INTERNAL COLONIALISM
An American Theory of Race

Ramón A. Gutiérrez
Ethnic Studies Department, University of California, San Diego

Abstract

This essay explores the historical genealogy of Internal Colonialism as an American theory of race from approximately 1950 to the early 1990s. Internal Colonialism as an idea originated in Latin America as part of a larger Marxist critique of development ideologies and was specifically elaborated by dependency theorists to explain the racial effects of poverty and isolation on indigenous communities. Black and Chicano radicals fascinated by the Cuban Revolution learned about the theory by reading Ernesto "Che" Guevara, by participating in the Venceremos Brigades harvesting Cuban sugar cane, and by the larger diffusion of Latin American dependency theory in the United States. Black nationalists and Chicano radicals embraced, transformed, and further elaborated on the idea of Internal Colonialism to explain their own subordinate status in the United States, which was the product of forced enslavement and military occupation. As a colonized population in the United States, Blacks and Chicanos suffered the effects of racism, were dominated by outsiders, much as colonial subjects in the Third World, and had seen their indigenous values and ways of life destroyed. As a theory that explained the effects of racism, it had its greatest popularity during the radicalization of the Civil Rights Movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s when nationalism and separatist ideas were in vogue. By the 1980s the theory had been abandoned in favor of more accommodationist politics and ideas.

Keywords: Race, Chicanos/as, Blacks, Dependency, Latin America

Since the late eighteenth century when thinkers first began elaborating complex theories about the nature, organization, and functions of society, those theories have been largely the products of European facts or inspired by European presence or observations in other parts of the globe. Theories of European immigrant assimilation in the United States are an excellent example of this pattern. Marxism, psychoanalysis, structuralism, postmodernism, to name but a few theories, all were products of experiences and thought generated in Europe, and only after the fact inflected by the particularities of life in other places. As far as I can ascertain, only three exceptions to this pattern exist. Internal colonialism, a theory of racial domination and

subordination elaborated by African American and Chicano[1] activists in the United States during the mid-1960s and 1970s, Liberation Theology, which hailed from Latin America in the 1980s (Gutiérrez 1984), and much more recently Subaltern Studies theorized by Indian scholars (Chaturvedi 2000).

The goal of this essay is to provide an historical genealogy for the theory of internal colonialism that Blacks and Chicanos first articulated in the United States, exploring its origins in Latin American theories of dependency and underdevelopment, and finally its extension, diffusion, and transformation among African Americans and Chicanos.

The belief that there were "domestic" or "internal" forms of colonialism operant within nation-states was a idea that initially emerged among Latin American development economists eager to understand the unequal terms of trade between the Third World and the First, and between dominant and subordinate groups in these societies. Racial minorities in the United States found these theoretical formulations particularly compelling and quickly adapted them to their own particular needs. Internal colonialism offered minorities an explanation for their territorial concentration, spatial segregation, external administration, the disparity between their legal citizenship and *de facto* second-class standing, their brutalization by the police, and the toxic effects of racism in their lives.

Internal colonialism represented a radical break in thinking about race in the United States after the Second World War. Far from seeking an understanding of racism in psychic structures, in an irrational fear of the "Other," or in the putative course of race relations cycles, Blacks and Chicanos reasoned that their oppression was not only personal, but structural, not only individual, but institutional. Racism was deeply historical, rooted in the legacies of conquest and colonialism, and in personal and systemic effects of poverty, segregation, and White skin privilege.

In the early 1960s, motivated primarily by their poverty, by their exploitation as laborers, by their low levels of educational achievement, by their occupational and residential segregation, and by their constant police harassment, a massive grassroots movement emerged in the United States among minorities that questioned the country's rhetoric of democracy and equality. Organized first in the American South by African Americans fighting racism and segregation, a convergence of interests and forces coalesced into what is now broadly referred to as the Civil Rights Movement. Gradually the movement spread to other regions of the country, to other groups with similar grievances, drawing liberal and religious allies along the way, demanding equal access to better education, to fair housing and employment, and to full membership as citizens of the United States.

In the early 1960s the movement's protest was peaceful, appealing to the country's conscience through sit-ins and boycotts, through prayers, pilgrimages, and marches, through freedom rides and voter registration drives, simultaneously litigating in the courts, and offering non-violent resistance even to death. Faced with massive civil unrest, with a worldwide audience daily observing and judging the harsh realities of American equality, the state responded legislatively to quell protest. In January 1964 the Congress ratified the Twenty-fourth Amendment to the Constitution, outlawing those arbitrary poll taxes that historically had kept Blacks from voting in the South. Later that year the Civil Rights Act was passed and signed into law on July 2 by President Lyndon B. Johnson, guaranteeing citizens protection against discrimination in voting, education, and the use of public facilities. On August 6, 1965, President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act, banning poll taxes, literacy tests, and all restrictions that might impede citizens from exercising their right to vote in federal elections.

Despite this legislation and the government's rapid infusion of funds into anti-poverty program, into labor force training, and housing development, "optimism gave way to pessimism and even cynicism," explain historians John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr. (1988, p. 458). Violence erupted particularly in cities. Some of it was undoubtedly provoked by White anger at the pace of desegregation and legal reform; much of it was born of minority misery and hopelessness. And thus while the ink was still wet on the newly signed Civil Rights Act, rioting erupted in Harlem. The following summer, five days after the Voting Rights act was signed into law, Watts, a minority neighborhood in Los Angeles, California, went up in flames, making it then the most destructive riot the nation had ever seen.

While Black Civil Rights activists were chalking up legislative victories in Washington, D.C., on the streets of Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago, the realities of minority life were as bleak and hopeless as they had been at the beginning of the decade. For many of the young, for those who expected a faster pace of change, the non-violent integrationist politics of Martin Luther King Jr. and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) offered more symbolic than material hope. The appeal of nationalism and separatism first articulated by men such as Malcolm X before his 1965 death increasingly sank deep roots into African American communities. The celebration of Blackness accelerated through such things as the creation of distinctive music, dress, looks, and events, through the rejection of the word *Negro* and the claiming of Black and African American identities instead, and through the generation of ideas that promised economic and political liberation.

For some African American radicals the slogan that quickly came to symbolize these racial separatist aspirations and nationalist dreams was "Black Power." Voiced first by Stokley Carmichael, then chairman of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the summer of 1966, Black Power crystallized the complex grievances that were fueling Black resentment toward Whites. Replacing the slogan of "Freedom Now," which Martin Luther King Jr. and the SCLC had long espoused, King confronted Carmichael explaining that "the words 'black' and 'power' together give the impression that we are talking about black domination rather than black equality" (King 1968, p. 31). King preferred "Black equality" or "Black consciousness" to Black Power, and correctly predicted that the slogan would unleash a torrent of White prejudice that up to that point most Whites had been too timid to express openly. Echoing the question James Baldwin had asked earlier in the decade, Black Power advocates repeatedly wondered, "Do I really want to be integrated into a burning house?" (1964, p. 127). For Baldwin the liberation of Blacks required "the most radical and far-reaching changes in the American political and social structure" (p. 115). This was the course Black Nationalists indeed felt obligated to chart.

The tide of African American radicalism in the form of Black Power proved impossible to contain, particularly as the war in Vietnam intensified in late 1966 and minorities were disproportionately among those drafted and increasingly among the war dead. Ironically, just as Martin Luther King was himself radicalized by the war in Vietnam, moving from earlier integrationist goals to broader issues of economic justice for all, the Civil Rights coalition fractured. At one end were integrationists who favored slow legislative change through coalitions with liberal Whites and other minorities. At the other end were the separatist and cultural nationalists, determined to go it alone as members of an oppressed race, celebrating Blackness, and seeking solidarity elsewhere, particularly with the revolutionary Third World.

The theory of internal colonialism was born during this search for radical Black solutions to urban poverty and hopelessness. Colonial domination, in whatever its guise, required a nationalist movement for liberation. Internal colonialism became

the model that was quickly heralded as holding the most potential for the liberation of minorities in the United States.

Internal colonialism as a theory grew out of the brutal urban conditions minorities faced in the United States. Seeking a theory of historical development that better explained their circumstances and offered tangible political strategies on which to act, radicals were clearly influenced by the militant Third Worldism then rampant on college campuses. Talk of revolution, colonialism, and imperialism were constant themes of debate. Given the iconic importance of the Chinese Revolution at the time, activist Blacks and Chicanos naturally sought inspiration in the writing of Mao Tse Tung. "We read Mao," explains sociologist Tomás Almaguer, "the writings of Frantz Fanon on the Algerian Revolution and Ernesto 'Che' Guevara on the Cuba Revolution; we read about American imperialism and about anti-colonial liberation struggles around the globe" (Almaguer 2003). Indeed in October 1966 when Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale announced the formation of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland, California, they posed for pictures prominently displaying their rifles in honor of Mao's motto that "power flows from the barrel of a gun" (Van Deburg 1992).

By studying national liberation struggles Blacks and Chicanos began to imagine themselves as oppressed nations that soon would be liberated through overt revolutionary struggle as part of the larger worldwide decolonization movements. Urban ghettos and Chicano *barrios* had the structure of domestic colonies, they asserted. They were isolated and segregated. Racism daily constrained the lives of residents in these domestic colonies. Like the wretched of the earth elsewhere, the residents of these domestic colonies had few opportunities or means to improve their material conditions. They wanted independence. And thus at the Black Power Conference of 1967 held in Newark, New Jersey, participants called for the "partitioning of the United States into two separate independent nations, one to be a homeland for whites and the other to be a homeland for black Americans" (Franklin and Moss, 1988, p. 459). Chicanos in 1969 likewise began speaking of the return of Aztlán, the land of their putative ethno-genesis.

THE LATIN AMERICAN ORIGINS OF INTERNAL COLONIALISM

The existence of "domestic" or "internal" forms of colonialism was not a new idea. Latin American development economists had first postulated it in the 1950s as a corollary to the larger body of thought known as dependency theory. Though many names are historically associated with Latin American dependency theory, André Gunder Frank, then a professor of economics at the National University of Mexico in Mexico City, was critical to its elaboration and diffusion. His novel postulating the "development of underdevelopment" became dogma (Frank 1969, 1972). Though Frank's writings were far from original and were largely derivative, he did manage to crystallize into a number of theorems what dependency meant historically and how the theory could be tested empirically. Parenthetically, in the African context, and almost simultaneously, similar theoretical advances were made. Walter Rodney wrote *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972), drawing largely on the works of African scholars such as Samir Amin.

To Latin American dependency theorists the central question of economic life was: Why, in the prosperity of the post-World War II era had Latin American, Asian, and African economies not experienced sustained development and growth? The success of the Chinese and Cuban revolutions, and the rise of nationalist movements

in the colonial world brought into serious question the Cold War evolutionary theory of economic development.

The Latin American developmental wisdom of the day, preached by men such as Raúl Prebisch, the chief economist of the United Nations' Economic Council on Latin America, was that industrialization and prosperity would be achieved in Latin America through economic nationalism (Prebisch 1950). By restricting the level of foreign imports, practicing import substitution, and supporting nascent national industries, states eventually would experience economic growth. In fact, Latin American prosperity historically had been greatest in periods of isolation, such as during the Great Depression, when the region had had to depend on its own resources to survive.

By the 1960s it had become clear to many Latin American economists that development strategies based solely on import substitution had not and could not succeed. Economic underdevelopment had a distinct and particular morphology. National markets were too small to support the establishment of intermediate and heavy industry. Income distribution was too skewed to promote large-scale national consumption markets. And land concentration was too profound to spur the consumption of manufactured goods by the rural masses.

André Gunder Frank saw these inequalities not as temporary blockages in the developmental trajectory toward industrial capitalism, but as permanent and systemic barriers. Historically, Latin American economies had been systematically plundered to fuel the industrialization of the metropolitan core economies. Frank coined the phrase "the development of underdevelopment" to explain how this relationship of colonial exploitation had progressed. So long as Latin American nations participated in the capitalist world's division of labor, this legacy would not be erased easily. It would be changed only when Latin Americans "destroy the capitalist class structure through revolution and replace it with socialist development," Frank opined (1972, p. 19).

In advancing his theorems on the morphology of Latin American dependency, André Gunder Frank took his sharpest aim at American economist Walt W. Rostow who in his book, *The Stages of Economic Growth* (1960), maintained that all economies moved through evolutionary stages toward industrialization. What one found in Latin America, argued Rostow, was a pristine *un*developed stage that in time would eventually "take-off" in step like fashion with a trajectory toward levels of industrialization and prosperity experienced by Europe and the United States.

Frank retorted that while Europe and Latin America may have begun as *un*developed, Europe had never been systematically *under*developed. Beginning with the colonial enterprise in 1492, European metropolitan countries had systematically plundered Latin America human and natural resources to fuel their own economic growth, using it as an outlet for their surplus production, and thereby fostering Latin America's underdevelopment. The caricature of Latin America as a dualistic society, composed of a modern export-oriented sector tied to the outside capitalist world and a backward, "isolated, subsistence-based, feudal, or precapitalist" sector, was simply wrong (Frank 1969, p. 4). Rather, the capitalist system from its very start had penetrated into the remotest areas of the continent leaving no person untouched and transforming isolated areas and populations into internal colonies.

Latin America's underdevelopment was an historic product of its satellite relationship to the metropolitan economies of Europe and the United States. The areas of greatest underdevelopment and feudal-like institutions were precisely those regions that once had been tied to export booms in raw materials. The areas of most sustained autonomous development were those that had been isolated preceding

their incorporation into the world capitalist system as satellites. Latin America's most substantive growth had occurred when ties to the world economy were weakest—the Depression of the seventeenth century, the Napoleonic Wars, the First World War, the Depression of the 1930's, and the Second World War. When the metropolitan economies recovered and reestablished ties to their satellites, these ties immediately choked off what autonomous growth had transpired (Frank 1969, pp. 1–27).

Forms of "domestic" or "internal" colonialism that existed within states emerged as concepts in the dependency literature primarily as a way to critique the then dominant view that Latin American economies were dualistic, composed of modern and backward sectors. Instead, the theorists asserted, internal colonies composed the mass of Latin America's poor population providing wealth to the metropolises. These internal colonies had a "racial dimension of being dominated . . . as well as an economic one; and more clearly lack social mobility (because of racism and their economic role as cheap labor)" (Frank 1972, p. xix).

Mexican sociologist, Pablo González Casanova, appears to have been the first dependency theorist to use the term *internal colonialism* (1963). He used it to describe the racialized economic dimension of relations between the dominant Mexican *mestizo* (mixed race) class and subordinated Indians. Several years later, in 1965, this analysis was deepened by the Mexican anthropologist Rodolfo Stavenhagen, who depicted race relations between Ladinos and the Maya Indians of Chiapas and northern Guatemala as a case of *internal colonialism*. Indians here had lost their lands, been forced to work for outsiders, been coerced into a monetary economy, and had been politically dominated by Ladinos (1970, p. 271). Such relationships were a "function of the structural development-underdevelopment dichotomy" and would persist for the Indians as heightened racism, rigid social stratification, cultural isolation, and their use as cheap, disposable labor (1970, p. 277).

Julio Cotler, a Peruvian political economist, offered a very similar reading of race relations between Ladinos and Indians in Peru in 1968. What economists had often described as a dualistic economy was more accurately internal colonialism, Cotler wrote. Internal colonialism better explained the isolation, marginality, and backwardness of indigenous areas and groups. Structural constraints, very similar to those through which the metropolitan states had systematically underdeveloped Latin America, operated within nation-states in relations between national populations in dominant industrial centers and the isolated, largely rural, Indian communities. The discrimination Indians suffered was due not only to cultural differences, but had a long-standing economic and structural foundation in the very ways that they had been incorporated into the international capitalist order.

U.S. GHETTOS AS DOMESTIC COLONIES

That race relations between Blacks and Whites in the United States could also be characterized as "domestic colonialism" was first proposed by African American scholar Harold Cruse in 1962. Writing in a newly established academic journal, *Studies on the Left*, Cruse argued that "the Negro is the American problem of underdevelopment" created by the condition of domestic colonialism in which they lived. Like the poor in underdeveloped countries, the lives of American Blacks were characterized by "hunger, illiteracy, disease, ties to the land, urban and semi-urban slums, cultural starvation, and the psychological reactions to being ruled over by others not of his kind"(Cruse 1968, pp. 74, 76). Celebrating the Cuban Revolution as a fundamental challenge to Western Marxist theory, Cruse maintained that what Blacks

needed in the United States was a revolutionary nationalist movement to extend anti-colonial victories from the Third World to the First.

The colonial metaphor was used repeatedly, but only in passing and quite superficially, to describe the condition of American Blacks in the years that followed. The book *Youth in the Ghetto* (1964) argued that the socio-political and economic structure of Harlem was that of a colony. John Lindsay, the Mayor of New York City, did not mention internal colonialism explicitly when he described Harlem, but he nevertheless seems to have accepted the fundamental premises of the nascent theory when, in 1966, he surmised: "Harlem has many of the features of underdeveloped countries. The basic similarity between Harlem and an underdeveloped nation is that the local population does not control the area's economy, and therefore most of the internally generated income is rapidly drained out. That money is not returned or applied to any local community improvement" (*New York Times*, 27, March 1966). Writing several months later in the *New York Review of Books*, I. F. Stone concurred "in an age of decolonization, it may be fruitful to regard the problem of the American Negro as a unique case of colonialism, an instance of internal imperialism, an underdeveloped people in our very midst" (August 18, 1966, p. 10). By 1968 even presidential candidate Eugene McCarthy began routinely referring to American Blacks as colonized people in his campaign speeches (Blauner 2001, p. 65).

The fullest elaboration of internal colonialism as refracted through the African American experience appeared in Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton's 1967 book, *Black Power*. Offering a "framework" for Black political, economic, and psychological empowerment in the United States, they began their searing critique of "white power" by differentiating between individual and institutional racism, locating the foundation of the latter in colonialism, and concluding that only by imagining Black Power as a global liberation movement of the colonized would American Blacks become active agents in forging their own freedom (p. xi).

Conceding that the colonial analogy was not perfect, Carmichael and Hamilton nevertheless maintained that it well enough described the way colonizers enriched themselves while furthering the "economic dependency of the 'colonized'." Reciting the ways Black ghetto residents were denied mortgages and loans yet paid more for the items they bought in White-owned stores, they explained how "exploiters come into the ghetto from outside, bleed it dry, and leave it economically dependent on the larger society" (p. 17).

Blacks had to develop a sense of community to fight White racism. They had to question the values and institutions of society and gain economic change through their own political engagement and empowerment (p. 39). The ghetto's "colonial patterns" would only be shattered when Blacks took community control over their schools and made them accountable, organized tenants unions, demanded that merchants create reinvestment programs in the form of jobs and scholarships, and created independent political parties attune to their own needs. This was what was necessary "to achieve dignity, to achieve their share of power, indeed, to become their own men and women . . ." (p. 185).

In the years that followed, a host of Black scholars embraced internal colonialism as a model of analysis and as a theory of political practice.

CHICANOS AS A COLONIZED MINORITY

The Chicano quest for a theory that explained their own oppression in the U.S. Southwest, part and parcel of larger structures of colonial domination, first dates to

1964. That summer Luis Valdez and Roberto Rubalcava, two students active in the establishment of Mexican American Studies at San José State College in California, traveled to Cuba as members of the first Venceremos Brigade (Huerta 1982, pp. 13–14). Eager to demonstrate their solidarity with Latin America's poor and with the Cuban Revolution, young Americans gave up their vacations to harvest sugar cane in Cuba that summer. On their arrival on the island, Valdez and Rubalcava read a statement entitled "Venceremos!: Mexican-American Statement on Travel to Cuba," in which they decried the condition of Mexican Americans in the United States and concluded that these were born of colonialism.

> The Mexican in the United States has been . . . no less a victim of American imperialism than his impoverished brothers in Latin America. Tell him of misery, feudalism, exploitation, illiteracy, starvation wages, and he will tell you that you speak of Texas; tell him of unemployment, the policy of repression against workers, discrimination . . . oppression by the oligarchies, and he will tell you that you speak of California . . . (Valdez and Rubalcava 1972, pp. 215–216).

Valdez and Rubalcava's analysis clearly tied Mexican American marginality in the United States to the hemisphere's colonial legacy. As colonial subjects, they believed that Mexican Americans would only be emancipated through a nationalist, anti-colonial revolt.

This was a theme, repeated over and over again, that resonated particularly among college students. Addressing students at the University of Colorado in 1967, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, one of the more radical Chicano nationalists, called them to social revolution. "[R]ealize that the Southwest is very much like one of the colonies that have been colonized by England, by some of the European countries and those places that are economically colonized or militarily taken over by the United States. We have the same economic problems of those underdeveloped countries, and we suffer from the same type of exploitation and political strangulation. And because of this, you have a new cry for militancy . . ." (Rosales 2000, p. 339).

Speaking to those gathered in Washington, D.C. for the Poor People's March in May 1968, Reies López Tijerina, leader of the New Mexican Alianza Federal de Mercedes, and Rodolfo Gonzales, of Denver's Crusade for Justice, again emphatically declared: "Robbed of our land, our people were driven to the migrant labor fields and the cities. Poverty and city living under the colonial system of the Anglo has castrated our people's culture, consciousness of our heritage, and language" (Gonzales 2001, p. 32). Invoking the American Constitution, they articulated a development plan that called for decent housing, free, community-controlled, and culturally relevant educational institutions, an end to police surveillance and violence, job training, and the restitution of lands fraudulently stolen by Anglos (Rosales 2000, pp. 306–307).

The analysis that Reies López Tijerina and Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales offered of the Mexican experience in the United States was quickly assimilated and echoed by students throughout the country. This outcome was virtually guaranteed by the fact Corky Gonzales, under the auspices of the Crusade for Justice, his Denver-based civil rights organization, convened the first National Chicano Liberation Youth Conference there between March 27 and March 31, 1969. Bringing together some 1,500 regionally diverse students who largely identified as Mexican Americans, the conference was absolutely catalytic in transforming the political identities of the attendees and making them into Chicanos. One of the final acts of the assembly was

the issuing of a manifesto called *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*. The Plan, drafted for the group by Luis Valdez, Juan Gómez-Quiñones, the poet Alurista, and Jorge González, gave substance to the political meaning of Chicano identity, declared a homeland, Aztlán, in need of liberation, issued a called to revolution, and set forth a set of demands of American society. "With our heart in our hands and our hands in the soil," *El Plan* announced, "we declare the independence of our *mestizo* nation. We are a bronze people with a bronze culture. Before the world, before all of North America, before all our brothers in the bronze continent, we are a nation, we are a union of free pueblos, we are Aztlán." Decrying the "gringo" invasion of their territories and the need to regain the natural riches stolen by outsiders, those gathered proclaimed, "Aztlán belongs to those who plant the seeds, water the fields, and gather the crops and not to the foreign Europeans." Aztlán as a physical and psychic space would only be reclaimed by driving exploiters "out of our community and a welding together of our people's combined resources to control their own production through cooperative effort." That effort included political, cultural, social, and economic activities, or the same set of demands articulated earlier by Tijerina and Gonzales at the 1968 Poor People's March (*El Plan de Espiritual de Aztlán* in Rosales 2000, pp. 361–363).

Later that year, in April of 1969, when faculty, students, and staff in California institutions of higher education met at the University of California, Santa Barbara, to discuss the educational needs of "Chicanos," they too reiterated their colonial status. Note the new ethnic terminology. No longer were they Mexican Americans; they were now Chicanos. In their manifesto, *El Plan de Santa Bárbara*, the conference attendees declared, Chicano *barrios* (ghettos) and *colonias* (neighborhoods) as "exploited, impoverished, and marginal . . . The result of this domestic colonialism is that the *barrios* and *colonias* are dependent communities with no institutional power base of their own" (*Plan de Santa Barbara* in Rosales 2000, pp. 191, 193).

The ideas articulated in the streets by activists and students soon enough began to receive formal academic analysis. Internal colonialism as an analytic model for understanding the past and then present condition of Chicanos was elaborated most extensively by Berkeley sociologist Robert Blauner and by his then graduate student, Tomás Almaguer. Blauner maintained that while the United States was never a "colonizer" in the nineteenth century European sense, it had nonetheless been economically developed through the conquest and seizure of indigenous lands, the enslavement of Africans, and the usurpation of Mexican territory through war. "Western colonialism," wrote Blauner, "brought into existence the present-day pattern of racial stratification; in the United States, as elsewhere, it was a colonial experience that generated the lineup of ethnic and racial divisions" (1972, pp. 51–81).

Blauner admitted that race relations and social change in the United States could not be explained entirely through internal colonialism because the country was a combination of colonial-racial and capitalist-class realities. Internal colonialism was a modern capitalist practice of oppression and exploitation of racial and ethnic minorities within the borders of the state characterized by relationships of domination, oppression, and exploitation. Such relationships were apparent as:

(1) forced entry—"The colonized group enters the dominant society through a forced, involuntary, process"
(2) cultural impact—"The colonizing power carries out a policy which constrains, transforms, or destroys indigenous values, orientations, and ways of life"

(3) external administration—"Colonization involves a relationship by which members of the colonized group tend to be administered by representatives of the dominant power. There is an experience of being managed and manipulated by outsiders in terms of ethnic status"—and,

(4) racism—"racism is a principle of social domination by which a group seen as inferior or different in terms of alleged biological characteristics is exploited, controlled, and oppressed socially and psychically by a superordinate group" (1972, pp. 51–81).

White skin racial privilege was at the heart of the colonial relationship, manifested as an "unfair advantage, a preferential situation or systemic 'head start' in the pursuit of social values, whether they be money, power, position, learning, or whatever," Blauner maintained. White people had historically advanced at the expense of Blacks, Chicanos, and other Third World peoples, particularly in the structure of dual labor markets and occupational hierarchies. Given these material facts, racism was far from a purely psychic phenomenon or a form of false consciousness; it was a structural and material reality that resulted in concrete benefits for Whites.

Sociologist Tomás Almaguer went on to give these ideas their fullest scholarly elaboration as applied to Chicanos in a series of essays that appeared between 1971 and 1975. Others in the academy followed on Almaguer's heels, offering emendations to his and Blauner's basic theoretical framework. Historian Rodolfo Acuña embraced the model in his sweeping survey of the Chicano experience entitled *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle toward Liberation* (1972). Herein he contended that the experiences of Chicanos were quite akin to patterns of exploitation common in the Third World. "The conquest of the [U.S.] Southwest created a colonial situation in the traditional sense—with the Mexican land and population being controlled by an imperialistic United States," Acuña argued. "Further, I contend that this colonization—with variations—is still with us today. Thus, I refer to the colony initially, in the traditional definition of the term, and later (taking into account the variations) as an internal colony" (1972, p. 3).

Embracing internal colonialism as the theory for empirical studies, Richard Griswold del Castillo's *The Los Angeles Barrio, 1850–1890: A Social History* (1979), and Albert Camarillo's *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848–1930* (1979) looked at the aftermath of U.S. military conquest of former Mexican territories and found the colonial analogy quite apt to describe the political marginalization of Mexicans and their segregation in *barrios* or ghettos. Ramón A. Gutiérrez described the mobilization and manipulation, the recruitment and repatriation of Mexican labor between 1880 and 1930, also as a case of internal colonialism (1976).

Right from the start, just as internal colonialism first gained vogue among Chicano scholars as a searing critique of social science theories that rationalized Chicano marginality as self-generated and rooted in cultural deficiencies, sociologist Joan Moore gently cautioned about its use. She understood well the model's appeal but wondered about its validity and rigor (1970). The Mexican-origin population of the Southwest was complexly stratified geographically, economically, and politically, she argued, such that the social order in New Mexico was a case of "classic colonialism," Texas "conflict colonialism," and California "economic colonialism." If internal colonialism as a political concept was to spur Chicanos to militant action it would have to elaborate an ideology capable of reducing such differences. Marveling at the *Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* issued by Chicano students that had gathered in Denver in 1969, she noted:

the ideology reaches out to a time before even Spanish colonialism to describe the Southwestern United States as "Aztlán"—an Aztec term. "Aztlán" is a generality so sweeping that it can include all Mexican Americans. That the young ideologues or the cultural nationalists (as they call themselves) should utilize the symbols of the first of these colonists, the Aztecs (along with Emiliano Zapata, the most Indian of Mexican revolutionaries from the past), is unquestionably of great symbolic significance to the participants themselves" (1970, p. 471).

Whether Chicano nationalists would ultimately succeed in elevating the symbols of despised lower-class Mexican Americans to popular use as "colonialist" Moore thought more unlikely.

INTERNAL COLONIALISM AND ITS POLITICAL LEGACY

Among Chicanos, internal colonialism was widely utilized by activists and intellectuals as an analytic tool to understand their structural location in American society from roughly 1965 to 1990. Why after nearly twenty-five years of use the theory fell into disrepute is more difficult to explain. One can easily offer a number of hypotheses, all of an internalist nature, the product of the Chicano Movement's implosion, and thus the eclipse of internal colonialism as its paradigmatic theory. Throughout this essay I have consciously referred to nationalist Mexican Americans as Chicanos. Today one cannot use this term without rebuke. The word *Chicanos/as* with the slash and addition of "as" is now obligatory in the Spanish language, marking a noun as feminine, and added largely as the result of the Chicana feminist critique of the Movement's elision of their issues and concerns. Chicanismo was a masculinist national project seeking the return of a homeland called Aztlán. This nation-building project was misogynist and exclusionary, particularly of women and sexual minorities. It was from these vantage points that critiques of Chicanismo emerged, moving away from structural explanation to personal history and experience as theory.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, four highly influential books appeared that broadened the gap between scholars and activists committed to nation building through the development of community grass-roots organizations and self-help institutions. Though this university/community dichotomy is undoubtedly too stark and deserving of more hues of gray, it nevertheless captures some of the tug of war that masculinist Chicano nationalism provoked. Starting with Richard Rodriguez's *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (1983), and followed by Cherríe Moraga's *Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios* (1983), Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), and Tomás Almaguer's *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (1994), these works asked a fundamental question about membership in the Chicano community. All of these authors were political subjects that had been largely excluded and branded as counter-revolutionaries because they were lesbian and gay.

In his autobiography Richard Rodriguez refused inclusion in the Chicano community, decried affirmative action and bilingual education, expressed his erotic desires for dark-skinned Mexican working class men, and wanted nothing more than to become Americanized. Born to Mexican American parents in California, he desired above all else a slice of the White American middle-class dream. Cherríe Moraga in her narrative ruminated on her mixed racial ancestry. A White Anglo father and a Mexican mother had given her a blond *güera* look, which racial purists deemed sufficient reason for exclusion, only compounded by the fact that she openly loved women. As Moraga wrote,

I am the daughter of a Chicana and anglo. I think most days I am an embarrass-
ment to both groups. I sometimes hate the white in me so viciously that I long to
forget the commitment my skin has imposed upon my life. To speak two tongues.
I must. But I will not double-talk and I refuse to let anybody's movement
determine for me what is safe and fair to say. Any movement built on the fear
and loathing of anyone is a failed movement. The Chicano movement is no
different (1983, pp. vi, 140).

Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) was undoubtedly the most
influential of these books challenging Chicano nationalism. Herein Anzaldúa exploded
simplistic notion of Chicano identity, claiming instead multiple identities as a Jewish,
lesbian, working-class *Tejana* who had grown up along the porous U.S.-Mexico
border speaking multiple dialects of Spanish. Indeed, she counted herself among
those living at the margins of society, those called *los atravesados*, "the squint-eyed,
the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed,
the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of
the 'normal'" (1987, p. 3). These individuals were the embodiment of the new
Chicana/Chicano Studies she and others would claim. They were individuals who
rejected patriarchal traditions and norms, recognized the hybridity of cultural forms,
and in their personal lives resisted the singularity of national boundaries.

Years after his own articles on internal colonialism had reached an almost canonic
status, Tomás Almaguer, now writing as an openly gay scholar, recanted much of
what he had written previously (1989). He explained that internal colonialism's
emergence among Chicano scholars had been an exaggerated overcompensation, but
necessary break from assimilation and Marxist class-based theories that viewed Mex-
icans as simply another European immigrant group that would eventually experience
upward mobility. Chicanos in the 1960s needed a theory that accounted for their
racial location in American society, for their experiences of racial oppression and
domination. Internal colonialism was an expedient fix. But the theory was wrong.
Mexicans in the United States were complexly stratified not only by race, but by
class, a point made more forcefully in *Racial Fault Lines* (1994) in which he showed
how in comparison to Asians and Blacks, Mexicans in nineteenth-century California
had enjoyed an intermediate racial status. Marked as they were by their Christianity,
by their European-origin language, and their European national descent, they were,
after all, really White. "The claim that Chicanos were victims of colonial systems
based on racial domination is also seriously open to question," Almaguer noted,
"given the racial status actually accorded Mexicans after United States annexation
and the modest advantages they held over other minority groups" (1989, p. 11).
There were simply too many historic disjunctures between the nineteenth- and early
twentieth-century experiences of Mexicans in the United States for "colonial" to be
a particularly usefully adjective.

Today there is considerable contestation among Chicano/a Studies scholars
about what precisely the Chicano Movement was, what its tangible results were, and
how its theoretical concerns live on. "Chicano Movement" is now deemed quite a
misnomer for several loosely allied grass-roots political organizations that per chance
occurred simultaneously as part of the 1960s worldwide egalitarian impulse to erad-
icate the most egregious forms of racial discrimination.

In the American Southwest four quite distinct organizations tried to better the
lives of their largely Mexican American members in different ways. Cesar Chavez,
the champion of agricultural workers, employed union-organizing strategies to win
wage contracts and better working conditions for his multi-ethnic members. In 1967

his United Farm Workers of America (UFW) succeeded in winning union contracts from many California growers, only to see those gains evaporate and never won anew in the face of government and grower opposition, conservative reaction, and hostility toward the UFW's goals from organized labor.

The firebrand evangelical Baptist minister Reies López Tijerina, likewise during the 1960s, led a very small and narrowly focused organization in northern New Mexico, the Alianza Federal de Mercedes. Their goal was to retain the lands fraudulently stolen from New Mexico's long-time Hispano residents after U.S. conquest in 1848. While Tijerina litigated and agitated against the federal government, petitioning the United Nations' assistance, and even "illegally" seizing federal lands, by the end of the 1960s Tijerina sat in a jail cell, his organization discredited, their members constantly surveilled by the government, and their poverty intensified (López Tijerina 2000).

Following an electoral strategy akin to that which Blacks had employed in Mississippi with the 1964 founding of the Freedom Party, so in Texas José Angel Gutiérrez launched La Raza Unida Party in 1970. Though the party was able through the ballot box to seize community control over the governance of Crystal City in south Texas, White capital flight quickly left the squabbling factions fighting over the morsels of poverty the Chicano and Chicana control of the city had wrought (García 1989; Gutiérrez 1998; Navarro 2000).

If any person or group can legitimately consider itself the heir to what is called the "Chicano Movement" it is undoubtedly Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, a former boxing champion whose bellicose in-your-face style rabidly challenged American racism. Through his Denver-based Crusade for Justice, he mobilized Chicano students to demand community control over their schools, to resist police harassment, to protest the war in Vietnam, and to assert autonomy through his self-help programs, manpower development, and consumer cooperatives (Vigil 1999; Gonzales 2001).

The utopian nationalist ideals embedded in the theory of internal colonialism—territorial autonomy, self-determination, community control, an end to racism—were advanced largely by the Mexican American students Corky Gonzales radicalized into Chicanos. Cries for community control morphed into student demands for university-based Chicano/a Studies programs, for curricular reform, for identity-based syllabi, for majors, minors, and all the rest. Community activists engaged in grass-roots politics were thereby eclipsed in import, replaced by literary nationalists convinced that the war of position was best waged in the university, textually, through literary resistance to White racial hegemony, rather than in the streets with sticks and stones.

For African Americans the dreams of internal colonialism ignited in the hearts of men resonated more like tin in the ears of women. "The only position for women in SNCC is prone," Stokley Carmichael announced in 1964, and though slightly less openly misogynist as a prophet of Black Power, the legacy of militant machismo lived on unrepentant (Brown 1992; Wallace 1990). Jail sentences, FBI surveillance, provocations, and assignations decimated the leaders of the Black Power movement and accordingly left their programs of economic development and political empowerment in ruins, much as had been the case with Chicanos/as. White backlash weakened the will of liberal politicians for further legislative change and with the election of Richard Nixon as president in 1968, the government's commitment to equality and access to housing, education, and work rapidly slackened and retrenched. Faced with racial hostility, what allies the Black Power movement had maintained moved on to mobilize against the war in Vietnam, and at the war's end, to comfortable middle-class suburban homes.

The tangible results of the Civil Rights Movement remain evident through heightened levels of political representation, patterns of voting participation, and economic upward mobility for some, swelling the ranks of the Black rich and middle

Ramón A. Gutiérrez

class, leaving behind a much larger permanent underclass that has continued to fall further and further behind. The theory of internal colonialism was elaborated in the United States for them. Whether it is Blacks in Harlem or Chicanos/as in East Los Angeles, the theory that promised to better their lives migrated elsewhere and the *barrios* and ghettos remained. Such, then, is the history of internal colonialism as theory and practice.

Corresponding author: Professor Ramon Gutiérrez, Department of Ethnic Studies, Social Sciences Bldg. Rm. 232, 9500 Gilman Drive, University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, CA 92093-0522. E-mail: rgutierrez@ucsd.edu

NOTE

1. It is currently common to use the term Chicano/a instead of simply Chicano to indicate that the word includes females too. As will become evident later in this essay, I retain Chicano here for historically specific reasons, namely that Chicano as a political identity was initially claimed largely by men.

REFERENCES

Acuña, Rodolfo (1972). *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle toward Liberation*. San Francisco: Canfield Press.

Almaguer, Tomás (1971). Toward the Study of Chicano Colonialism. *Aztlán*, 2: 7–21.

Almaguer, Tomás (1974). Historical Notes on Chicano Oppression: The Dialectics of Race and Class Domination in North America. *Aztlán*, 5: 27–56.

Almaguer, Tomás. (1975). Class, Race, and Chicano Oppression. *Socialist Revolution*, 25: 71–99.

Almaguer, Tomás (1989). Ideological Distortions in Recent Chicano Historiography. *Aztlán*, 18: 7–27.

Almaguer, Tomás (1994). *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Almaguer, Tomás (2003). Personal Interview, December 15.

Anzaldúa, Gloria (1987). *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Spinsters/ Aunt Lute.

Baldwin, James (1964). *The Fire Next Time*. New York: Dell.

Barrera, Mario (1979). *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality*. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press.

Barrera, Mario, Carlos Muñoz, and Carlos Ornelas (1972). The barrio as internal colony. *Urban Affairs Annual Reviews*, 6: 465–498.

Blauner, Robert (1969). Internal colonialism and ghetto revolt. *Social Problems*, 16: 393–408.

Blauner, Robert (1972). *Racial Oppression in America*. New York: Harper & Row.

Blauner, Robert (2001). *Still Big News: Racial Oppression in America*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Brown, Elaine (1992). *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Camarillo, Albert (1979). *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848–1930*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Carmichael, Stokely and Charles V. Hamilton (1967). *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*. New York: Vintage Books.

Chaturvedi, Vinayak (Ed.) (2000). *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*. London: Verso.

Clark, Kenneth (1965). *Dark Ghetto*. New York: Harper & Row.

Cotler, Julio (1968). Organizaciones Campesinas en el Peru. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.

Cotler, Julio (1970). The mechanics of internal domination and social change in Peru. In Irving Louis Horowitz (Ed.), *Masses in Latin America*, pp. 407–444. New York: Oxford University Press.

Cruse, Harold (1968). Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American. In *Rebellion or Revolution?*, pp. 73–91. New York: William Morrow & Co.

Frank, André Gunder (1966). The development of underdevelopment. *Monthly Review*, 18: 17–31.

Frank, André Gunder (1972). Economic dependence, class structure, and underdevelopment policy. In James D. Cockcroft, André Gunder Frank, and Dale L. Johnson (Eds.), *Dependence and Underdevelopment: Latin America's Political Economy*, pp. 19–45. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.

Frank, André Gunder (1969). *Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Franklin, John Hope and Alfred A. Moss, Jr. (1988). *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*. New York: Knopf.

García, Ignacio M. (1989). *United We Win: The Rise and Fall of La Raza Unida Party*. Tucson, AZ: Mexican American Studies Research Center, University of Arizona.

Gonzales, Rodolfo (2001). *Message to Aztlán: Selected Writings*. Houston, TX: Arte Público Press.

González Casanova, Pablo (1963). Sociedad plural, colonialismo interno y desarrollo. *América Latina*, 6: 15–32.

Griswold del Castillo, Richard (1979). *The Los Angeles Barrio, 1850–1890: A Social History*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Gutiérrez, Gustavo (1984). *Teología de la Liberación: Perspectivas*. Lima, Peru: Cep.

Gutiérrez, José Angel (1998). *The Making of a Chicano Militant: Lessons from Cristal*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Gutiérrez, Ramón A. (1976). Mexican Migration to the United States, 1880–1930: The Chicano and Internal Colonialism. MA Thesis, University of Wisconsin.

Harlem Youth Opportunites Unlimited. (1964). *Youth in the Ghetto: A Study of the Consequences of Powerlessness and a Blueprint for Change*. New York: Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited.

Huerta, Jorge A. (1982). *Chicano Theater: Themes and Forms*. Tempe, AZ: Bilingual Press.

Johnson, Thomas A. (1966). "Harlem likened to a new nation, head of mayor's task force cites similar problems." *New York Times*, December 11, p. 74.

King, Martin Luther, Jr. (1968). *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

López Tijerina, Reies (2000). *They Called Me "King Tiger": My Struggle for the Land and Our Rights*. Houston, TX: Arte Público Press.

McCandlish, Phillips (1966). Civil rights chairman relishes new powers to deal with challenge ahead. *New York Times*, March 27.

Moore, Joan (1970). Colonialism: The case of Mexican Americans, *Social Problems*, 17: 463–472.

Moraga, Cherríe (1983). *Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios*. Boston, MA: South End Press.

Navarro, Armando (2000). *La Raza Unida Party: A Chicano Challenge to the U.S. Two-Party Dictatorship*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Prebisch, Raúl (1950). *The Economic Development of Latin America and its Principal Problems*. New York: United Nations.

Rodney, Walter (1972). *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. London: Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications.

Rodriguez, Richard (1983). *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez*. New York: Bantam Books.

Rosales, F. Arturo (2000). *Testimonio: A Documentary History of the Mexican American Struggle for Civil Rights*. Houston, TX: Arte Público Press.

Rostow, Walt W. (1960). *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Stavenhagen, Rodolfo (1970). Class, colonialism, and acculturation. In Irving L. Horowitz (Ed.), *Masses in Latin America*, pp. 235–288. New York: Oxford University Press.

Stone, I. F. (1966). "People without a country; The Negro American, ed. by Talcott Parsons and Kenneth B. Clark." *New York Review of Books*, August 18, pp. 8–12.

Valdez, Luis and Roberto Rubalcava (1972). Venceremos!: Mexican American statement on travel to Cuba. In Luis Valdez and Stan Steiner (Eds.), *Aztlán: An Anthology of Mexican American Literature*, pp. 215–216. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Van Deburg, William L. (1992). *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965–1975*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Vigil, Ernesto B. (1999). *The Crusade for Justice: Chicano Militancy and the Government's War on Dissent*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Wallace, Michele (1990). *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*. London: Verso.