

“EVERY NORTH AMERICAN SHALL BE PUT TO DEATH,” AND OTHER VISIONS FOR A MORE JUST SOCIETY: RACIAL GEOGRAPHIES OF THE 1915 PLAN OF SAN DIEGO

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*“Every North American over sixteen years of age shall be put to death;
and only the aged men, the women, and the children shall be respected;
and on no account shall the traitors to our race be spared or
respected.”*

-Article VII, Plan of San Diego, 1915

On January 6, 1915, nine Mexican prisoners held in a jail in Monterrey, Mexico signed a document known as the Plan of San Diego. The plan was to begin six weeks later on February 20, and would entail the occupation and liberation of five states in the U.S. Southwest that had been taken “in a most perfidious manner by North American imperialism.” The Plan of San Diego was a multi-racial vision that sought an alliance between Black, Japanese, Mexican, and indigenous communities to oppose imperialism and white supremacy. It strove to liberate the “black race” from the violence of “Yankee tyranny,” and after taking the five U.S. states, it would take six more states to form an independent Black republic. It also allied itself with the “Apaches of Arizona as well as the Indians (Red Skins) of the Territory,” and promised a return of indigenous ancestral lands, assuming those groups joined in the struggle.¹ Upon liberating these areas, the Plan stated that “All ways of communication, all rural property are to belong in common... All racial hatred would end and schools would be established to teach the principles of ‘Universal Love.’”² While the

¹ Juan Gómez-Quíñones, “Plan de San Diego Reviewed,” *Aztlán* 1 (Spring 1970): 128–29. See Appendix A for a full translated copy of the Plan of San Diego.

² Quoted in James A. Sandos, “The Plan of San Diego: War & Diplomacy on the Texas Border 1915-1916,” *Arizona and the West* 14, no. 1 (1972): 9–10. This phrase

Plan itself was discovered and eventually stamped out by U.S. authorities, its demise required the concerted effort of every level of the U.S. citizenry, peaking in October of 1915 when the entire active-duty U.S. army was stationed along the Rio Grande.³ The Plan also played a central role in the tumultuous international relationship between the United States and Mexico, which were brought to the brink of war in the summer of 1916. To this day, the authorship of the Plan is disputed,⁴ and the adherents to the Plan ranged from Mexicans and Mexican-Americans— on all sides of the Mexican Revolution, which was raging just south of the Border— to indigenous people, Black people, and Asian people.⁵

was in a revised edition of the Plan which was written on February 20, 1915, the day the original Plan was set to begin. This revised edition will be explained more fully in the coming pages.

³ Charles C. Cumberland, "Border Raids in the Lower Rio Grande Valley-1915," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (1954): 305.

⁴ The historiography here is unclear. Venustiano Carranza, a revolutionary leader and eventual president of Mexico (1917-1920) claimed that it was a Magonista (adherents of anarchist Ricardo Flores Magón) plot to exploit tensions between the U.S. and Mexico and get the U.S. Army to side with more radical factions of the Mexican revolution; Flores-Magon claimed that it was a media hoax and that the uprising was simply a response to racist anti-Mexican violence, but agrees that the adherents to the Plan are anarchist because they "don't obey any leadership"; The U.S. government speculated that it was a German plan to deter the U.S. from entering WWI; Harris and Sadler argue that Carranza was behind the Plan the entire time as a political tool to get recognition from the US; while Gómez-Quíñones argues that it was exactly what it claimed to be: an uprising of Mexican Americans seeking land, justice, and equality. The authorship is further complicated by the fact that the nine original signatories claimed allegiance to Victoriano Huerta, a military commander who seized the government in 1913 and was later forced out. This paper reads with the argument of Gomez-Quíñones, but regardless of who exactly was behind the Plan, what is more important in this paper (and generally, I would argue) is what came of Plan, the movement surrounding it, and the responses to it. Ricardo Flores Magón, *Dreams of Freedom: A Ricardo Flores Magón Reader*, ed. Chaz Bufe and Mitchell Cowen. Verter (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005), 91, 206, 207; Charles H. Harris and Louis R. Sadler, "The Plan of San Diego and the Mexican-United States War Crisis of 1916: A Reexamination," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 58, no. 3 (1978): 381-408, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2513956>; Juan Gómez-Quíñones, "Plan de San Diego Reviewed"; James A. Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands: Anarchism and the Plan of San Diego, 1904-1923*, 1st ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 101.; Sandos, "The Plan of San Diego," 7.

⁵ James A. Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands: Anarchism and the Plan of San Diego, 1904-1923* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992): xv.

The Plan of San Diego, in its spatial representation, practice, and rhetoric, articulated a vision for the Southwest United States that defied the spatial and racial logics that were constitutive of the U.S. and Mexican nation-building projects. The Plan itself did not view the United States and Mexico equally: it unapologetically rejected U.S./Anglo imperialism and racism, while remaining open to future annexation by Mexico, though it stipulated that it would not accept any aid from the Mexican government. Similarly, the United States and Mexico had different views of the Plan: the U.S. saw it as a danger to American citizens and property, while Mexico at some moments supported and at other points rejected the Plan. Regardless of the relationships between Mexico, the United States, and the Plan of San Diego, however, as a revolutionary vision and plan of action that undermined the racial logics and sovereign basis of the U.S. and Mexican nations, the Plan was ultimately responded to with violence from both sides. Such violence was justified by drawing on the fraught history of colonial and neo-colonial encounters with indigeneity, and by projecting the constructed figure of the “barbarous indian” onto adherents of the Plan.

The Plan of San Diego emerged from the early twentieth-century anarchist movement, and especially the work and thought of noted Mexican revolutionary Ricardo Flores Magón. Beginning his activism in Mexico City as a Liberal reformer against the Porfirio Díaz regime, Flores Magón, along with his brother Enrique, became increasingly disillusioned with Liberalism and Mexican nationalism as the Porfiriato fell.⁶ Together, the Flores Magón brothers started the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM), but stated in 1908 that in reality the “liberal clubs were socialist,”⁷ and by 1911 had developed a thorough critique of the state, capitalism, and the clergy, advocating for a full-

⁶ For a fuller picture of the political development of the Flores Magón brothers and the PLM, see Ward S. Albro, *Always a Rebel: Ricardo Flores Magón and the Mexican Revolution* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1992); Flores Magón, *Dreams of Freedom*; Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*; Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Sembradores, Ricardo Flores Magon y El Partido Liberal Mexicano: A Eulogy and Critique.*, Rev. ed., Chicano Studies Center Publications. Monograph No. 5 (Los Angeles: University of California, Chicano Studies Center, 1977); Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, *The Return of Comrade Ricardo Flores Magón* (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2014).

⁷ Juan Gómez-Quiñones, *Sembradores, Ricardo Flores Magon y El Partido Liberal Mexicano*, 28.

fledged anarchist revolution.⁸ While Ricardo Flores Magón was a central activist in the Mexican revolution, his role was more of a writer, publisher, and visionary than an active fighter. Engaged in an “incessant battle of words and images,”⁹ the value of Flores Magón’s work must be judged as much in its imaginative capacity as in its practicality. While visioning is often sidelined in revolutionary discussions, it is worthy to note that the U.S. Department of Justice recognized the danger in these ideas: “While anarchists might live miserably, their dedication to their ideals— despite the lack of means to achieve them— made them politically dangerous.”¹⁰ In this line, we can imagine that the revolutionary vision of the Plan of San Diego posed a legitimate threat to the sovereignty of the United States. Indeed, when on May 13, 1915, nine Plan of San Diego adherents were indicted by a federal grand jury in Brownsville, Texas, they were charged with conspiring to steal “certain property of the United States of America, contrary to the authority thereof, to wit, the states of Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and California...”¹¹ This peculiar indictment shows that the United States government saw the Plan of San Diego, regardless of its practicality, as a direct threat to its sovereignty. Though the Plan amounted to an eventual “practical” failure (i.e., its vision was not achieved), the raids it produced, as well as the visionary critique it proposed, figured centrally in both the national and international landscape.

Relying on a theory of racial geography— understood by María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo as “a technology of power, and when used as an analytic and theory of spatial production, it indexes the series of techniques used to produce space in racial terms”¹² — this paper explores how the Plan of San Diego both practiced and represented space: how literal border geographies were inhabited and contested; how geographical representations of the borderlands were produced,

⁸ Gómez-Quiñones, *Sembradores*, 6.

⁹ Andrew Cornell, *Unruly Equality: U.S. Anarchism in the Twentieth Century* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016), 22.

¹⁰ Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, 129.

¹¹ *U.S. v. Basilio Ramos et. al.*, District Court, Brownsville, no. 2152 (1915). Cited in Harris and Sadler, “The Plan of San Diego and the Mexican-United States War Crisis of 1916,” 381.

¹² María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given: Racial Geographies across Mexico and the United States* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 17.

undermined, and destroyed; how racial logics mapped over each other, onto land, and onto human bodies; and how understandings of space and land were challenged and usurped. All of this happened through a racialized lens in which different subjects were interpellated through different processes at different times. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre, Saldaña-Portillo differentiates between spatial practice and spatial representation, which, while distinct, go hand in hand. It is not spatial practices alone – “those concerned with production and reproduction of life (and death) and of social relation” – that produce space; the production of space is also constituted representationally “by scientists, urban planners, social engineers, and artists, among others, who ‘identify what is lived and what is perceived [in spatial practice] with what is conceived.’”¹³

As a vision that was never executed, the Plan of San Diego must be viewed in its dual practical and representational capacities. Despite the fact that it was crushed less than one year after it was originally produced, its vision – spatial, racial, geographical – was anything but a failure. And despite its ultimate practical ‘failure,’ there were very real – that is, material – spatial, racial, and geographic consequences that mapped across landscapes and bodies. If we take Saldaña-Portillo at her word that “these spatial practices and representations [examined in *Indian Given*] of space together produce ever-fluctuating racial cartographies of the Mexico-U.S. border,”¹⁴ some questions arise: what racial cartographies of the border were created by the Plan of San Diego? How were these racial cartographies “graphed around the troublesome trace of the Indian,” if at all?¹⁵ How did these racial cartographies contest, reinforce, and intersect with other racial geographies across Mexico and the United States?

This paper will take up questions of the context of the Plan of San Diego: the long legacy of colonial violence in Mexico and the United States; the racial geographies that intersect(ed) the US/Mexico border; the varied local, national, and international political movements that influenced and affected the Plan; and the representation and contestation of land and sovereignty through the Plan, its adherents, and its contemporaries. This paper is also

¹³ Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given: Racial Geographies across Mexico and the United States*, 22–23.

¹⁴ Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given*, 23.

¹⁵ Saldaña-Portillo, 22.

centrally concerned with the lives, bodies, minds, and dreams of those surrounding the Plan; how people were subjected to racialized and gendered violences, how movements and communities were formed around resistance to those racialized and gendered violences, and how people offered forth – through their actions, writings, and movements – a vision that contested the notion that how things are is how they have always been and will always be. The central argument of this paper is that the Plan of San Diego, along with the anarchist movement that laid the foundation for its emergence, articulated a response to three related spatial paradigms. First, the anarchist-inspired¹⁶ Plan directly contested the racial logic of the borderlands – mediated through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo – that functioned around the racialized figures of the “indio” and the “Indian” to determine who was included and who was excluded from the nation. Second, the Plan of San Diego came in direct response to two related technological developments – the arrival of the railroad and European crop irrigation to the Southwest – that transformed the South Texas landscape. And finally, the Plan of San Diego disputed the system of private property, which is at the root of the liberal notion of sovereignty that undergirds both the United States and Mexico. Without making a cause-and-effect argument between these three related spatial paradigms and the emergence of the Plan of San Diego, this paper hopes to show how these three paradigms affected the borderlands in such a way that made space for the emergence of the Plan of San Diego.

This paper continues in multiple sections. To begin, this paper will explore the colonial history of the Americas, outlining the divergence between the Spanish and English encounters with indigeneity, and the consequent racial geographies that emerged. From there, the three primary spatial phenomena to which the Plan of San Diego emerged in response – the racial geography of the borderlands as it was laid out by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the early-twentieth-century technological developments in South Texas,

¹⁶ I write “anarchist-inspired Plan” rather than “anarchist Plan” because, as James Sandos has pointed out, the desire to form an independent republic is antithetical to decentralized, non-governmental anarchist philosophy. Nonetheless, as will be shown throughout this paper, the Plan aligned itself with the anarchist movement of the borderlands in its call for land expropriation, communalism, and in its critique of U.S. Liberalism. Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, 84.

and the contradictions of liberal sovereignty – will be examined in depth. Next, this paper will outline the ways in which the Plan of San Diego articulated its response to these spatial phenomena, in both its representational and practical formulations. Following that, a historical account of the events of the raids and the reactions to those raids – by Anglo vigilante groups, state militias, and the federal governments of both the United States and Mexico – will shed light on how the figure of the “*indio bárbaro*” was deployed against Plan of San Diego adherents in defense of the liberal sovereignty of both the U.S. and Mexico, and in defense of the racial geographies of the newly annexed U.S. Southwest. To conclude, this paper will make a case for the power of radical visioning, exemplified in the Plan of San Diego, in the fight against racist colonial domination.

COLONIAL (RE)MAPPING OF THE AMERICAS: THE RACIAL GEOGRAPHIES OF NATION-BUILDING

The racial geographies of the US/Mexico border reach back 500 years to the moment Europeans set foot on the American continent. In *Indian Given: Racial Geographies across Mexico and the United States*, Josefina Saldaña-Portillo argues that “the national geographies and the geography of the border region [are] meticulously produced through the colonial encounters with indigeneity... The geographies of the United States and Mexico have been produced, materially and representationally, through historical, social, and racial relation with indigenous subjects.”¹⁷ The racial geographies on either side of the border, however, are not equivalent. One was produced relationally between Spanish Catholic colonialism and the indigenous people they encountered in what is now Mexico, while the other was produced relationally through English Protestant settler colonialism and the indigenous people they encountered in what is now the United States. Saldaña-Portillo differentiates between these two racial geographies with the terms “indio” and “Indian,” that, while rough translations of each other, are not equivalent. *Indian Given* is an exploration of both untranslatability of these two terms, as well as the relations and intersections of the racial geographies that these distinct terms represent.¹⁸ Likewise, this paper is geographically focused on the

¹⁷ Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given*, 6.

¹⁸ Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given*, 8.

U.S./Mexico borderlands, and is thus concerned with the moments at which these distinct racial geographies interact and collide.

The European encounter with indigeneity in the Americas can be characterized within a dialectical framework of potentiality. That is, there are two types of indigenous subjects – docile/hostile, those with fidelity/infidels, domesticated/savage – and at any one point, depending on the complexities, needs, and power relations of the specific colonial project, those indigenous subjects can be on either side (and are both sides) of the binary; it is not an either/or, but a both/and.¹⁹ In the case of Spanish colonization, the binary between the civility/barbarity of “indios” is visible in Spanish census categories by the end of the Mexican War of Independence in 1821.²⁰ Unlike the U.S. at the same time, Mexico simply divided its censused population into two groups: “*gente de razón*” and “*indios*.”²¹ These categories were not static, however, and contrary to their logical interpretation, indigenous people were not necessarily classified as “*indios*.” For indigenous people to be classified as “reasonable people,” they had to recognize the *sole* sovereignty of Spain. The “*indio*” category was reserved for all those populations who recognized a sovereign power in addition to that of the Spanish crown; that is, if one were a “pacified,” Christianized “Indian” who recognized the sovereignty of Spain and *also* maintained their own structures of governance and social organization, they would be classified as “*indio*.” At any point, an indigenous person could cross this census line by abandoning claims to tribal sovereignty, highlighting the transient nature of indigenous subjectivity.²²

In the emergence of the Mexican nation (following the War of Independence of 1810-1821), and well into the Liberal reforms of the

¹⁹ Saldaña-Portillo, 53.

²⁰ For the sake of space, I am not going into the debates on indigenous humanity in the early colonial period. For a more robust discussion on how indigenous civility/barbarity was imbued at this time, see Saldaña-Portillo, 36-53.

²¹ Prior to this historical moment, New Spain had a complex system of racial classification. The transition to a simplified racial classification is representative of the shift towards a Liberal humanist philosophy advocated by the Catholic Church, which was itself a relic of the Bourbon Reforms of the mid to late eighteenth century, and the increasing influence of European liberalism in Spain. For more on Spanish racial classifications see Martha Menchaca, *Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 166–69.

²² Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given*, 119–20.

1850s and 1860s, this fraught history of indigenous inclusion/exclusion persisted. Liberal reformers denounced the parochial and heterogenous indigenous township model of community organization – itself a relic of colonial reform and imposition²³ – as it was seen as an obstacle to the project of modernization because it was not built around the universalizing idea of private and individual land ownership. The debate revolved around conceptions of liberal sovereignty, and indigenous relations to this notion of sovereignty. In her book *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, Wendy Brown writes, referring to political theorist Carl Schmitt, that “Schmitt [sic.] exaggerates only slightly [sic.] when he says that for Locke ‘the essence of political power is its jurisdiction over the land.’”²⁴ From this it follows that sovereignty is premised not only on a relationship to land, but a particular conception of land that is privately and individually owned. It is through the process of land enclosure – walling land off and declaring it as one’s own – that sovereignty is born.²⁵

The fact that private property is at the foundation of liberal thought, and the fact that “Indians” were living in townships meant not only that “Indians” were the obstacle to modernity, but also that they were the obstacle to a complete modern nation. The project of Liberal reformers, then, was to “transform the particularity of Indian difference into the abstractness of liberal citizenship.”²⁶ The 1857 Mexican Constitution was a central project in the formation of abstract liberal citizenship. Far more progressive than the U.S. Constitution, the 1857 Constitution extended freedom to, and guaranteed government protection of, all enslaved people who set foot in Mexico (slavery had been outlawed in Mexico since 1829); and prohibited all forms of indentured servitude or unpaid labor. These articles came in direct response not only to the United States but also Mexico’s colonial history – a history it sought to distance itself from

²³ Townships were a mechanism of colonial resource extraction, in which dispersed indigenous populations were “voluntarily” relocated to townships upon conversion to Christianity. For more information on townships see Maria Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003), 200-201.

²⁴ Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty* (New York: Zone Books; 2017), 44.

²⁵ Brown, *Walled States*, 45.

²⁶ Saldaña-Portillo, *The Revolutionary Imagination*, 203.

by extending freedom and equality to all of its citizens regardless of race, ethnicity, or nationality. This inclusive racial imaginary, however, served both assimilative and individualizing ends. Under Spanish colonialism, indigenous people were allowed a level of flexibility (exemplified by the census categories references above, but also extending to a degree of territorial autonomy for certain groups, such as the Navajo, Comanche, and Apache), and were defined as a group with political rights, however limited they may be. But universalized liberal citizenship shifted the distinction between “Indians” and “non-Indians” from one of political rights to one of individual cultural difference.²⁷

The racial geography of the Mexican nation was created around an inclusive principle: in the development of the Mexican nation – and through the liberal reforms of the 1850s and 1860s – *mestizaje* was exalted as the mix of two cultures, Spanish and indigenous, that could create a unified nation. It was the newly created “fusion” of two races that a third would be born and would come to represent Mexican national character.²⁸ However, this inclusionary principle came at a cost. As Arjun Appadurai writes, “no modern nation, however benign its political system and however eloquent its public voices may be about the virtues of tolerance, multiculturalism, and inclusion, is free of the idea that its national sovereignty is built on some sort of ethnic genius.”²⁹ The creation of the Mexican nation was certainly premised on “the virtues of tolerance, multiculturalism, and inclusion,” and indeed a central debate of the Liberal reforms was how to best include Mexico’s indigenous population. If we take Appadurai at his word, the question arises: what was the “ethnic genius” of the newly formed Mexican nation? In line with Brown and Schmitt’s argument that national sovereignty is born through enclosure, it becomes apparent

²⁷ Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given*, 123-24.

²⁸ Saldaña-Portillo argues that the “fusion” was less of a fusion and more of a process of cultural exploitation. Drawing on Manuel Gamio, who is considered to be the intellectual architect of indigenous incorporation into the Mexican nation post-independence, Saldaña-Portillo illustrates how Gamio imagined indigeneity not as the numerical majority (which it was), or even as an equal to Creole elites, but as a “latent fund of ‘powerful energies’ waiting to be harnessed - channeled - in the service of the nation.” That is, the question of *mestizaje* was not how to fusion two races to make a third, but how to utilize a resource lacking its full potential. Saldaña-Portillo, *The Revolutionary Imagination*, 208.

²⁹ Arjun Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 3.

that Mexican nationhood was created through the transition away from townships and towards private property ownership. This occurred at the cost of indigenous spatial practices, forming an ethnic genius around the denigration of indigeneity. While claiming multiculturalism, these Liberal reforms denied indigenous spatial practices and collective land management, which were now viewed as a threat to the new and fragile nation. Indigenous character was allowed; indigenous spatial practice was not.

As opposed to New Spain, and later Mexico, in the British colonies, and later the U.S., indigenous spatial practice was categorically denied, and indigenous character was accepted only in the service of colonial land acquisition. This was most visible through the process of simultaneously imbuing indigenous people with and without reason. Colonial logic had it that propertied and civilized “Indians” could reasonably sell their land, thus rendering colonial purchases of land “just.” This happened through the use of contracts, in which English colonists “obtained Indian land in ‘a faire Purchase,’ in a ‘lawfull bargaine,’ with the ‘Consent’ of these ‘exact Observers of property.’”³⁰ The fact that these contracts were fraudulent, however, was not an unjust aberration of the contract form, but a constitutive piece of indigenous-settler relations, in which “Indians” were seen as human precisely because of their ability to sell their land. It was through the capacity to reason – and thus the capacity to contractually sign away land – that indigenous people were imbued with humanity.³¹ Extending the argument of Cheryl Harris, Saldaña-Portillo writes, “If the property of whiteness was emblemized by the capacity to buy and hold property, then the property of indigeneity was emblemized by the capacity to hold and relinquish land.”³² With the passage of the Indian Intercourse Act of 1790 by the U.S. Congress, however, this colonial logic of indigenous reason and humanity saw a complete reversal. The act stated that “no sale of lands made by any Indians, or any nation or tribe of Indians within the United States, shall be valid to any person or persons, or to any state ... unless the same shall be made and duly executed at some public treaty held under the authority of the United States.”³³ Refuting the long history

³⁰ Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given*, 56.

³¹ Saldaña-Portillo, 58.

³² Saldaña-Portillo, 59.

³³ Quoted in Saldaña-Portillo, 62.

of recognizing indigenous land ownership, this transition from contract to treaty as the method of proper land acquisition was a simultaneous transition from indigenous reason and humanity to indigenous nomadic savagery. “Indians” were no longer rightful owners; they were now merely occupiers of space.³⁴

Despite the transition from civilized, property-owning, contract-signing “Indians” to barbaric, nomadic, space-occupying “Indians,” the thread of land dispossession is woven throughout. This land dispossession is linked to intersecting notions of whiteness, individuality, and property ownership. When Wendy Brown references Locke and Schmitt to argue that sovereignty is born from enclosure, she is also referring to the historical fact that not only is jurisdiction over land a prerequisite for political power, but also that jurisdiction over land occurs through the relationships between an individual and the state. If for Locke the essence of political power is its jurisdiction over the land, and land is understood as private property, then when Locke argues that “every man has a ‘property’ in his own ‘person,’” he is claiming a sovereign subject that is defined in relation to property. In this act, Locke is “not only defining ‘property’ but also defining *personhood*.”³⁵ It is the state, however, that mediates the relationship between the owner and the owned: the state maintains this relational aspect of property by “[protecting] one’s right to own something by ensuring no one else does.”³⁶ This interaction is not an ahistorical or unmarked relationship between state and individual; as Cheryl Harris has argued, since the inception of property rights in the United States, it has been the relationship between race and property that racial and economic domination has been monopolized by whiteness.³⁷ This domination has occurred through the fact that “whiteness and property share a common premise – a conceptual nucleus – of a right to exclude.”³⁸ Thus, the acquisition of indigenous land by British and American settlers occurred through a dual mechanism of exclusion: on the one hand,

³⁴ Saldaña-Portillo, 63.

³⁵ Lisa Marie Cacho, *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 23, drawing on Grace Kyungwon Hong.

³⁶ Cacho, *Social Death*, quoting Hong.

³⁷ Cheryl I. Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (1993): 1716.

³⁸ Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” 1714.

indigenous people were excluded from rightful property ownership (except in the instances that they sold away their rightful ownership), and on the other, they were excluded from the racial category of whiteness.

As this section has outlined, the Mexican racial geography was one premised on inclusion. In reality, this inclusion relied on the denigration of indigenous worldviews and spatial practices, but nonetheless, the logic of Mexico's racial composition relied on the incorporation of indigenous identity in the formation of the Mexican subject. On the other hand, the racial geography of the United States was premised on an exclusionary principle. Even as indigenous people were included in property relations, it was only in the service of land transfers away from "Indians" and to Anglo settlers that such an inclusion was made possible. Due to the intersection of whiteness and property in the United States, the subject formation of "Americans" was broadly exclusionary and extended only to white men. In the borderlands region, these two racial geographies have always interacted, and at moments have collided profoundly. This collision is most evident in the annexation of Northern Mexico into the Southwestern United States following the Mexican-American War, 1846-1848.

COLLIDING GEOGRAPHIES, COLLUDING SOVEREIGNTIES: RACE, SPACE, AND INDIGENEITY IN THE TREATY OF GUADALUPE HIDALGO

The collision between the two distinct racial geographies, outlined above, occurred through the terms set by the treaty that ended the Mexican-American War, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Once again, the dialectical framework of potentiality emerged, this time as a mediating principle for inclusion into the United States. The process of inclusion/exclusion of mestizo, indigenous, and Afro-mestizo subjects into the U.S. nation occurred in the clash between the racial geographies of the United States and that of Mexico.³⁹ The collision is most visible in the fact that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo sought to include annexed Mexicans into a racial geography premised on exclusion. Article 8 states that regardless of their citizenship at the moment the treaty is signed or in the years to come,

³⁹ Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given*, 108-9, 133-34.

annexed Mexicans are allowed to retain their property in the annexed territories, free of charge. Article 9 gives the option to annexed Mexicans to become U.S. citizens, to enjoy “all the rights of the citizens of the United States according to the principles of the Constitution,” assuming that they “shall not preserve the character of citizens of the Mexican Republic.”⁴⁰ Referring back to Harris’ argument about the interconnection between whiteness and property, and to the Naturalization Act of 1790, which restricted citizenship to “any alien, being a free white person,” the act of extending property rights and citizenship to Mexican men meant simultaneously racializing them as white. However, the clear issue arose: Mexicans did not look white. Due to the exclusionary racial logic of the United States, the written words of the treaty that sought to extend “the enjoyment of all the rights of the citizens of the United States according to the principles of the constitution,” were ultimately bound to fail. The treaty sought to extend the privileges of Anglo whiteness to those who in Mexico, when positioned relationally to indigenous or Afro-mestizo people, could mobilize the category of whiteness in their favor, but when positioned relationally to white Anglo settlers in the U.S. Southwest, their claims to whiteness fell short. This was because, in the racialized bodies, lives, and “character” of annexed Mexicans, Anglos saw a “trace of the indio bárbaro...ever present in Mexicans’ indeterminate racial embodiment.”⁴¹

The trace of the “*indio bárbaro*” was present elsewhere in the Treaty as well. While articles 8 and 9 of the Treaty are the center of historians focus for the rights they purportedly grant to annexed

⁴⁰ Quoted in Saldaña-Portillo, 134–35. Saldaña-Portillo draws here on Early American scholar David Kazanjian. While many U.S. historians and Chicana/o scholars agree that the treaty failed to grant the rights it promised to Mexicans, Kazanjian extends this discussion by asking what it would mean if the U.S. had *succeeded* in granting the rights it promised. He centers this phrase – “shall not preserve the character of citizens of the Mexican Republic” -- in his analysis, and concludes that to become a U.S. citizen, with all the purported rights that includes, would require “a negation, a becoming un-preserved, disposed of, lost, wasted” if the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was fulfilled as promised. David Kazanjian, *The Colonizing Trick : National Culture and Imperial Citizenship in Early America* (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 207.

⁴¹ Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given*, 155.

Mexicans,⁴² article 11 shows the cost at which rights were granted in the two earlier articles:

Considering that a great part of the territories, which, by the present treaty, are to be comprehended for the future within the limits of the United States, is now occupied by savage tribes, who will hereafter be under the exclusive control for the Government of the United States, and whose incursions within the territory of Mexico would be prejudicial in the extreme, it is solemnly agreed that all such incursions shall be forcibly restrained by the Government of the United States whensoever this may be necessary; and that when they cannot be prevented, they shall be punished by the said Government, and satisfaction for the same shall be exacted all in the same way, and with equal diligence and energy, as if the same incursions were mediated or committed within its own territory, against its own citizens.⁴³

As in Articles 8 and 9, annexed Mexicans are posited to be legally equal to white U.S. citizens, just as indigenous incursions into Mexican territory are to be legally treated as if it were an incursion into the United States. Legal punishment for such incursions – against the state of Mexico or “proper” Mexicans in the territories annexed by the U.S. – “shall be exacted in the same way” “as if” it were “against its own citizens” – that is, with the full might of the U.S. legal apparatus. Despite the contradictory racial logics referenced above, here we see how Mexicans and Americans alike are imagined to be individual liberal subjects, deserving of state protection. But such a similarity of character, despite racial difference, can only be achieved as it is juxtaposed to the “savage tribes” who simply “occupy” the land that is now the United States.

⁴² Saldaña-Portillo, 134. See footnote 40 for what it would mean to actually grant these rights to Mexicans. This claim – that historians center on articles 8 and 9 for the rights they purported grant to annexed Mexicans – is drawn from Christopher David Ruiz Cameron, who offers a legal perspective of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Ruiz Cameron outlines the three primary ways in which historians have ascribed meaning to the document, which he classifies as traditionalist, revisionist, and reclamationist. He argues that legal scholarship on the Treaty is dwarfed in comparison to historical scholarship, which has led to an oversimplification in our understanding of the ways in which the Treaty has been consequently legally adjudicated. Christopher David Ruiz Cameron, “One Hundred Fifty Years of Solitude: Reflections on the End of the History Academy’s Dominance of Scholarship on the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo,” *Bilingual Review / La Revista Bilingüe* 25, no. 1 (2000): 1–2.

⁴³ Quoted in Saldaña-Portillo, 136.

It is here that the collusion between the Mexican and U.S. racial logics emerges most prominently. Gone are the days of a fluctuating and transient indigenous identity, able to be assimilated in exchange for forsaking indigenous spatial practices and sovereignty. Now the “*indio bárbaro*” is concretely cast outside of both the United States and Mexico. The “savage tribes” pose a threat to the territorial cohesion of both nations in their racial character and spatial practice. In the Treaty’s representation of space, it is indigeneity that violates the sovereignty of *both* nations.⁴⁴ The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo – which sets the terms for the collision of the two racial geographies – essentialized indigenous racial character into the solidified category of “savage tribes” and negated any claim to territorial sovereignty by casting indigenous populations as simply “occupiers” of space that is now to be the United States of America.⁴⁵ (Recall here the aforementioned transition from contract to treaty for how indigenous land was to be acquired by the U.S. government: it was by imagining indigenous people as simply “occupiers of space” as opposed to rightful owners that allowed the treaty form to imbue a nomadic savagery onto Native peoples – a legacy that flashes up quite forcefully in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.)

The vision of sovereignty presented by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo affirms Wendy Brown’s claim that “sovereignty does not simply unify or repress its subjects, but is rather both generated by and generative of these subjects.”⁴⁶ The process of subject creation happens through specific racialized identity categories, best understood through the phrase “beyond the pale.” A pale refers to a wooden fence stake, and its historical and political meaning comes from the English colonization of Ireland, where “The Pale” referenced both the line between civilized and uncivilized, and the colonial territory itself.⁴⁷ However, “beyond the pale” is not simply a geographic marker distinguishing the civilized from the uncivilized; it is also “where the brutishness of the civilized is therefore permitted, where violence may be freely and legitimately exercised.”⁴⁸ Inherent to the phrase “beyond the pale,” then, is both a justification of the

⁴⁴ Saldaña-Portillo, 138.

⁴⁵ Saldaña-Portillo, 108-9, 136-37, 155.

⁴⁶ Brown, *Walled States*, 52.

⁴⁷ Brown, 45.

⁴⁸ Brown, 45-46.

originary violence of colonization, as well as justification of the process of continual colonial encroachment, settlement, dispossession, and violence.⁴⁹

While Brown's elaboration of the phrase "beyond the pale" underscores the colonial engineering of land, "the pale" constructed through the logic of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo hinges not solely on geography, but also on the racialized identity of the "savage tribes." The liberal subjectivities of both the United States and Mexico were constituted by what was "beyond the pale," but the pale was staked into a *racialized* geography, not simply unmarked land. When Saldaña-Portillo writes "that Mexican and U.S. national geographies... are the effect of visualizing indios and Indians in landscape,"⁵⁰ she is speaking to a specific mechanism of subject creation. Such a mechanism happens *vis-a-vis* geography's disciplinary power: depending upon the interests of the English and Spanish colonists, and what they desired to see in/on the landscape, varying spatial practices and representations emerged, and functioned as a way to both discipline what we see and discipline us into "seeing (and knowing) mapped space as racialized place."⁵¹

In the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, rather than constituting their subjectivities by what was beyond a physical border, the sovereignty of each nation – and thus the subject formations within each nation – was constituted through the relationship between the illiberal "savage tribes" and the land they were "occupying." With the newly constructed pale of the "*indio bárbaro*," colonial conquest was justified in the past and present. Racialized violence was now deemed legitimate not beyond a geographic boundary, but beyond a racialized imaginary that was constituted at the intersection of indigeneity and geography. This racialized imaginary is mobilized as "an unconscious racial hermeneutic in the business of statecraft for Mexico and the United States," repeatedly grafted onto racialized bodies as a tool for dispossession and violence.⁵² When Roberto Hernández writes that "Indian-hating on the frontier is passed through a recurrent colonial

⁴⁹ Brown, 46.

⁵⁰ Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given*, 17.

⁵¹ Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given*, 18; María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo "Persistent Geography of the Indio Bárbaro," accessed November 21, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEsm1L13KjY>.

⁵² Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given*, 235.

logic onto its heir in the form of Mexican-hating on the border,”⁵³ he is making a similar claim, not of the equivalence between colonial violence of the past and present, but of the ways in which colonial violences manifest across time and space. It is important to note, then, that the figure of the “*indio bárbaro*” is not tied to the racialized indigenous body, nor does it refer to any specific historical actor. Rather, viewed as a tool of statecraft, it is deployed across time and space in the service of imperial expansion, racial violence, and exploitation of indigenous and marginalized people.⁵⁴ Thus, it was through a “recurrent colonial logic,” visible through the reliance on the figure of the “*indio bárbaro*,” that in the summer of 1915 radical anarchism, foreign “other,” and Mexican racial identity were conflated and affixed to all people of color in South Texas, regardless of their politics or nationality.⁵⁵ To fully understand the context from which the Plan of San Diego emerged, it is first important to explore briefly the local political, social, and economic landscape of the area from which the Plan developed, and which was most directly impacted by the raids that ensued.

TECHNOLOGICAL UPHEAVAL: THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF SOUTHERN TEXAS, CIRCA 1900

The Plan of San Diego was ostensibly written in the small South Texas town of San Diego, which is located about 100 miles north of the current border and 100 miles south of San Antonio. Thus, an examination of the context of southern Texas is important to an examination of the plan itself. James Sandos, Plan of San Diego historian, has characterized the social environment of South Texas pre-1900 as relatively harmonious. His argument is that this period of relative harmony contrasts with the post-1900 boom in agriculture, Anglo and Mexican immigration, and increased racial animosity by pointing to the ways in which industrialization of farming and transportation destroyed the previously established social fabric of the Rio Grande Valley. “Harmony,” however, should raise red flags, as it is often imagined and desired by those in power as a way to maintain power without “rebellious” or “disruptive” contestation.

⁵³ Roberto Hernández, *Coloniality of the U.S./Mexico Border: Power, Violence, and the Decolonial Imperative* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2018), 30.

⁵⁴ Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given*, 235.

⁵⁵ Gómez-Quiñones, “Plan de San Diego Reviewed,” 125.

Sandos' point in his characterization of South Texas pre-1900 as harmonious is unclear. He seems to accept *ipso facto* that the harmony of South Texas was positive, held together through racial intermarriage and "the Roman Catholic and Hispanic convention of *compadrazago*, the fictive kinship of godparents,"⁵⁶ that led an integrated, and presumably peaceful, social fabric.

In reality, the social fabric was anything but peaceful. Since the incorporation of Texas into the United States with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexicans and Mexican-Americans faced considerable threat of racist violence. As William Carrigan and Clive Webb have documented, "between 1848 and 1879 Mexicans were lynched at a rate of 473 per 100,000 of population" – over ten times the rate of African American lynchings in the South.⁵⁷ Statistics alone cannot even begin to account for the terror and violence afflicted by lynch mobs, and simple statistical comparatives do violence to the reality of racism and racial violence at every level of American life. Much of this racist violence can be traced to the role of the Texas Rangers. Rangers were essentially organized vigilante lynch mobs, who had state backing, but were often looked down upon by the Army for their violent and indiscriminate attacks – a reality that will be explored further in the subsequent pages. The point stands, however, that people of Mexican ancestry in the Southwest faced significant threats to their life. As opposed to Sandos' assertion that racial violence worsened after the turn of the century, Carrigan and Webb point to the increase of Mexican migration to the region beginning in the 1880s as an explanation for the *decline* in the instances of racist lynchings. Solidarity in community, it can be imagined, is the reason for such a decline. Sandos' characterization of an integrated and peaceful social fabric, then, must be read critically.

Geography and development played a central role in the racial dynamics of South Texas. Defined as "xeric" by geographers, the South Texas landscape lacks moisture and has high rates of evaporation. Because of this, agriculture is virtually impossible without sufficient irrigation, which meant that ranching was the primary method of land

⁵⁶ Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, 64, 71.

⁵⁷ William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, "The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin or Descent in the United States, 1848 to 1928," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 2 (2003): 414.

use throughout the nineteenth century.⁵⁸ It was primarily Anglo cattle ranchers who gained economic power, while Mexican workers “generally [sic.] served as laborers, cowboys, assistant lawmen, and occasionally as stockmen.”⁵⁹ Thus even as the numerical equality in racial groups and the practices of *compadrazago* purportedly led to a harmonious social fabric, in these skewed labor dynamics it is clear that it would take far more than intermarrying to build a truly equitable community. Nonetheless, the contrast that Sandos draws between pre-1900 and post-1900 southern Texas is valuable when we look at the technological changes that occurred around the turn of the century. In 1904, two major technological developments collided: the arrival of the railroad and crop irrigation, which worsened the already-precarious racial disparities and tensions of the pre-1900 era.⁶⁰ The first European irrigation system was brought to the valley in 1876. These early irrigation systems were built along the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo⁶¹ and used pumps and lifts to gather and distribute water. Due to regular flooding, though, these pumps were destroyed often and were rarely successful. 1904, however, marked the arrival of the railroad to the Rio Grande Valley, suddenly making investments in irrigation more profitable. The risks themselves were no less, but the potential markets for delivering agricultural goods that opened up with the arrival of the railroad quickly overrode fears of flooding, which in turn skyrocketed land values.⁶² The railroad also meant a massive influx of Anglos from the East coast looking for cheap and potentially profitable land, while there was an equal influx from the south around the same time of Mexicans who had been displaced by the revolution.⁶³ Railroad expansion complemented developments in irrigation technology, making each more profitable than either would be alone. The ways in which these two technological developments mapped across the South Texas landscape had profound effects on the

⁵⁸ Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, 63.

⁵⁹ Sandos, 64.

⁶⁰ Sandos, 64–65.

⁶¹ These two names refer to the same river. Rio Bravo was the (original) Mexican name of the river, while Rio Grande was the U.S. name. After the U.S. annexation of what is now the U.S. Southwest, Rio Grande became the official name of the river. Sandos, 63.

⁶² Sandos, 66.

⁶³ Sandos, 65–66, 71.

social, economic, and political lives of all who lived there and formed a central backdrop to the events that transpired eleven years later.

SOVEREIGN CONTRADICTIONS: MEXICAN ANARCHISM AND THE CRITIQUE OF LIBERALISM

By 1910, Mexico had suffered from in a thirty-one year reign of dictator Porfirio Diaz. In that year, following Diaz's multiple calls for the democratization of Mexico, Francisco Madero announced his candidacy for president. Madero was the son of wealthy landowners, and a liberal reformer who drew on the legacy of liberal reformism of the 1850s and 1860s and the 1857 Constitution. He was promptly arrested, and Diaz declared himself the duly elected president. In response, Madero called for a political revolt, which was ultimately a failure, but which kindled revolutionary hope throughout the country. In the subsequent months, the various disaffected factions of the nation coalesced under Madero to oust Diaz, which occurred in early 1911. Soon after Madero declared himself president, his military commander Victoriano Huerta seized power, and Madero was killed, presumably at the order of Huerta. Two other significant factions of the revolution – led by Venustiano Carranza and Pancho Villa – broke with Huerta over the assassination of Madero. Carranza, who would become the president of México in 1917, opposed Porfirio Diaz, but only sought mild political reform. Villa, along with Emiliano Zapata, both advocated complete social and political reform and land distribution.⁶⁴

While Ricardo Flores Magón began as a liberal reformer and close friend of Madero, by the time the revolution began, he had broken with liberal reform efforts and was advocating, along with his *Partido Liberal Mexicano* (Mexican Liberal Party, or PLM), a full-fledged anarchist revolution.⁶⁵ Through the revolutionary publication, *Regeneración*, Flores Magón and the PLM launched an assault on what Flores Magón referred to as the “three-headed hydra”: capitalism, the

⁶⁴ This is a quite brief sketch of the emergence of the Mexican Revolution. For more information on the Mexican Revolution see Ward S. Albro, *Always a Rebel*; Samuel Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*; Sandos, “The Plan of San Diego,” 6.

⁶⁵ Gómez-Quiñones, 6, 27.

state, and the clergy.⁶⁶ These three ills critiqued by Flores Magón coalesce under a more benign-faced – though equally insidious – system: liberal sovereignty. At the root of liberal sovereignty is the state formation, its relationship to privately owned land (through capitalism), and the theological element that ascribes power to private property and state sovereignty. The emergence of this sacred element of property is explained by Jost Trier when he writes, “The enclosure gave birth to the shrine by removing it from the ordinary, placing it under its own laws, and entrusting it to the divine.”⁶⁷ When Flores Magón wrote in the “Manifesto to the Workers of the World,” in 1911, that the PLM is for all those who “do not recognize the ‘sacred rights of private property,’”⁶⁸ he made a similar claim to the theological character prescribed to land enclosure, as well as a direct contestation of it.⁶⁹

In critiquing the “three-headed hydra” of liberal sovereignty, the PLM platform is also speaking to the contradiction inherent to its political form. The fundamental contradiction of sovereignty lies in the discrepancy between the assumption of liberal democracy that sovereignty is held by the people and for the people on the one hand, and the classical features of sovereignty – “power that is not only foundational and unimpeachable, but enduring and invisible, magisterial and awe-inducing, decisive and suprallegal” – on the other. Rule by the *demos* as it is posited in liberal democratic thought is irreconcilable with rule by the sovereign state; hence the distinction made by Locke between legislative power (popular sovereignty) and prerogative power (state sovereignty).⁷⁰ This contradiction leads Wendy Brown to conclude that “the ‘rule of the people’ becomes at best a discontinuous, episodic, and subordinate *practice*, rather than

⁶⁶ Magón, *Dreams of Freedom*, 18.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Brown, *Walled States*, 43.

⁶⁸ Magón, *Dreams of Freedom*, 135.

⁶⁹ The critique of private property lies at the foundation of anarchist thought. Much of Flores Magón’s thought relied on the theoretical contributions to the anarchist field made by one of the movements founders, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Proudhon posited the question – *What is Property?* – in his 1840 publication, which would become the central question not just of the anarchist movement, but of all those movements concerned with land redistribution and land justice. Proudhon’s answer, with which Flores Magón certainly agreed, cut to the root of the entire colonial and capitalist project: “Property is theft.” Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, 23.

⁷⁰ Brown, *Walled States*, 49–50.

an actual sovereign power.”⁷¹ To address tension, Liberalism seeks to split the autonomy of the people from the sovereignty of the state, but in so doing exposes the “rule of the people” as a hoax.⁷²

While Liberalism splits the “legislative power” and “prerogative power” in an attempt to hold both (but in reality exposing its fundamental incoherence), the anarchist critique of Liberalism also splits these two theories of sovereign power, but towards different ends. Whether by Liberalism or anarchism, the split between popular sovereignty and state sovereignty shows the contradictions of liberal democracy, but while Liberalism evades this contradiction, anarchism embraces it. In his critique of the state, Flores Magón and the PLM, with the Plan of San Diego following suit, reject state sovereignty and seek to realize a true popular sovereignty. As Juan Gomez-Quiñones writes, “[Flores Magón] stressed that sovereignty resided in the people, and that there was nothing above it.”⁷³ As opposed to traditional anarchist thought, which centered sovereignty of the person over sovereignty of the state, the PLM approach centered sovereignty of the people: it embraced the collectivity of the *demos* while simultaneously rejecting individualist anarchism and Liberal collectivism.⁷⁴ This anarchist collectivism was especially clear in the fight for land. Whereas the reform elements of the Mexican Revolution advocated land reform, and radical elements of the Revolution advocated a state-sponsored land redistribution program, Flores Magón called on the oppressed classes to take land for themselves: “There must be EXPROPRIATION. The well-being of all – the ends; expropriation – the means.”⁷⁵ Here Flores Magón rejects the balancing act of legislative and prerogative power, which would persist as a problematic even in radical land redistribution programs, precisely because of the role the state would play in such a program. Instead, Flores Magón calls on the people to seize what is rightfully theirs, and, in this move, invokes a central distinction between Liberalism and anarchism: the need for a true *demos*.

⁷¹ Brown, 51.

⁷² Brown, 53.

⁷³ Gómez-Quiñones, *Sembradores*, 5.

⁷⁴ Gómez-Quiñones, 13.

⁷⁵ Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, 58. Flores Magón’s words echo exactly the sentiment that was originally expressed by Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin in his book, *The Conquest of Bread*.

Flores Magón's anarchist articulation was a threat to the sovereignty of both the United States and Mexico, as both were premised on the contradictory liberal sovereignty outlined above. Both Venustiano Carranza (the leader of the Constitutionalist Army of the Mexican Revolution, which was eventually triumphant) and U.S. President Woodrow Wilson recognized this threat and had mutual fears that the PLM and *Regeneración* would sully the relationship between them. Despite their tense relationship (elaborated further below), prominent anarchists Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman decried Wilson as a lackey of Carranza, just as Flores Magón asserted that Carranza was merely a "lackey of Wilson and the bandits of Wall Street."⁷⁶ These calls came in response to a crack-down on radical anarchist activity on both sides of the border, and illuminate the threat posed by the anarchist exposition of the incoherence of liberal sovereignty felt by both sovereign nations.

"EVERY NORTH AMERICAN SHALL BE PUT TO DEATH": THE OPPOSITIONAL LOGICS OF THE PLAN OF SAN DIEGO

Drawing on the momentum of the Mexican Revolution, the Plan of San Diego sought to seize land that was deemed stolen on two counts: from Mexico by the United States, and from Mexicans and Mexican-Americans by Anglos. The Plan made a direct reference to the 1846-1848 Mexican American War, as it sought to take back land that had been taken from Mexico "in a most perfidious manner by North American imperialism."⁷⁷ Built into this claim was a reference to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which mediated the passage of Mexican land to the United States. The Treaty proposed a universalized liberal citizenship in which whitened (mestizo), "civilized," property-owning Mexican men were placed on the same level as Anglo-American men, all at the expense of the exclusion of indigenous people, but also at the expense of Afro-Mexicans or other Mexican's who were too dark to acquiesce into the exclusionary Anglo racial logic.⁷⁸ While the Plan spoke directly to the U.S. annexation of Northern Mexico, it also spoke to the failure of the United States to live up to the promises made in articles 8 and 9 of the Treaty, and as such,

⁷⁶ Magón, *Dreams of Freedom*, 92, 95.

⁷⁷ Gómez-Quifiones, "Plan de San Diego Reviewed," 129.

⁷⁸ Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given*, 137.

shaped a racial vision in direct opposition to that proposed by the Treaty. As opposed to the Treaty, which purportedly accepts as American all those Mexicans who “shall not preserve the character of citizens of the Mexican Republic,” the Plan accepts as its adherents all those who buy into the Plan. Entry into the U.S nation in the case of the Treaty, and entry into the to-be-formed republic in the case of the Plan of San Diego, are both determined based on allegiance to a certain “character,” orientation, and set of values. On the flip side, the exceptions of the Treaty are indigenous and darker-skinned people, while the exceptions of the Plan are Anglos – “Every North America over sixteen years of age shall be put to death” – as well as anyone who does not support the Plan – “on no account shall the traitors to our race be spared or accepted.” In both the Treaty and the Plan, acceptance is determined in two regards: racially and ideologically. The Plan of San Diego, though, demands the inversion of race and ideology demanded by the Treaty. Thus, in addition to rejecting the liberal notion of sovereignty of the United States in exchange for a sovereignty of the *demos*, the Plan of San Diego also explicitly rejects the racial and ideological pretext of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in exchange for an interracial republic – but without white Anglos. In other words, while the Treaty excludes those who are too dark or those whose territorial practices contradict those of liberalism, the Plan excludes those who are too light or who align themselves with liberal values of the state and private property. While positioning itself in opposition to the racial logic of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the white supremacist liberal sovereignty of the United States, the Plan also emerged in the context of the material changes in the South Texas landscape.

ANGLO ANXIETY, MEXICAN CRIMINALITY; OR, HOW IT ALL WENT DOWN

On February 20, 1915, the day the uprising was originally set to begin, nothing of the sort had occurred as of yet. Instead, on that day, the Revolutionary Congress (of the Plan of San Diego, who was vested with command of military operations) revised the Plan to more tactically and ideologically specific ends. Now the Plan would begin in Texas and spread outwards. The anarchist leanings of the Plan became quite explicit in this revised copy, calling for complete “SOCIAL REVOLUTION,” the return of cultivated lands to the

“proletarians,” complete communalism of property and tools, and a negation of distinct nations.⁷⁹ The federal government of the United States had yet to take the plan seriously, and even as an original signatory of the Plan, Basilio Ramos, was indicted for conspiring to steal five U.S. states, the judge proclaimed that he “ought to be tried for lunacy, not conspiracy against the United States.”⁸⁰

In mid-March, Texas Governor James Ferguson petitioned President Woodrow Wilson for \$30,000 to add thirty more men to the state ranger force in the face of what he described as an “almost reign of terror.” Major General of the Southern Department of the Army, Frederick Funston, thought this request absurd and claimed that Ferguson wanted the federal Army to solve what he saw as simply a Texas problem. President Wilson stated that the requested funds were not available, but agreed to change federal policy so that after March 5, the Southern Department would view raiding groups “as belligerents entering American territory for unlawful acts,” and directed Funston to work with Ferguson to allocate resources accordingly.⁸¹ This decision by Wilson would have profound consequences: now any raiders who attacked Anglo property would be charged with not just a violation against (the “sacred” rights of) private property, but would be cast as a foreign operative violating American sovereignty.

On July 4, 1915, the first widely accepted (in consequent scholarship, not by officials at the time) Plan of San Diego-related incident occurred. On that day, a band of forty Mexican raiders crossed the Rio Grande into Texas, killed two Anglo men on a ranch near Lyford, and continued to travel throughout South Texas for two weeks, killing another eighteen-year-old Anglo boy en route, and all the while evading capture.⁸² Throughout July and into early August, raids became an almost daily occurrence, targeting ranches, county stores, and railroad bridges, taking firearms, and killing Anglos.⁸³ The federal government had yet to associate these raids with the revolutionary Plan of San Diego. On August 7, 1915, Luis De la Rosa, the First Chief of military operations of the Plan of San Diego, led a

⁷⁹ Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, 83.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Sandos, 85.

⁸¹ Sandos, 86.

⁸² Sandos, 87; Cumberland, “Border Raids,” 291.

⁸³ Cumberland, “Border Raids,” 291–92.

group of forty armed rebels in an attack on the King Ranch, which was “one of the oldest symbols of Anglo power in South Texas.” While described as a “raid” in the press and consequent scholarship, these revolutionaries did not understand it as such. This attack was an act of war to reclaim land that was stolen from Mexico.⁸⁴ Following this raid, a posse of Texas Rangers gathered the bodies of the raiders that had been killed, tied their legs to saddles of the Rangers’ horses, and dragged them through the brush. They stopped at one point and captured a picture. This picture was then printed onto thousands of postcards and sent into northern Mexico “as a warning to future raiders.” Unsurprisingly, this provoked outrage rather than the desired fear.⁸⁵

In the aftermath of this raid, on August 10, the 12th Cavalry patrol captured a number of documents and banners in a skirmish with raiders that indicated Mexico as the source of the raid, and an allegiance of the raiders to the Plan of San Diego.⁸⁶ This led General Funston to conclude that General Emiliano Nafarrate, commander of the Carranza forces at Matamoros, Mexico, was behind the raids, and that any further violence between U.S. Army forces and raiders could lead the U.S. and Mexico to war.⁸⁷ Regardless of Carranza’s actual relation to the raids, the position taken by Funston put Carranza in an advantageous position. Woodrow Wilson had opted for a policy of impartiality towards competing factions of the Mexican Revolution, but the more disrupting raids became to the United States, the more power Carranza had in his claim that without legitimate reign over Mexico, there was little he could do to stop them.⁸⁸

Raids continued over the next two months, but the treatment of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in South Texas was inspired much more by Anglo anxiety and racism than by actual actions by people of Mexican descent. This anxiety arose primarily from the threat Anglo Americans felt to their way of life. If the technological developments of the railroad and crop irrigation in South Texas, and their social and economic consequences, were seen by Anglos as progress – as we can assume they were – the emergence of the raids associated with the

⁸⁴ Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, 89–90.

⁸⁵ Sandos, 91.

⁸⁶ Sandos, 91-92; Cumberland, “Border Raids,” 294.

⁸⁷ Cumberland, 294–95.

⁸⁸ Cumberland, 297–98.

Plan of San Diego in 1915 demonstrates both the weaknesses of that very same progress, and the fear of its demise. It was no accident that raids deliberately targeted the two central developments that transformed the South Texas landscape: ranches and railroads. These raids instilled a profound geographic anxiety in the hearts of minds of Anglo residents of the borderlands – one heavily inflected by race, gender, economy, and technology. It was not change itself that Anglos feared – indeed they were the ones who had spurred the initial massive disruptions in the social fabric of the area – rather it was the internalization of notions of safety, prosperity, sovereignty, and a sense of ‘Americanness’ that struck such a deep chord in the hearts of the Anglo populace. This fear was rooted in the direct and violent rejection of liberal sovereignty, private property, and white supremacy – three central tenets of “American” identity. In other words, Anglo anxiety was in response to the threat against the very forces that created Anglo-American subjectivity. It was not just property that was at stake, but an entire way of living in and interacting with the world.

In the summer months of 1915, this Anglo anxiety contributed to the grafting together of Mexican identity, radical activity, and the imagined foreign enemy in the minds of the Anglo populace.⁸⁹ As General Funston demanded ever more troops from the War Department, he referenced the threats posed by “a general uprising of the Latin population or on an invasion from Mexico,” implicitly conflating these two threats as one in the same as far as law enforcement was concerned.⁹⁰ From the civilian perspective, any man of “Latin” appearance was assumed to be a spy or raider, regardless of their actual political affiliation. As early as July, two Mexican horsemen were shot and killed by an Anglo rancher on the baseless presumption that they were raiders,⁹¹ and “despite the opinion of many observers that no more than ten percent of the Mexican and Tejano population had committed a disloyal act,” unsubstantiated racist violence continued.⁹² In this context, people of Mexican descent were not simply stereotyped for criminal activity, but were *criminalized*. As Lisa Marie Cacho explains, “to be stereotyped as a

⁸⁹ Gómez-Quiñones, “Plan de San Diego Reviewed,” 125.

⁹⁰ Cumberland, “Border Raids,” 296.

⁹¹ Cumberland, 300.

⁹² Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, 98.

criminal is to be misrecognized as someone who committed a crime, but to be criminalized is to be prevented from being law-abiding.”⁹³ An initial read of this situation points towards the stereotyping of Mexicans in South Texas: they were targeted by Rangers and Anglo civilians due to a misrecognition of their intentions. Referring back to the racial logic of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexicans in the annexed territories (including Texas) were racialized as white and thus had legal recourse to violence inflicted upon them. Cacho understands the difference between criminalized and stereotyped populations as whether or not eventual inclusion into the law is possible, and according to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexicans were indeed included in American law precisely because of their whiteness, relationship to property, and citizenship. For example, despite the fact that the Plan of San Diego accused “white skinned savages” of segregating train cars and excluding Mexicans, Mexican and Tejano citizens admitted to first-class cars – a remnant of the Treaty’s racial inclusion of Mexican men. Those excluded were Black men and all women.⁹⁴ However, the reality of their criminalization (as opposed to stereotyping) becomes apparent in the indeterminate presence of the “*indio bárbaro*,” ever-present in Mexican’s racial embodiment.⁹⁵ According to the Treaty, the “savage tribes” of the annexed territory were concretely cast outside of both nations due to their spatial practices. While in Mexico, *mestizo* men would be read as

⁹³ Cacho makes a crucial distinction between these two terms that are often used interchangeably: stereotyping and criminalization. The distinction between stereotyping and criminalization is made apparent through Cacho’s discussion of “recognition.” Cacho posits that to be stereotyped is to be *mis*recognized as someone who has broken a law. Stereotypes are degrading, then, not because race is devalued, but “because they link race to other categories of devaluation, just as race is redeemed when linked to other properties of personhood universalized as socially valuable, such as heteronormativity or U.S. citizenship.” Thus, the injury done to someone who is stereotyped is fundamentally an injury related to misrecognition because it ensures the outrage of those who are misrecognized as *being* (not behaving like) a criminal. While stereotyping is a misrecognition, Cacho draws on cultural studies scholar Sara Ahmed to argue that criminalization requires a transparent *recognition* on behalf of the seer. Criminalization requires not an *inability* to see certain people as eligible for personhood, but a *refusal* to see them as such, as well as a refusal “to recognize the material histories, social relations, and structural conditions that criminalize populations of color and the impoverished places where they live.” Cacho, *Social Death*, 3-9.

⁹⁴ Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, 101, 104.

⁹⁵ Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given*, 155.

legible citizens due to the “inclusive” racial logic of the Mexican nation, but in the United States, the exclusive racial logic of whiteness rendered Mexicans as “too Indian,” as “not white enough,” thus conflating Mexican identity with the “savage tribes,” constitutive to, yet excluded from, United States sovereignty and citizenship.

Such an exclusion is made apparent in the practice and history of the Texas Rangers. Sandos writes that “Ranger appeal to Americans lay in their mythic reputation for frontier defense and settler protection against marauding Indians and Mexicans.”⁹⁶ The “recurrent colonial logic,” posited above by Roberto Hernández, by which Indian-hating on the frontier is metamorphosed into Mexican-hating on the border, crystallizes in the dual “protection” offered by the Texas Rangers: “protection” from both “Indians” and Mexicans.⁹⁷ In South Texas, Rangers referred to Mexicans as “undesirables,” “surplus populations,” and “better dead than alive.” As one Anglo put it, “Whenever they [Rangers] arrest one of the greasers, they rarely disarm him, and allow him every opportunity to get away. I asked one the reason for this once and he replied, “They might try to start something if we leave their arms on them, and a dead Mexican is always a lot less trouble than a live one. We would have to kill ‘em in self defense.””⁹⁸ Mexicans are not only stripped of their humanity, but in the articulations by Rangers, the racist violence against them is implicitly made to parallel similar violence against “marauding Indians.” Through Ranger violence, the figure of the “*indio bárbaro*” was deployed as a tool of statecraft through the criminalization of Mexicans, who were cast “beyond the pale” of the nation, and whose being and bodies (as opposed to their behavior) were deemed as legitimate targets of legal and extralegal violence.⁹⁹

Despite all the anxiety already felt by the Anglo populace, and the racist violence engendered by such anxiety, it was not until mid-October that the terror of Anglos and Mexicans in the Rio Grande Valley peaked. On the night of October 18, 1915, Luis de la Rosa and a

⁹⁶ Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, 86. Roberto Hernández has an almost identical quote, referring to “the history and legacy of antagonism and violence since 1848 by “marauding Indians” and “Mexican bandits” on the one hand, and Texas Rangers, the Border Patrol, and other vigilant-like formations on the other.” Roberto Hernández, 49.

⁹⁷ Roberto Hernández, *Coloniality of the U-S/Mexico Border*, 30.

⁹⁸ Quoted in Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, 91–92.

⁹⁹ Lisa Marie Cacho, *Social Death*, 6.

group of sixty followers mounted yet another concerted attack on a symbol of Anglo-initiated change in South Texas. The group vandalized railroad tracks eight miles north of Brownsville, Texas, and when the train hit that portion of the tracks, it was immediately derailed. The raiders boarded the train, killed two men, wounded three, and took the valuable possessions of all Anglo-American passengers.¹⁰⁰ In the morning following the raid, a posse of local law enforcement and Texas Rangers rounded up seven Mexican and Tejano men for questioning. None of them had been present at the raid. After interrogation, however, Captain H.L. Ransom of the Ranger force claimed four of the men as his prisoners, took them into the desert, and proceeded to shoot them to death – “leaving the bodies where they fell.”¹⁰¹ With no attention paid to the extra-judicial murder of innocent men, General Funston sent an immediate request to the War Department. He requested “twenty bloodhounds and fifty Apache Indians¹⁰² trained in scout work to assist the patrols in pursuing the fleeing raiders. He realized, he said, that the request would ‘doubtless startle [the] War Department,’ but he insisted that the prejudice against the use of bloodhounds was ill-founded and that the only way to stop the raids would be to make it almost certain death to be involved in such depredations.” Funston also requested that he be

¹⁰⁰ Cumberland, “Border Raids,” 303–4; Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, 101–3.

¹⁰¹ Sandos, 103–4.

¹⁰² The history of Apache scouts in the U.S. Army dates from roughly 1871 to 1947. Apache scouts were used by the U.S. military in a number of campaigns, especially in the Apache Wars, the Navajo War, the Yavapai War, and other expeditions where knowledge of the territory and tracking practices were deemed necessary. While Funston’s request was denied in this case (which is elaborated below), Funston did oversee a regiment of Apache scouts just months later in the Pershing expedition to capture Pancho Villa. For more information about Apache scouts in the U.S. military, see Jennifer L. Jenkins, “Framing Race in the Arizona Borderlands: The Western Ways Apache Scouts and Sells Indian Rodeo Films,” *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists* 14, no. 2 (2014): 68–95; Michael L. Tate, “From Scout to Doughboy: The National Debate over Integrating American Indians into the Military, 1891–1918,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (1986): 417–37; Michael L. Tate, “‘Pershing’s Pets’: Apache Scouts in the Mexican Punitive Expedition of 1916,” *New Mexico Historical Review; Albuquerque, Etc.* 66, no. 1 (January 1, 1991): 49–71; Paul Joseph Barbone, “We Were Recruited From the Warriors of Many Famous Nations,” *Cultural Preservation: U.S. Army Western Apache Scouts, 1871–1947*, PhD diss., University of Arizona, 2010. accessed November 25, 2019.

authorized to order “no quarter” for the enemy (meaning no mercy for the life of the enemy) – a practice already in use by local vigilante forces such as the Texas Rangers (exemplified in Captain Ransom’s execution of innocent Mexican men) that Funston had previously roundly rejected.¹⁰³ The War Department was not just startled; it was appalled. They feared that sending bloodhounds, Apache scouts, and authorizing “no quarter” would jeopardize the prestige of the Army and make them appear “barbaric.” Not unlike the British colonizers who desired the allure of “just practice” in their acquisition of indigenous lands, here the Army sought a prestigious, civilized, and “just” image even as they actively participated in violence against innocent Mexicans. Rather than viewing practices of “no quarter” as somehow distinct from federal policy, Funston’s request, and Captain Ransom’s extra-judicial execution, illuminate that such practices, in fact, go hand in hand. Civilian vigilantism, in this light, can be seen as a structurally embedded form of border violence, aiding in the protection and stabilization of national borders in a way that works in tandem with “prestigious” federal military practices.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, while refusing Funston’s request, The War Department agreed to send yet another regiment to Texas, at which point virtually every active-duty troop was stationed on the border.¹⁰⁵

Immediately following the raid, Wilson recognized Carranza as the *de facto* leader of Mexico.¹⁰⁶ In the wake of this decision, a community meeting was called by prominent Anglo men in the valley, and a petition was sent to Wilson pleading that he press Carranza to police the Mexican side of the border. If he refused or failed, then “U.S. troops should be permitted to cross into Mexico after marauders.”¹⁰⁷ Further proposals followed, the most consequential being the request for martial law in the area. Referring back to the discussion on liberal sovereignty, martial law entails the usurpation of “prerogative power” (state sovereignty) over “legislative power” (popular sovereignty). Wendy Brown writes, “a state of exception – the declaring of ‘martial law’ – is precisely the suspension of law in time and space. It eliminates the boundary between inside and outside,

¹⁰³ Cumberland, “Border Raids,” 304.

¹⁰⁴ Hernández, *Coloniality of the U-S/Mexico Border*, 28.

¹⁰⁵ Cumberland, “Border Raids,” 305.

¹⁰⁶ Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, 107.

¹⁰⁷ Sandos, 108.

permitting the indifference to the law that is normally reserved for the outside to come inside.”¹⁰⁸ The fact that Anglos of the Rio Grande Valley requested martial law illuminates two interrelated realities: the first is that white citizens felt such an extreme sense of anxiety that they were willing to forego their political rights and liberties in exchange for a sense of security; and second, it shows that Anglos recognized the racialized nature of liberal sovereignty and martial law. They knew that while their liberties may be partially hampered, they would be the benefactors of such a suspension. When the law “normally reserved for the outside” was allowed to “come inside,” it would target those racialized populations from which white citizens sought protection. This is due to the fact that whiteness is not simply a racial trait, but an ideological signifier: “whiteness-as-ideology... signifies an endorsement of the tenets of liberalism and capitalism.”¹⁰⁹ In other words, even if the state were to suspend the political liberties of all citizens in the Rio Grande Valley, white citizens would automatically be read as possessing social value precisely because of their relationship to the state and to property, and would be spared in the violence justified by the law once it “came inside.”

As martial law makes the distinction between “outside” and “inside,” the violence against Mexicans in South Texas was justified not through the sweeping suspension of rights and liberties of a geographic area entailed by martial law, but through a racial maneuver that mapped Mexicans “outside” the racial composite of the nation. This is made apparent in a statement issued by Judge Sam Spears of San Benito, Texas:

All things considered, these rangers and officers have proceeded with commendable discrimination. Much more has been said in the press and otherwise, about killing innocent Mexicans, than is justified by the facts as I have them... In my judgement it is better by far to have made this kind of mistake than to have one of our own [Anglo] people killed... Every fair-minded man, when brought face to face with a condition where the criminal element is so powerful that the laws of the land cannot be enforced through the courts, must admit that mob violence is necessary to the saving of our civilization.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Brown, *Walled States*, 46.

¹⁰⁹ Joanna Swanger, “Cacho Commentary 2019,” Email to author. November 15, 2019, 5.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, 109.

The value of life is positioned comparatively by Judge Spears, where the murder of innocent Mexican's is deemed acceptable if it prevents the loss of Anglo life. In other words, the value of Anglo life is only legible in this instance in the devaluation of the lives of Mexicans.¹¹¹ Even without martial law, the legal boundary between outside and inside is suspended, and violence "reserved for the outside" is allowed to "come inside." In this case, rather than a suspension of legislative power, law is suspended through racially mapping Mexican's outside of legal protection, "beyond the pale." As elaborated earlier, what is "beyond the pale" "is where civilization ends, but it is also where the brutishness of the civilized is therefore permitted, where violence may be freely and legitimately exercised."¹¹² Just as pale of the nation was constructed around the figure of "savage tribes" through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Judge Spears constructed the pale here around the Plan of San Diego adherents, whom he referred to as "criminal elements." In his articulation, the racial line between Anglos and Mexicans is both where civilization ends – those "criminal elements" that are "so powerful" that they threaten the demise of "our civilization" – and also where the brutishness of the civilized is permitted – as Rangers are applauded for their "commendable discrimination" in the "killing of innocent Mexicans." Furthermore, in this case vigilantism is not only a constitutive piece of border violence, as posited earlier, but a constitutive piece of liberal sovereignty and Western civilization, for it is only through "mob violence" that "our civilization" can be saved.

South of the border, in a show of good faith after being recognized as the legitimate leader of Mexico, Carranza replaced General Nafarrate – who commanded the Matamoros district, just south of Texas and whose forces had actively participated in raids – with General Eugenio López.¹¹³ Despite cracking down considerably on raiders who were harbored in northern Mexico, López, was later replaced by yet another general after referring to the raiders as "*revolucionarios Texanos*" ["Texan revolutionaries"].¹¹⁴ General Alfredo Ricaut, who "had a reputation of friendliness with the United

¹¹¹ Cacho, *Social Death*, 15.

¹¹² Brown, *Walled States*, 45–46.

¹¹³ Cumberland, "Border Raids," 302–3.

¹¹⁴ Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, 121.

States,” took his place, at which points the raids virtually ended.¹¹⁵ Regardless of Carranza’s actual connection to the raids, the fact that they stopped as soon as he was officially recognized shows that he had at least some power over them, or at least had the power to stop them with military violence on the Mexican side of the border. Even as the Plan of San Diego raids brought the two countries to the brink of war, each sovereign power had a vested interest in bringing the raids to an end. Carranza, while exploiting the raids to his benefit, was certainly wary of what a true anarchist uprising would mean for his quest for power. Just a month earlier, Carranza had called on the U.S. to help rid himself of his anarchist critics, namely Flores Magón and the PLM, whom Carranza misrecognized of the Mexican branch of the anarcho-syndicalist International Workers of the World (I.W.W.).¹¹⁶

The anarchist uprising in the borderlands within which the Plan of San Diego was situated ultimately threatened the sovereignty of both nations. Not unlike the “*indio bárbaro*” seventy years prior, the spatial practices and racial makeup proposed by the Plan of San Diego undermined the liberal sovereignty of the United States and Mexico, and were responded to by casting the Plan adherents firmly outside of each nation. Prior to his recognition as the *de facto* leader of Mexico, Plan of San Diego adherents had active support in the Carrancista press.¹¹⁷ Following his recognition, however, representations of Plan adherents in the Carrancista press shifted from “*revolucionarios*” [“revolutionaries”] to “*bandoleros*” [“bandits”].¹¹⁸ In this move, Carranza refuted any prior alliances with Plan adherents and designated them as bandits, deserving of violence from the Mexican military now under his control.

By the time the raids had come to an end, the economy and population of the Rio Grande Valley had been decimated.¹¹⁹ More than half of the original valley population had fled due to fear of violence, and the economy was in ruins.¹²⁰ While the raids killed eleven soldiers and six civilians, according to official numbers, the total death toll inflicted upon Mexican and Tejano valley residents was far greater.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ Cumberland, “Border Raids,” 307-8.

¹¹⁶ Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, 125–26.

¹¹⁷ Harris and Sadler, “The Plan of San Diego,” 388–89.

¹¹⁸ Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, 123.

¹¹⁹ Gómez-Quiñones, “Plan de San Diego Reviewed,” 126–27.

¹²⁰ Cumberland, “Border Raids,” 302.

¹²¹ Harris and Sadler, “The Plan of San Deigo,” 390.

The estimates begin at 102, but by the summer of 1916, General Funston reported that state and local officials “did execute by hanging or shooting approximately three hundred suspected Mexicans on [the] American side of [the] river.”¹²² Over the next twenty years, rows of skeletons with bullet holes through the head continued to be found throughout the valley.¹²³

VISIONING AN UNTHINKABLE POLITICS

Less than ten months after its birth, the Plan of San Diego was more or less crushed by federal authorities on both sides of the border. In an attempt to understand this ultimate failure, as well as the decline of the anarchist movement surrounding the Plan, historians – many of which have been cited throughout this paper – have offered critiques of both the anarchist movement surrounding the Plan of San Diego and the Plan of San Diego itself. Such critiques have centered on the lack of a coherent on the part of Plan and the anarchist program of the PLM. Juan Gómez-Quiñones has argued that the flaws of anarchism are a result of its idealistic tendencies – harkening back to a supposedly utopian past to critique the ills of the present – writing, “Anarchism’s failure is objective and clear; it is theoretically poor and tactically bankrupt” due in part to its “inability to maintain stable organizations and coordinate sustained actions.”¹²⁴ James Sandos has repeatedly pointed to the tedious balance played by Flores Magón between peaceful reform and violent revolution, anarchism and socialism, concluding that he relied on tactics of “deceit” and “deception” to gain and retain followers.¹²⁵ In regards to the Plan of San Diego, Sandos has argued that its goal of forming a republic is antithetical to anarchist, concluding that its February 20

¹²² Harris and Sadler, 392.

¹²³ Harris and Sadler, 391.

¹²⁴ Gómez-Quiñones, *Sembradores*, 12-13. Gómez-Quiñones offers the caveat that the anarchism of the PLM proved more successful than other articulations of anarchism precisely because of its emphasis on collectivity over individuality and its incorporation of rural *campesinos* in its revolutionary platform, as opposed to European and Eastern U.S. anarchist thought that focused on the urban proletariat.

¹²⁵ Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, 22, 30, 45. Sandos discussion continues, however, to argue that despite tactics of deceit and deception, a tumultuous political climate, and being sent to prison, Flores Magón persisted in his fight and vision, and emerged as a prophet with the rise of the Plan of San Diego.

revision “lacked the coherent focus of a single mind and single philosophy behind it.”¹²⁶

Despite these critiques, which speak to the practical failure of anarchism, the PLM, and the Plan of San Diego, both Gómez-Quiñones and Sandos recognize (at least in passing) the visionary potential that these political formations offer. Gómez-Quiñones points to the power of Flores Magón’s writings, arguing that Flores Magón was artistic and humanistic until the end, and praising his emphasis on creativity over violence. Gómez-Quiñones concludes that “the primary task [of Flores Magón and the PLM] was to prepare, to seed, to educate.”¹²⁷ Even as Sandos critiques the incoherent vision of the Plan of San Diego, he argues that its mixed messages allowed it to be legible to all regardless of their opinions of anarchism, and that it was indeed these mixed messages that allowed it to embrace not only Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, but also African Americans, indigenous people, and Asians in both the United States and Mexico.¹²⁸ This thesis is aligned with the praise of visionary thought offered by Sandos and Gómez-Quiñones. While both of these authors critique the incoherent vision of the PLM and the Plan of San Diego, I propose that this “incoherent vision” is precisely what allows the PLM and the Plan of San Diego to resist what Lisa Marie Cacho has called the “lure of legibility.”¹²⁹ Regardless of

¹²⁶ Sandos, 84.

¹²⁷ Gómez-Quiñones, *Sembradores*, 8, 63, 70-71.

¹²⁸ Interestingly, despite the central role that interracial solidarity played in the vision of the Plan, this facet is quite underexplored in existing scholarship. Most scholarship on the Plan acknowledges its interracial vision, but only James Sandos directly analyzes the fact that names of purported raiders included those who were likely Japanese, with no mention of the role that Black or indigenous people played. The most straightforward explanation for the vision of interracial solidarity offered by the Plan is in its opposition to the exclusionary racial logic of the United States. In positioning itself oppositionally to the exclusionary characteristic of both whiteness and property, there is space for an inclusive interracial counter-articulation to emerge. In the quest for social value, marginalized communities are often recruited into rights-based politics that demand the denigration of other more-marginalized groups to obtain small amounts of privileges in the eyes of the U.S. legal system and white public. In its inclusionary racial logic premised on solidarity, the Plan of San Diego not only proposes a contestation to whiteness and property, but also provides a space for organizing across racial lines that refuses rights-based politics that seek inclusion into the status quo. Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands*, 84, 106; Cacho, *Social Death*.

¹²⁹ Cacho, *Social Death*, 31. The phrase “lure of legibility” is drawn from Grace Kyungwon Hong, who writes that “the allure of legibility is undeniably difficult to

whether or not the authors of the Plan sought to refuse legibility – and indeed historical accounts of the Plan show that refusing legibility was not the expressed intent of the plan – the reality of its lack of a unified vision and its ultimate impracticality point towards a stance that refuses both legibility and practicality. Such a decision to stage a fight against all practical odds aligns with what Derrick Bell has termed “racial realism.” Racial realism is understood by Cacho as “a form of unthinkable politics because it proposes that we begin battles we’ve already lost, that we acknowledge and accept that everything we do may not ever result in social change.”¹³⁰ The question arises: did adherents to the Plan of San Diego believe their goal was possible? There must have been an inkling of hope that it was not only possible but practical enough to risk one’s life for. But regardless of whether they thought it possible and practical, adherents to the Plan were engaged in a project of racial realism, precisely because they made the choice to join the struggle against insurmountable odds. The “failure” of the Plan of San Diego, then, must be viewed through a lens that takes seriously not only what was destroyed, but what was produced. The vision of the Plan of San Diego offered a contestation to liberal sovereignty, white supremacy, and capitalism, but also proposed an idea for what an alternative world could look like. In hindsight, this vision looks impossible, but the mere act of visioning itself, I believe, is the most powerful and radical act undertaken by the Plan of San Diego, and offers us a glimpse into what is required to transform our reality into one in which all can not only survive, but truly live.

resist. Indeed, imagining a politics based on the refusal of social value is an impossible, unthinkable option, one, in truth, outside of any available notion of the political.”

¹³⁰ Cacho, 32.

APPENDIX A: TRANSLATION COPY OF THE PLAN OF SAN DIEGO FROM GÓMEZ-QUINONES, "PLAN OF SAN DIEGO REVIEWED," 128-131

*Translation
Copy*

Provisional Directorate of the Plan of San Diego, Texas.

PLAN OF SAN DIEGO, TEXAS, STATE OF TEXAS
JANUARY 6th, 1915.

We who in turn sign our names, assembled in the REVOLUTIONARY PLOT OF SAN DIEGO, TEXAS, solemnly promise each other, on our word of honor, that we will fulfill, and cause to be fulfilled and complied with, all the clauses and provisions stipulated in this document, and execute the orders and the wishes emanating from the PROVISIONAL DIRECTORATE of this movement, and recognize as military Chief of the same, Mr. Augustin S. Garza, guaranteeing with our lives the faithful accomplishment of what is here agreed upon.

1. On the 20th day of February 1915, at two o'clock in the morning, we will arise in arms against the Government and country of the United States of North America, ONE AS ALL AND ALL AS ONE, proclaiming the liberty of the individuals of the black race and its independence of Yankee tyranny which has held us in iniquitous slavery since remote times; and at the same time and in the same manner we will proclaim the independence and segregation of the States bordering upon the Mexican Nation, which are: TEXAS, NEW MEXICO, ARIZONA, COLORADO, AND UPPER CALIFORNIA, OF WHICH States the Republic of MEXICO was

robbed in a most perfidious manner by North American imperialism.

2. In order to render the foregoing clause effective, the necessary army corps will be formed, under the immediate command of military leaders named by the SUPREME REVOLUTIONARY CONGRESS OF SAN DIEGO, TEXAS, which shall have full power to designate a SUPREME CHIEF, who shall be at the head of said army. The banner which shall guide us in this enterprise shall be red, with a white diagonal fringe, and bearing the following inscription: "EQUALITY AND INDEPENDENCE" and none of the subordinate leaders or subalterns shall use any other flag (except only the white flag for signals). The aforesaid army shall be known by the name of: "LIBERATING ARMY FOR RACES AND PEOPLES."

3. Each one of the chiefs shall do his utmost by whatever means possible to get possession of the arms and funds of the cities which he has beforehand been designated to capture, in order that our cause may be provided with resources to continue to fight with proper success. The said leaders each being required to render account of everything to his superiors, in order that the latter may dispose of it in the proper manner.

4. The leader who may take a city must immediately name and appoint municipal authorities, in order that they may preserve order and assist in every way possible the revolutionary movement. In case the Capital of any State which we are endeavoring to liberate be captured, there will be named in the same manner superior municipal authorities, for the same purpose.

5. It is strictly forbidden to hold prisoners, either special prisoners (civilians) or soldiers; and the only time that should be spent in dealing with them is that which is absolutely necessary to demand funds (loans) of them; and whether these demands be successful or not, they shall be shot immediately without any pretext.

6. Every stranger who shall be found armed and who cannot prove his right to carry arms, shall be summarily executed, regardless of his race or nationality.

7. Every North American over sixteen years of age shall be put to death; and only the aged men, the women, and the children shall be respected; and on no account shall the traitors to our race be spared or respected.

8. THE APACHES of Arizona, as well as the INDIANS (RED SKINS) of the Territory, shall be given every guarantee; and their lands which have been taken from them shall be returned to them to the end that they may assist us in the cause which we defend.

9. All appointments and grades in our army which are exercised by subordinate officers (subalterns) shall be examined (recognized) by the superior officers. There shall likewise be recognized the grades of leaders of other complots which may not be connected with this, and who may wish to cooperate with us; also those who may affiliate with us later.

10. The movement having gathered force, and once having possessed ourselves of the States above alluded to, we shall proclaim them an INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC, later requesting (if it be thought expedient) annexation to MEXICO, without concerning ourselves at that time about the form of Government which may control the destinies of the common mother country.

11. When we shall have obtained independence for the negroes, we shall grant them a banner, which they themselves be permitted to select, and we shall aid them in obtaining six States of the American Union, which States border upon those already mentioned, and they may form from these six States a Republic that they may, therefore, be independent.

12. None of the leaders shall have power to make terms with the enemy, without first communicating with the superior officers of the army, bearing in mind that this is a war without quarter; nor shall any leader enroll in his ranks any stranger, unless said stranger belong to the Latin, the negro or the Japanese race.

13. It is understood that none of the members of this COMLOT (or any one who may come in later), shall, upon the definite triumph of the cause which we defend, fail to recognize their superiors, nor shall they aid others who, with bastard designs, may endeavor to destroy what has been accomplished by such great work.

14. As soon as possible, each local society (junta) shall nominate delegates who shall meet at a time and place beforehand designated, for the purpose of nominating a PERMANENT DIRECTORATE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT. At this meeting shall be determined and worked out in detail the powers and duties of the PERMANENT DIRECTORATE, and this REVOLUTIONARY PLAN may be revised or amended.

15. It is understood among those who may follow this movement that we will carry as a singing voice the independence of the negroes, placing obligations upon both races; and that, on no account will we accept aid, either moral or pecuniary, from the Government of Mexico, and it need not consider itself under any obligations in this, our movement.

"EQUALITY AND INDEPENDENCE"

San Diego, Texas, Jan. 6, 1915.

President,

Signed, L. Farrigno.

Signed, Augustin S. Garza, Com.

Signed, Manuel Flores

Signed, B. Ramos, Jr.

Secretary,

Signed, A. Gonzales, Lawyer

Signed, A. A. Saenz,

Saloon Keeper

Signed, E. Cisneros

Signed, A. C. Alamraz.

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