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## UNSPOKEN WHITENESS: #WHITEXICANS AND RELIGIOUS CONSERVATISM IN MEXICO

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**Abstract:** This article explores intersections between religious conservatism, pro-Americanism, and whiteness in Mexican society. Specifically, it examines past and present attempts by white elites and religious conservatives to surveil indigenous women’s bodies and sexuality, to “Americanize” Mexico, and to glorify the nation’s European legacies at the expense of erasing—and even justifying—anti-indigenous violence. This paper analyzes conservative activism as carried out by early-twentieth-century Catholic activists and contemporary social media users grappling with the present-day “whitexican” phenomenon. It analyzes Mexicans’ unspoken appeals to whiteness as they permeate prevalent discourses of feminine propriety and religious restoration, North American cultural proximity, indigenous criminality, and brown-skinned deviance.

**Keywords:** Whitexicans; Whiteness; Hispanic Whiteness; Mexico, Conservatism; Religion.

**Resumen:** Este artículo investiga las intersecciones entre el conservadurismo religioso, el proyanquismo y la blanquitud dentro de la sociedad mexicana. Con un enfoque en el pasado y el presente, se examina cómo las élites blancas y los conservadores religiosos han intentado vigilar los cuerpos y la vida sexual de las mujeres indígenas, al igual que “americanizar” México y glorificar su legado europeo hasta borrar—y justificar—la violencia antiindígena. Se estudia la movilización conservadora por medio del activismo social de los católicos mexicanos a principios de siglo XX y la actual polémica entre usuarios de redes sociales en torno al fenómeno “whitexican”. También se analiza la apelación tácita e indirecta de los mexicanos a la blanquitud, tal y cómo aparece en discursos de restauración religiosa y decoro femenino, de proximidad a los Estados Unidos, y de criminalidad indígena.

**Palabras clave:** Whitexicans; blanquitud; blanquitud hispana; México; conservadurismo; religión.

## Introduction: The Unspoken Gone Viral

"Debería de caer una bomba en el zócalo," wrote Ximena García on Facebook, "nos haría un favor a todos. #vivaMexico" (@LosWhitexicans, "Xime," n.pag.).<sup>1</sup> On the evening of September 15, 2019, a crowd of eighty-thousand people gathered in Mexico City's national square, or *el zócalo*, to commemorate the 209th anniversary of Father Miguel Hidalgo's declaration of independence. As President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) delivered his first *Grito de Independencia*<sup>2</sup> since taking office in December 2018, García and countless others voiced their opposition to the incoming president on social media. García's post allowed her to engage in an influential form of public discourse from the comfort of her home. Just fourteen months earlier, AMLO had won a resounding electoral victory after criticizing Mexico's established ruling parties for resorting to violence and intimidation to suppress political dissent. Unlike tens of thousands of victims—disappeared, tortured, and murdered—García took to the internet without fear of reprisals from the state. She posted freely, even as she alluded to an extreme form of political violence.

Indeed, Mexico's 2018 election had polarized society unlike any other time in the country's recent past (Montes and de Córdoba 2018). AMLO's supporters, disparagingly labeled as "*chairros*," became targets on social media given their alleged left-wing fanaticism, and their purportedly blind veneration of a populist president-elect long maligned by conservatives as a "tropical Messiah" akin to Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez (Krauze 2006). Hailing from Mexico's rural poor and urban working classes, *chairros* were dismissed as lazy, ignorant, and politically unsophisticated (Milenio Digital 2017). Beneath these epithets, however, lay the unspoken yet indisputable reality that *chairros* were predominantly indigenous and brown-skinned, their *piel morena*<sup>3</sup> eponymously reflected in AMLO's recently-formed reformist political party: *Movimiento Regeneración Nacional*, or MORENA.

A young and light-skinned woman, García worked as a pilot for Interjet, one of Mexico's most prominent international airlines. Although her Facebook post initially received less than twenty reactions, García's comments went viral on several social media platforms and caught the attention of the national press. Even as some on the internet sympathized with García's views and defended her freedom of speech, García's post became the object of scrutiny in dozens of online news outlets: among them, prominent news sites like *Aristegui Noticias*, *CNN Español*, *Milenio* and *Forbes*. On September 18, Interjet publicly distanced itself from García's statements, reassuring customers that the company had taken disciplinary action and suspended García from her job (Forbes Staff, 2019). Subsequently, García recorded a public apology from her home, sporting a *rosa mexicano* (Mexican hot-pink) blouse, hair straightened, and face slathered with white concealer make-up. In a one-minute video, the airline pilot lamented over her remarks and referred to them as immature and thoughtless (CNN 2019). García assured audiences that she did not condone violence of any kind, offering her apologies to Interjet, AMLO, and the people she offended.

Despite this fast-paced turn of events, reactions from Interjet and the Mexican press were astonishingly tone-deaf and overlooked the underlying racial dynamics fueling the pilot's comments (Redacción AN/GS 2019; CNN 2019; Forbes Staff 2019; Milenio Digital 2019). The press became complicit in ensuring that García's unspoken claims to whiteness remained unexamined, virtually ignoring the pilot's calls to violently obliterate brown-skinned *chairros* from the political map. Nevertheless, *Twitter* told another story, for García's Facebook post was immediately picked up and circulated by the polemical *Twitter* group "Cosas de Whitexicans," also known as #Whitexicans and @LosWhitexicans. Activated in October 2018—barely three months after AMLO's landslide electoral victory—@LosWhitexicans branded its homepage as a place for "*humor negro sobre gente blanca*."<sup>4</sup> Within a year, @LosWhitexicans had garnered over two-hundred thousand followers. Through playful satire, the group poked fun at "*whitexicans*?" and categorized them as white or light-skinned Mexicans who

shared a core group of common traits (Forsell Méndez 2020). These included a white-passing appearance, a considerable amount of wealth, an affinity for all things European or North American, and an open disdain for AMLO, MORENA, and the *chairros* (Forsell Méndez 2020; Mexicanist 2019).

Prior to García's *Facebook* controversy, the rise of the term *whitexican* had generated a great deal of debate given its usage by non-whites to deride white elites (Forsell Méndez 2020). While some social media users believed that the neologism represented an incendiary brand of anti-white racism, a vast majority defended it as a vehicle of justice following decades, if not centuries, of colonialist oppression (Mexicanist 2019). Adding fuel to the fire, prominent online news sites like *Animal Político* ascribed the rise of *whitexican* in the popular lexicon to AMLO's own public use of pejoratives like "*fifi*" to categorize wealthy conservatives. Controversies aside, however, the content posted by @LosWhitexicans accurately captured a vital element of Mexicans' problematic claims to whiteness: namely, that these claims have historically been indirect and occurred through a variety of innuendos whose true meaning derives from cultural subtext and historical context. These unspoken claims to whiteness, in other words, happen as Mexicans engage in discourses that are not explicitly racial, but remain inherently racist. In García's case, the pilot's claim to whiteness did not occur in the language of race, but rather through discourses of hyperbolic political violence that revealed their racist subtext when appropriately contextualized. Members of @LosWhitexicans astutely caught on to this subtle—albeit powerful—form of race-making, identifying García's prompting of violence against brown-skinned *chairros* as a way to claim an unspoken form of whiteness.

As scholars examine Mexicans' use of non-racial discourses to claim an unspoken whiteness, @LosWhitexicans' official profile photo provides helpful clues as to the historical origins behind this cultural discursive practice. Superimposed against the backdrop of a U.S. flag, an image of Ricardo Anaya—AMLO's former presidential rival and the candidate of Mexico's conservative National Action Party (PAN)—looms over "Cosas de Whitexicans." Although Anaya never endorsed or adopted white supremacist viewpoints, exploring the PAN's 1938 inception within a broader history of Catholic partisan activism reveals important connections between Mexico's counterrevolutionary past and its present racial divide. As the last viable political alternative to MORENA's allegedly leftist revolution, Anaya's resistance to AMLO's 2018 *Cuarta Transformación* (4T) echoes Catholic partisans' political opposition to the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and their support for a U.S. military intervention in Mexico during the pivotal decades between the 1910s and early 1940s.

Given Anaya's polarization of Mexican conservatives and the absence of a unified anti-AMLO opposition in the Mexican political landscape, *whitexicans* have turned to the white supremacist politics of U.S. President Donald J. Trump as a way to reject the Mexican president. Posting under the hashtag #soymexicanoynotengopresidente, white elite Mexicans have branded themselves as "Mexicans without a president" and appealed to a sense of North American cultural proximity in an effort to further distance themselves from brown-skinned *chairros* (@LosWhitexicans, "Mex I Can"). Moreover, as the Central American migrant caravans of 2018 exacerbated Mexican xenophobia, *whitexicans* readily embraced Trump's vilification of impoverished indigenous immigrants (Vega 2018). Two years later, Trump's influence on conservative politics and *whitexican* identity is undeniable, as evidenced by the rise of the "Make Mexico *Fifi* Again" movement (El Joe 2019; @TSPConsultingMX, "Make..."), and increased support for Trump's 2020 re-election bid among white elites and religious conservatives (@LosWhitexicans, "Otro subnormal.").

On September 15, 2020, @LosWhitexicans retweeted a selfie taken by Mexican actress and outspoken Trump supporter, Patty Navidad. Published under the hashtag #MéxicoPatriotaConTrump, the tweet went viral exactly one year after García's controversial statements. Sporting a "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) hat from Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, Navidad praised Trump's leadership over AMLO's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic (@LosWhitexicans, "Patricia Navidad

Patriota!"). Citing Bible verses, the actress had taken to *Twitter* a week earlier and branded herself as a defender of truth and a "soldier of God" while promoting conspiracy theories about the coronavirus (Redacción El Universal 2020, n.pag.).

As religious conservatives like Navidad embrace Trumpism for its antagonism of science and "political correctness," *whitexicans* have adopted Trump as a symbol of resistance to Mexico's burgeoning progressive movements and their respective challenges to the legacies of systemic racism, colonialism, and patriarchy (Forssell Méndez 2020; Redacción Proceso 2019). Anaya, on the other hand, remains a steadfast reminder of "what could have been": a white, wealthy, Anglophone conservative from a political party with historic ties to Catholic partisan activism. In an effort to better understand the present-day *whitexican* phenomenon and Mexicans' implicit and unspoken claims whiteness, this essay explores the ways in which seemingly non-racial discourses, words, images and symbols—much like Anaya's photograph—acquire racial meaning. By examining *whitexicans'* social media activism against AMLO's 4T in conjunction with Mexican Catholics' historic opposition to the nation's Revolutionary state, I offer valuable insight to the unique intersection between religious conservatism, pro-Americanism, and notions of whiteness in Mexican society. This essay focuses specifically on past and present attempts by religious conservatives and white elites to surveille indigenous women's bodies and sexuality, "Americanize" Mexico, and glorify the nation's European legacies at the expense of erasing—and even justifying—anti-indigenous violence. Throughout my analyses of these issues, I examine the ways in which Mexicans' unspoken appeals to whiteness have permeated prevalent discourses of feminine propriety and religious restoration, North American cultural proximity, indigenous criminality, and brown-skinned deviance.

### **From Dance Hall Decadence to Reproductive Rights**

A full century prior to AMLO's election, the passage of Mexico's 1917 Constitution appeared to signal the end of social unrest and political violence unleashed by the chaos of the Mexican Revolution. Beginning in 1910, Mexico's decade of civil war had polarized society unlike ever before, particularly as dramatic international developments exacerbated domestic divisions. As the Russian Revolution came to fruition in 1917, Mexico's Revolutionary government, then headed by constitutionalist president Venustiano Carranza, enacted a progressive and secularist constitution that drew from socialist European influences (Álvarez-Pimentel, 2017.; Spenser, 1999). Despite criticisms of Carranza as a moderate reformer, the specter of communism heightened political divides and an increasing fear of "Russianization" penetrated all aspects of society (Spenser 1999).

Enabling the political mobilization of feminist women's groups and brown-skinned *campesinas*<sup>5</sup>, the Mexican Revolution challenged longstanding gender and racial hierarchies in Mexican society. Fearful of these groups' social mobility, the Revolutionary state's conservative Catholic opponents—predominantly white and wealthy elites—transformed "communism" into a catch-all term designed to vilify the government's reformist agenda and stoke fears of moral decadence and social disorder triggered by challenges to the gender-racial status quo (Álvarez-Pimentel 18-19). Labeled as a dangerous, radical, and subversive ideology, communism was rebranded by Catholic partisans and made synonymous with state atheism and the moral evils of secular urban modernity (21). Through magazines, newspapers, and propaganda, Catholics used anti-communist discourse imbued with religious overtones to establish themselves as faithful soldiers in a modern crusade for the nation's soul (24-25; 27). Employing the language of religious restoration and appeals to "social order," anti-revolutionary Catholics argued for the necessity of race and gender hierarchies. Their ultimate goal was the preservation of the Church's power and white elite Catholics' social standing.

Specifically, white women in Mexico's Catholic elite imbued non-racial discourses with racial meaning in an effort to assert their perceived superiority over brown-skinned counterparts. As self-proclaimed "soldiers in Christ," white elite *católicas*<sup>6</sup> developed a unique brand of whiteness that sought to suppress indigenous mobilization in an effort to protect their power and preserve their privilege. As Mexico's increasing urbanization gave rise to indigenous rural emigration and the emergence of new urban cultural trends, Catholics feared that revolutionary activism had triggered an influx of radical ideologies from Europe and the United States (Cortina 1922; Delpar 1992; López 2010; Spenser 1999). Subsequently, Mexican cities became the focus of conservative anxiety, as the rise of feminism and lower-class jazz halls, prostitution and *indigenista* syndicalism, all threatened to disrupt a complex system of patriarchy and caste hierarchy previously enforced by three-hundred years of Spanish colonialism and Mexico's own neocolonialist regime under General Porfirio Díaz (Chowning 2020; Cortina 1922; Crespo Reyes 2018; Martínez 2008; Socolow 2000). From the vantage point of Catholic partisans, Mexico's growing cities were new hotbeds of vice and promiscuity, interracial relations, and political radicalization (Cortina 1). Young men and women were particularly susceptible to these improprieties, for the state's new restrictions on religious education left them vulnerable to moral decline and ideological corruption by foreign and non-white influences ("Asociación Nacional" n.pag.; Cortina 8; "El Congreso" 1).

By mandating compulsory secular public education for all Mexican children and youth, the Mexican Constitution's religious regulations and secularist reforms effectively curtailed the powers of the Mexican clergy and limited the scope of religious schooling (Álvarez-Pimentel 2). As a result, Catholic partisans feared an irreversible rupturing of the Mexican family and broader society, for the Church would now be unable to restore social order and moral integrity among decadent youth tainted by unholy forces ("Asociación Nacional" n.pag.; Cortina 8; "El Congreso" 1). In response to the government's anticlericalism, conservative Catholic partisans founded the *Asociación Nacional de Padres de Familia* (ANPF) in 1917. Calling on Catholic parents to actively monitor their children's instruction in and outside the home, the ANPF argued that parents held a sacred duty to ensure that their children's education conformed to religious doctrine and promoted the survival of propriety and *buenas costumbres*<sup>7</sup>. Amid the chaos of an ever-changing world, Catholic partisans passionately called for the restoration of *Cristo Rey*— or, "Christ the King"—to his rightful place at the helm of Mexican society (Álvarez-Pimentel 21-22). They crusaded against the heresy of Revolution, and actively engaged in discourses of propriety imbued with deep racial meaning.

In November 1922, Refugio G. de Cortina, the vice-president of the *Unión de Damas Católicas Mexicanas* (UDCM), published a scathing condemnation of urban life and secular modernity as part of a larger news campaign launched during the *Damas'* inaugural convention. Printed on the front pages of *El Universal* newspaper, Cortina's treatise on moral decline relied on its racial subtext to spark new energy into the UDCM after a decade of inactivity. Through discourses of class, xenophobia, and female propriety, Cortina denounced dance hall decadence for corrupting Catholic youth, and for leading respectable young women to moral depravity (1). Specifically, Cortina took aim at new dance styles imported from the working-class (i.e., black- and brown) neighborhoods of cities like New York and Buenos Aires (1). Conscious of the mixed-race and non-white origins of contemporary dances like the tango, the shimmy, and the foxtrot, Cortina branded these "*danzas exóticas*"<sup>8</sup> as diabolical, expressing nostalgia for the more traditional waltz and European ballroom dances of past decades (1). Cautioning against the "*males incurables*"<sup>9</sup> caused by immorality, Cortina cited medical testimonies wherein prominent physicians affirmed that excessive agitation from provocative dancing resulted in women's sterility, neuroses, and loss of maternal instinct (1).

From Cortina's perspective, non-white foreign art forms enabled white Catholic youth's hyper-sexualization, widespread immorality, and a general deviation from *buenas costumbres* (8). As

upper-class urban slumming threatened to disrupt gender norms and subvert racial hierarchies, Cortina and the UDCM feared losing the power that came with white elite "respectability": a modern concept reminiscent of colonial ideas about chastity and honor (Martínez 4; Socolow 69). Lending voice to longstanding notions of racial hierarchy, Cortina envisioned the white, upper-class women of the *Damas Católicas* as setting an important example for working-class indigenous women (8). The respectable ladies of the UDCM, she claimed, held the sacred responsibility of leading humble *obreras*<sup>10</sup> who looked to emulate the style and ways of life of a *gran señora*.<sup>11</sup> "No es la moda la que debe imponerse, sino nosotras . . . La humilde obrera quiere imitar a la gran señora y si esta no conserva su dignidad hasta en los menores detalles, aquella, por instruida y llena de ambiciones, dará un paso más [hacia el lujo] . . . por nuestro mal ejemplo (8).<sup>12</sup>

In this excerpt from Cortina's article, her use of words like *imitar*<sup>13</sup> and *ejemplo*<sup>14</sup> to describe the relationship between non-white *obreras* and white elite *señoras* evoked her sense of racial paternalism and moral superiority toward non-white counterparts. Specifically, Cortina depicted the indigenous and mixed-race women of Mexico's working classes as ignorant and morally vulnerable, and therefore inclined toward avarice, sexual temptation, and an undignified degree of ambition—a masculine trait by UDCM standards (8). By contrast, Cortina argued that white elite *católicas* held a moral responsibility to guide non-white women toward the preservation of their dignity and instruct them on how to align their lifestyles with their faith. Nevertheless, beneath the language of class and discourses of propriety, Cortina's critique of modern decadence implicitly racialized moral deviance and positioned feminine respectability as an exclusively white trait.

In a xenophobic tirade against burgeoning feminist ideologies, Cortina accused Jews, communists, and French freemasons of corrupting Mexican culture by using fashion and music to lead Catholic girls away from their own femininity (8). She also denounced the new feminist wave for seeking to masculinize women through its attacks on domesticity, its calls for sexual liberation, and its subversion of traditional gender roles (8). Indeed, Cortina's distrust of feminism actually reflected broader trends among the *Damas Católicas*, particularly as the UDCM mobilized against feminism's purported erasure of gender difference. Historians like Anne Rubenstein, for instance, have aptly demonstrated how UDCM publications took aim at French fashion and hairstyles for promoting "androgynous" styles that threatened to erase differences between the sexes and the visual markers of racial difference (Rubenstein in Olcott et al. 63-64). Cortina's condemnation of modernity should thus be read as both a critique of feminism and a defense of Mexico's historical racial hierarchies. In the eyes of white elite *católicas*, the rise of modern urban culture threatened to subvert privileges gained from a patriarchal and racialized system of social relations, which in turn granted white elite women a significant amount of power over non-white counterparts.

Framing Cortina's claims were centuries of patriarchal tradition through which Mexico's white and white-passing Catholic elites had relied on matrimony as a means to conjoin "respectable" families and perpetuate power through the consolidation of economic, political, social, and racial dominance (Socolow 66-69). Consequently, Cortina condemned parents and husbands for allowing young women to partake in sinful activities that would stray them away from matrimony and "respectable family life" (Cortina 1922, 8). Whiteness thus grew beyond a racial construct and morphed into a gendered praxis. It constituted a racialized sense of identity reflecting uneven historical legacies of power, and comprised an active practice designed to protect racial privilege by controlling elite women's sexuality and obstructing their engagement in interracial relations (Martínez 2008, 4).

The prospect of interclass race-mixing—be it through social interactions, cultural exchanges, or sexual relations—actively destabilized the survival of an unadulterated whiteness, thus threatening Catholic elites' claims to supremacy. Subsequently, the UDCM obsessively monitored elite feminine propriety as the rise of disruptive cultures in multiracial urban spaces posed a formidable challenge to

the white dominant status quo (Cortina, 8). In response to these purported challenges to racial purity, Cortina and the UDCM proposed the closure of dance halls and public bans on certain types of music and styles of clothing (8). Moreover, the UDCM called for the establishment of special cultural commissions designed to surveil different aspects of city life (e.g., fashion, music, dance), and for the foundation of a national re-education program designed to develop sound moral judgment and instill good Christian principles among indigenous women and Mexican youth (Cortina, 8). More broadly, the *Damas* envisioned nation-wide moralization campaigns that would promote Catholic teachings in schools, beauty salons, and union headquarters—everyday spaces frequented by elite girls and working-class women (Cortina, 8). In solidarity with the ANPF, the UDCM also pledged its undying support for Mexico's Catholic Teachers' Union, the *Profesorado Católico Nacional*, and called for the establishment of a national commission to address the issue of religious education (Cortina, 8).

Drawing from racially-charged assumptions of decadence and inferiority, Catholic activists branded non-white empowerment as dangerous and subversive to white purity. In the case of the *Damas Católicas*, this form of racism relied on its creation of a non-white racial "Other" enabling whiteness to define itself as inherently superior to brown- and blackness. Mexican white supremacy can thus be theorized as being predicated on an unspoken mode of racial discourse that was (1) dialectical and dialogically formed, (2) subjective and tautological, and (3) self-perpetuating. Whiteness relied on its own racist logic for validity, and it looked to restrict and surveil non-white agency for the sake of its own survival and self-preservation.

Indeed, constructions of non-whiteness and racial otherness can be defined as products of, by, and for the white imagination. As Anne McClintock argues in her 1995 study of British colonialism, "The invention of race in the urban metropolises . . . became central not only to self-definition of the middle class, but also to the policing of the 'dangerous classes' . . ." (5). Cortina's criticisms of Mexico's multiracial urban modernity demonstrate a similar process, for the *Damas Católicas'* racialization of deviance (non-white) and propriety (white) were necessary steps in the creation of a conservative worldview wherein notions of racial inferiority served as justification for the surveillance of subversive and unsophisticated non-white Others. Subsequently, Cortina's invention of the non-white Other as naturally inclined toward moral corruption allowed her to equate whiteness with virtue, and thus granted the patriarchal language and discourse of female propriety with a racialized double meaning—that is, an implicit and subtextual racial connotation.

The use of double meanings in non-racial discourse essentially worked to imbue non-racial concepts with racial meaning. From Cortina's standpoint, the notion that a proper and respectable *señora* could also be white was redundant, as Cortina equated whiteness with propriety, respectability, and a Catholic *señora's* wealth and prestige. Subsequently, when confronted with the task of explaining why white *señoras* should still be perceived as being superior to, and responsible for, morally decadent brown-skinned *obreras*, Cortina referenced señoras' exemplary and desirable attributes—i.e., their whiteness—as justification for the permanence of racial hierarchies. Cortina thus relied on subjective tautologies to implicitly argue for the continuation of white supremacy in Mexican society, essentially citing whiteness as the reason behind white superiority.

Consequently, whiteness became exclusive, inflexible, and self-contained: a self-perpetuating concept reliant on its own circular logic for validity. Given the rigidity with which whiteness itself was safeguarded and determined, the latter became a "desirable attribute" that only a select few within Mexico's Catholic elite—and definitely not a brown-skinned indigenous *obrero*—could actually attain. As scholar Frantz Fanon observed of white perceptions of blackness:

All they ask of the black man is to be a good nigger. Making him speak pidgin is tying him to an image, snaring him . . . as the eternal victim of his own essence, of a *visible*



*appearance* for which he is not responsible . . . Speaking pidgin means imprisoning the black man and perpetuating a conflictual situation where the white man infects the black man with extremely toxic foreign bodies . . . There is nothing more sensational than a black man speaking correctly, for he is appropriating the white world. (18-19)

As Fanon indicates, whiteness largely concerned itself with remaining inaccessible to non-white actors and relied on specific strategies to reaffirm its self-proclaimed superiority when threatened by non-white empowerment. Whereas Fanon exposes Europeans' leveraging of language as a tool to invent and reproduce notions of black inferiority, Cortina and the *Damas Católicas* used discourses of propriety to reinvigorate images of brown-skinned immorality grounded on assumptions of non-white sexual deviance. For all their discourse of guiding Mexico's vulnerable indigenous masses toward moral uplift, Cortina and the *Damas Católicas* spoke of spiritual regeneration from a place of self-righteousness and out of a desire to reassure themselves of their own moral purity by reinforcing images of brown and black decadence. Even as the *Damas* called on humble indigenous *obreras* to perfectly emulate the religiosity and *buenas costumbres* of white elite *católicas*, the latter still turned to other attributes, such as wealth, status, and prestige as markers of their dominance. All of these qualities were inaccessible to brown-skinned women. The *Damas'* goal, then, was not to uplift or educate non-white women to the point of empowerment, but rather, as Fanon writes, to produce "good" *morenas*, or at least purport to do so in order to reaffirm an implicit sense racial superiority. Mexico's white elites not only created the material conditions of non-white oppression, but they also turned to racism as a means to justify social disparities and allegedly remedy the very societal ills it ascribed to non-white actors. In an effort to sanctify whiteness, the *Damas Católicas* ensnared indigenous *obreras* in images of feminine impropriety and sexual indecency, balking at the prospect of brown-skinned appropriations of white purity.

Cortina and the elite white women of the UDCM should therefore be interpreted as actively creating racial Otherness in order to leverage their racial privilege and exercise power over non-white counterparts—especially non-white females. As McClintock argues, ". . . white women were not the hapless onlookers of empire but were ambiguously complicit both as colonizers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting" (6). As seen in the case of Refugio de Cortina and the UDCM, Mexico's white elite *católicas* adopted the language of patriarchy and imbued it with racial meaning in an effort to reaffirm their unique position of power at the intersection of race (whiteness) and gender (femininity). Nonetheless, even as this form of "borrowed" power, as McClintock deems it (6), granted white *católicas* a certain degree of dominance, it still reinforced and reproduced the patriarchal social edifice to which all women were subjugated.

Present-day debates over abortion and women's reproductive rights—two issues that disproportionately affect Mexico's indigenous women over white elite counterparts (Redacción AN/AG 2020)—reveal important connections between contemporary *whitexicans* and post-revolutionary religious conservatives. Similar to Cortina and the *Damas Católicas*, today's white Catholic partisans have taken to social media in an effort to proselytize patriarchal forms of morality imbued with racial bias. Mexican feminists' recent push to decriminalize abortion at the national level has unleashed a wave of reactionary opposition and resurfaced racial tensions. Once again, white elites have taken up the mantle of saviorism, while Mexico's indigenous and brown-skinned women are depicted as ignorant, immoral, and shameful.

On July 29, 2020, just as the Mexican Supreme Court voted against upholding an injunction that would legalize first-trimester abortions in the state of Veracruz, @LosWhitexicans published a tweet connecting pro-life ideology to *whitexican* identity simply and succinctly: "*Ser provida*"<sup>15</sup> (@LosWhitexicans, "Ser provida."). The following day, @LosWhitexicans retweeted an image shared

by the PAN—Ricardo Anaya’s conservative party—depicting three white-skinned fists raised in the air with light blue *pañuelos* wrapped around each wrist (@LosWhitexicans, “PAN Jalisco”). The sky-blue handkerchiefs were a nod to both the color scheme adopted by the PAN in 1946 and Mexico’s burgeoning anti-feminist pro-life movement, *Mexico Provida*. The hashtag on the image read, “*SalvemosLas2Vidas*,” or “let’s save both lives.” Just a few hours later, @LosWhitexicans shared another image depicting Mexico’s iconic Virgin of Guadalupe—widely known as *la virgen morena* for her brown skin and indigenous appearance—with blue eyes, white skin, and European facial features (@LosWhitexicans, “La Virgen more...”). In her hands, the Virgin held three newborn infants to her breast, one black and two brown-skinned. The caption read, “*Virgen Santísima de Guadalupe defiende y salva a tus niños mexicanos.*”<sup>16</sup> While the image whitened morality and divinity, it deemed blackness and brownness as both infantile and in desperate need of salvation.

Emboldened by their Supreme Court victory in July, Mexican religious conservatives spent the latter part of the summer on a relentless offensive against the nation’s budding multiracial coalition of feminist activists. Tensions over the issue of abortion reached a crescendo on the @LosWhitexicans homepage on September 29, 2020, just days after Donald Trump’s Supreme Court nomination of judge Amy Coney Barrett, a devout Catholic and pro-life advocate, resurrected the debate over reproductive rights in the United States. As news of Judge Barrett’s possible replacement of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg reached Mexican social media circles, the predominantly white conservative *Facebook* group, “Líderes por la Vida y la Familia,” published a public note of congratulations and denounced the U.S. media and liberal Democrats for allegedly attacking Barrett’s Catholic faith (Líderes, “El presidente...”). As Barrett’s appointment rekindled Mexican debates over abortion, @LosWhitexicans linked pro-life ideology to *whitexican* identity by retweeting a post by user @LilyTélez, a white female journalist and PAN senator-elect from the state of Sonora (@LosWhitexicans, “Lily Tellez”).

In a September 28 tweet, Télez shared misleading cartoon images depicting a fully formed fetus whose body had been delimbed with forceps during an abortion. Five days later, the images posted by Télez were disseminated by the “Líderes” group and other conservative social media outlets. Condemning feminists’ green handkerchiefs, Télez warned that “*el trapo verde es muerte*”<sup>17</sup> (n.pag.). Within hours after its publication, Télez’s post ignited a flurry of debate on the #Whitexicans twitter feed. Notably, Estefanía Veloz, a prominent feminist journalist and outspoken political commentator of *Canal Once* and *ForoTV*, replied to Télez’s tweet by pointing to the harsh socioeconomic realities surrounding the issue of abortion in Mexican society. “*Las ricas abortan, las pobres mueren*,”<sup>18</sup> read Veloz’s reply (n.pag.). Beneath this insightful commentary on class disparities and unequal access to healthcare, Veloz’s post made a deeper statement about race and implicitly alluded to the fact that white Catholics’ organized opposition to decriminalizing abortion most negatively affected the health and safety of impoverished indigenous women—the most vulnerable sector of Mexico’s population given the high incidence of rape, sexual assault, and clandestine induced abortion among women *indígenas*.

On the one hand, Télez’s supporters responded with the anti-feminist hashtag #NoHablenPorTodas, both a sobering reminder that feminist activists did not speak for all Mexican women, but also a contradiction in terms given pro-life advocates’ support for the absolute and unequivocal criminalization of all abortion procedures without exception. Feminists, on the other hand, denounced Télez’s spread of disinformation and her imposition of patriarchal religious values. As members of the “Líderes” group entered the debate, they equated abortion with murder and thereby shamed, guilted, and dissuaded all “radical” women who supported the termination of a pregnancy. The group’s conservative users attacked the nation’s emergent feminist movement and actively demonized its calls for reproductive rights, sexual freedom, and an end to gender violence.

Even as MORENA remained largely divided on the issue of abortion—with AMLO himself being accused by feminists of inaction on issues of reproductive right and gender violence—Mexican religious conservatives deemed the nation's left-leaning populist government as a vehicle of "femimarxistas."<sup>19</sup> Consequently, they turned to Trumpism given its unapologetic style of conservative religious militancy. As recently as June 2020, in fact, the "Líderes" *Facebook* group had posted a photoshopped image of Donald Trump clutching two babies and whisking them away from a fiendish Hillary Clinton (Líderes, "Apoyemos..."). The image was accompanied by the hashtag #AllLivesMatter and a public call for Mexicans to support President Trump's purported defense of unborn children against pro-choice Democrats. Garnering nearly six hundred reactions and over three hundred shares, the image appeared on the "Líderes" page just days after the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police and subsequent calls by the #BlackLivesMatter movement to reckon with the issues of racial violence and police brutality both in the United States around the world. Trump's pro-life posturing and self-proclaimed efforts to restore of Judeo-Christian values in the United States (Jenkins 2017), along with his reluctance to unequivocally denounce white supremacist groups (McCammon 2020), his relentless criticism of racial sensitivity training and "political correctness" (NPR Staff 2020), and his public condemnation of the #BlackLivesMatter movement as a "symbol of hate" (Liptak and Holmes 2020), all effectively transformed the U.S. President into another favored symbol among many of Mexico's religious conservatives and *whitexicans* at large. As Trump and American social media users adopted the #AllLivesMatter hashtag to negate black racial justice movements in the United States, the image posted by "Líderes" acquired new racial meaning. For many Catholic *whitexicans*, #AllLivesMatter became a platform from which to defend pro-life ideologies and simultaneously deny the existence of systemic racism.

### **Toward a U.S. Cultural Proximity: "American" Liberties and English-Language Fluency**

Even as Barrett's nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court revitalized Mexican religious conservatives' alignment with Trumpism, the rise of the "Make México *Fifi* Again" movement, along with social media posts like Navidad's MAGA-clad selfie, both suggest that the confluence of Mexican notions of whiteness, religious conservatism, and pro-American sentiment spans beyond debates over abortion. Pro-American sentiment is so widespread among *whitexicans*, in fact, that the only pinned image on the "Cosas de Whitexican" homepage captures a Mexican man donning a U.S. flag over his back as part of an anti-AMLO protest in Mexico City (@LosWhitexicans, "Ni nosotros..."). Through its satire of pro-Americanism, "Cosas de Whitexican" has documented the ways in which elite Mexicans' appropriation of the English language actually constitutes a common trope of *whitexican* identity. Given the cultural proximity that an Anglophone identity offers to the United States, *whitexicans* ascribe an implicit sense of social status—and whiteness—to their English-language fluency. @LosWhitexicans has thus dedicated a bulk of its *Twitter* stream to documenting *whitexicans'* repeated posturing as keepers of the English language, thereby echoing Fanon's analysis of language as both a racialized component of self-identity and a crux of imposed racial categories. To that end, a significant number of posts in "Cosas de Whitexicans" also reveal the depth of racism imbued within white elite criticisms of those who do not fully understand English or speak it fluently.

For example, on September 28, 2020, @LosWhitexicans published a screenshot of a tweet wherein a young white woman named Larissa Ynzunza scorned phone operators at call centers for their purportedly flawed pronunciation of the English language (@LosWhitexicans, "Larissa Ynzunza"). "Ay perdón," read the tweet, "pero QUE FEO INGLES TINEN LOS INDIOS DE CALL CENTERS EH," (n.pag.). Here, the phrase "*indios de call centers*" actively assigned the properties of indigeneity (i.e. brownness) to call center operators on the basis of their occupation. Furthermore, the

tweet's central clause, "*pero que feo ingles tienen los indios...*," characterized improper English ("*feo ingles*") as a trait that all indigenous Mexicans actively possessed ("*tienen los indios*"). Through her use of the term "*indio*," Ynzunza explicitly invented an indigenous non-white Other who did not share her level of English-language fluency. Conversely, Ynzunza racialized her own language proficiency and flaunted it as a marker of both her social status and her whiteness.

Similarly, on October 7, 2020, @LosWhitexicans shared another screenshot documenting a conversation between two young white women, Twitter users @Samcoorona and @Datov\_ (@LosWhitexicans, "Qué oso..."). The exchange began as @Datov\_ openly admitted to her own practice of racial profiling in her efforts to discern whether someone had a visa or if they were undocumented. "*Hay gente que simplemente sabes que no tienen visa,*" she wrote. Meanwhile, @Samcoorona replied, "*O que no saben inglés,*" suggesting that one could also determine whether or not a person could speak English based solely on their appearance. Whereas Larissa Ynzunza had openly assigned a certain degree of brownness to those she deemed unable to speak English, @Samcoorona racialized non-English speakers *implicitly*, and without openly admitting to making judgments on the basis of race. In both cases, however, the two women presented their knowledge of English as a marker of their whiteness and subsequently invented a non-white, non-English-speaking Other who was either indigenous, in Ynzunza's case, or undocumented, according to @Datov\_ and @Samcoorona.

Even as @Samcoorona refrained from using openly racial discourses, both her and Ynzunza's posts contributed to what scholar Alice Krozer documents as Mexicans' racialization of wealth and socioeconomic status. This process of racialization is enabled by the stereotypes that arise from Mexicans' lack of cross-racial interactions, which Krozer ascribes to the perdurance of class segregation in Mexican society (n.pag.). Considering this present-day social phenomenon alongside the *Damas Católicas*' broader suspicions of multiracial urban spaces and the racially-charged images of *la gran señora* developed by Cortina, it is clear that Mexicans' racialization of wealth and status, as grounded in an inhibition of cross-racial relations, has endured for nearly a century. Subsequently, *whitexicans*' leveraging of a white Anglophone identity as both a marker of status and a sign of racial superiority should be interpreted as the latest iteration of this historic trend.

In a similar echo of the past, a glance at Mexican history also demonstrates that, despite the novelty of Trumpism, pro-American sentiment among Mexican elites and religious conservatives actually dates back to the Cristero Rebellion of 1926-1929: a church-state civil war pitting Catholic partisans of all racial and class backgrounds against government forces under the command of President Plutarco Elías Calles. Barely two years after Cortina's public condemnation of secular modernity and the *Damas Católicas*' resurgence on the national stage in 1922, Calles ascended to the Mexican presidency in December 1924 and aggressively enforced the Mexican Constitution's anti-clerical provisions by enacting a series of anti-religious measures collectively known as the *Ley Calles* of 1926 (Young 2012). The Calles Laws denied any legal personality to the church, outlawed monastic and religious orders, secularized all religious education, and forbade the clergy from voting or making political statements in public (n.pag.). Moreover, Calles's government outlawed public worship and prohibited priests and nuns from wearing religious garb outside of churches and convents (n.pag.).

In response, the *Damas Católicas* partnered with other middle- and upper-class Catholic partisan organizations and formed the National League for the Defense of Religious Liberty (LNDLR). As peasant *cristero* rebels mobilized under the leadership of local clergy and took up arms against state atheism, the Mexican episcopate and the LNDLR sought to Westernize *cristeros* in the eyes of U.S. and European audiences. This Westernization of *cristeros* was part of a larger plan to receive funding and military support from international capitalist interests recently betrayed by Calles's nationalist economic policies. Specifically, the LNDLR's elite Catholic partisans appealed directly to the U.S. Knights of Columbus and corporate magnates in the U.S. oil industry, as the League believed that

Calles's rejection of U.S. property claims in the Bucareli Treaty of 1923, along with his unsuccessful attempts at nationalizing the Mexican oil industry and confiscating of foreign-owned property, all constituted valid reasons for a U.S. military intervention in "Soviet Mexico." Mexican Catholic partisans thus turned to anti-communist discourses in an effort unite capitalist expansion with religious conservatism. Consequently, the LNDLR depicted brown-skinned rural *cristeros* as the sophisticated defenders of Western civilization fighting not only for religious freedom, but also for individual liberties akin to those safeguarded by the U.S. Constitution—namely, the right to private property.

Indeed, members of the LNDLR claimed a certain degree of "Americanness" when approaching potential U.S. allies. Like twenty-first-century *whitexicans*, these attempts at establishing a cultural proximity to the United States were really part of a broader, albeit unspoken appeal to whiteness, as forged by frustrated conservatives and dissatisfied elite actors threatened by the nation's brown-skinned masses and the revolutionary politics of proletarian mobilization. In a confidential letter from December 1926 addressed to the U.S. Secretary of State, Frank B. Kellogg, Mexican businessman José Gándara echoed the League's characterization of the Cristero Rebellion as a struggle for Western civilization—in English—and presented the nascent LNDLR as an organization that Americans would "certainly appreciate." Gándara urged Kellogg to support Mexican Catholics and argued that it would be "natural" for Americans of all religious backgrounds to sympathize with *cristeros* given their struggle for the very religious liberties upon which the United States had been founded. Furthermore, he positioned the restoration of Mexican religious freedoms as conducive to the safeguarding of private property, the encouragement of "commercial intercourse" between Mexico and the United States, and the security of investments by leading American interests.

Gándara positioned U.S. cultural proximity as a powerful force that could potentially bring allies like Kellogg to his side and unite American private interests with Mexican Catholics' religious struggle. He thus used significant portions of his letter to present Kellogg with his "American" credentials and make subtle, albeit powerful statements on Mexican identity. "I am a Mexican, born in Chihuahua and have lived in your wonderful country for fourteen years," Gándara wrote (n.pag.). "The leading American business men... of northern Mexico have known me since a child and if your honor would want to ascertain my integrity and sincerity, I am sure that any of those well-known men or almost any Bank in El Paso would recommend me" (n.pag.). Even as Gándara claimed to represent the "real" Mexico, he frequently referenced his family's connections to U.S. private companies and expressed his desire that Mexico emulate the United States in its policies and governance. Gándara claimed that the "real" Mexico was guided by American principles. He thus argued for the Americanization of Mexican society and positioned the "bolshevist" Calles administration as unrepresentative of the Mexican people. Furthermore, Gándara suggested that the legacies of the Mexican Revolution were not only un-American, but that they were also not truly Mexican.

Gándara's pro-Americanism finds resonance in present-day *whitexican* opposition to MORENA, as embodied in the conservative #FRENAAA movement: the *Frente Nacional Anti-AMLO*. In fact, as recently as September 24, 2020, @LosWhitexicans poked fun at FRENAAA for appealing to a sense of North American cultural proximity to express their anti-AMLOist views.<sup>20</sup> In a series of retweeted pictures posted by @LosWhitexicans, FRENAAA protesters were comically shown donning signature-brand American sportswear and holding up homemade signs written in English: the unofficial *lingua franca* of Mexico's white conservative elite (@LosWhitexicans, "Fernanda Caso"). True to Trump form, one of the signs read: "AMLO: you are fired! Go away." In an interesting nod to the *cristeros*, pictures showed protesters carrying banners of the Virgin of Guadalupe and signs dismissing AMLO as a criminal and a communist dictator (Caso 2020). Moreover, images, memes, and videos depicted protesters parking their luxury cars on the street in an effort to block the main traffic lanes of *Paseo de la Reforma* (@LosWhitexicans, "Fernanda Caso"), while others showed

individuals setting up empty camping tents on adjacent sidewalks so as to create the illusion of inciting a *paro nacional*, or national strike (@LosWhitexicans, "Eco friendly."; @LosWhitexicans, "Plantón Fifí"; @LosWhitexicans, "Trucazo.>").

On the same day that FRENAAA took to the streets, @LosWhitexicans retweeted a pro-Trump publication by *Twitter* user @rix, a light-skinned man and YouTube personality whose *Twitter* profile suggests a heightened degree of conspiratorial thinking with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic (@rix). A simple "Trump 2020," @rix's tweet had been posted a week earlier, on Mexican Independence Day, and just hours after actress Patty Navidad's public endorsement of Donald Trump (@LosWhitexicans, "Otro subnormal"). On October 6, @rix doubled down on his support for Trump and shared a video of the U.S. president removing his facemask upon returning to the White House after being treated for the coronavirus at Walter Reed Hospital (@rix, "Hay acciones..."). One week later, on October 14, @rix took to *Twitter* and openly criticized "Cosas de Whitexican" for retweeting his public content. Exhibiting the type of white racial discomfort that sociologist Robin DiAngelo has recently described as "white fragility" (DiAngelo 2018, 1-5), @rix lashed out in anger and responded to @LosWhitexicans by claiming that there was racial intent behind the term *whitexican*. In a spectacular show of ignorance towards the complexities of systemic racism, @rix reduced the issue to a matter of individual bias, arguing that it was "stupidly" racist to think that only white people could be guilty of racial prejudice: "*Pensar que un negro no puede ser racista es estupidamente racista*"<sup>21</sup> (@LosWhitexicans, "Otro que no entiende nada").

Embedded between images and videos of FRENAAA, @rix's pro-Trump content powerfully attested to the connections between *whitexicans'* adoption of Trumpism and their anti-AMLOist conservative politics. Between September 15 and October 7, in fact, @LosWhitexicans dedicated nine of its nineteen *Twitter* posts to playfully satirizing *whitexicans'* prevalent pro-Americanist sentiments. Over the course of these three weeks, "Cosas de Whitexican" exposed *whitexicans'* claims of cultural proximity to the United States as implicit expressions of whiteness. On the one hand, these indirect claims to whiteness included FRENAAA protesters' appropriation of English as the common language of anti-AMLOist resistance, as well as the adoption of a racialized Anglophone identity by *Twitter* users Larissa Ynzunza, @Samcoorona, and @Datov\_. On the other, the pro-Trump posturing of influencers like @rix and prominent religious conservatives such as Patty Navidad and Senator-Elect Lily Téllez all attested to *whitexicans'* embrace of Trumpism not only as a repudiation of AMLO, but also as a rejection of secular progressivism, feminism, and racially literate "political correctness."

Just as Gándara envisioned Mexico's true revolution as emanating from the U.S., so too did present-day *whitexicans* associate Trumpism and cultural proximity to the United States as conducive to a type of Mexican liberation that thoroughly repudiated leftist politics and Mexico's brown-skinned *chairros*. Even as many *whitexicans* still refrain from explicitly evoking Donald Trump, their pro-American conservatism serves as a platform for the expression and survival of their white identity. For religious conservatives and Mexican elites, Trumpism represents a conduit towards the permanence of longstanding class, gender, and racial hierarchies. Present in the subtext of gender and class discourses, Mexican white supremacy remains blind to systemic racism and primarily concerned with its own preservation, defense, and survival.

### **Hispanism, Indigenous Criminality, and Brown Deviance**

From the 1920s to 2020, Mexicans' unspoken whiteness has emerged from the antithetical tension between status quo politics and revolutionary change. This is seen in the oppositional relationship between Cortina's patriarchal and white supremacist brand of Catholic conservatism and the rise of a multiracial urban modernity whose challenges to gender and racial norms embodied the radical ethos

of the Mexican Revolution. Throughout the early twentieth century, Mexican notions of whiteness evolved through their opposition to the state's projects of *indigenismo*. Today, Mexican white supremacy has become a socially toxic byproduct of the emergent political conflict between *whitexicans'* light-skinned elitism and AMLO's brown-skinned 4T.

For this reason, @LosWhitexicans has insightfully mocked those who took to social media following the murder of George Floyd and, in contrast to pro-life conservatives' appropriation of #AllLivesMatter, used the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag to denounce racial violence in the United States. Pointing to the irony of *whitexicans'* denouncing structural racism abroad and perpetuating it at home, @LosWhitexicans even tweeted a political cartoon of a white and well-groomed Mexican man depicted as taking a selfie and tweeting "#BlackLivesMatter" while resting his knee on the neck of a brown-skinned indigenous woman—a powerful message on the intersection between patriarchy, elitism, and white supremacy (@LosWhitexicans, #BlackLivesMatter). A direct reference to Floyd's murder by asphyxiation under the knee of police, the June 2020 cartoon showed a car with the license plate "*Racismo*" and a handful of racial epithets commonly hurled at indigenous Mexicans in everyday speech: namely, "*nacos*," "*jodidos*," "*prietos*," "*mugrosos*," "*chundos*" and "*chachas*."<sup>22</sup> The image offered pointed criticism of the racism embedded in Mexican slang, commenting on *whitexicans'* normalization of the nation's anti-indigenous violence to the point of willful ignorance and utter blindness.

In fact, barely ten days after Ximena García's controversial statements, on September 24, 2018, @LosWhitexicans shared a controversial tweet by user @DxrKaiser, a young white-passing man. Published on the fifth anniversary of the gut-wrenching disappearance of 43 indigenous student activists in the rural town of Iguala, Guerrero, @DxrKaiser scorned the murdered students of Iguala's Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College for commandeering buses on their way to a demonstration in Mexico City (@LosWhitexicans, "La audacia"). Although @DxrKaiser acknowledged that the kidnapped and incinerated *normalistas*<sup>23</sup> had been victims of state violence, he still labeled the students as glorified criminals and dirty "*mugrosos*." "*No, no nos faltan 43 mugrosos que se ROBARON unos camiones para marchar en vez de estudiar*," he tweeted. "*Ya dejen de glorificar a delinquentes nomas porque los quemaron/desparecieron #Ayotzinapa5anos #NosFaltan43*" (n.pag).<sup>24</sup>

Although not explicit in its claims to whiteness, @DxrKaiser's tweet attested to Mexicans' deep-seated racism. Writing from the "we" perspective (*nos*), the user addressed the nation and projected his views onto society. Turning to words like *robaron* ("they stole") and *delinquentes* ("criminals"), @DxrKaiser used discourses of criminality to create a deviant and subversive non-white Other. Consequently, his tweet minimized violence and justified the state-sanctioned murder of indigenous activist youth. As @DxrKaiser imparted judgement upon the students of Ayotzinapa, non-racial discourses acquired racial meaning. The user positioned himself as an arbiter of brown-skinned morality, and even went as far as excusing government's incineration of indigenous activists on the grounds that the victims should have been studying rather than attending a protest. By virtue of his racial privilege, @DxrKaiser rendered education as a permissible form of brown-skinned empowerment. By contrast, he deemed protesting an unacceptable form of non-white self-realization.

With regard to the issue of violence, social media posts by users like Ximena García and @DxrKaiser not only expose *whitexicans'* normalization of racism, but also reveal a perverse glorification of physical violence against AMLO's recently empowered indigenous supporters. By calling attention to these publications, @LosWhitexicans brings to light a toxic brand of patriotism—an unspoken white nationalism—that envisions lifeless brown bodies as expressions of nationhood. In a similar vein, as early as the 1920s and 1930s, Mexico's elite Catholic partisans adopted Hispanic discourses that exalted Spanish colonial violence against indigenous communities. Branding Spanish missionaries as both the architects and engines of Mexican civilization, Catholic Hispanism relied on

eugenics and the alleged racial inferiority of non-European peoples to produce narratives that justified Spanish colonization (Horcasitas 2010).

Even as early as the 1880s, Mexican historians like Manuel Orozco y Berra reinforced Hispanist understandings of Mexican history by portraying Aztec civilization as barbarian, barbaric, and degenerate. "To sweep the Aztec cult from . . . the earth was an immense benefit," he wrote. "To substitute Christianity for it was to advance an immense distance on the road to civilization." (Kelley, 6-7). Even among Mexico's Revolutionary intellectuals, recent scholarship by historian Juliet Hooker has revealed that figures like José Vasconcelos—Mexico's first Secretary of Public Education and the father of modern *mestizo* nationalism—produced narratives of Mexican miscegenation that were "inconsistent," "selectively decolonial," and "limited" in their critique of white supremacy (159-160). Hooker thus argues that Vasconcelos' project of *mestizaje*, as outlined in *La Raza Cósmica* (1925), "continued to operate within an epistemic logic that privileged European ideas and sources" (159).

As expressed by organizations like the *Damas Católicas*, Mexicans' Catholic Hispanism sought to counter the cultural and political projects advanced by state-sanctioned *indigenismo*. In turn, Revolutionary *indigenismo* looked to "re-discover" Mexico's popular indigenous traditions in order to consolidate Mexican national identity under a common narrative of *mestizaje* that recognized cultural indigeneity as more than a passive recipient of Spanish cultural "enlightenment" (López 9-11). Still, even as *indigenistas* exalted Mexico's pre-Columbian civilizations and contemporary indigenous cultures, they engaged in processes of cultural appropriation that sanitized indigenous traditions and imposed inorganic forms of a nationalist "ethnic" culture upon local communities (10). Subsequently, Revolutionary *indigenismo* became a platform from which to re-package oppressive "modernization" projects as racially democratic nationalist enterprises while the state rejected any and all forms of indigenous cultural divergence from officialist norms (10).

Despite *indigenismo*'s internal contradictions, Catholic Hispanists interpreted this appropriation of indigenous culture as the purposeful leveraging of racial identity-narratives to advance anti-Catholic state projects. Hispanists distrusted *indigenismo* for its seeming use of nationalism to conceal what they saw as the true radicalism of the Mexican state. Specifically, Catholic partisans perceived the state's syndicalization of indigenous workers and the government's secular Spanish-language education of native communities as detrimental to the Church's influence. In their view, the Mexican government now intended to perform the work that had historically been carried out by Catholic activists: namely, the instruction and protection of Mexico's peasant indigenous masses and the larger moral uplift of the nation. Catholics thus argued that *indigenismo* only served to aggrandize Mexico's secular and atheistic state at the expense of religious institutions. Subsequently, Hispanists positioned the nation's white Spanish heritage as the nation's saving grace from both indigenous "barbarism" and twentieth-century communist aggression (Álvarez-Pimentel 18-20).

Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, Mexico's Young Catholic Women's Association, the *Juventud Católica Femenina Mexicana* (JCFM), used its internal magazines to disseminate Hispanist messages of *mestizo* patriotism while relying on non-racial discourses to uphold white supremacy. Working under the guidance of the *Unión Femenina*, a re-branded descendant of the UDCM, the JCFM's white elite *católicas* mobilized their ranks into social action against President Lázaro Cárdenas's push for secular public education (Álvarez-Pimentel 8). In the September 1937, the JCFM's *De Frente* magazine relied on its text and imagery to emphasize the importance of Mexico's Hispanic legacies and appeal to prevalent notions of *mestizaje*. The magazine displayed images of the Virgin of Guadalupe as a symbol of a Catholic *mestizo* nationalism, and dedicated pages of text to the deification of the nation's Spanish Catholic "heroes": namely, Hernán Cortés and Queen Isabel I of Castile.

Beyond *De Frente*'s Hispanist posturing, racism thrived within the JCFM's discourses of "social equilibrium," or *equilibrio social*, as developed in propaganda designed for indigenous working-class



women. Published in *Mi Tierra* magazine, these messages specifically targeted indigenous girls in the countryside (Álvarez-Pimentel 34-36). Similar to the UDCM's discourses of propriety, the JCFM developed the concept of social equilibrium as a means to reinforce racial hierarchies and subvert any and all political mobilization by non-white women (36). According to the JCFM's "*Reglamento General de la Especialización de Campesinas*," the preservation of social equilibrium required rural and working-class women to conform to their socioeconomic realities and forgo materialistic aspirations fueled by feminist ideas in order to preserve national harmony (n.pag.). The maintenance of social equilibrium, then, actually referred to the safeguarding of white elite power by thwarting non-white upward social mobility. For this reason, the white women of the JCFM urged brown-skinned *campesinas* to forgo their struggle for higher wages and improved working conditions. In an effort to impede indigenous women's empowerment, the JCFM portrayed social, political, and economic conformity as *campesinas*' most patriotic expression of citizenship (Álvarez-Pimentel 2017, 40). By engaging in unacceptable and inappropriate forms of political mobilization, the JCFM argued, brown-skinned women actively contributed toward (1) vanity, licentiousness, and the erosion of morality, (2) indigenous women's acquisition of a false concept of superiority, and (3) the ultimate downfall of womankind ("En el campo" n.pag.).

Through discourses of social equilibrium, the JCFM attempted to dictate the contours of acceptable behavior and permissible forms of activism for their non-white counterparts. Like the *Damas Católicas* of 1922 and @DxrKaiser in 2018, the women of the JCFM reinforced their whiteness by positioning themselves as arbiters of brown-skinned morality, ultimately developing a sense of racial authority from their own invention of a deviant non-white Other. As Hispanist discourses justified colonial violence, the language of "social equilibrium" sought to maintain historic racial and class hierarchies by couching the obstruction of non-white empowerment in the language of national harmony. Structural racism was thus made and re-made by and for the benefit of white elites, as the latter relied on non-racial discourses to promote and reproduce racism in all aspects of society.

Studying the JCFM's notions of "social equilibrium" in relation to *whitexican* anxieties over *chairs*' political mobilization reveals important similarities and points of connection between present-day *whitexicans* and Catholic partisans of the early twentieth century. By analyzing the present-day *whitexican* phenomenon against the historical backdrop of Catholic activism, scholars can and should expose the ways in which white supremacy continues to evolve through its opposition to the seemingly anti-colonial political projects of the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and AMLO's 4T. From the vantage point of *whitexicans* and white Catholic elites, a "good" *morena* does not mobilize for political rights and nor does she claim her rightful place in the national table of democracy. Dismissed as ignorant and criminal *chairs* in 2020 and licentious *obreras* in 1920, Mexico's working-class feminists, indigenous *normalistas*, and brown-skinned revolutionaries all remain under attack by white elites for challenging patriarchy, racial hierarchy, and the political status quo.

## **Conclusions: From Soldiers in Christ to #Whitexicans**

As this essay demonstrates, Mexicans' unspoken whiteness comprises a collection of discourses, values, beliefs, and practices that implicitly enforce historic racial hierarchies designed to protect the privileges of the nation's white elites. Similar to the white Catholic partisans of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, contemporary *whitexicans* continue to further systemic racism through their constant re-invention of non-white Otherness. This politization of color has stemmed from white elites' implicit racialization of class difference in times of political polarization: namely, the years following AMLO's historical election in 2018 and the decades after the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Specifically, I have demonstrated how Mexicans' unspoken appeals to whiteness have permeated prevalent discourses of

feminine propriety and religious restoration, North American cultural proximity, indigenous criminality, and brown-skinned deviance.

Like twenty-first century *whitexicans*, Catholic partisans' deep-seated racism comes to light only after carefully analyzing the political and social context informing their use of specific kinds of non-racial language. Buried within the bedrock of subtext, Mexican white supremacy requires this type of methodology in order to excavate racism and expose it as the latent substructure of Mexican society. Consequently, as Tuna M. Camppt has noted in relation to the case of Afro-German cultural identity, historians looking to understand Mexican white supremacy must read primary sources for hidden meanings while considering a document's historical context and its author's positionality (115).<sup>25</sup> As part of this strategy, historians must also read against the archival grain in order to understand just how and why white supremacy survives. As scholar Michel-Rolph Trouillot argued, archival collections should not be taken as static, ahistorical, or apolitical sites. Rather, the archives' very formation, structure, and maintenance should be taken as providing valuable clues to decipher the past and understand the present.

White supremacy should thus be understood as a systemic and continuing problem reinforced by language, everyday interactions, the failure of political institutions, and the structural inequalities stemming from the permanence of social hierarchies. It should not be perceived as circumstantial issue currently perpetrated by a few individuals on social media. History, I argue, presents an important lens from which to analyze these issues, for it enables us to understand how white supremacy emerged and why it has persisted over time. As historical narratives continue to shape modern identities, historians should call on societies to recognize and confront ongoing racism.

Mexican society is particularly in need of this, as the myth of *mestizaje* has led many to believe that Mexico represents a post-racial society: one where race does not determine class, or where the harsh realities of gender violence and patriarchy codified into law affect all women to the same degree, regardless of skin tone or economic status. Although the myth of Mexico's alleged racial erasure wields a significant amount of power, these views have the potential to evolve, particularly as Mexicans' become increasingly aware of the ways in which race structures their society. Certainly, the world's recent reckoning with racism following the murder of George Floyd has not only reverberated across Mexican society, but also forced Mexicans to confront their own prejudices, all while the COVID-19 pandemic continues to reveal the ways in which race influences deep structural inequalities. The study of whiteness—and white supremacy—becomes all the more necessary at this pivotal juncture in time, as it enables us to understand how everyday people justify inequality, how societies exert oppression on non-white communities, and why injustice endures.

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## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> "A bomb should fall over the zócalo... it would do us all a favor. #vivaMexico." (All the translations from Spanish to English are the author's unless other source is indicated).
- <sup>2</sup> "cry of independence." This is a term used to describe Mexico's yearly Independence Day ceremony wherein the president delivers a speech evoking the Cry of Dolores, a call to arms by Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla which triggered the Mexican War of Independence in 1810.
- <sup>3</sup> "brown skin."
- <sup>4</sup> "Dark humor about white people."
- <sup>5</sup> "rural peasant women."
- <sup>6</sup> "Catholic women."
- <sup>7</sup> Literally "good behavior," but also refers to moral propriety.
- <sup>8</sup> "exotic dances."
- <sup>9</sup> "incurable evils."
- <sup>10</sup> "working-class women," particularly in the industrial sector.
- <sup>11</sup> "great lady."
- <sup>12</sup> "We should prevail over fashion... the humble female worker wants to imitate the great Catholic lady, and if the latter does not preserve her dignity even in the smallest of details, then the former, misguided and filled with ambition, will take another step toward avarice... all because of our bad example."
- <sup>13</sup> "imitate."
- <sup>14</sup> "example."
- <sup>15</sup> "To be pro-life."
- <sup>16</sup> "Most holy Virgin of Guadalupe save and defend your Mexican children."
- <sup>17</sup> "The green rag means death."
- <sup>18</sup> "Rich women abort, poor women die."
- <sup>19</sup> "feminist-Marxists"
- <sup>20</sup> FRENAAA's loose constellation of anti-AMLO demonstrators has been dismissed by the Mexican press as diffused and disorganized given its inability to cohere around a central message, a unified group of leaders, or a common set of objectives (Caso 2020). Fittingly, domestic officials and foreign diplomats once raised similar criticisms of the LNDLR.
- <sup>21</sup> "To think that a black man/person cannot be racist is stupidly racist."
- <sup>22</sup> In order of appearance: "the screwed ones" (*jodidos*), "the dark ones" (*prietos*), "the dirty ones" (*mugrosos*), "the unrefined ones" (*chundos*), "the maids/servants (female)" (*chachas*).
- <sup>23</sup> "student teachers."
- <sup>24</sup> "No, we don't miss 43 'mugrosos' that STOLE buses so they could protest rather than study. Stop glorifying criminals simply because they were incinerated/disappeared #Ayotzinapanos #NosFaltan43."
- <sup>25</sup> Drawing from Camp, I treat "positionality" as the "plural cultural, political, and ideological subject positions occupied by individuals in society" (115).