fairytale of whomever's in charge, while possibly working to invalidate narratives of domination and entitlement, is nevertheless unfair to the victims of atrocities that history has witnessed and that continue to happen every second. So, while my study of consensus ideology is mostly tied to history as the dominant (mis)representation of the past, an attention to *what actually happened* will reveal how this domination came to be and what it has chosen to forget.

My urge to revisit history was spurred by what appeared to me an aggressive ahistoricism in US representations of Mexico, not just in everyday parlance and tacky Cinco de Mayo celebrations, but also in my very object of study, *The Burlington Free Press*. A 2008 article profiling Mexico and a few Mexicans living in Vermont (which I will revisit in Chapter Three) boiled the country's history down to these two sentences:

Mexico, which was under Spanish rule for three centuries, declared independence Sept. 16, 1810; it was recognized by Spain in 1821. For thousands of years prior to Spanish rule, Mexico was home to native people, a land of complex and advanced civilizations.  
(Pollak 2008)

While giving some small measure of dignity to Pre-Columbian civilizations, it nevertheless makes the grave oversights of, one, treating indigenous people and influences as entirely eradicated, two, treating the Spaniards as the sole eradicator and colonizer, and three, imagining a narrative of Mexico detached from the United States. This chapter aims to prove just how dangerous—and ideological—of oversights these are.

Rape, pillage, betrayal, exploitation, desire...to these legacies of the US and Mexico's troubled brotherhood, I would add one more: *erasure*. By erasure I simply mean the ideological selectivity of which movements and episodes to highlight, which constructs a problematic narrative or representation of the past that erases certain people and events from an ideology's canon of knowledge. Such is the case with all history—the human relationship to the past is always one of redactive reflection, its inevitable gaps filled by our imaginaries, leaving the past a vessel for dreams, validations, and moral contrasts—but the way our country has misremembered and misrepresented Mexico is an erasure perhaps without match in contemporary history. A glance at most US high school curricula would suggest that Mexico has been veritably *written out* of our national history, whereas many Mexicans can list every time the US has ever invaded their country (Beer conv. 2015). Their being written out is a distinct and precedented possibility: the ideological mechanisms that were used to pull a historical veil over slavery and Black racism in this country are still being dismantled, slowly. These same mechanisms work to cloud the history of Mexican-American and Anglo-American relations, and by the same token, they buoy and justify present-day exclusion, discrimination, and misrepresentation.

It should be stated that Mexican-Americans are just one of many groups through whose experience we can observe US and Western hegemony; and recognizing the particularities of one group's situation as crucial to expressing how the global infinitude of oppressions are inextricably intertwined and mutually entrenching. Studying specifics is crucial to accepting true difference around us (and the ambiguity it carries), and it is partly what Rancière means by *dissensus*, resisting the consensus by counting in what it counts out. Coming to terms with our history against Mexicans is particularly pressing, given that Latinos are now the US's largest minority and Mexicans the largest group within that. A little under 10% of people born in Mexico now live in the United States, where their birthrates have now outpaced their immigration rates; the 35 million people of Mexican descent counted by the US Census, about 11% of our population, doesn't even include an additional seven million without papers. Not long from now, our country will be as Latino as it is white, and denying the interlacing of Anglo and Mexican contexts will only become more ridiculous. Yet our current national identity limits its inclusion to assimilated, Americanized Mexicans. Will we ever accept Mexicans as Mexicans, or will we continue to engulf them? We must confront and teach our country's long history against and in partnership with Mexico, or else will we continue to treat Mexicans as an interruption, a threat to national meaning. We will neither see nor know ourselves.

I have deep respect for the study of history but would be hard pressed to call myself a historian. As such, while I consider presenting and analyzing my project's historical backdrop extremely important, I must rely heavily on actual historians, who have done the groundwork in trying to reverse this erasure. This work is crucial, and while I will give it much attention in this chapter, my ultimate purpose is to see how inaccurate our contemporary US historical narrative

remains, and how unjustly it inflects contemporary representations of Mexicans-Americans and other Latinos, particularly the 1,700 migrant Latino dairy farmworkers living in Vermont.

A useful resource for unearthing the gruesome facts of US-Mexico relations and representations—and for expressing them in bold, powerful language—was *Greasers and Gringos: The Historical Roots of Anglo-Hispanic Prejudice* (2006) by Jerome R. Adams, a political scientist and historian at the University of North Carolina. While the book is of course ideological, given its pronounced purpose of exposing a history of Anglo antagonism dating back centuries before these countries even existed, it does not come off as a polemic; it remains richer in “raw information” than opinion or theory, from start to finish. Adams presents heavily sourced accounts of specific events and phenomena. While Adams was far from my sole source, the extent to which I lean on his account (especially of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) deserves acknowledgement.

Taking a suggestion from historian Phillip Nicholson, whom Adams cites—“Prejudice is not simply a peculiarity of certain nations; it is a phenomenon of *expansive* nations” (Adams 171)—I will begin tracing the history of prejudice against Mexicans back to when the US came into its own as an expansive power. Previously a weak coastal colony and an underdog against the British in the unlikely American War of Independence, by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the young nation itched for westward expansion. Unlike the enormous indentured peasant castes that worked Latin American plantations, the US’s self-sustaining “yeoman farmers” were entrepreneurs with a personal stake in their country’s economic wellbeing, willing to take up arms in the name of national economic opportunity (Engerman & Sokoloff 288). However, there were human obstacles to their expansionist urges: far from an untapped wilderness, much of the American West was settled territory of the Spanish Empire, except for France’s Louisiana Territory and of course the ancestral lands of Amerindian tribes. As early as 1797, “Americans

saw those [Spanish] colonies as medieval, monarchist, and Catholic,” (Adams 79), justifying their takeover decades in advance. The 1803 purchase of the Louisiana Territory left its southern border with Spanish territory uncertain, and “Spain, [who] of course was too weak to advance any objection” (83), became the United States’ only true political obstacle to further territorial expansion. When the Embargo Act of 1807 restricted US exports to the still-hostile British Empire, “[Mid]western farmers and merchants witnessed so much ruin that they could think of little else but getting some foreigner—any foreigner—into their gun sights. At the top of the target list were the Spanish in West Florida” (88). Already, US nationalism and capitalism were wedded, their projects of government aligned with the interests of white male land-owners (who, conveniently, were the only voters) who, lacking a ready supply of indigenous labor and pre-existing agriculture, clamored for more land to develop. The 1810s were a decade of contrast: while landed elites across Latin America waged wars of independence for almost purely political, self-deterministic reasons, the US wrested Florida from Spanish and Amerindian hands in the Creek Wars for almost purely expansionist, capitalist reasons.

But Florida did not sate us. The persistent aggression and prejudice against independent Mexico by the US revealed two things: one, that US expansionism (wedded with capitalism) was not a feeling that could be satisfied, but an ideology of desire that required the preservation and relocation of a part outside itself in order to survive; and two, that our means of justifying the conquer of Mexicans were adjustable to the times, that we held every right to subjugate Mexicans not just because of the Spanish Empire’s weakness, but because of an inherent Mexican inferiority that even political upheaval, then and now, could never shake off. The US representation of Mexico’s first (short-lived) president Augustín de Iturbide set the stage for centuries of condescension towards Mexican politics: described as “one of America’s spectacular

rascals,” Iturbide’s “greatest disservice was in providing an abiding cliché for American commentators. ‘Iturbide,’ wrote two Americans in 2004, ‘initiated a style of rule that would prevail, in the absence of institutions of popular self-government, *for the better part of two centuries*’” (Adams 108). This complete invalidation and cultural dismissal of Mexico’s admittedly troubled politics was crucial to the US’s ideology of its own good governance, of American exceptionalism, and therefore of its divine right to govern coast to coast. This divine right found expression in ideas like the Monroe Doctrine and Teutonic exceptionalism—though the news media would give the idea its most famous name.

In 1845, newspaper editor John O’Sullivan labeled our country’s divine right “manifest destiny,” encouraging US forces eager to annex Texas and California to “spread the benefits of democracy and freedom to the lesser peoples inhabiting the continent” (Adams 136). In tandem with the logic that justified slavery, manifest destiny defined the era, giving ideological ground to the atrocities that had already been committed in the name of US expansionism and the many more to come. As our country stretched its borders with blood and bullets, manifest destiny gave grotesque reality a rosy ideological glaze that filtered out what could never be justified and continues to affect how we see our past and present. Selective ideological erasure of past and present events and their victims was already hard at work, with the help of media representation.

Manifest destiny also exemplifies how ideological erasure can cause very tangible and consequential oversights; it created a gaping disconnect between US attitudes towards expansionism and how it was construed by Mexicans. The Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819, which ended the aforementioned Creek Wars and ceded Florida to the US, also “relinquished all [US] claim to the Spanish province known as Texas” (Adams 94). But that same year, a doctor named James Long led an armed band into Texas to raid its people and villages for the next two years,

an incident that “created enormous distrust of Americans by Spanish (and, later, Mexican) officials” (107). By 1845, the pervasion of expansionist discourse like O’Sullivan’s prompted the full annexation of Texas, in complete violation of the treaty (though Texas was by this point an independent Republic). Manifest destiny still declared the *Tejanos* better off in Washington’s care than their own, treaties be damned. New Mexicans were also deemed unfit for Mexican governance (or self-governance), soon terrorized by US expeditions which “bore all the marks of banditry, pure and simple” (115). As were the *Californios*, Spanish settlers who far outnumbered but welcomed and supported the few early Anglo settlers, who then in 1846 “connived rather cynically” against *Californios* in an attempted US overthrow of Mexican California called the Bear Flag Revolt, which “took by surprise *Californios*, who felt betrayed by Americans who had prospered in a semi-autonomous province and then turned on it” (131-135). Given this long history of betrayal, bloodshed, and broken promises, one might assume that the US government and people were at least aware of the marks against them and anticipate serious Mexican backlash to further expansionism. But the ideology of manifest destiny, which justified and enabled this expansion, rendered US leaders and citizens blind to the consequences of their atrocities, and even readied them to commit more. So a few months into the grueling Mexican-American War (1846-1848), when US troops were not greeted as saviors but resisted by professional armies and civilian raids, it became clear to some that “[President] Polk and his advisors had totally underestimated the sense of outrage among the Mexican people” (Adams 121). Such is the power of ideology: blinding enough to cause military experts the most rudimentary miscalculations. As the US predetermined Mexican territory ripe for commercialization and complacent to invasion, Mexican dissensus was rendered invisible, leading the US into a horrendous war that saw at a minimum 15,000 deaths on each side.

Countless episodes from the Mexican-American War—“or as it is known in Mexico, the War of the Mexican-American Invasion” (Edmonds-Poli & Shirk 294)—reflect ideology’s impact on political and military action, from the lowliest militiaman to the White House. Manifest destiny justified President James K. Polk’s declaration of war, casting as enemies not just those who harm the country as it is, but those who stand in the way of what it could be, always imagining the US as *more* than it currently is. The war started thus:

With troops in the field, Polk...made public his desire that the force hold its ground unless it was ‘provoked’ and had to defend itself. In late April [1846], a Mexican sortie crossed the Rio Grande, riding on land held sovereign by Spain and Mexico for 350 years. There, they killed several US troopers and retreated. That was all the provocation Polk needed. (Adams 121-122)

Whether Polk (or anyone) was blinded by expansionist ideology or used it consciously and cleverly for political and military motives, he was still its participant and reproducer. With Presidential approval, military self-justification via manifest destiny pervaded the military ranks as they marched south from the Rio Grande and west from the coasts of Veracruz. Arming thousands of disgruntled soldiers, ideology was at its deadliest: Adams writes,

At the enlisted level, troopers brought to the ranks not political ambition, but a knapsack full of working class insecurities...Their proclivity for racist, religious, or nationalist rationales for their crimes took up the language of manifest destiny, suffusing their criminal activities with the heroism and comradeship implicit in that cause. (Adams 137-138)

Not only the way the war was represented, but even the way the war was experienced by the very pillaging soldiers, was mediated by ideology. Though the Mexican-American War, when remembered at all, is often retold as a blowout in which US troops marched with ease against Mexico City, it in fact dragged on for three long years, during which “the uncertainty exacerbated mutual animosities” (145). Thus ensued the brutal cycle of manifest destiny: valorizing atrocities, glossing over their human impact, denouncing unforeseen Mexican backlash, and justifying even sicker bloodshed.

As we will see again and again, a major driver of such destructive ideology—or at least its most articulate and influential voice in democratic society—is newsprint and information media. Adams highlights the reputation of “Americans of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century [as] ‘a newspaper-ruled people,’ with editors and writers filling the role of a democratic nobility” (Adams 136). Nineteenth century US growth in industry and literacy saw an explosion of print—newspapers, novels, posters, passports, children’s books, instruction manuals—inaugurating the Information Age that expands to this day. John O’Sullivan used a journal article to enunciate state ideology and justify unfathomable atrocities. The power of media then glutted itself on the spoils of war, swelling its representational authority. The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the war, drew the modern-day border (except for the 1854 Gadsden Purchase of southern New Mexico and Arizona), and stretched the United States’ former Rocky Mountain frontier all the way to the Pacific; less than a year later, gold was discovered at Sutter’s Mill, and the 49ers were unleashed. Adams cites Boyer and his colleagues on print media’s critical role in motivating Americans to move West and preserving manifest destiny’s expansive ethic:

Americans embraced the legend of the West as an uncomplicated, untainted Eden of social simplicity and moral clarity...The myth was the cumulative work of many hands, from dime-novel writers, newspaper correspondents, and railroad publicists to novelists, politicians, and artists. It sank deeply into the American consciousness. (qtd. in Adams 140)

Of course, the Southwest was no “untainted Eden,” not then nor 350 years prior when the Spanish arrived, but representation can overcome that. The thought of the Edenic American West sold in the blossoming *market of ideas*. And so, as US eyes turned westward, the market buoyed any representation of the West that performed the proper *erasure* of rapes and massacres, of looting and arson, of any unpleasant history of the land, blinding and beckoning East Coast Anglos while rendering invisible the victims of their conquer, the 100,000 Mexicans and the

(soon-to-plummet) 750,000 Amerindians who now found themselves living in US territory (Adams 145).

It is worth emphasizing here that exclusion and prejudice against Mexicans were not the products of Mexican immigration, but in fact predated the major migrant influxes by many decades. Mexicans were not the immigrants; as the aphorism goes, “We [Mexican-Americans] didn’t cross the US border, the US border crossed us” (Torres 1). California’s first poor *barrios* were not built by desperate fence-jumpers, but by once-prosperous *Californios* who now found themselves strangers in their own land, voiceless, disenfranchised, and unconsidered. The prejudice against Mexican-Americans that continues today was not originally articulated to exclude immigrants, but for the newcomers to assert themselves over the indigenous, for white Anglo *immigrants* to justify their takeover. Only decades later, once erasure had normalized white settlement and rule of the Southwest, did prejudice become focused against Mexican *immigrants*, inflected by a historically new discourse of keeping out and walling off.

White settlers also brought their own racial politics to a region where Latinos had been rulers and elites for centuries. Before the Mexican-American War, slavery advocates worried that acknowledging Latinos would disrupt the racial hierarchy that soon-to-be Confederate states employed to justify African slave labor: “Some slave-state representatives cautioned that absorbing a population of dark-skinned citizens, the Tejanos, could lead African slaves to militate for their own freedom” (Adams 118). They were nervous that conferring full citizenship to dark-skinned Mexicans—as opposed to the restricted rights and three-fifths citizenship of Black slaves—would weaken US state cohesion and exclusionary power. The same racial anxieties had already barred Amerindians from US citizenship: “English settlers...implemented a policy of exclusion...the English could not conceive of an empire which should include the

Indians as an integral part of its citizenship” (160). But after the Mexican-American War, by defying several of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo’s provisions for the protection of Mexicans in US territory, the US government proved it could manipulate the meaning and value of citizenship to its purposes. Mexican-Americans, like freed slaves, became legal citizens on paper, but Anglo-Americans found countless ways to diminish the status of this citizenship and to uplift their own. White settlement of the Southwest accelerated after the Civil War, by which time legal slavery and the three-fifths compromise had been replaced with new mechanisms of exclusion: Jim Crow laws, over-incarceration, forced labor, and a culture of persecution and fear. The racist foundations of US ideology survived first Guadalupe Hidalgo, then the Emancipation Proclamation, and a caste system was built into the census (or *consensus*) of US citizenship. So, the racial politics of the *Southeast* collided with the *Southwest* to reinforce Mexican darkness and Anglo whiteness, sharpening the United States’ ideological borders: Adams writes,

Coming from a land where native tribes had been exiled and Africans enslaved, Anglo Americans created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century west a version of Jim Crow society...Mexicans learned the cruel aphorism that ‘money whitens’ and, as their lot in life was diminished, they themselves were ‘darkened.’ (Adams 154)

And the exclusion only intensified: unemployment, political disenfranchisement, riots against Mexican-Americans, and frequent lynchings (Carrigan & Webb 2015) put so much stress on Mexican-Americans that in the last few decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, their birth rates plummeted, and some social scientists predicted their extinction (Adams 158).

Indeed, social scientists found new importance as informational elites in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Industrial Revolution and subsequent technological advancements imbued rationalism and the scientific method with a power that mere words never wielded. Anglo-Americans invoked social science to concentrate the powers and privileges of citizenship among white, educated, often urban elites, spurning a number of ideological movements and

“discoveries” that explained and normalized a xenophobic, color-coded caste system: race science, social Darwinism, Teutonic exceptionalism, nativism, and eugenics. “Constructed by bigots and fortified by the anxieties of the period,” writes Adams of nativism, “anthropologists and sociologists...provided its legitimacy...‘a movement hostile to unregulated immigration’...[and] especially vilified were those whose heritage was of mixed ethnicity, like *mestizos*” (Adams 161). Nativism and the other pseudo-scientific movements of the time were essentially a “modernization” of manifest destiny, with two notable changes: one, now that the West had been won, territorially speaking, Anglo-American expansionism now focus inward on regulating and racializing national space; and two, the new *scientific* rationale for what was formerly an emotional (and not-so-scientifically capitalist) expansionism allowed for exclusion to be truly written into law, upheld by logical, legal arguments and axiomatic discourses. For nativists, who “should not be portrayed as a lunatic fringe” but were in fact central to the state-strengthening of the time, “fundamental to their purpose was the decennial census embedded in the US Constitution as a measure of democratic fairness. It was ready for use as an instrument of discrimination” (Adams 166). The institutionalization of the US Census during the late-19<sup>th</sup> century solidified the nativist tradition of systematically allocating and withholding rights via citizenship. To this day, the Census works both to exclude non-citizens altogether and to partition citizens into different categories based on race, wealth, sex, and other demographics around which laws can be written. Citizenship is a biometric, a means for the capitalist-state to count, measure, and value its subjects, and the unquestioned US Census is a relic of nativist social science now completely normalized.

But perhaps the most overtly biopolitical (and sinister) aspect of turn-of-the-century race science was the eugenics movement. In some scholars’ view, the eugenics movement was in fact

“the most enduring legacy of social Darwinism.” (McReynolds 307). Eugenics was nativist, racist exclusion taken to its logical extreme, unashamedly—indeed, quite popularly—escalating race relations to a discourse of *eradication*, of culling the herd. Its policies included, among others, cultural reeducation, anti-miscegenation, anti-immigration, and forced sterilization. If that sounds like Nazism, it’s because Adolph Hitler took notes from the US example: in 1924, Hitler wrote that “The American union itself...has established scientific criteria for immigration... making an immigrant's ability to set foot on American soil dependent on specific racial requirements on the one hand as well as a certain level of physical health of the individual himself” (qtd. in Romo 2005). It was no accident that Hitler found proto-Nazism in US immigration policy, since many nativist anxieties of the time were concentrated along our Southern border, which proved a testing ground for eugenics, race science, and intrusive biopolitical enforcement. The US used noxious chemicals on migrant Mexican workers and refugees of the Mexican Revolution as early as 1917 (Burnett 2006), including Zyklon-B by 1929 (Romo 2005). Eugenic practices, or at least the impetus for them, were widespread: “By the mid-1920s nearly half of the states had passed some form of eugenical sterilization legislation” (McReynolds 308). While this eugenical activity helped construct our imagination of the border (and, consequently, our nation as a whole), it also caught on in states where racial purity was seen as more precedented and “achievable”—as we will observe in Chapter Two.

The strengthening the US-Mexico border, even only in the national imagination, was a strong forger of US signification, relying on and justifying discrimination. Similarly but perhaps tangibly than the Census, a strong border defines US citizens and US territory by defining and sustaining its opposite. From the founding of Border Patrol in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, to its early militarization during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1919) and its aftershocks, to the present-day

border hyper-enforcement that includes walls out to the desert and sea, military personnel, informal local militias, and even unmanned drones, the discourse of *strong borders* has framed Latinos and Mexicans in particular not just as the opposite against which the US is defined, but as the intrusion against which the US must defend itself. Even the Mexican-Americans who found themselves on US territory after the war, as well as many other subsequently naturalized citizens, come to be seen as intruders, immigrants, crossers of our fantasized border. Indeed, Adams writes, “The border’s purpose was to divide two nations, two histories, and, most importantly, two futures. However, the line ran through the middle of Mexican America...Americans portrayed immigrants crossing the border as threatening” (Adams 170). With or without a physical wall, early 20<sup>th</sup> century the shift from manifest destiny to border ideology had implications still relevant today: having reached the limits of territorial expansion, the border is the line where US expansionism can double back and resettle its own territory. In the eyes of capitalist-state ideological subjects, the US-Mexico border erases the atrocities that drew that border in the first place, it represents Mexicans in formerly Mexican territory as a mistake in need of a solution, and it conceals from US ideological subjects how the US continues to cross its own border and exploit Mexican labor and resources.

It is impossible to overemphasize the role of money, business, and capitalism in the various ideologies of expansion. Through the history of US-Mexico relations, capital evolved from being a primary means and motive of expansion into practically the entire definition of expansion. Business interests influenced the Mexican-American War from the beginning, and the US victory secured its control of key trade routes reaching far below the Rio Grande (Adams 147); the primary appeal of the Gadsden Purchase was a valley through which US developers could build the transcontinental railroad; and the Gold Rush is only the most romanticized of the

US fervor to extract capital from its new territory. The Mexicans who remained on US land were more often than not treated as another resource, a mule in need of whipping, a labor force that could not be expected to optimize its own production and therefore merited exploitation. The Land Law of 1851, while it “nominally protected [Mexican land] owners who could show title, also required landowners to reach *certain levels of productivity* or be expelled” (151-152). Here we see an ideology of US entrepreneurial entitlement that holds true today, which insists that the US is the global master of business and, in the name of efficiency and productivity, is responsible for spreading business across the world. One of many telling examples is the San Elizario Salt War (1877-78):

When Anglo investors moved too quickly to turn a profit from salt lakes that had not been fully exploited by Mexicans, the latter were angered...the Mexican government had considered the lakes in the public domain. Thus violence sprang up like a flame from the friction between Hispanic nonchalance and Anglo American impatience. (Adams 157)

Unsurprisingly, capital won: Mexicans were either killed or forced from their land, and the salt fields were reaped. But what is important to understand is the economic motives of armed conflict carried over to “peacetime” expansion, and that even the less overtly militaristic expansionist ideologies like nativism were driven by economic impetuses. Armed conflict or not, it’s about capital accumulation, which relies on inequality and exclusion. When Anglos took off their military uniforms, they would still use economic means to disenfranchise Mexicans. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Anglo takeover of the Southwest was not by armies but by “‘Anglo-American merchants, [who] through access to credit and wholesale markets and knowledge of business techniques, eliminated much of their Spanish-American mercantile competition,’ including among their competitive practices ‘fraud, intimidation, and violence’” (Montejano qtd. in Adams 153). Anglo settlers brought with them the breed of expansive capitalism of which they were already masters, and Mexicans, for being less obsessed with expansion and

accumulation, could not compete. Nativism, racism, citizenship, and capitalism collide to completely exclude Mexicans from the consensus while justifying and relying on their exploitative labor—the part of no part.

Capitalism and market forces are also major drivers of historical erasure. To attract settlement, investment, and development, entrepreneurs collaborated with the press to disassociate the new US territory from its human price. And the whole time, the US sold its dream of progress and prosperity (and justified its cost) by contrasting itself with poor old Mexico, whose “leaders were commonly shown as failing to meet the most basic needs of their people because governments were mired in medieval values and dominated by mustachioed villains. By the end of the [19<sup>th</sup>] century, a Mexican in a sombrero asleep beneath a towering cactus had taken his place in the forefront of the American psyche” (Adams 162). This lazy, ineffectual image of Mexico and Mexicans was crucial to the exploitation of Mexican land and people and the affirmation of productive, expansive US identity. Individual US settlers needed to justify themselves and dehumanize the victims of their expansion, so they tipped the market of ideas in their own (nativist) favor: “Newspapers of the period were expressing ethnic prejudice so blatantly because they were publishing in a supportive environment. American readers clamored for more” (Adams 162). Even more than manifest destiny had influenced the “newspaper-ruled people” before the war, by the 20<sup>th</sup> century mass media had become a factory of public opinion and an apparatus of the state, justifying and reproducing capitalist-state power.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Mexican-Americans’ social position did not see vast improvement. Although many learned English, supplied labor, and even served in the World Wars, the mechanisms of exclusion and erasure—race science, the Census, border enforcement, job discrimination, legal barriers, and the mass media—became even greater

obstacles. The Mexican Revolution had also caused the country to fall from the US's graces: having toppled the regime of pro-foreign-investment dictator Porfirio Diaz, the revolution eventually brought to power the PRI, a political party that (in its early days) antagonized the US capitalist-state by redistributing Mexican land and nationalizing its petroleum industry (Edmonds-Poli & Shirk 296). Through all this, Mexican-Americans did begin finding work at greater rates, especially during the war years when US workers were stationed overseas and labor was in high demand, but the conditions of this work were brutal and exploitative, essentially wage slavery. Yet the labor demand was what gave rise to many current Mexico-US migration patterns: millions of Mexicans crossed a much more porous US-Mexico border than today's to work here for a few months or years before returning home. These migrants gained at least marginal legal acknowledgment through the *Bracero* program, started in 1942 (the precursor to today's H-2 seasonal labor visas). Many US-born Mexican-Americans did the same work, remaining largely in the Southwest. Mexicans were said to have received preferential treatment over their European counterparts because they were deemed less likely to unionize, a more complacent workforce (302). But this privileged complacency may also have kept Mexican-Americans from mobilizing or making themselves heard. Unlike for African Americans, there was no Great Migration of Mexican-Americans to metropoli in the north, nor was there any notable equivalent to the Harlem Renaissance during this time. Mexican-Americans were still almost entirely excluded from public discourse, invisible even as their labor became more and more crucial to the US economy. Their status as foreign and deportable sharpened their need to conform to their *working* position within the capitalist-state; a non-working, non-producing Mexican, be it the man in his sombrero sleeping on a cactus, or the farm union organizer demanding better conditions, was completely disposable.

It was not until the Civil Rights Movement that Mexican-American agency broke into the US psyche, when Cesar Chavez and his United Farm Workers (UFW) brought light to the deplorable treatment of migrant and non-migrant Mexican workers that placed cheap food on American tables. (Also key to the foundation of UFW was Dolores Huerta, a heroine of Mexican-American history who is too often erased by the US ideology that, hard-pressed to accept a strong Mexican man, discounts any possibility of strong Mexican women.) Chavez and Huerta declared solidarity with Martin Luther King and the Black Civil Rights Movement, and together they captured US attention through television screens: “Another boost to the farmworkers’ cause was their association in the popular mind with African Americans’ demands for equality. Once the competition among mass media outlets was thrown into the mix, the images of jailed farm-union leaders proved compelling” (Adams 182). Compelling they were, insofar as farmworker motives were construed as parallel to African American motives. But while African Americans were largely demanding *legislative* reform—greater political representation, less legal segregation—that could be answered by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with little systemic change, the UFW and other Mexican-American movements were demanding *business* reform—better pay, housing, and work conditions—that capitalist-state institutions were unwilling to offer. Chavez and Huerta’s victories for farmworker conditions were short-lived (perhaps due to a backlash against Latinos who were now seen as capable of unionization), and to this day, a shocking sum of American food comes from migrant Mexicans and Latinos working in conditions resembling slavery. The successes and failures of the Civil Rights Movement revealed capitalism as the primary foundation of state consensus: the US government was willing to share more political representation with African Americans but was and remains

entirely unwilling to share economic representation or redistribute wealth, with Mexican-Americans or anyone else.

What did result from this period was an ongoing discussion of Mexican and Latino identity, of what it means to be Mexican-American, of how they can represent themselves, and of how others should and should not represent them. From the UFW's own Teatro Campesino, to the Chicano and Borderlands movements (Anzaldúa 1987), to the rise of *Hispanismo* and *Latinidad* as concepts, to the surge in US-based Latino media and publishing, to the post-colonialist and subalternist movements of today, the Civil Rights Movement triggered a veritable awakening in Mexican-American identity and an explosion of media, *about* Latinos and *by* Latinos (Bruce-Novoa 1990). It has sparked a valuable debate about meaning and purpose of identities—"Latino," "Hispanic," "Chicano," "Mexican," "Mexican-American"—with no resolution in sight.

But the degree to which this discussion impacted Anglo-Americans, who maintained control of a US mass media machine more powerful than any in world history, was marginal at best. The subjugation of Mexican-Americans was more fundamental than ever before to US economy and prosperity, so the market—whether that be the market of ideas or the market of commodities—was still not willing to accommodate Latino self-determination. And by the 1980s and 1990s, with the second great wave of Mexican immigration (the first being World War II), "A consensus formed that Hispanic workers were 'taking' jobs devoutly sought by Americans" (Adams 8), not to mention the new associations in the public consciousness between Mexican immigration and drug trafficking and gang violence (Edmonds-Poli & Shirk 293). Border states like California and Texas built enormous, militarized walls that have done little to stymie immigration, instead pushing migrants to more dangerous routes and stimulating the cartels'

human trafficking and smuggling business. California's Proposition 187, the "Save Our State" (SOS) initiative passed in 1994, established a state-wide citizenship screening program to prevent undocumented immigrants from receiving social services (until deemed unconstitutional in 1999). Even as the US become "more dependent on immigrant labor than at any time since the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century" (Adams 193), this very dependence reinforced the economic imperative of withholding rights and protections from Latino immigrants, an injustice made possible by using the media machine to cast all Latinos as invasive, illegal immigrants, who by doing our least-desired jobs are in fact breaking the law. And while the media can no longer be as overtly racist as it was in the nativist days, its fear-mongering about Latino immigration taps the deep well of Anglo-American racial prejudices and anxieties: "News articles lump together *all* Hispanics, whose presence is described in breathless terms like 'rising' and 'growing' and 'increasing' ...the estimates portrayed in the media do not differentiate among the native born, the naturalized, legal immigrants, and illegal aliens" (189-190). The prevailing discourse that still represented Latinos as one homogenous chunk meant that the status of all Latinos was dependent on the most prevalent representations of a few Latinos in the mass media—still centered around immigrants.

The glimmer of hope for sensible immigration reform offered by NAFTA, by high-level talks between US and Mexican officials in the 1990s about conditions at the border, about labor rights, human rights, an EU-style agreement, made all the more promising in 2000 by Mexico's democratic election of Vicente Fox (and his chumminess with George W. Bush), was completely dashed the next year by the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks. 9/11 provoked an intense US backlash against immigrants of all origins, brought about the Department of Homeland Security, and aligned US border policy with anti-terrorism. The Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal

Immigration Control Act that the House approved in 2005 would have built 700 miles of double-layered fencing, required police collaboration with immigration officers, and made it a felony to assist undocumented immigrants in remaining in the country, but encouragingly, massive protests kept the bill from passing to law (Edmonds-Poli & Shirk 304)—perhaps a veritable demonstration of dissensus, but also a reflection of consensus business interests, who would have been harmed by such vast criminalization and restriction of their workforce.

Nowadays, as the immigration debate rages on within perhaps the most polarized political consensus of our history—so polarized it may even threaten the cohesion of state-capitalist ideology that has so long defined and justified our one nation, under God—the extreme left and extreme right seem to stray outside of state-capitalist consensus logic. Leftists and immigrant activists want more legal status for immigrants, work visas, a path to citizenship, border de-militarization, less stringent enforcement, and higher wages, all of which clash with consensus capitalism and national signification. Conservative hacks and hawks still clamor for tighter borders, more deportations, and no path to citizenship for “illegal aliens,” with states like Arizona, Alabama, and Utah proposing laws “to make life so difficult that illegal immigrants will choose to leave” (Edmonds-Poli & Shirk 305), yet this also defies the consensus capitalism that relies so heavily on migrant labor. Ultimately, each extreme can only be politically heard by making concessions to the consensus, in other words by making neoliberal *economic* arguments that refer back to the sage logic of consensus capitalism. The right says how much immigrants drain our economy and steal our jobs, the left says how much immigrants support our economy and how much more immigration enforcement costs. Prioritizing capital above all else has become so normalized that we no longer know the difference between political moderation and a veneration of money, so that when either side of the immigration debate prioritizes issues that are

not necessarily economic—on the right, our national character, language, and “stock,” and on the left, our national moral standing and fairness, *even though these were once the causes that justified capitalistic expansion*—they are deemed extremist and pressured to tone down their rhetoric. Manifest destiny used to gloss over its economic motives; now, those motives have become so embedded in our lives that we are ashamed of all that is non-economic, and we use that great moderator—capital—to define the limits of our ideology and erase or expel our non-capitalistic inconsistencies.

And who commits this erasure but the media? The media, so central now to how US ideological subjects envision themselves and their country, works to maintain and reproduce the state-capitalist consensus, encouraging consumption and prosperity only made possible by the exploitation of migrant labor as well as poor workers across the world, and consequently excluding and erasing that labor force so as to disconnect consumer imaginations their unpleasant, exploitative output. Capitalist-state ideology, even while forcing people to work and while relying on their work, cannot account for its workforce, and for the benefit and preservation of its ideological subjects must exclude and erase the workforces it abuses and oppresses. Migrant workers, Mexicans and otherwise, are therefore excluded, and the enduring power of racism and nativism combined with the visual mass media casts the shadow over anyone who resembles them. Neither Vermont’s history, as we will see in Chapter Two, nor most of Vermont’s contemporary news media, as we will see in Chapter Three, prove any exception to this capitalist-state ideological imperative of exploitation, exclusion, and erasure.

So can we consider Mexican-Americans the part of no part, as Rancière terms it? By simply acknowledging his or her own living and working in this country, does a Mexican-American

“speak when he is not to speak...[or] partake in what he has no part in” (Rancière 32)? Yes, I argue, because the prosperity, passivity, and privilege of US capitalist-state ideological subjects have come to rely so heavily on the justified (and/or invisible) exploitation of Mexican-Americans and immigrant laborers that to acknowledge their speech or their rights would disrupt the state’s conditions of (re)production. Mexican-Americans are certainly a “part,” in fact they are an integral part of the state, central to its survival and prosperity, and yet they are also “of no part,” they are the opposite against which the state defines itself, racially and politically, and they must be constrained to that voicelessness and invisibility, because recognizing and including them would undermine their power not just as an exploitable labor force, but as a signifier of difference by which the US understands itself. And, crucial to contemporary commercialism, Mexican-Americans are not nearly *marketable* enough, their exploited and (allegedly) unwanted presence here difficult to sell as cultural curiosity or glitz up for the media; they are this country’s dirty secret. Under this theoretical model, improving the status of Mexican-Americans requires either their *self-erasure* and assimilation into the capitalist-state consensus, or a complete reconceptualization of state signification, one that either decouples expansive and exploitative capitalism from the state or replaces states with more inclusive ideological orders. As I continue to trace the status of immigrants and Mexican-Americans through their changing representations by capitalist-state mass media, I will consider whether US conceptualizations of the state are indeed becoming more inclusive—or whether Rancière’s theoretical construction of state power is insufficient.

## Two

### Somewhat More Achievable Dreams of Homogeneity: Vermont and the Legacies of Nativism, Tourism, and Eugenics

“To those who are seriously concerned for the future of the old American stock, New England does present a sad picture. The Yankee is almost extinct...it is difficult to see just how Yankeeism is going to be planted in the immigrant when the Yankee himself cannot keep it.”

—Guy Johnson, review of *The Conquest of New England by the Immigrant* (1927)

“The state subsidized magazine *Vermont Life*...has used representational strategies that simultaneously promote a special landscape and a special people...an authentic American rurality long since past elsewhere. These discourses are employed not simply to attract people to the state, but also to export its goods to elsewhere...including its ‘pure’ dairy.”

—Robert M. Vanderbeck, “Vermont and the Imaginative Geographies of American Whiteness” (2006)

“Vermont...me parecía un destino ideal para radicarnos y encontrar empleo: el lugar con menos mexicanos en todo Estados Unidos. No era ni siquiera diez mil en la capital, según el censo.”<sup>4</sup>

—Antonio Ortuño, *La fila india* (2013)

For Vermont readers, the history covered in the previous chapter may have seemed a little far from home, and they may now be asking the very reasonable question, what real impact do US-Mexico relations, mostly concentrated in the Southwest and along the border, have on the state of Vermont, or on New England as a whole? Yes, there are now many Mexicans working on farms here in Vermont, but what on earth does that have to do with the Gadsden Purchase? Truly, I would never have reviewed this far-off history at such length if I did not consider it crucial to understanding the real focus of my project, which is Vermont consensus representation and exclusion of migrant Latino farmworkers. Vermont has a role in this national history as well as its own unique state history; the way Vermont is both tied to and divergent from the rest of US history weighs heavily (but often invisibly) on every encounter between white Anglo Vermonters and immigrant and non-immigrant Latinos. Therefore, in this chapter I will give critical attention

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<sup>4</sup> “Vermont...seemed like an ideal location to move to and find work: the place with fewest Mexicans in the entire United States. There aren’t even ten thousand in the capital, according to the Census.” From a contemporary Mexican novel about migration through and out of Mexico, whose title translates as *The Indian Line*.

to Vermont's distinct history of manifest destiny, nativism, and state-capitalism in regards to immigrants, demonstrating how Vermont parallels and diverges from the national history of immigrant and Mexican-American relations and revealing distinctions in the Vermont experience and ideology. I will also continue to employ the same Derridian and Rancierean theoretical framework, determining what constitutes the Vermont capitalist-state consensus and what exclusionary mechanisms operate to make migrant farmworkers Vermont's part of no part.

A few last passages near the end of *Greasers and Gringos* are very pertinent to Vermont's current population of migrant farmworkers. Never once writing the word "Vermont," Jerome Adams nonetheless identifies a new phenomenon of migration by which our state has been affected: by the early 2000s, "Given their number, it was not surprising that the immigrants were no longer restricting themselves to the traditional 'entry' states: California, Texas, Florida, and New York" (Adams 189). By the 1980s and 1990s, a number of factors had contributed to the establishment of new Latino communities and migration routes: better transportation and communications technology, internal migration by Latinos already living in the US, anti-immigrant sentiment in these traditional entry states, pursuit of new job markets (especially in farms and faltering factory towns), and crippling poverty and desperation in Mexico and other Latin American nations, precipitated by the 1982 debt crisis, civil wars in Central America, drug violence, and other push factors. Yet among the numerous new states of Latino and Mexican settlement that Adams mentions—Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, South Dakota, Minnesota, Illinois, Georgia, North Carolina, and New Jersey—none even approach Vermont. And reasonably so: the shortest possible trip from Mexico to Vermont, from Nuevo Laredo to Pownal, Vermont in our state's southwest corner, is still over 3,300 miles. New England's extreme distance from the southern border, and its lack of deeply established immigrant

networks and communities like those of New York City, make sense of its very low Latino population.

Yet, evidence shows, Latino migrants still make their way up here, and more keep coming. Adams never mentions Vermont but he does mention Maine, where migrants have come all the way from Central America and Mexico to work in the incredibly dangerous logging industry: “The long trip from Mexico to Maine was but another example of the migration of Hispanic workers willing to do grueling, dangerous work for low pay” (Adams 191). This phenomenon is a testament to these migrants’ new extremes of desperation and to the level of Latino infiltration and settlement in the US that makes the passage to Maine even conceivable. The same can be said of dairy farmworkers in Vermont and other agricultural and industrial workers in Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, and upstate New York.

When talking about New England, especially in the context of Latinos, it becomes essential to divide the region into northern New England—the states listed above—and southern New England—Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. This geographical division is nothing new and is based largely in the southern states’ shipping ports and connection to international trade, a connection which once stoked nativist anxieties that ripple to this day. In his 1937 book *Let Me Show You Vermont*, Charles Edward Crane wrote derisively of southern New England’s immigrant population and reverently of his own state’s racial purity—a purity which, as we will see, was stronger in the state’s marketable imaginary than in its true labor force: “Of the six states that make up New England, Vermont...is perhaps the one now most like old England. Vermont’s original Anglo-Saxon strain is less alloyed than that of the other New England states, particularly less alloyed than the three most strongly industrial states which make up the southern tier” (qtd. in Vanderbeck 646). These demographic patterns, and the ideologies

that respond to them, hold true in New England to this day. One contemporary figure makes the northern-southern distinction unignorable: according to the 2000 Census, “*Ninety-five percent of New England’s Latinos live in southern New England*” (Torres 4). This number should stop short any shorthand description of Vermont migrant farmworkers as “New England Latinos,” because that category by and large refers to urban and suburban dwellers in the sprawls of Boston, Providence, Hartford, New Haven, and New York City (which have a long history of absorbing other immigrant groups). Indeed, the mere 5,316 Vermont Latinos counted in the 2000 Census, less than one percent of the state population, were mostly internal migrants from southern New England urban centers.

Of course, undocumented migrant farmworkers, a major driver of the state and regional (let alone national) economy, are not included in these numbers, and they diverge demographically from the trends of New England Latino settlement that the Census identifies: urban, familial, Caribbean. Indeed, the home country of most Vermont migrant farmworkers—Mexico—is barely reflected in the Census, which shows that “Latinos of Puerto Rican heritage were always the largest single component in New England, and they continue to be so” (Torres 5). Again, many of the documented Latinos in Vermont are Puerto Ricans concentrated around Burlington and Montpelier, and theirs is a much different “Latino experience” in northern New England than the Mexicans and Central Americans milking our cows.

I should mention here, I do not mean to argue that the experience of undocumented farmworkers from Mexico and Central America is in any way “more real” or “more important” than the experience of urban Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, South Americans, or any other migrant or US-born Latino group. Nor do I claim that northern New England is somehow more pertinent than southern New England when discussing Latino livelihoods; the numbers show that that is

simply not the case, because southern New England is much larger and faster-growing hub for Latinos, even after undocumented immigrants are added to the Census figures. But since, as we've seen before and as we'll see again, media and ideology often group all Latinos together and attribute the traits and stereotypes of some to all, the styles of representation and treatment directed at one subset of Latinos or even one individual Latino can have implications for the rest. Therefore, I find it self-defeating to perceive migrant farmworkers or northern New England Latinos as “niche” groups, because the way we treat them reflects on the way we treat all others. While studying the treatment of, say, urban Puerto Ricans from Massachusetts might reveal more about the experiences of a larger group, studying the treatment of a tiny minority like Vermont's 1,700 migrant Latino farmworkers reveals more about the society they live in. It's a matter of social accountability. Though only a quarter of one percent (0.25%) of the state's already tiny population (626,562 in 2014), Vermont's migrant dairy farm workers are the keystone of its most emblematic industry, comprising a quarter of dairy's workforce, dairy accounting for 80% of Vermont's agriculture and two percent of its total economic output (Vermont Dairy 2014). Vermont has the choice to honor its migrant dairy farm workers or use the group's small size as an excuse to turn away their attention; whatever Vermont does has obvious impact on these farmworkers, but it reflects back on the state as well.

This much can be said of Latinos throughout all of New England: unlike in the Southwest, New England Latinos are a relatively new, “emergent” phenomenon, still the exception rather than the rule, still marginalized by society and popular representation, and still largely observe and commented on from the outside rather than given room to express themselves—that is, when they are observed at all.

As a result, there is virtually no New England equivalent to Chicanismo, no Borderlands scholars for Latinos on the Canadian border, no Aztlán near Albany, and relatively little scholarship on the topic of Latinos in New England. Exhaustive searches for scholarly writing about Mexicans and/or Latino immigrants in New England reveals little, most of which I will cite here. Much of what exists is sociological and demographic research by often non-Latino academics, as opposed to an authentic literature of self-determination. And, due to the aforementioned low Latino population in *northern* New England, writing on Latinos in Vermont is particularly scant. *Latinos in New England* and *Latino Voices in New England* are two of the biggest (or most commercial) titles on the topic, and both are problematic in their own ways.

Andrés Torres's edited volume *Latinos in New England* (2006), while a useful resource, is mostly just an account of demographic statistics and migration patterns. It does little to reveal the lives behind these numbers or the particularities of being a Latino in this part of the country. It is also almost entirely restricted to southern New England. David Carey and Robert Atkinson's collection *Latino Voices in New England* (2009) makes almost the exact opposite mistake: it is a series of verbatim personal accounts and "life stories" collected from various Latinos in one community—Portland, Maine—with little attention to demographic trends or regional context. These books' most crucial mistake, though, is their common exclusion of migrant farmworkers and undocumented immigrants. Whether the sociologist writers subscribed too strongly to the US Census, or whether they assumed most farmworkers to simply be temporary migrants and not true inhabitants of New England, or whether due to a host of other biases, farmworkers are excluded from these volumes. These two books deserve some credit for shedding light on certain Latinos—admittedly, the majority of Latinos in New England—who are documented, employed, largely non-Mexican urban dwellers. But these books are only possible because the US

capitalist-state consensus (and, in tandem, the US Census) has begun to recognize the types of Latinos highlighted in these books, but not other Latinos. Honestly, these books work against themselves by ignoring undocumented Latino migrant farmworkers and by validating their exclusion at the hands of the same state that used to exclude all Latinos.

Many migrant farmworkers also remain quite invisible in New England (the northern states especially) because they arrived here relatively recently, decades after Cesar Chavez and UFW used the media to call public attention to the farmworker cause, decades after that attention lulled. Of course, even in Chavez's time, that very power of media broadcasted the boycotts in California all the way to Vermont; but these images and messages were received very differently in Vermont than in states that had housed and relied on Mexican-Americans for decades. Vermont's lack of Latinos, as well as its other historical peculiarities, shaped an ideology far different from the states described last chapter, altering its view of far-off farmworker movements as well as its view of the many farmworkers that would begin arriving here in the 1990s. This distinct Vermont ideology continues to mediate our encounters with Mexican and Central American migrant farmworkers, our (mis)representation of them in the media, and our inclusion or exclusion of them in capitalism, culture, and law. In this chapter, I will review the history of Vermont ideology, prejudice, and exclusion that preceded the arrival of Mexican and Central American immigrants. I will then briefly describe how things look today—though much of this latter description will take place in the next chapter, on how Vermont media and *The Burlington Free Press* in particular has represented Latinos and Mexican-Americans over the past fifteen years.

Vermont exceptionalism predates the birth of our country—it declared itself an independent Vermont Republic in 1777, with its own constitution, eventually admitted as a state in 1791 after New York and New Hampshire ceded their claims to its territory. Part of this Vermont independence and need to organize itself came from its vulnerable position as a frontier state, on the opposite frontier as the states bordering Mexico. This largely undisputed border with Quebec (or French Canada) was more of a threat than an opportunity for territorial expansion, because Quebec was already a hotly disputed territory between major colonial powers (namely, Britain and France) and had been the site of French and Indian War (also known as the Seven Years War) in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. Incursions into northern Vermont by British troops during the War of 1812, violence in Quebec during the Rebellions of 1837-38, and even 1864's St. Albans Raid by Confederate troops who had snuck into Canada all reinforced Vermont's imperative to establish its territory, organize its people, and define its borders. All this contributed to a strong sense early on of who Vermonters were, and who they were not. Dating back to these early days is "the frequently invoked figure of the 'real Vermonter,' who is often portrayed with precisely these adjectives—*independent, taciturn, thrifty*, and so forth—and who is often contrasted with outsiders (or in current Vermont parlance, 'flatlanders') who are seen to have invaded the state and displaced the native 'woodchucks'" (Vanderbeck 646). Even more than a century after Vermont's early history as a frigid frontier outpost, this notion of Vermont spartanism and self-reliance remained a driver of state signification, imagination, and nationwide dreams of the true American Yankee.

Another early driver of Vermont identity and solidifier of its capitalist-state consensus was its strong economy. In fact, Vermont, or at least Burlington, was a rising center of commerce, given its strategic port position: in a historical fictitious diary entry about visiting

Burlington in 1840, Seymour Bassett observes that “Burlington [had] been booming for over fifteen years...since the Northern Canal linked the Lake with the Hudson Valley in 1823. As the port of entry since 1822 for the Customs District of Vermont, it has no peer on the Vermont shore” (Bassett 636). The proper exploitation of exploitation of this position would have been impossible without low-wage immigrant labor, provided by “the Champlain-Hudson Canal...a funnel for emigrants from the hill country or Europe” (637), who either worked in town at the ports or glass factories, or out in the country as farm wage laborers, too poor to buy their own land. In a sense, Vermont was decades ahead of the southwest in its use and abuse of immigrants: Vermonters had already drawn their border and asserted their ownership of territory, it did not have as great a need to evict or terrorize people off their land, but instead began the tradition of discrimination, wage labor exploitation, ghettoization, and immigrant exclusion quite early on. Bassett captures the hypocrisy of immigrant exclusion and reliance well: of Burlington, he writes, “The profits of commerce make it, in spite of the shabby blocks near the wharves, a jewel among New England country towns” (649), those shabby blocks housing the very immigrants from whose sweat these profits are made. Whether Bassett intended this contradiction and derision or barely noticed it (writing in 1971), it is indicative of immigrants’ low status, their being what we might call the part of no part. Susan Ouellette’s more scholarly study of Quebecois immigrants to Vermont and upstate New York confirms that “Yankees and Yorkers viewed French Canadians’ arrival and residence with great trepidation. Despite their utility as workers, French Canadians were judged unlettered, priest-ridden undesirables...French Canadian ethnicity became synonymous with ignorance, cultural stagnation and poverty” (Ouellette 367-368). Even without a racial divide like the Southwest’s, Vermont “Yankees”—

basically, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants—found ways to draw the lines that justified immigrant exploitation and exclusion.

Also, thanks to Vermont's early wealth, cohesion, and self-consciousness, its statesmen were strengthening their consensus and their mechanisms of exclusion from early on. The consensus of these commercial-political leaders attributed their success not to a chance of geography or the hard work of immigrant laborers but to their own hearty, resilient Yankee stock—in contrast to those lazy, dirty, Catholic, monarchistic French Canadians across the border. (Beginning to sound familiar?) Bassett spots the apparatuses of the consensus neatly lined up in Burlington's city center: "The post office is in Mills Row, east of the American Hotel, next to the *Sentinel* and bookstore—the Democratic headquarters. Whig patrons complain of the partisan atmosphere... The [post] office is a political plum...and grossed almost \$3000 last year" (Basset 639). Political and commercial projects were already aligned, treated no differently by either Whigs or Democrats. Therefore, since continual Vermont prosperity already relied on the influx, underpayment, and mistreatment of immigrants, neither side vied for their greater representation. As a result, not only were Vermont immigrants economically excluded, but politically as well, as Bassett's reference to the University of Vermont and its staff demonstrates:

"The mercantile and professional community has always recognized the college's economic value, and has repeatedly invested in buildings and books. The working men—at least those of Jacksonian, immigrant, or Romish persuasion—are less content with the Puritan professors who urged neutrality during the Canadian rebellion. If the students get into scrapes, the hackman says only, 'Bhoys will be Bhoys.'" (Bassett 643)

While immigrant political views are seen as threatening—associated with the Canadian Uprisings, Catholic medievalism, and other non-white, non-Protestant affairs—and are urged towards "neutrality," the students (and, presumably, the professors) are allowed to play whatever

political game they please. This double-standard would work to keep WASPs in power for years to come.

Yet even in the face of this discrimination, Vermont had already formed an idea of itself as inclusive and accepting, inaugurating a tradition of self-validation and erasure that continues to this day. Robert Vanderbeck identifies “the post-Civil War tradition that all Vermonters were abolitionists and devoted to notions of racial equality, a tradition that is increasingly discredited by recent historical work...The minimization or *erasure* of racism can similarly be found in relation to discussions of interactions between ‘white’ settlers in Vermont and the state’s Native American population” (Vanderbeck 649). Be they freed slaves, Abenaki tribesmen, French-Canadians, or European immigrants, their actual exclusion by Vermonters was far overshadowed by the fiction of Vermont openness. Even now, Vermonters will still say things like *Vermont accepts people of all creeds and colors...we just don’t have any here*. Even as Vermont’s mechanisms of exclusion would intensify over the next century and a half, the idea that Vermonters were personally, morally responsible for this exclusion would never take find a place in consensus ideology.

More so than urban slums, French Canadian and European immigrants came to populate and be associated with rural areas. Many more were becoming rural farmhands, required to sustain a struggling agriculture sector. Samuel McReynolds writes that by the turn of the century,

Offsetting the [rural] decline was an increase in the foreign born, particularly the non-English speaking. The British immigration has waned decidedly, while the French-Canadians now make up over 40 percent of our foreign born, and the Italian, Swedish, Polish, Russian and Spanish elements have made marked gains. These immigrants constitute[d] a large part of the supply of farm laborers and by taking up farms that would otherwise be abandoned, keep the land active and enlarge the market for local merchants. (McReynolds 319-320)

Similarly to how Mexican and Central American migrants are keeping Vermont’s dairy industry afloat today, more than a century ago Europeans and Quebecois injected the same energy into the

(perhaps more diversified) agricultural sector, helping preserve everything that Vermont claimed to be. However, they contradicted the image that Vermont thrived on its “old Vermont stock” (McReynolds 320), a falsity that had helped keep WASPs in power (with full wallets) since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this way, we can view Vermont’s prevailing whiteness (still over 95%) not as some demographic accident, but as a success story of centuries of racist, classist, *nativist*, consensus exclusion. Even as the targets of discrimination were by today’s definition white, they still bore marks of difference at which mechanisms of exclusion were directed; Vermont’s ability to exclude white undesirables perhaps made its ability to exclude non-whites that much more extreme. Indeed, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as white immigrants faced harsh discrimination, the few Vermonters of color faced outright terror at the hands of a disproportionately large Ku Klux Klan chapter: there were several thousand Ku Klux Klan members in Vermont during 1920s, “as well as tacit support from many others” (Vanderbeck 649). Prejudice against Europeans and French Canadians, while rampant, was clearly no distraction from the proportionately few racial divisions that Vermont held, and it may even have given Vermonters more exercise for their exclusionary muscles.

It is important to emphasize that during this time, in the Southwest, immigration was the Anglo means of conquest, whereas in the Northeast, immigration was the threat to that prior conquest and (much like today’s conservative immigration opponents) was seen as something that must be stopped and eradicated. This discourse came to full fruition with the rise of social science, race science, nativism, and eugenics, discussed last chapter. Vermont has a particularly ugly history of eugenics, which was tied to (or sanitized by) the rural revitalization movement. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the US’s and particularly Vermont’s urban capitalist-state consensus had grown anxious about the cultural state of rural peoples, due in their eyes to the migration of

many promising rural leaders to urban areas, but also wrapped up in xenophobic and nativist tensions. But by framing *poverty* as the primary target of rural revitalization, its proponents justified their project as *humanitarian*, no matter their means. In his essay on Vermont rural revitalization and eugenics, McReynolds defends some of the developmental efforts of the Vermont Commission for Country Life (VCCL) and its leader Henry F. Perkins (a UVM professor whose name a building on campus, Perkins, still bears), like the expansion of education, infrastructure, and social services, claiming that these reforms should not be overshadowed by the eugenics legacy: “Given the strong eugenic overtones of [the VCCL program] Rural Vermont there is the temptation to dismiss the plan as an aberration or an abomination. This would be a mistake” (McReynolds 325). While McReynolds elsewhere gives harsh treatment to the eugenical practices themselves, he fails to see the exclusionary, capitalist-state expansionism within the VCCL’s rhetoric of development. He points to rural revitalization’s mission of “making agriculture more profitable and overcoming rural waste and exploitation...[with] the belief that rural life needed to conform to the industrialism and urban growth that had emerged since the turn of the century” (McReynolds 301-303), hinting at the assertion of urban values over rural, but failing to recognize the consensus at work. He defends as humanitarian the urban consensus mechanisms that seek to reform and indoctrinate the very rural peoples and industries they rely on. Crucial is the understanding that eugenics and rural revitalization, even at their most acceptable, were still instruments of exclusionary, nativist capitalist-state expansionism that, looking at Vermont today, seem to have done their job.

And at its worst, Vermont eugenics institutionalized a discourse of immigrant eradication and erasure with implications reaching far past eugenics’ fall from public grace with the rise of Nazism. Vermont’s was indeed one of the country’s most aggressive eugenics programs—

“Although a belated entry into the attempts to reform rural life in America, the VCCL was one of the more formidable to do so” (McReynolds 309)—and had little more than its title to disguise its more discriminatory, sinister ambitions:

The eugenics movement's most ardent adherents promoted racial stereotypes and believed that certain peoples possessed a monopoly of desired characteristics...More often, differences were found in the quality of nationalities. Races such as the Nordics were believed to be of a higher quality. Given this perspective, the issue was not the socialization of, but the inherent limitations on and eradication of, the genetically deficient...the main text of *Rural Vermont* opens with the question ‘What is happening to the old Vermont stock?’ (McReynolds 308-320)

During this period, as the nation’s newspapers promoted racial stereotypes to a public that “clamored for more” (Adams 162), the VCCL needed only the thinnest of veils to garner appeal for their social engineering ambitions, which included incarceration, rehabilitation, marriage restrictions, and forced sterilizations (McReynolds 328). And even as the US’s horror about Nazism pushed eugenics from public acceptability, it may have just thickened the veil in front of other purist, nativist projects, which continued because the understanding of what Vermont was and was not, a Yankee state, remained unchanged.

This Yankee image of the state was important not just for Vermonters themselves, but for Vermont in the US imagination, an image of (white) purity that stimulated one of Vermont’s major industries to this day: tourism. Vermont’s efforts to draw wealthy East Coast tourists to its idyllic Green Mountains and Champlain Valley were yet another project of the capitalist-state consensus, which sought to market its own territory. The state tapped into a national nostalgia for traditional, agrarian communities to which industrialization—and immigration—posed a significant threat:

The racialization of Yankee whiteness in narratives about northern New England (Vermont, Maine, and New Hampshire) become especially evident in the late 1800s and early 1900s as the states of southern New England (Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island) experienced rapid industrialization, urbanization, and in-migrations of new European immigrants, African Americans, and others. In fact, as Conforti (2001) argues, in the 1920s and 1930s the idea of the ‘real’ New England shifted northward in the

popular geographic imagination as a result of the growing diversity of southern New England and the perceived dilution of its Yankee character. (Vanderbeck 647)

Taking advantage of public desire for a “real New England,” Vermont tourism promoters perpetuated nativist and eugenics ideology, replacing the rhetoric of social reform and eradication with an image of a state where such reforms had been successful, or never needed to exist in the first place. Little exemplifies this better than *Vermont Life* quarterly magazine, published and printed by the State of Vermont for branding purposes since 1946. But even earlier than that, Vermont actively sought out tourists, especially ones who would buy summer homes and spend their summers there. In fact, attracting WASP tourists was another motive of rural revitalization: “Tourism was eugenically based in that it was viewed as fertile ground to regenerate the genetic stock of Vermont” (McReynolds 315). It was certainly profitable—“Tourism was so central to economic growth in Vermont that tourists were referred to as a ‘cash crop’” (318)—and it seemed to attract the kind of tourists that the state intended. Robert Vanderbeck writes that “Discrimination...was clearly a part of the Vermont rural tourist landscape...prejudice was institutionalized in the tourist trade, giving the state one of the worst reputations for tourist-related anti-Semitism in the nation” (Vanderbeck 647). This was exactly what Vermont had intended: an influx not just of Yankee WASPs, but of people willing to reproduce and sharpen their distinctions, and by extension, Vermont’s as well.

Yet this reproduced discrimination was an invited but unadvertised byproduct of tourism. Attracting Yankee tourists required the representation of Vermont as the Yankee paradise of their dreams, not another racial battleground. In other words, the image Vermont cast of itself for tourists was absent of the very problems (i.e. rural immigrant undesirables) that rural revitalization programs sought to address, even though those programs and the tourism industry had the same genetic intentions. Once eugenics became scandalous and cast a shadow over rural

revitalization movements, the tourism industry and its messaging remained fully intact, continuing to draw in visitors and homebuyers with an image of traditional, white, agrarian, Yankee Vermont, an image that, rather than acknowledging (albeit derisively) the difference of rural dwellers and immigrants, excluded and erased that difference. In a sense, tourists were drawn to Vermont because the work of purification had already been accomplished there, or it never needed to be: “Vermont is often seen as (and, crucially, *made* to be seen as) a state where white snow, white church steeples at the center of the New England ‘white village,’ and white faces fit together naturally in the same scenic tableau” (Vanderbeck 645). Even as continual European and French Canadian immigration proved this image false, the state earned more by denying its diversity than by confronting it. And it wasn’t just “tourism promotion campaigns, [but also] Vermont product marketing, the images of Norman Rockwell, the poetry of Robert Frost, and a diverse range of other popular media that emphasize[d] the state’s ‘unspoiled’ character and landscape” (Vanderbeck 641-642). The idea of Vermont as a surviving relic of the original agrarian colonies, revolutionary defiance, and the “old Yankee stock” held huge appeal for many (wealthy) Americans, and the media that promoted this image erased Vermont’s heterogeneity, even for people inside the state who interacted with this heterogeneity every day.

These same problematic politics of Vermont’s touristic imaginary were still very much at play when a far different demographic began arriving to Vermont in droves and would change the image of the state to the present day: hippies. The 1960s and 1970s saw a population boom for Vermont, as back-to-the-land organic farmers, anti-war protestors, leftist college students, and other counterculture movements found haven in Vermont. Vanderbeck writes,

The apparent influx of hippies and back-to-the-landers contributed to the growing countercultural image of the state, in some respects supplanting longer standing images of the thrifty Yankee farmer...this state with a solidly Republican history developed a (somewhat overstated) reputation as a bastion for left-wing politics. (Vanderbeck 651)

In Vermont's self-imagination and especially in the national eye, this high-profile liberalism somewhat supplanted the state's deep-rooted Yankee identity. These groups' opposition to the aptly named Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant is a telling metaphor of the state's shifting character. While some met these newcomers with skepticism, their status as white, educated Americans and their chosen motive of rural revitalization was also construed as an answer to Vermont's touristic (and eugenicist) prayers. The acceptance of these newcomers invited even more: Vermont's population increased by 15% during the 1970s, and at least half of this came from Anglo-American internal migrants. However, these hippies chose Vermont as the site to found their farms and communes because of its imagined "unspoiled" quality, which as we've seen was a fabrication of the Vermont state-capitalist consensus, whose profit and identity still relied on a veiled notion of genetic purity. The incoming ideology of hippie open-mindedness and counterculture inclusivity was therefore layered over the preexisting mechanisms (and results) of racist, classist exclusion. As hippies pitched their tents on what they imagined to be untapped land, they erased the memory of centuries of systematic exclusion, dangerously imagining as a blank slate the state that had been carefully constructed by a state-capitalist consensus of discrimination, eradication, and unrecognition. By 1989, while writing about the state that 70 years prior had celebrated its discrimination whole-heartedly, Neill can barely believe his own words about the KKK in Vermont: "*Strange as it seems*, the Ku Klux Klan was once a power to contend with in Vermont...*Even the green hills of Vermont*, home of the stubborn, independent, historically tolerant Yankee, could not escape the in-roads of the fiery cross" (qtd. in Vanderbeck 649-650). Caught up not just in the original fiction of Yankee openness and the tourism industry's sanitation of "the green hills of Vermont," but also in the

hippie erasure of Vermont's discriminatory legacy, Neill tries to overcome this erasure while writing in a tone that embodies it.

For the most part, this erasure has not been overcome, and as such, "Vermont has since been "portrayed as a place where 'race' is of little significance, yet notions of whiteness are central to how the state has been represented and represents itself" (Vanderbeck 641). Allusions to race itself are largely absent from Vermont discourse because the state's near-homogenous racial makeup lacks race *relations*; under-discussed is how most aspects of Vermont culture have been marked and constructed as *white*, in contrast to some far-off or long-gone racial opposite. What this allowed for is a discourse of Vermont racial innocence, going "back to the land" as a sort of historical baptism, and, as Vermont increasingly became the target of conservative attacks on liberal ideas and culture, even a racial *victimhood*. In the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century politics, Vanderbeck mentions

Robert Oscar Lopez (2004), [who] in a provocative postelection analysis entitled "How White Liberals Became a New Racial Minority," reflects on how he has increasingly seen 'eye to eye' with white liberals... 'White liberals are the target of the worst political rhetoric, debased in the most degrading terms, and, ultimately, stripped of their rights and branded traitors. They have been stripped, in fact, of their whiteness.' ...I read a letter to the editor in Vermont's largest newspaper [*The Burlington Free Press*] expressing concern with the vilification of people who are labeled 'liberal' and 'environmentalist'... 'racism thrives...the words liberal [and] environmentalist...have become the new epithets slung at the ecologically literate and the socially thoughtful by the ecologically ignorant and socially senseless.' (Vanderbeck 653-654)

When white, educated liberals, standing on the shoulders of centuries of nativist, classist exclusion by the capitalist-state consensus that they now pretend to oppose, can equate their position in partisan squabbles to racism, erasure has clearly done its job. This fabricated image of white Vermonters as an innocent and persecuted minority, which ignores centuries of abuse and exploitation of migrant labor that continues to this day, remains central to how Church Street storefronts represent their boutique trinkets, to how Stowe and Killington ski resorts promise an

escape from the worries of the world, to how college campuses attract the new generation of young liberals and squeeze them for every penny, to how *Vermont Life* magazine can continue attracting tourists looking for an untainted trip back to white, colonial New England, to how Vermont dairy can call itself the last bastion of milky purity, to how newspapers like *The Burlington Free Press* can (re)produce this image and keep the cogs of the capitalist-state consensus turning.

## Three

### Marketed Minorities and Feigned Equality—Until Recently: Confronting Immigrant Erasure in *The Burlington Free Press*

“Vermont is historically and traditionally a place of inclusion and non-discrimination. That’s a long legacy of which I’m proud and which I know all Vermonters are. It is one I plan to continue.”

—former Vermont Governor Jim Douglas (2004)

“Students answer[ed] the question, ‘How has the Hispanic culture made its way into your home?’...eating nachos, burritos, tacos and flan. Shakira and Tito Puente were on one family’s list. Some made recent visits to Central America and some said they often use Spanish words like *hola*, *perro*, *gato* and *adios* in their homes. Baseball players...were on more than one list and one student was born in Guatemala.”

—Lynn Monty, *The Burlington Free Press* (2009)

“I feel very fortunate to have so much support, in particular from my community of farm workers who told me: ‘We’ve got your back. We’ll fight with you.’”

—Danilo Lopez, quoted by Teri Hallenback in *The Burlington Free Press* (2013)

Throughout the previous two chapters’ historical accounts, we have seen capitalist-state consensus mechanisms of exclusion expressed and reinforced by the news media, particularly newspapers. Throughout our nation’s history, newsprint has remained a dominant representational force, helping to define and enforce the borders of official ideology. And today, news media is at its widest reach, broadcasting to a much greater number and percentage of people in the United States and across the globe thanks to widespread literacy and access to web and mobile technology. While magazines, radio, television, and web multimedia have become the (arguably dominant) supplements to the traditional broadsheet, I believe that written newsprint remains the informational anchor for many other media. In large part, people still view journalists as writers, or writing at least as their most substantive, “factual” form of expression. And web multimedia—video, radio, podcasts, slideshows, etc.—are almost always accompanied by some newsprint-style written copy, signaling the prevailing importance of text as structure of information. Counterintuitively, the extreme cuts and consolidation in the newsprint industry

over the past few decades have worked in many newspapers' favor, gutting their competition and giving them an unprecedented (if undeserved) level of reader trust. Other news forms' inundation with entertainment (just look at the high-tech thrill ride that CNN has become) has left newsprint looking more staid and serious than ever before, giving it an imagined authority for its still-relevant stodginess.

For this reason, newsprint continues to serve as a litmus test for capitalist-state ideology. There are two different perspectives which validate the practice of reading official ideology in newsprint, both of which should compromise any faith in a truly "independent media" or "free press." First is the not-so-radical but controversial idea that media is a machine controlled by self-interested, capitalist-state elites. Media consolidation has made a few very rich men even richer, media moguls like Rupert Murdoch and Sumner Redstone who can pass their neoliberal, profit-oriented values down the chain of command to news outlets across the globe. This coincides with the prevailing influence of money in politics (supported by the *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision and the fact that few politicians are rude enough to refuse a gift when it's offered to them), resulting in trillions of dollars in public-private partnerships, the rise of the "pro-business Democrat," and a news industry that is reluctant to criticize the ideological foundation of the stories (including atrocities) it reports on: capitalism. But for those who are skeptical of condemning a full-fledged corporate-state-media alliance (which, I hold, should not be the stuff of conspiracy theories but should be at the center of all conversations about power and oppression), look at it this way: even if print journalism isn't *paid off* by corporate elites, it is still *symptomatic* of the culture and economic power structures they command. Individual writers and readers operate within state capitalism, even when they most reject it—which the invisible hand of the market makes nearly impossible for any paid journalist. In the free market of ideas

(and news is certainly a market), radical writing that defies consensus ideology and shakes the foundations of its readers will simply not sell, and writers who write attempt to defy ideology will not get hired. The news we read is the symptom of capitalist-state ideological dominance, comprised of information that (re)produces these dominant ideologies, easier for readers (always already subjects of this system) to consume and digest. In either reading—news as the capitalist-state’s voice-box or as its symptom—we see the ability to interpret consensus ideology in non-alternative newsprint, an ability that has not been undermined but in fact reinforced by the consolidation of the newsprint industry and the infinity of web media. Newsprint holds on to its authority as a smart, no-nonsense source, embedded within the consensus. Stray too far in the market of ideas and a newspaper will never sell.

Such is certainly the case for *The Burlington Free Press*. The newspaper of record beyond just Vermont’s largest city, it is viewed as the informational authority for most state issues. The national media, of course, has a far-wider reach and perhaps a greater influence on people than local news does; so why focus on the *Free Press*? First, a review of national media would be beyond the scope of this project. Short of a full analysis of the national media’s portrayal of Mexican and Latino immigrants, I will defer to the history of US representation of Mexican-Americans observed in Chapter One as a point of reference for how the national media continues to (mis)represent this population. Second, I see enduring importance to location and locality: while we could consider *USA Today*, *NPR*, or *Fox News* “more influential” for their wide audience and quantity of content, local news outlets remain in many ways more resonant, for discussing nearby circumstances with which their audience lives and interacts daily and directly. Just as a state’s specific history has more resonance for its inhabitants, signifying *This is about who we are, the land we came from, and how it continues to affect us*, a state’s local

newspaper (or local TV station, radio, website, etc.) also has a uniquely personalized effect, which readers value enough to keep newspapers like the *Free Press* in business. This resonance of local news also amplifies the power of a specific state's capitalist-state ideology, especially where there is state pride and where locals want to tap in to issues concerning where they live. Vermont is without a doubt one of these places.

But what about Burlington, the city that the *Free Press* is named for? Past and present, here and everywhere, there is an undeniable cultural divide between the urban and rural, in our case liberal urban centers like the Burlington-Montpelier areas and backcountry Vermont. In the immeasurable history of media, urban centers have always been the sources of information thanks to their concentrations of wealth, education, and technology; even when local, small-town newspapers were at their prime, informational authority was imagined as originating in urban areas. Urbanites represent themselves as well as their rural or foreign counterparts, often framing rural areas as undeveloped, uneducated voids of information in need of infrastructure, organization, and *textualization* by urban elites. The *Free Press* is no exception: it reports *from* Burlington *on* the entire state, using its urban vantage to explain urban *and* rural Vermont to all Vermonters. The consensus is defined by urbanites, even in a state like Vermont where over 61% of its inhabitants are rural, and even where much of our *urban* character is flavored by our rural surroundings (outdoor gear stores, cheese and syrup vendors, wooded folksiness in general). In fact, the *Free Press* practices the very same appropriation of Vermont ruralism that our urban retailers, restaurants, and boutique shops do—that is, bringing rural Vermont into the fold of capitalist-state ideology, without rural permission or through outright coercion. In other words, the *Free Press* markets Vermont. Obviously the *Free Press* does not truly reflect rural Vermonters, nor does it “truly” reflect anyone, such is the limit of all representation, but in

appropriating the entire state and enforcing its representational authority over all of Vermont, it defines what the state ought to be, draws the limits of capitalist-state ideology, and excludes those who do not conform—even people who have lived here their entire lives. And for migrant farmworkers, their unprivileged rural and foreign status in the media reflects, intensifies, and perpetuates the many mechanisms already working to exclude them: citizenship, language, race politics, and every ideological presumption about Mexicans and Latinos that Vermonters carry.

The Vermont media merits scrutiny: I have just framed the *Free Press* as an intense mechanism of exclusion, or at a minimum a symptom of powerful exclusive structures, but *Free Press* readers and writers would tell a very different story, placing themselves at the masthead of liberalism and open-mindedness, as Vermonters are often portrayed. So, who is right, or at least wrong? I will defend my critique of the *Free Press* by interrogating its treatment of Vermont's migrant Latino farmworkers. How much does *The Burlington Free Press* actually exclude migrant farmworkers? When it doesn't outright ignore them, how does it represent them? What does the *Free Press*'s representation of farmworkers reveal about the nature and mechanisms of dominant Vermont ideology? Is it best imagined as a symptom of other exclusionary structures or as a powerful excluder of its own?

As Chapters One and Two demonstrated, Vermont has a legacy of mistreatment and misrepresentation of immigrants unique within the national context, influenced by a number of factors: a heritage of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant “Yankee” inhabitants, a history of disdain for immigrant groups like Southern Europeans and French Canadians, an intensely exclusionary racial politics deepened by the legacy of eugenics, a disregard for the conditions and culture of rural people, and a self-conscious shift towards hippy leftism that stood on the shoulders of anti-rural, anti-immigrant urban Vermonters while simultaneously erasing them from memory. As

opposed to many outwardly conservative and nativist states of the Southeast and Southwest, who are often unapologetic in their exclusion of Latinos and Latino immigrants and flaunt their hard-line policies, Vermont finds itself a veritable success story of nativism yet frames itself as exactly the opposite, dangerously diverting attention from the state's exclusionary structures still hard at work. And Burlington, the wellspring of Vermont media, is at the apex of these ideological shifts. So, a study of *Free Press* representations of Latinos and, more specifically, of migrant Latino dairy farm workers will reveal residual exclusion in Vermont ideology. This chapter will demonstrate how the Vermont capitalist-state consensus continues to position itself in regards to a non-citizen, rural, racial minority group and, crucially, whether this is changing. I will review representations of Latinos and migrant Latino farmworkers in the *Free Press* over the past 15 years (2000-2015), articles found on their online ProQuest database and their website (BurlingtonFreePress.com) with the search terms "Hispanic," "Latin," "Latino," "Immigrant," "Immigration," "Migrant," and "Mexican." This methodology was far from flawless, which I came to realize by running into these websites' gaps and limitations (and, disappointingly, their lack of images), but I did my best to overcome this by using a broad range of search terms and performing close readings of at least sixty *Free Press* articles, many but not all of which are included here. It is also worth noting that my specific critiques of the *Free Press* farmworker representations are contrasted not just with my close reading of Migrant Justice representations (see Conclusion), but also with an extensive though less systematic of other Vermont media sources, including *Seven Days*, *The Montpelier Times-Argus*, *VT Digger*, *Vermont Watchdog*, WCAX, VPR, various independent blogs, and reader comments posted to these articles.

Before interrogating if and how *The Burlington Free Press* represents migrant Latino dairy farm workers specifically, it is important to ask how it represents Latinos as a socio-racial category, immigrants or otherwise. I have found references to Latinos (more often labeled Hispanics) in the *Free Press* throughout my whole sample period (2000-2015), but the conditions for their inclusion, as well as the resulting tone and detail of their representations, change throughout this period, enough so that it is appropriate to divide my time frame in two: 2000-2010 and 2010-2015. While we will be able to discuss Latino representation and immigrant representation more or less interchangeably during the latter period, it is difficult to do so for the former. The reasons for this are very problematic, caught up in a capitalist-state ideology simultaneously upholds and conceals the mechanisms of racial, legal, and economic exclusion, an ideology that Vermonters would rather deny than confront and dissect, especially during the first decade of this century.

By the early 2000s, Vermont and Burlington in particular had already undergone their shift in self-imagination from a white stronghold of Yankee values to a (still white) liberal hippy haven of Democrats and Progressives. As we saw in Chapter Two, this erased the memory of discrimination, nativism, and eugenics that Vermont once embraced, and by which it is still shaped, ignoring the consensus powers that still act on the state forcibly. This erasure resulted in insinuations of Vermont being a progressive, “post-racial” or “multi-cultural” society, enforcing the illusion of an even racial playing field supported by unbiased, all-inclusive state structures. In some ways, this idea was supported by the challenging but comparatively successful refugee resettlement efforts in the Burlington area, which may have helped construct ideas of the ideal immigrant as someone who has won legal status based on their years of living in a war zone and now lives to some extent alongside the white Vermont middle class. Consequently, as we will

see time and time again, early 2000s *Free Press* articles dealing with race play up racial *diversity* while ignoring racial *inequality*. One article from 2000 titled “Not Simply Black and White” outlines two different scenarios in which white people allegedly *become minorities* when surrounded, even briefly, by members of a different race. One local student and basketball player “never thought much about being white before he went to Champlain College. That’s when [he], in his own hometown, became a minority” (Jacobson 2000). Another white woman claimed to not understand the plight of her adoptive Korean daughter until “leaving a Boston production of *Cats* when surrounded by Korean theatergoers who looked less like herself and more like her teen-age daughter... ‘I was the one that was different from everybody,’” the mother said of her post-*Cats* racial awakening (Jacobson 2000). The *Free Press*’s use of these rare race situations to describe the feelings of racial minorities exposes a gaping disconnect with actual minority groups and their experiences in a white, prejudiced state that pretends to be exactly the opposite, denying the mechanisms acting against minorities with a fantasy of equal opportunity.

The same disconnect shows itself in a 2003 *Free Press* article titled “Open Your Mind,” which applies similar racial (il)logic to the immigrant experience (though with no mention of the many migrant Latino farmworkers that had already begun working in Vermont, as will remain the case for most of these 2000-2010 articles). The article asserts that “Immigrants come to the United States...to participate fully in their chosen country while still honoring their own culture heritage,” only “fearing they will not be accepted” (“Open” 2003). Forget discrimination, forget exploitation; this article boils down the difficulty of the immigrant experience to *not fitting in* and to immigrants not being able to express their personalities. And of course, simple problems call for simple solutions: “What breaks down the barriers is often a simple conversation” (“Open” 2003). This is the erasure of oppressive and exclusive structures in action; the *Free*

*Press* does away with prejudice both systemic and situational, pacifying liberal, self-validating Vermont readers by acting as if immigrant exclusion can be overcome by just giving immigrants a spot at the lunch table. This is a gross oversight of the racial, linguistic, legal, economic, and historical barriers that most immigrants work their whole lives—or their whole temporary stays in the US—to overcome. A 2005 *Free Press* editorial titled “Reflect State’s Diversity” commits the same erasure. While it criticizes then-Governor Jim Douglas for not employing enough minorities, it ultimately condemns those minorities for not doing enough to put themselves out there: “The state’s minority community ought to make it impossible for the governor to overlook qualified candidates of color...They should seek a voice in government” (“Reflect” 2005). Just as in the previous article, while the message is “liberal” and encouraging of some form of diversity, it imagines a level playing field free from discriminatory and exclusionary structures, where it only takes a few easy speech acts—us talking to them, them talking to us—to secure racial equality. The already-outlined centuries of institutional Latino exclusion that continue to pervade our codes of law and ethics (our ideology) should be enough to prove how deeply misguided this is.

Another means by which the *Free Press* has upheld this myth of racial equality is its selectivity of specific Latinos to represent. Indeed, while many of these early *Free Press* articles make vague reference to “the Vermont Latino community,” they usually end up boiling this community down to a few choice examples. And most of these 2000-2010 examples fit snugly into the presuppositions and prerequisites of the capitalist-state consensus, by conforming to either a racial stereotype or an image of the ideal immigrant. A 2000 article titled “Playing with Pain of Isolation” is one of its first articles specifically about Latinos, describing not farmworkers, but professional soccer players from Mexico playing temporarily on a local team.

And the sympathy shown to them—“This summer [soccer player Luis Torres is] living with two fellow Latino players in a woman’s home in South Burlington, a far cry from the glamorous and jet-setting life of the pro athlete” (Hallenbeck 2000)—sounds more indignant about the mistreatment of athletes than about the mistreatment of Latino immigrants. In fact, its grieving of their living standards—which sound quite high relative to their farmworker compatriots, living with South Burlington locals? rather than in complete isolation in a rural trailer without clean drinking water—ignores and erases the one thousand or more Vermont migrant farmworkers who were already living here in abject poverty. It minimizes the immigrant experience by concentrating its pain into a few immigrants who, in coming here, are probably fulfilling their childhood dreams rather than their familial economic obligations.

A 2005 article about some Latinos at a soccer game during the 11<sup>th</sup> annual Vermont Latino Festival—about which the *Free Press* has written many articles more than a passing reference to actual Latinos living in Vermont, except for a few of the even organizers—similarly reduces Latinos to the sport that the US most commonly associates with them. Titled “Passionate Play,” the article plays into many Latino stereotypes and casts soccer as Latinos’ sole purpose in life: “a common way for Latinos to spend an afternoon—sprinting down the field, deftly dodging defenders, firing shots on goal, shouts of Spanish filling the air” (Hallenbeck 2005). The article is solely about this soccer game, making only marginal reference to the players’ backgrounds or their lives here—which, given the lack of reader awareness that Vermont Latinos even exist, might be a question on many minds. They are here for soccer, this article seems to conclude, adding a third pillar to Latinos’ allegedly quite simple and marketable culture:

‘There is a misconception about Latino culture that it is all about salsa or that it’s all about food,’ said Luis Tijerina, a Mexican-American who lives in Burlington and organized Sunday’s match. ‘Soccer for us is like a religion,’ said Sergio Fernandez, a construction worker who moved to Burlington about a month ago. ‘Soccer is the number-one passion.’ (Hallenbeck 2005)

The article fits these quotes together as if to correct each other, as if to say, “Latino culture isn’t just about salsa and food—it’s also about soccer!” And its topical selection and limited scope by extension limits reader conceptions of Latinos, who have little other media they can turn to in order to learn about Vermont Latinos. Still, given the US’s preconceived placing of Latinos on a soccer field—especially in Vermont, where many people’s only prior exposure to Latinos is on a TV screen, and more likely ESPN than CNN—this article confirms these cultural presumptions and does little to enrich reader understanding of Vermont Latinos.

Other portrayals of individual Latino immigrants do not play into simplifying stereotypes so much as they set the requirements for immigrant inclusion, and oftentimes, it sounds like “learn English, marry a wealthy white man, and market your culture.” A 2008 article called “World Tour” that profiles Mexico as a country is basically a list of prerequisites for Mexican-American immigrant inclusion, from accepting a history of Mexico that makes no reference to US involvement, invasion, or exploitation, to being an ambassador of marketable multiculturalism, to being an obedient wife to a white husband. After a very brief description of the history, geography, and people of Mexico, it profiles two Vermont Mexicans: Gloria Ruvalcaba, who moved here from California, whose husband is a Swiss micro-chip designer, and who was kind enough to share a Mexican recipe with the *Free Press*, and Leonora Dodge, who “grew up in Montreal, the daughter of a mother who was born in Mexico and a father who was born in Ireland...married to a lawyer...[and] has a master’s degree in Mexican history from the University of Texas” (Pollak 2008). Dodge in particular is lauded as the model Mexican-American: an English-speaking immigrant from *Canada* who is willing to adopt stereotypes and sell her culture. Indeed, she is presented positively and is not perceived as a threat because she does not object to (or is removed enough to not be personally offended by) racial prejudice. A

separate *Free Press* article quotes her as having, in her own words, “yelped like a Mariachi” when she heard about the Latino Festival (Mariana 2008a). And describing her giving birth in Vermont and speaking to her newborn baby in Spanish, she laughs off the hospital staff’s racial anxieties: “The midwife and nurses in the room started looking at me like I was speaking in tongues! My husband had to explain to them that I was not delirious, just Mexican” (Pollak 2008). Dodge’s acceptance and non-objection to Vermonters’ racial prejudice, inadvertent or otherwise, validates this kind of language—or at least the *Free Press*’s representation of her makes it thus. The article appoints Dodge as a cultural ambassador who gives Vermonters the Latino approval to equate “Mexican” with “delirious,” or to look for little in Latina women besides babies and recipes.

Another article from 2008 titled “In Stowe, Exhibit Proves Art Knows no Borders” praises a well-connected, Mexican-American business magnate for his marketing of traditional (even stereotypical) Mexican art to curious Vermonters. He is the most high-class of Mexican immigrants, enjoying Stowe like any of his wealthy neighbors would, even the ones only there every other weekend:

Manelick de la Parra, a successful Mexican businessman and artist who owns a residence in Stowe...through his connection with the Mexican State Department, [arranged] the transportation of [Mexican artist Rafael] Cauduro’s murals...Attracted to Vermont about 30 years ago by the trout in the Lamoille River, de la Parra affirms that art has the power to integrate people in a unique way and break through barriers—physical, spiritual, and ideological. (Mariana 2008b)

Not only is Manelick an extremely exclusive and non-indicative example of a Mexican immigrant—one who came here not to work but to fish—and not only does he show himself willing to sell his own culture—literally importing one of its most well-known art media, murals, to satisfy US presumptions—he even helps erase racial and national inequalities by declaring art a “universal language” that can break down barriers. However, as the capitalist-state consensus

well knows and rewards him for, the only thing actually breaking down any barriers is *money*: the money he spent to bring the murals to Vermont, the money that wealthy Stowe residents pay to see the murals, the money he is able to invest in Vermont so that the state can flatter him as their favorite Mexican. He aids the exclusion of his migrant farmworker compatriots living throughout his area, probably deeming them too poor or unsophisticated for artistic production—let alone acknowledgement—with dreams instead to bring to Stowe a different Latino art form that is more supportive of capitalism and the myth of racial equality: “tangos and milongas from Argentina and Uruguay” (Mariana 2008b). By recognizing wealthy, white South Americans above his poor, struggling, Latino countrymen, de la Parra becomes the capitalist-state consensus’s model Latino.

Hector Cobeo is another one of the consensus’s exemplary Latinos, an educated, English-speaking, non-immigrant able and eager to market his culture—again, through the Latino Festival. Cobeo was “born in New York and raised by Puerto Rican parents within the traditions of a Latino family...After graduating [UVM] as a radiologic technologist, Cobeo obtained a job with what would later become Fletcher Allen Health Care” (Mariana 2008a). While giving full credit and respect to Cobeo, his lauding in the *Free Press* as a model Latino are problematic. His is a reality unachievable for most Latinos, and making him a Latino cultural representative sets an unrealistic standard that erases the mechanisms of social, legal, racial, and economic exclusion that many Latinos face. Also, like Leonora Dodge, much of his *Free Press* acclaim comes from his organizing of the Latino Festival, as its long-standing coordinator and as DJ Hector “El Salsero” Cobeo. These select Latinos whose *Free Press* representations I have just described—Leonora Dodge, Gloria Ruvalcaba, Manelick de la Parra, and Hector Cobeo, as well as soccer players Luis Torres, Luis Tijerina, and Sergio Fernandez constitute nearly every *Free*

*Press* reference to a specific Vermont Latino (explicitly identified in print as Latino or Hispanic, as opposed to just as an immigrant) in the 2000-2010 period; all are very ideological and very problematic.

For seventeen years until what appears to have been its final year in 2011, the Latino Festival performed erasure by simplifying, sanitizing, and marketing certain aspects of Latino culture, framing *Latinidad* as an identity free of socioeconomic baggage, which anyone can put on or take off at their leisure. The Latino Festival was a longstanding tradition and the primary representation of Latino culture to the Vermont public, directly and also through regular *Free Press* coverage. Their writing about the Festival (and presumably the festival itself) is rife with presumptions and stereotypes: in 2001, the Festival was described as having

popular and light-hearted festivities that bring a touch of Latin American *passion* for life to Burlington...combines the *Salsa feel* of past festivals with a deeper look into Latino *folkloric culture*...[the band] Viva Quetzal!'s music is *unmistakably Latino*, with *its high energy*, fancy guitar work and strong percussion...an *eclectic* mix of *exotic* and *ancient* instruments that bring the high plateaux of the Andes and the rain forests of central America to the *dynamic urban barrios* of the United States. ("Short List" 2000, emphasis added)

This string of exoticisms seems like less of an empirical review than a semantic condensation of every Latino stereotype imaginable. But by celebrating these stereotypes rather than using them derisively, Vermonters validate and sustain cultural presumptions and also contribute to the racial equality myth. An article about a later Latino Festival, titled "Latino Culture Spices Festival Series," continues the same pattern of celebrating stereotypes: it begins, "Salsa will be on the menu Friday night in Essex Junction, but not just the kind you eat. The kind you dance to" (Silverman 2003), and continues on with other tacky references hot and spicy Latino culture. What both of these articles overlook is the lives of the actual local Latino people in whose honor the Festival claims to be held. Indeed, it is framed more like a gypsy circus or costume party than a community event, sharing a few of the exoticisms of some far-off land, once every year. It

markets and minimizes Latino culture by offering easy and temporary participation, through “dance lessons—salsa, tango, zumba—...dance demonstration and live bands...and the traditional Saturday night Latin Boat Cruise, a dance party aboard the Spirit of Ethan Allen III” (Mariana 2008a). By insinuating that attendees can become Latinos or engage in Latino culture simply by doing zumba or listening to foreign music on some Lake Champlain booze cruise drastically overstates the fluidity of Latino identity, erases the racial inequality from whose vantage the white Festival attendees enjoy themselves, and boils Latinidad down to its most marketable, packageable, and presupposed aspects. This is culture as entertainment, a playpen for tourists from near and far, a perverse, marketable fiction of Latinidad praised by the consensus and appropriated by its representations. In Vermont, good comes to those who can best sell their backgrounds; a market of multiculturalism is the consensus form of diversity, which reins in true cultural difference and acceptance.

When the Latino Festival does connect its celebration back to the people whose culture it is supposed to be honoring, these people tend to be acknowledged only as distant specters with problems to be pitied from afar, erasing the problems facing Latinos right in our very state. A 2002 article about the eighth annual Latino Festival (“rhythmic beat,” “boisterous drummers” and all) reported on the Festival’s attempt to include a little social consciousness and raise questions about culture, hosting the first discussion panel in its eight years:

The drumming wafted [?] into City Hall, where a smaller, more serious crowd had gathered to listen to a panel discussion about the Latino experience in Vermont and issues facing the culture in Latin America and around the world...The 10 members of the panel spent about an hour and a half talking about a wide range of issues, from how the Latino community is perceived in Vermont to whether to end the decades-old economic embargo against Cuba. (Silverman 2002)

This rare discussion of Latinos in Vermont should be encouraging, but given the unawareness of community issues that continued to pervade these Latino Fests for years to come—and the

apparent discontinuation of these panel discussions, unless the *Free Press* just never reported on them again even while continuing its rave reviews of the Latino Boat Cruise—this glimmer of hope for community social awareness should not be taken too seriously. After all, it would not be until the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Latino Festival in 2008 that it would “host a charity event for the first time,” with proceeds going to “Caribbean Medical Transport, a nonprofit organization based in Lyndonville that sends medical supplies and equipment to Cuba and other Caribbean and Latin American countries in need” (Mariana 2008a), and while this quite-long-overdue philanthropy might seem positive, it only throws money at far-off problems in a manner that is downright imperial. Whatever local issues had been brought up by the panel six years prior, by 2008 seemed to have been cast overseas once again.

One of the *Free Press*’s least problematic representations of Latinos and Mexican-Americans is a 2004 report on Cinco de Mayo titled “A National Celebration,” which makes a visible effort to include and positively portray Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. While it certainly avoids most egregious stereotypes and derisions, it is still symptomatic of the capitalist-state consensus, laying out exactly *what we expect out of* Latinos. It reads,

Mexican-Americans could determine who wins [certain] states’ *electoral votes* in the November presidential contest. Likewise, Hispanic *artists, singers and actors* are becoming part of the American cultural mainstream. *Hispanic consumers are expected to be a trillion-dollar market* by the end of the decade. Vermont and the rest of the United States are being *enriched* by greater diversity. On Cinco de Mayo that’s reason for celebration. (“A National Celebration” 2004, emphasis added)

In the same breath that it honors Mexican-Americans, it lists their requirements for inclusion: that they *vote*, that they *buy* and *consume* goods, and that they express their diversity through our established cultural media, and preferably with the spiciness we prescribe to them. In essence, as I have already argued through theoretical and historical evidence, *The Burlington Free Press* and the Vermont capitalist-state consensus that it reflects only include those Latinos that submit

themselves as unthreatening, accounted-for ideological subjects, and preferably if they encourage other Latinos to do the same. This means *work, spend, vote, speak English*, but *know that you're different and be willing to market that difference* in a medium for which we've already built a profitable industry.

Overall, the *Free Press's* representation of the Latino Festival, of a few specific Latinos, and of "Latino culture" as a whole conform to Vermont's capitalist-state consensus and the same strict, degrading standards of immigrant inclusion it has held for more than two centuries, plus the relatively new requirement of making Vermont look multicultural and egalitarian on paper (and screen). Not surprisingly, most Latinos don't qualify, least of all the migrant dairy farm workers on whose abuse and neglect the entire system relies.

Practically nowhere in these early years does *The Burlington Free Press* mention migrant farmworkers in the context of race (Latino or Hispanic), because while the consensus has an imperative to exclude these farmworkers, the impetus cannot be framed as *racial* in a state that imagines and markets itself as liberal and equal-opportunity. The scattered mention of migrant workers in the 2000-2010 period do not show up for the search terms "Latino," "Hispanic," or "Mexican," despite being just that; I found them only with the search terms "Migrant," "Immigrant," and "Immigration." These latter categories denote a legal status before a racial one, justifying immigrant exclusion via a system of law in whose eyes everyone—especially in Vermont—is equal. After all, even the federal government gave its stamp of approval to the racial fairness of Vermont's judicial system. The *Free Press* seemed to agree with two federal judges' joint ruling that

The system used to select juries for federal court in Vermont is not racially biased but could be improved...[they] turned aside arguments made by 14 criminal defendants who had claimed they couldn't get a fair trial in federal court because the system used to pick juries excluded minorities... 'The defendants have not shown that this disparity amounts

to unreasonable under-representation or that it is the result of systematic exclusion.  
(Hemingway 2008)

The judges' ahistorical logic—ignoring the centuries of systemic exclusion that made the pool of jurors so unrepresentative in the first place, as well as the biased laws and enforcement that pit all-white juries against disproportionately many defendants of color—was enough to satisfy the *Free Press*, which continued to write about immigrant legal exclusion and persecution as a purely legal issue with nothing to do with race, space, class, or any other discriminatory factor. And it would take a few more years (and some serious dissensus) before the case of biased policing and racist legal structures would be reexamined.

Until then, though, immigrant exclusion and derision was to be justified in the *Free Press* by stripping immigrants down to just that, nothing but their legal status. One of its first references to migrant farmworkers, in an atrocious article titled “Workers using fake IDs,” takes this accusatory legal stance:

Illegal Mexican immigrants coming to Vermont to work on dairy farms show their new employers authentic-looking Social Security cards and other identification documents that are fakes, a Vermont migrant worker advocate said Friday. ‘They have fake IDs,’ said Cheryl Mitchell of the Addison County Migrant Workers Coalition. ‘The reality is that everyone knows these folks are undocumented.’ (Hemingway 2007)

These first lines of the article establish that apparently the most news-worthy information about this group of workers who sustain the Vermont economy is that they are here illegally with fake IDs. It even twists farmworker advocate Mitchell’s realism and sympathy to function as a confirmation of the writer’s and readers’ worst fears. The article’s veritable mania about illegal immigration—which is in fact a follow-up article to a piece (that I could not find) about then-Governor Jim Douglas’s in-laws employing undocumented migrant farmworkers on their dairy farm—exhibits the mechanisms of exclusion hard at work. Its immigrant fear-mongering and

attempted smear of Douglas hearken back to the eugenicist rhetoric of eradication and anti-ruralism. Even the *Free Press* article itself alludes to its own muckraking:

Douglas said [his in-laws] the Fosters did not believe the [previous *Free Press*] article was a ‘fair representation’ of their situation and ‘take great issues with the characterization’ in the story’...Douglas also said it would be improper for an employer to seek additional proof of worker's citizenship status once the normal identification and Social Security paperwork is provided...‘You're not suggesting racial-profiling in employment, I hope?’ He said the solution to the problem of illegal workers is for Congress to pass a comprehensive immigration reform law. (Hemingway 2007)

This may seem like a rupture in the consensus, with *The Burlington Free Press* pushing for immigration enforcement and profiling while the government appears to defend farmworkers and advocate for a hands-off approach. However, both sides still support immigrant exclusion, a core tenet of the consensus: while the *Free Press* identifies their illegal presence and employment for the purposes of stronger law enforcement and deportation, Douglas would rather maintain the current system that allows for the silent exploitation of farmworkers. What is critical is that both sides make legal arguments for exclusion, the *Free Press* saying that these farmworkers are breaking the law, and Douglas claiming that asking farmworkers for additional proof of citizenship would overstep the law and violate the laws *against racial profiling* which he alleges must be respected. The grand irony here is that both of these legal arguments work to conceal and reinforce racism, be it racist policing and eradication or racist exploitation and neglect. The tension between these two sides frame much of the immigration debate, in Vermont and nationwide, and this high-stakes political squabble is crucial to keeping the population at hand in a state of vulnerable, exploitable legal limbo. Especially in 2000-2010 Vermont, when the state refused to address any racism within itself, the racist immigration debate between “ignore them” and “eradicate them” often went unchecked.

And unchecked it went. The 2008 article “5 Immigrant Workers Arrested,” describing how “Working from a citizen’s tip, the US Border Patrol arrested five illegal immigrants walking

across an Essex parking lot Thursday morning” (McLean 2008), makes absolutely no reference to these immigrants’ race or nationality, despite the fact that that was likely exactly what prompted said “citizen” (note the contrast) to alert the authorities. The article also makes no comment on the conditions of the unjust detainment of these five Lowe’s subcontractors without criminal records, unflinchingly reporting that they’ve been arrested and will be “turned over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement for deportation proceedings” (Mclean 2008), as if they were simple traffic violators receiving the tickets they deserve. The article also directs all accusation at the workers, without objection to their manager’s blatant exploitation of them:

Illegal immigrants typically work for about \$8 an hour, [Damon] Hall said, compared with the \$20 to \$25 an hour paid by ‘responsible contractors.’ ‘Everybody is trying to throw low-ball bids in. And there are only so many ways to lower your costs...Using undocumented workers is a very easy way to do it,’ Hall said. (Mclean 2008)

This drives home the point that legal persecution of immigrants can be useful even for their employers, especially when the law places disproportionate blame on the immigrants themselves than the people who hire them—as the law has tended to. The complete lack of any dissenting voice in this case (or the article’s failure to quote such a voice) is telling of Vermont immigrant’s 2000-2010 lack of support systems, community incohesion, and complete exploitability by the capitalist-state consensus.

One 2006 article titled “Immigrants Rally in Vt., Nation” rings a hopeful note for immigrant rights and inclusion, but is rife with oversights that are very telling of the additional years of Vermont ideological exclusion to come. The article describes a “rally for immigrants’ rights and a living wage for all Vermonters” (Ober 2006), in solidarity with other enormous demonstrations for immigrant rights going around all across the nation in outcry against the extreme measures of the proposed Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005. While the article promisingly illustrates local organizations like the Peace

and Justice Center, the International Socialist Organization, and Immigrant Rights Vermont (an apparently defunct organization about which I could find practically no information) coming together in solidarity for immigrant rights and adopting the messaging and slogans of national immigrant rights movements—“Sí, Se Puede,” “Nadie Es Ilegal”—it still somewhat casts these immigration issues elsewhere by adopting “a living wage for all Vermonters” as its cause and by entirely overlooking the migrant farmworker population. It evokes Jim Douglas’s deferral of immigration issues to the federal government, even when confronted with immigrant issues locally. The fact that Vermont dairy farm workers get zero mention in an article about an immigrant rights rally is a chilling testament to their extreme exclusion. And the article’s absence of Latino cultural allusions and stereotypes, while somewhat refreshing, works not only to detach immigration issues from racial discrimination, but also to delineate between illegal immigrants and the Vermont Latinos already described in the *Free Press*—just in case those descriptions alone hadn’t accomplished that enough.

While the Vermont consensus overlooked its migrant dairy farmworkers, or at least their dignity, the farmworkers were only growing more aware, at least when given the forum to communicate, to escape isolation even briefly and befriend some compatriots, and to realize that the forces acting against them were systemic, were unjust, and were not going to change themselves anytime soon, so long as these forces could keep migrant labor in the shadows.

It was a police stop like many others, one in which the police place a call to Border Patrol on suspicion that the two passengers were “in this country illegally.” Despite their clean records, the two men were put into deportation proceedings, and Vermont State Trooper Jared Hatch who

made the call to immigration officials is “cleared by a citizens review panel for his actions.” But this time, there was resistance:

The two men, Danilo Lopez and Antonio Meza-Sandoval, who are from Mexico, both filed complaints about the incident with the state Human Rights Commission, according to Natalia Fajardo of the Vermont Migrant Worker Solidarity Project... ‘I am personally disappointed,’ Fajardo said when told about the state ruling [clearing the officer]. The solidarity project has been support for the two men. (Donoghue 2011)

And there’s more:

Five protesters later formed human chains and twice tried to block the Border Patrol from leaving with the two Mexicans. State police arrested three of the people blocking the federal vehicle[:] Avery Brook, 29, of Burlington, Brendan O’Neill, 38, of Underhill, and John MacLean, 51, of Burlington. (Donoghue 2011)

This 2011 article, titled “Immigrant Stop Ruled Proper,” undeniably still has many of the same old problems—referring to Danilo and Antonio as “illegal immigrants” and framing the story around the Vermont Trooper Hatch’s declaration of lawful conduct by the panel—but its content is something new. Through organized community support and the staging of new types of events, these farmworkers and their allies have brought about a change in the same old deportation story, and the *Free Press*, even just reporting the basic details of what happened, has offered a different explanation in consensus ideology of what is supposed to happen in these events. These farmworkers and their allies inserted themselves and their voice into the *Free Press*, even while their true mission or identity remains unaccounted for by capitalist-state ideology. And the Vermont Migrant Worker Solidarity Project, what would later become Migrant Justice, has continued making and shaping Vermont news to this day.

It did so again two years after this incident, in a 2013 article whose very title is a reason to celebrate: “Immigrant Activist Danilo Lopez Gets to Stay” (Hallenbeck 2013). Not only does the article itself describe unprecedented good news for Vermont migrant farmworkers (news made possible by Migrant Justice), it describes Danilo himself in better terms, as a “Vermont

farm worker who has been fighting deportation” rather than as an illegal immigrant who got what he deserved. Even more remarkable, the article leaves considerable space for Migrant Justice and Danilo to speak for themselves:

‘We won!’ Migrant Justice declared on Facebook. ‘Now, we see how we can change the world we live in,’ Lopez said...‘I feel very fortunate to have so much support, in particular from my community of farm workers who told me: ‘We’ve got your back. We’ll fight with you’...Then, there was the thousands of petition signatures. Hundreds of people took time to make phone calls to ICE. We launched the ‘Stop Danilo’s Deportation Video Project’ and we held a big regional protest at the ICE headquarters joining the national ‘Not One More’ deportation movement. We organized to get letters of support, not just from our governor and congressional delegation but from dozens of Vermonters.’ (Hallenbeck 2013)

A number of things about this passage demonstrate tremendous progress for migrant farmworkers and their consensus inclusion. First, this is one of the first instances that the *Free Press* has actually quoted a migrant farmworker, giving him the right to speak for himself rather than be spoken for. Second, that level of recognition draws comparisons to the profiles of specific Latinos outlined earlier, to which Danilo provides significant contrast, for being an undocumented immigrant and for not playing into preconceived Latino stereotypes and in veritably defying what ideology expects of him. And third, that Danilo even defies the *Free Press*’s focus of the article specifically on him by speaking less about himself than about his “community of farm workers” that supported him, a community that, without reference by Danilo, this article would otherwise have excluded.

As Migrant Justice took more and more newsworthy action in favor of farmworkers, and as its actions and campaigns witnessed more success at a statehouse that received no guidance from above and increasingly more pressure from below, the *Free Press* grew more willing to defer to Migrant Justice’s voice on farmworker issues, quoting the organization’s members, citing its reports and findings, and—crucially—assuming its style of farmworker representation. The 2014 article “Bias-free policing issue comes before Vermont lawmakers” leans heavily on

facts and quotes from Migrant Justice, even somewhat assuming the organization's tone outside of its citations:

The Vermont State Police have seen marked improvements in their dealings with members of minority groups, including Latino farmworkers who lack immigration documents giving them legal status but who are said to provide crucial labor on many Vermont dairy farms, an advocacy group told the House Judiciary Committee. But Migrant Justice said the state panel that sets police standards has issued a much weaker policy...Migrant Justice, which represents farm workers, cited two incidents in northern Vermont's Franklin County last year in which it said sheriff's deputies pulled over drivers and, spotting passengers who appeared Latino, demanded identification and then called in the U.S. Border Patrol. The five passengers now are in deportation proceedings, Migrant Justice said. (Gram 2014a)

The *Free Press's* deferral of testimony on farmworkers to the organization that advocates for their improved legal status marks a huge shift from the *Free Press* that, just a few years prior, reported on their round-up by ICE without a word of opposition. The biggest difference is that now, there are many words of opposition to be reported on.

One major ideological shift that Migrant Justice seems to have brought to the *Free Press* is the re-insertion of race into the consensus immigration discussion. The *Free Press's* extraction of race and racism from immigration enforcement is challenged by Migrant Justice's undeniable accusations of biased Vermont policing (if not by a recent national re-observation of race issues). Racist enforcement was the focus of their 2012 bias-free policing campaign which combated ambivalences towards racial discrimination, like those that enabled the aforementioned federal judges' 2008 ruling that Vermont juries were fair in spite of numbers like "African-American men make up less than 1 percent of Vermont's population, but about 13 percent of its prisoners" (Ram 2015). The *Free Press's* concession to the intersection of race and legal status in immigration enforcement comes with its full deferral to the Migrant Justice voice, in a 2014 *Free Press* video of Migrant Justice testifying to lawmakers in favor of the drivers license for undocumented immigrants law and for more comprehensive bias-free policing policies. After

hearing a farm owner share her prejudiced warnings against giving rights to migrant farmworkers because “They drink too much when it’s there to drink,” the video shows Migrant Justice founder Brendan O’Neill identifying the deep-seeded racism behind the farm owner’s Latino stereotyping (a practice that the *Free Press* used to enable):

‘The generalizations we heard, of these people from this different culture can’t control themselves, with alcohol...Let’s really think deeply about what’s being said there and what’s underneath that, in terms of assumptions about what people are and what people aren’t, based on where they’re from or the color of their skin. This is serious stuff that we’re talking about...The audacity, the same community that saved the dairy industry, to then insinuate...[that] these folks have done nothing good for you.’ (Video 2014)

Here, not only does O’Neill deconstruct the racism behind these testifiers’ objections to farmworker rights, he identifies the Vermont capitalist-state consensus motive for withholding rights from farmworkers: to leave the credit (and profit) for keeping the dairy industry alive in the hands of farm *owners* and *distributors*, as opposed to the exploited farmworkers who keep dairy afloat but tarnish its “pure,” whitewashed image. This accusation of alcoholism, like accusations of illegal immigrant status, is just another means of racially excluding Latino farmworkers without dirtying Vermont hands with either racism or even *race* as a concept. Thankfully, unlike earlier, Migrant Justice is there to set the record straight, giving the last word to lawmakers and reporters alike.

And, in a monumental turn-around from the erasure of race and racism from the Vermont self-imagination, the “Vermont House approves collecting [racial] profiling data” for police stops, as the 2014 article’s title states. Not only does the article refer to the approval as “a win for the advocacy group Migrant Justice,” who had pushed for “officers to not automatically assume that people who appear to be Latino should have their immigration status checked, unless they’re found engaging in criminal behavior,” it even concedes that “Perceived bias in Vermont’s criminal justice system has been an issue for years” (Gram 2014b). A few years previously,

when the *Free Press* seemed not to bat an eye at this perceived bias and even contributed to its unbiased image by stripping immigrants of their racial identity, this law being passed and this tone of *Free Press* coverage would have seemed inconceivable.

Indeed, this new awareness of farmworker issues and the new language for discussing them has even had impacts on articles unrelated to Migrant Justice. A 2013 article titled “Food Projects Connect Immigrants to Home,” about a UVM Extension program where volunteers set up home gardens to ensure food security for migrant farmworkers, uses much more culturally conscious and appropriate language to discuss farmworker issues even when Migrant Justice isn’t in the room, so to speak:

The project works in Franklin County and central Vermont with some of the estimated 1,200 to 1,500 Latino migrant workers on Vermont dairy farms...‘Something that has become very important to us is identifying, what are more culturally familiar foods and herbs that people want to grow?’ said Naomi Wolcott-MacCausland, who works at UVM Extension and is also one of the organizers of the Huertas project. ‘Something like epazote is a good example...It’s an herb that’s really prevalent in lots of cooking in Mexico and in Guatemala.’ (Burbank 2013)

There are a few things of note here that evidence a huge split from the 2000-2010 Latino immigrant representations, even outside of the Migrant Justice context. First, the article acknowledges the farmworkers’ range of identities—race, nationality, employment, community. Second, it completely avoids all the “hot and spicy” stereotypes and exoticisms that we saw in previous articles about Latinos, even when talking about some foods that are quite literally hot and spicy. And third, to that effect, rather than filling in the gaps with its presumptions about Latinos, the article, like Huertas itself, makes an effort to discover and spread new information, like the epazote herb, which is not in many people’s Top 20 items associated with Latin America. Mares’s simple assertion that diversity takes more than a few exotic, preconceived notions and is in fact a journey of discovery—“‘There’s a lot of diversity in terms of the kinds of ingredients in Mexican cooking, and finding those has been challenging sometimes,’ Mares said”

(Burbank 2013)—is a huge step forward from the densely stereotypical Latino Festival. And the *Free Press*'s recognition of Huertas speaks to a change in the state's self-imagination and capitalist-state consensus, growing, as this kind of change must, from the grass roots.

A 2015 opinion piece titled "Justice for Farmworkers" bears further evidence that grassroots organizing outside the consensus is dismantling old edifices of the Vermont capitalist-state consensus and identity, using a display of migrant farmworker pain and power to directly attack the ideology of Vermont *exceptionalism*, the legacy of its nativist immigrant exclusion and its capitalist, tourist self-promotion. The writer, Vera Chang, lodges farmworkers straight against the forces of the consensus, both the spatial imaginary that seeks to erase them and the corporate greed that seeks to exploit them, the two of which are clearly intertwined:

I wish Vermont's idyllic landscape and discussions around the state's 'exceptionalism' meant we were exempt from farmworker issues on our turf. But the sector responsible for driving Vermont's food systems economy, dairy, has been consolidating (the number of dairy farms has decreased 96 percent over the last nine decades), with remaining farmers subject to price volatility, while production expenses steadily increase. Thus dairy farmers and workers alike have been squeezed into a system sustained by cheap labor... Migrant Justice (MJ), Vermont's farmworker-driven organization, reports stark conditions for the 172 farmworkers they surveyed: 40 percent of workers said they do not receive Vermont's minimum wage, 30 percent have experienced injury or health problems due to work, 20 percent do not have access to bathroom or access to water at work, and 15 percent have insufficient heat in employee housing. (Chang 2015)

This show of force against dairy corporations, using humanitarian arguments to dismantle the horrible industry consolidation and the myth of Vermont that these companies uphold to conceal the harm they inflict, is new for the *Free Press*. Few other articles lay the blame and responsibility for farmworker abuse on the dairy industry itself, and this article's finger-pointing—reflective of Migrant Justice's brand new Milk With Dignity campaign—pits against each other the two contrasting traits of Vermont ideology: Vermont as a pure, idyllic utopia, and Vermont as a truly liberal and democratic state whose problems will not go unaddressed. It

remains to be seen whether Milk With Dignity will realize the latter ideology, and whether the *Free Press* as well as the not-so-capitalist-state consensus will get on board.

So does this trajectory of *The Burlington Free Press* mean that Vermont's capitalist-state consensus is truly becoming more inclusive of immigrants? Based on the Rancierean theoretical construction of capitalist-state power and consensus ideology, I would argue that yes, Vermont's consensus has become more inclusive of immigrants, or at least of its migrant dairy farmworkers. Particularly over the past five years while Migrant Justice has existed as an organization, the *Free Press* has come much more to terms with our state's racial inequality, exclusion of minorities, and marginalization of migrant farmworkers, even though it has stopped short of fullheartedly adopting their cause. Yet, far from "free," the press's path has paralleled that of the law, which during this time has passed several reforms—the drivers licenses law and the bias-free policing policies—that more than ever before confronted our state's racism and the people of color it victimizes. Progress has been made in showing Vermont the harmful contradictions and erasures implicit in its fantasy of liberal openness, and in raising awareness of the institutional exclusions that need to be overcome in the name of civil rights and social justice. However, since most Vermont farmworkers still live in isolation, immobility, social exclusion, and fear of the law, it remains to be seen whether Vermont will further recognize these continual injustices and continue the progress of the past five years, or whether the consensus has satisfied itself with its show of liberalism and will now go back to its business of erasure. How Vermonters will define themselves if not in contrast to those unheard, unseen, undocumented migrant farmworkers (which, at some unconscious level, still figures into our self-imagination) has yet to be seen. As such, in trying to reproduce itself and the conditions of its production, the

Vermont consensus may redouble its efforts to exclude migrant farmworkers. But, as proven by their influence on the news, the fate of immigrant and farmworker inclusion largely rests on Migrant Justice, who will without a doubt continue to bring farmworker issues to public consciousness, even if they fall short on future reforms.

Indeed, much hangs in the balance as Migrant Justice's farmworker members kick off their Milk With Dignity campaign, one which targets the true power of the capitalist-state consensus: the highest echelons of the dairy industry. Calling on the state's major milk processors and distributors to take responsibility for farm owner and farmworker wellbeing and to prioritize human rights throughout their supply chain, Milk With Dignity aims directly at wealth inequality and corporate extremism. The Vermont consensus—and simultaneously, *The Burlington Free Press*—has shown itself willing to acknowledge some of the *legal* and *social* exclusions of farmworkers, even if confessing them threatens to tarnish the pure, untainted image of the state and its dairy industry. The *economic* exclusion of immigrants, however, is a whole different animal. Economic exclusion and exploitation is the profitable mechanism around which other exclusionary mechanisms are built to conceal. It remains to be seen how willing the consensus will be to confront what has become its largest mechanism of exclusion and exploitation, but also its largest source of signification and power—capitalism. A not-so-capitalist-state consensus might be willing to join a campaign that targets corporate greed in the dairy industry, an industry that helps write the fiction of Vermont perfection but is actually one of the strongest forces standing in its way. Milk With Dignity would not even necessarily undermine capitalism, just ask for slightly more fair wealth distribution to farmworkers and farm owners by dairy executives, which, in a state nationally represented by a man named Bernie Sanders who regularly rails against Wall Street and campaign finance, doesn't sound impossible.

What it may require, though, is a redirecting or rebranding of Vermont exceptionalism, wrenching it from the hands of the dairy marketers who have become some of the Vermont imaginary's biggest perpetrators. The question of whether Milk With Dignity will be able to truly subvert and reverse corporate greed or just slowly push it elsewhere strikes at the heart of my theoretical query: by Rancière's logic, Milk With Dignity is a movement of dissensus that must either transform the consensus (and the contrasts from which it draws meaning and power) or concede to consensus conditions of inclusion in order to be heard; but within different theoretical frameworks, Milk With Dignity's creation of visible but unaccounted-for events can cause a rupture in systems of signification and power that, as opposed to the theory previously employed, opens up the possibility for radical inclusion. I can only hope that the latter theory, which fell outside this project's original intent, can hold true.

One encouraging sign is the support given to farmworkers by the many other Vermont newspapers. While the *Free Press* remains the state's most widely circulated, papers from more rural communities like *The Montpelier Times-Argus*, *The Rutland Herald*, and *The St. Albans Messenger* may have painted a different picture of the migrant Latino farmworkers living closer to them over the years. *Seven Days*, an increasingly popular Burlington-based weekly newspaper, and *VT Digger*, an alternative investigative local news website, have had much better track records in terms of the language they use to portray migrant farmworkers and the stories they cover. Some of these publications were printing not-so-problematic pieces about Vermont migrant Latino farmworkers as early as 2005. My readings of these other newspapers have been far from systematic, and I would encourage anyone to continue this research, comparing Latino immigrant representation in various other Vermont publication in order to more accurately locate migrant Latino farmworker's shifting position relative to the Vermont consensus. One trend,

though, seems to hold true for Vermont migrant Latino farmworker representations across the board: a positive shift in tone and content about four to six years ago. This was around the time when a few farmworkers formed themselves into a solidarity organization, creating the community forum and collective voice they needed to emerge from the shadows.

Many still live in those shadows, acknowledged but still unreached by Migrant Justice, or trapped in too extreme of isolation for community contact alone to alleviate. There are lifetimes of work ahead of us to secure a system that can be called inclusive.

## Conclusion

### Building and Voicing Power Outside the System: Grassroots Organizing and Self-Representation by Migrant Justice

“Migrant Justice builds the voice, capacity and power of the migrant farmworker community and engages community partners to organize for social and economic justice and human rights. We believe lasting systemic change requires changing not just how our food and economic systems work, but also changing who is at the table leading.”

—from the Migrant Justice mission statement (2010)

“The truth is I don’t want to go home. You are my new family. Migrant Justice has shown me that an injury to one is an injury to all.”

—Vermont dairy farmworker Eliazar, Migrant Justice flyer (2014)

“Oficial, no me veo como si fuera un criminal.  
Sé que mi color de piel no es como el de usted.  
Lo he notado, sus emblantes, lo he gritado  
una vez y muchas más,  
y no hablo por hablar.

La verdad es que yo no me vine aquí para  
robar, si así se portan conmigo, que según  
traigo un permiso. Cual sería el castigo, si  
yo fuera un ilegal? No me quiero imaginar.  
...Se aterra a ponernos mil  
barreras! No entiendo porque hay fronteras,  
Si ante Dios somos iguales! Derrepente te dan  
porra y hay fechas, sí no somos *ilegales*,  
y como siempre lo he dicho, nadie es ilegal.”<sup>5</sup>

—Vermont dairy farmworker Gilberto, “Nadie es ilegal” (2015)

As I mentioned before, I entered this project with the goal of comparing three distinct representations of Vermont migrant Latino farmworkers: those by *The Burlington Free Press*, those by Migrant Justice, and finally those by the farmworkers themselves, self-representations gleaned from semi-structured interviews. For a couple of reasons, it turned out to be a blessing in disguise that I only fit in two of these interviews. First, I was never trying to conduct social science or ethnographic research, I was only hoping to have a few rich conversations and build

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<sup>5</sup> “On my word, I don’t see myself as a criminal./ Sure, my skin color’s not like yours./ I’ve noted the look of your face, I’ve screamed it/ once and many more times./ and I don’t talk just to talk./The truth is I didn’t come here/ to rob, if that’s how you act around me, that’s why/ I carry my papers. What price would I pay, if/ I were illegal? I couldn’t even imagine./...They threaten us with a thousand/ walls! I don’t understand why borders exist/ If we are equal before God. But then they give you/ the truncheon, and dates to remember; if only we weren’t illegals./ and like I always say, nobody is illegal.”

relationships with farmworkers. Interning and volunteering with Migrant Justice, this ended up occurring quite naturally. And second, more importantly, I came to realize how much of a fool's errand it would have been to treat Migrant Justice representations as separate from farmworker self-representations, or at least to view my ability to distinguish these two as more valid than Migrant Justice's ability to synthesize them.

What I came to see is how deeply seriously Migrant Justice takes its commitment to empowering and putting forward the farmworker voice, with the goal restructuring systems of power and leadership that its mission statement suggests: "We believe lasting systemic change requires changing not just how our food and economic systems work, but also changing who is at the table leading" (Migrant Justice 2010). To promote immigrant inclusion, dismantle hierarchy, and function not just as an advocacy organization but as a community space, Migrant Justice follows farmworker leaders (as opposed to *leading* farmworker followers), making sure that its major campaign decisions are made by its all-farmworker Coordinating Committee, and that its messaging is conveyed through the voices of many different farmworker activists. While Migrant Justice's methods of farmworker representation remain problematic, centering on an opposition ideology and with more incentive to demonstrate its collective community strength and common experience than its true diversity, the organization nevertheless prioritizes inclusion, democracy, and solidarity to extents that I did not believe institutions could achieve, until I witnessed it in action. My prior disbelief was in fact quite symptomatic of consensus ideology: trapped in the capitalist-state mindset, I assumed Migrant Justice to be the leaders of a silent and suppressed people. But that is not the case; its communal organizational model and structure of power defies consensus logic. For that reason, Rancière would deem Migrant Justice a movement of dissensus, existing firmly outside the system, unaccounted for, locked in a

relationship of resistance, grinding against the consensus's ideological barriers without actually being able to speak or be heard.

However, what I ultimately found in *Migrant Justice* was a strong argument *against* Rancierean theory, for a number of reasons. First, while I believe Rancière was right to correct Althusser's bifurcation of ISAs and RSAs and instead argue that all state apparatuses constitute a cohesive consensus, he then fits this consensus into a far more harmful binary, that of consensus and dissensus. Although I found his consensus-dissensus theory useful and especially revealing of the many ideologies that exist outside of political discussion and go unacknowledged even by "democratic" politics, the theory nonetheless diminishes the ability that members of dissensus possess to cause events, make themselves heard, and participate in reforming the consensus without falling victim to its ideology. The harm that Rancière inflicts by deeming impossible all communication and cooperation between consensus and dissensus is to lock up the capitalist-state consensus in its own impermeable ideology and to force dissensus movements into what Abraham Acosta calls a "deadlock of resistance" (Acosta 2014). While Acosta borrows Rancière's notion of "the part of no part" and Spivak's of the "subaltern" to describe the ideological exclusion of certain groups and the resulting "silence" that occurs from their not being ideologically accounted for, he condemns that these groups are too often cast as resistant, perpetually excluded because their exclusion is imagined to elicit a resistant, combative, and threatening response. This nuance helps correct the flaw in Rancierean theory that would present *Migrant Justice* and its farmworker members as raging against the machine incomprehensibly, as opposed to peacefully and comprehensibly making its thoughts heard to the consensus even while maintaining a dissensus ideology. But still, Acosta does not go far enough in correcting Rancière in order to adequately describe *Migrant Justice*, because his any many other theorists'

construction of ideology still focuses on a single central ideology, consensus, with dissensus only existing in relation to it. While the “part of no part,” the “subaltern,” and their silence accurately portray the struggles of power and representation between an ideological order’s membership and its outside opposites, theories based around this singular model fail to describe a world where there are always multiple ideological orders at play, all of which can hear and silence different people in different ways, all at the same time. Therefore, to laud the *Free Press*’s eventual acknowledgement of farmworkers as their breaking free from silence ignores the ideological orders that did *not* previously ignore farmworkers. And to praise the government’s or the media’s recognition of Migrant Justice as an extreme ideological shift perhaps overstates a case of a new ideological order entering the political fray of *many* ideological orders that all act powerfully on their subjects, even while capitalist-state ideology remains the most dominant.

Alternative theories like this, which decentralize and multiply the sources of ideology, pitting them together and leaving no one truly unheard, help explain not just Migrant Justice but grassroots organizing as a whole. Small, community organizations can possess ideologies of their own, oftentimes much more inclusive ideologies based on scale of the institutions uplifting them: small enough to avoid major inefficiencies, hierarchies, and corruption and to directly remain accountable to ideological subjects whom the institution was built to benefit. Grassroots organizations like Migrant Justice may operate outside of the capitalist-state ideology, but that does not make them by definition “resistant,” nor does it determine whom they can and cannot include or the methods or standards of inclusion. This may even disrupt the Derridian logic that requires ideological orders to define and exclude their opposite; this logic may itself be an invention of capitalist-state ideology to justify its exclusionary tendencies, opening the possibility for ideologies of radical inclusion. Finally, this decentralization of ideology gives

ideological subjects a far greater ability to see, hear, and understand previously unaccounted-for things than Rancière would suggest. If this is true, then ideological orders do not have to radically alter each other's ideologies just to be heard; they can just speak, cause events, and demand people's attention.

But while Migrant Justice may disrupt the consensus-dissensus logic, this disruption does not deny that such a thing as capitalist-state ideology exists, nor does it diminish the role of farmworkers' media acknowledgement as symptomatic of greater state inclusivity. Migrant Justice and Vermont migrant Latino farmworkers are increasingly find recognition by the local government and press that has undeniably ignored them, in their own words they have "emerged from the shadows," silent and invisible no more in the eyes of Vermont state-capitalist ideological subjects. Migrant Justice has demanded acknowledgement and caused events that have left Vermont with little option other than to recognize its migrant farmworkers and their right to be here, effectively dismantling the state-sponsored ideologies that would rather not have it so. And as Migrant Justice launches Milk With Dignity, capitalist-state ideology will be forced to confront its biggest contradiction, between corporate and human interests. At this point, if the state of Vermont sides with the big dairy corporations, it will have to backtrack on its newly revived narrative of moral, liberal teleology and inclusion. There is a distinct possibility that this will happen; Migrant Justice is already prepared for this scenario, to not let Vermonters forget how their capitalist-state acknowledged farmworker rights only until they threatened corporate greed and structures of wealth inequality. And even if the *Free Press* sides with the capitalist-state ideology, Migrant Justice will force it to report, engage with, and draw language from its events demonstrative of anti-corporate ideology. Migrant Justice knows that for change to occur,

they must make it impossible for the Vermont capitalist-state to regain its ideological supremacy and push farmworkers back into the shadows.

If language is not necessarily a mechanism in which this ideological contest plays out (which it very well might be), then it is certainly ideological change's most visible manifestation. The types of language Migrant Justice uses to represent its farmworker members constitutes a major departure from the way the Vermont capitalist-state and *The Burlington Free Press* (mis)represented them for many years. In its flyers, website pages, statements to the press, speeches, and *boletines*, Migrant Justice presents a tone and structure of farmworker representation that was previously inconceivable by Vermont ideology. Many aspects of the language it uses express a subversive, anti-corporate, and anti-hierarchical inclusivity that fundamentally breaches how capitalist-state ideology conceives people and power: its denouncement of cultural stereotypes and legal-status reductionisms (never describing anyone as an "illegal immigrant" or even just an "immigrant"); its descriptions of all Vermont farmworkers as organization and community members (with words like "member," "organizer," "ally," "*compañero*," etc.); its nearly constant bilingualism in print and speech (referring to itself as both "Migrant Justice" and "Justicia Migrante," its campaign as both "Milk With Dignity" and "Leche Con Dignidad," etc.); its prioritization of human rights and dignity above all else; its status as a non-profit organization; its high valuation of the labor that migrant farmworkers provide and their saving of the local dairy industry; its condemnation of racist and biased structures and institutions that once kept them in "silence" and "shadows"; its refusal to accept further oppression and its hope for a new day; and its call for complete systemic change of corporate food systems that still work to sustain their exclusion. Previously, using this type of language and messaging to describe Vermont migrant farmworkers was completely unprecedented, but by

now has forced its way into *Free Press* and the official state vocabulary. As *Free Press* articles defer more and more to the Migrant Justice voice and even assume that tone for itself, it will become difficult to deny the fundamental shift in Vermont's capitalist-state ideology, or the role that Migrant Justice's language and actions played in bringing about this shift without having to submit themselves to "consensus" modes of thought.

But above all, the farmworkers' lives and minds have been forever changed, at least those involved with Migrant Justice—and involvement is growing every day. I can only hope (and expect) that Migrant Justice, while needing to represent itself strategically, may continue to unconditionally hear and include its members and address their needs, as it appears to have done so far. When I asked Roberto what had changed in his life since moving here, he said that much has changed in his work and family life, and that Migrant Justice has been critical to that:

Many changes have occurred in my work and family life since being here. I have been able to help my family with money to sustain their education; I've supported them more by living here. Much has changed in my work life too, thanks to an organization called Migrant Justice that supports migrants and workers' rights. We've achieved two triumphs, winning drivers licenses and bias-free policing. And this is so important to us, living and working here in Vermont. (Roberto interview, 2015)

People are allowed to say what they want about Mexicans and Latino immigrants, stereotype and dehumanize and misrepresent them however they deem fit. But human lives, when they make themselves visible and are allowed to be seen, are a tough thing to generalize. They are distinct people with distinct families and backgrounds, but many are bonded by the common experience of living thousands of miles from the ones they most love, working incredibly hard to keep our dairy industry alive so that their families can avert the suffering of migration and stay home in the land they love. This is the angle on immigration that Vermont and US capitalist-state ideology has too long kept its subjects from seeing. If that ideology or a different allowed us to see immigration in this light, our country, world, and future would look far different.

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