INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday, February 21, 1928, the written statement of Harvard professor Robert de C. Ward, of Boston, Massachusetts, was presented to the US House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization. In favor of the latest version of the so-called Box bills, House Resolution (H.R.) 6465, which sought to restrict Mexican migration, Ward decried the ills wrought by Mexican migrants[1] on the United States:

> The situation as to Mexican immigration is very serious. Not only is this influx already very large, but it is certain to increase. . . . There is no doubt that most Mexican peons are good "raw" laborers. They do outdoor work on farms, railroads, dams, aqueducts, roads and construction enterprises, chiefly still in the Southwest and in southern California. They are, as a rule, peace-loving, docile, and obedient. They are good to their families. But on the other hand they are a serious social problem. They know or care little about sanitation; they live huddled together in shacks or freight cars and, in increasing numbers, in congested "Mexican quarters," on the outskirts of western and southwestern cities, without proper facilities. . . . Our great Southwest is rapidly creating for itself a new racial problem, as our old South did when it imported slave labor from Africa. We must not forget that every Mexican child born on American soil is an American citizen, who, on attaining his or her majority, will have a vote.[2]

Joining a conversation that had been in place for several years, Ward echoed the larger tenor of much of the testimony in support of the bill and signaled the contentious climate attached to Mexicans in the 1920s.

Those standing with Texas representative John C. Box argued that Mexicans were a reproductive racial threat to the nation. Invading the intimate and public spaces of the United States, Mexicans were located in

their contested mobility. For instance, Texas commissioner of labor Charles McKemy described increasingly deplorable conditions: "Texas is now flooded with undesirable Mexicans, immigrants. On every corner the tamale and chili vendor is shouting his wares. On the large farms he has replaced the white man, due to the fact that his living standards are low, and it takes little to satisfy his needs. In railroad gangs and on public works Mexicans and negroes have pushed the white man out and threaten the respectability of the most numerous American families."[3]

History teacher M. R. Nelson expressed a similar concern: "Southwest Texas is already Mexicanized and the wave is gradually and somewhat rapidly spreading north and east. I sincerely hope that you may succeed at this session of Congress in having your measure [H.R. 6465] enacted into law."[4] Each of these snippets name a refrain all too familiar to us today: the Mexican threat lies in its movement. But that mobile danger is not just about Mexican invasion of US public spaces. The reproductive threat, Ward and others reminded Congress, was racial. Like Negroes, Mexicans would pollute the raced body of the nation. Despised for their filth even while desired for their "raw" labor, Mexicans appeared in political and public discourse as the nation's newest racial problem. Though easily able to locate Mexican migrants in their docile tractability and as labor, opponents of the Box bills also identified their danger. Dirty and backward, they were a menace.

The words of these citizens resonated with the January 1926 testimony of S. Parker Frisselle, who spoke *against* an earlier version of the Box Bill. Responding to H.R. 6741, Frisselle maintained that increased restrictions on Mexican migration were both unnecessary and counterproductive. Mexicans, he explained, constituted a critical population, indispensable to California, if not the nation. Represented through a persistent paradox, Mexicans were named both as uncontrollable and easily managed:

> My experience of the Mexican is that he is a "homer." Like the pigeon he goes back to roost. He is not a man that comes into this country for anything except our dollars and our work and the railroads, and all of us have been unsuccessful in keeping him here because he is a "homer." Those who know the Mexican know that that is a fact. We recognize in California, perhaps somewhat differently from the other gentlemen whom you will hear later, that with the Mexican comes a social problem. We in California think we can handle that social problem. It is a serious one. It comes into our schools, it comes into our cities, and it comes into our whole civilization in California. We, gentlemen, are

> just as anxious as you are not to build the civilization of California or any other western district upon a Mexican foundation.[5]

These two opinions, with their oppositional perspectives regarding the Box bills, aligned in curious ways. Not at all unique, the arguments advanced resonated with much of the testimony, both in support of and in opposition to the various versions of the bill as they also tapped into earlier debates. Fears of the effects of race-mixing informed the design and motivated the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924 and its harsh restrictions on all nonwhite migration.[6] They emerged as well across the debates about possibly setting quotas on Mexico.[7] Notably, both advocates and opponents of increased restrictions on Mexican migration not only spoke about Mexican migration but linked it to larger national conversations about race and labor.

These arguments were not lost on those who resisted increased restriction. As Frisselle's aforementioned words indicate, neither Frisselle nor California had any desire for the inclusion of Mexicans into the nation. Instead, opponents of the Box bills, those who favored the relatively unfettered entry of Mexican workers, spoke in harmony with the other prevalent narrative of the time: Mexicans, ideally tractable and docile, were "homers." They came, they worked, and they left. For farmers such as T. A. Sullivan, testifying on behalf of the Farmers of the Red River Valley in East Grand Forks, Minnesota, Mexicans provided labor that simply was not available from other agricultural laborers, who refused to "go down on their knees and work."[8] Echoing his testimony, C. S. Brown, of the Arizona Farm Bureau, located the importance of Mexican labor in his argument that white workers "won't pick [cotton] at all."[9] Articulating a view of Mexicans as willing and able to do the arduous labor of stoop and hand fieldwork, both Brown and Sullivan situated the desirability of Mexican migrants in a particular embodiment—a way of being in the fields that contrasted with whiteness.

As these varied yet somewhat uniform comments illustrate, the debates over the Box bills were about much more than Mexican migration. At play were larger questions about the parameters of race, nation, and migration. Endorsed by leaders of the eugenics movement as well as the Ku Klux Klan, the Box bills generated heated and prolonged conversation throughout the 1920s, with each new set of hearings raising again the same basic arguments—Mexican migrants were curiously needed and manageable, if also an uncontrollable and unnecessary racial menace to the nation.[10]

Though the reasons for the continued failures of the Box bills are complex and multiple, two critical pieces emerge for me.[11] First, the conversations are

rife with both spatial and temporal associations. Public figurations of Mexicans as temporary "birds of passage" featured centrally in arguments for regular and easy access to Mexican labor.[12] Fostered by the intersections with what I have named elsewhere as a narrative of need, the debates around Mexicans located them as a uniquely cheap and exploitable labor pool.[13] While other populations had also been named as economical and necessary, only Mexicans could be figured through the proximity of the US/Mexico border and their presumed circular migration as temporary and impermanent. Second, by the end of the 1920s, the debates over the Box bills waned, largely perhaps because legislative restrictions on Mexican migration were no longer necessary. Or, at least, the need for them was contained via legislation that criminalized undocumented entry. With the passage in 1929 of laws that made undocumented entry a misdemeanor and a second such entry a felony, new mechanisms of regulation were born that would soon name Mexicans within "illegality."[14] Together, the larger rhetorical climate around Mexicans installed the critical pieces that situated Mexicans as transient, cheap labor—recruitable and returnable.

This framing of Mexicans as needed temporary labor informed early policy and practice, and continues, in a somewhat different variant, to underwrite efforts to perpetuate Mexican migration even as dominant discourses promised a seemingly tenacious invasion. It shaped not only the ways the US nation-state thinks about managing, controlling, and containing Mexicans but also consolidates the larger narrative within the United States on Mexicans and citizenship. That is, if Mexicans are perpetually returnable, they exist outside of the US nation-state. Historically, the figuration of Mexicans as temporary located them as interlopers who perhaps came to give, to labor, but also to take. Even today, as public discourse overflows with tales of the dangers of Mexican immigrants who come to stay, legislation, sociocultural practices, and public discourses enable, if not invite and encourage, Mexican migrants to enter the country, often as guest workers, given amnesty.

In this book, I examine the rhetoric around Mexican migrants, discourses I situate as formative to racialization. I argue that in these narratives, frequent and persistent characterizations of Mexican migrants as temporary, cheap labor have, in effect, constructed in the cultural imaginary an image of Mexicans as deportable and disposable and racialized them into "illegality." They do so by figuring Mexican migrants into the familiar tropes of "illegal aliens" and "wetbacks," as well as the less familiar ones of zoot suiters and braceros. These tropes, I suggest, do the critical rhetorical work of racialization. Throughout the book, I enter into scholarly conversations on Mexican migration, deportability, disposability, and "illegality," conversations that

have typically occurred among legal scholars, anthropologists, historians, or political scientists, as a rhetorical critic invested in rhetorical racialization. If one effect of both deportability and disposability is the constitution of some migrants—typically Mexican—into "illegality," fixing Mexicans *as* "illegal aliens," that constitution is rhetorical, an effect of discourse.

Deportability, Disposability, and "Illegality"

The debates surrounding the Box bills in the mid-to-late 1920s surface a peculiar dynamic in US attitudes toward and regulation of Mexican migration. That tension, or what Nicholas De Genova names a "critical paradox," lies in the seeming contradiction between the persistent and rising regulations of legal Mexican migration and the simultaneous maneuvers that invite and enable surreptitious migration. That paradox is the legal production by the United States of undocumented migration from Mexico.[15] The United States remains open to undocumented Mexican migration even as it virtually precludes legal Mexican migration, a phenomenon necessitated by contradictions between US immigration law and economic practice. In short, despite long-standing and deeply held narratives of the United States as a proud country of immigrants, we have sought two different kinds of immigrants, those invited to become American and those desired as disposable labor. To make sense of the long history of Mexican migration to the United States, both legal and extralegal, I frame that past through the complexities of both deportability and disposability.

Typically described as the necessary solution to rising immigration crises, deportation has become the (threatened) practice of the day. But as scholars across a range of disciplines maintain, notwithstanding the horrors and trauma of deportation, it is deportability that demands critical scholarly, if not public, attention. If deportation is the legal act of removal, deportability is the condition of being liable to removal. A consequence of illegality, deportability is a regime, a global practice of regulation and surveillance that produces climates of vulnerability and exploitability.[16] The distinction is crucial; historically and today, within the United States, it has been deportability, not deportation, that has ruled the lives of Mexican migrants as well as migrants generally. Such a claim should not be read as a trivial or easy dismissal of the terrors and devastations of deportation. Instead, I pause on this distinction to underscore the relative infrequency of deportation in US history against the immensity of the shadow of deportability.

Within the United States, the production of deportability has long been intimately tied to its cultural, affective, racial, and rhetorical vectors. The mechanisms for racialized deportation date back to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which authorized the deportation of any Chinese immigrants who arrived while violating exclusion laws.[17] That category of deportability was soon expanded, with the 1892 passage of the Geary Act, which decreed that all Chinese laborers, regardless of date of entry, could be asked to prove their "legal right to be in the country" or face deportation.[18] These early laws and the initial cases of deportation were, as Daniel Kanstroom notes, "infected by more than a little racism."[19] Indeed, if we trace the rise in deportation policy and immigrant exclusion, the parallels are noteworthy. In the early 1900s, the nation continued to consider deportation, and Congress created increasing categories of individuals who were subject to deportation, including anarchists, paupers, prostitutes, those "likely to become a public charge," and those committing crimes of "moral turpitude."[20] Though the categories of deportables that emerged after 1892 were racially ambiguous, the classes of persons subject to deportation matched, almost verbatim, those of persons added into the various racial exclusionary laws.[21]

Still, despite the passage of the various acts, the legislation prompted relatively few deportations.[22] But by the mid-to-late 1920s, intolerance and nativism were clearly intertwined, and one consequence was a turn to deportation.[23] William Preston concludes that, in this time, "the foreigner became identified as extremist"; in turn, immigrants were figured as a burden and threat that could and should be limited, if not eliminated.[24] Most salient here were fears of communism and labor agitation. Though the "Red Scare" of the early 1920s was quite narrow in its original focus, it was pliable enough to foster the sense that many migrants were un-American and should be deported.[25] With the notorious Palmer Raids, government officials used raids, arrests, and detainments, often without warrants, to terrorize migrant and citizen populations. Then, during the Los Angeles sweeps of the 1930s, vast numbers were arrested, but few were held for deportation.[26] The arguments advanced in the name of eugenics, where leaders such as Harry H. Laughlin increasingly called for immigration regulation and control and argued that deportation was a prime means to rid the country of unwanted immigrants, exacerbated rising concerns of communism. Still, even with heightened xenophobia and a growing list of deportables, the actual numbers of individuals deported paled in comparison to what happened to Mexicans in the 1930s, when "Congress began to flex its immigration-regulation muscles."[27]

It is likely not coincidental that the coming of age of deportability aligned with its intersections with illegality. That is, the dramatic rise in deportations in the 1930s mapped onto a social and political contestation over the place and function of Mexicans and the passage of yet other laws restricting and legislating entry. Historian Mae M. Ngai is adamant that deportation "came of age" in the late 1920s and early 1930s as an effect of the ratification of the highly restrictive Immigration Act of 1924, increased regulation of national land borders, the advent of the US Border Patrol, and the criminalization of undocumented entry.[28] She maintains, "Immigration restriction produced the illegal alien as a *new legal and political subject*, whose inclusion within the nation was simultaneously a social reality and a legal impossibility—a subject barred from citizenship and without rights."[29] With the passage in 1929 of laws that criminalized undocumented entry, apprehensions changed such that undocumented entry became the single greatest category of violation producing deportation.[30] By the early 1930s, deportability and deportations were linked almost inextricably to illegality, and the populations most explicitly pushed into climates of deportability and "illegality" were Mexicans.[31]

As these accounts suggest, deportability exceeds its own legality such that as much as it is a legal condition, it is also much more. The deportation regime that scholars trace in the contemporary moment has a long history. Comprised of a multitude of practices, perspectives, and procedures that enable both literal and figural surveillance and regulation, deportability produces suspect bodies and lives lived in the "shadows."[32] Constituting what Elizabeth Fussell names the "deportation threat dynamic," climates of deportability require relatively few formal deportations. Little immediate and overt surveillance is necessary for individuals to experience the intensity of the threat of deportation, to avoid any and all interaction with law enforcement—and conceivably all authorities, legal or social—and thus to enter into states of heightened exploitation and vulnerability.[33] Cristina Beltrán, for instance, concludes that undocumented migrants today live in "a regime of enforced invisibility," while Marta Maria Maldonado, Adela C. Licona, and Sarah Hendricks write that "the regime of deportability creates a material as well as a psychic threat."[34]

Serving the economic demands of the nation-state, the experience of deportability ensures that the undocumented remain ideal and ever-available laborers. James Cockcroft explains: "Paradoxically, deportation and importation of Mexicans occur simultaneously and for identical reasons: to produce scapegoats for society's economic problems; to guarantee a large surplus of workers in the labor pool in order to meet production needs or to hold the

general wage level down; to deter workers from seeking better wages or work conditions by implying that they can always be replaced; and to make things difficult for potential labor organizers while assuring a pool of potential scabs. In sum, the deportation-importation of Mexicans serves to keep workers intimidated, divided, and confused."[35] Cockcroft is, of course, not an isolated voice. De Genova writes, "It is precisely their [undocumented migrants] distinctive legal vulnerability, their putative 'illegality' and official 'exclusion,' that inflames the irrepressible desire and demand for undocumented migrants as a highly exploitable workforce—and thus ensures their enthusiastic importation and subordinate incorporation."[36] Rachel Ida Buff comments that "these deportations render workers more vulnerable to exploitative work conditions and unconstitutional practices,"[37] while Sarah B. Horton concludes that "the ever present possibility of their deportation [i]s a key factor allowing employers to maintain the docility of the migrant labor force."[38]

This cultivation of fear begins to surface the implications of deportability with disposability. If deportability is widely theorized as the perpetual state of being liable to deportation, disposability refers to the condition of being used and then subject to disposal—lives discarded.[39] While the two conditions are not interchangeable, in the case of Mexicans, they are intimately connected. The principal points of overlap lie in both the significance of labor to public frames of Mexican migrants and larger discourses of race, as well as gender, sexuality, and citizenship. Scholars writing on deportability and disposability sometimes think at the intersections of the two;[40] however, I am unaware of an account of migration to the United States that puts the two in sustained conversation. Across this book, I think deportability and disposability as aligned vectors of what Kanstroom, commenting specifically on deportability, names technologies of "post-entry social control."[41]

I situate Mexicans within disposability so as to theorize the rhetorical ways they have been constituted in and through their bodies and their labor as excess. Broadly, scholars writing on labor and disposability argue that within capitalist structures, some bodies become mere troves of expendable labor, valued—if not cherished—for their very disposability.[42] Henry A. Giroux names disposable bodies as those who have been "rendered redundant,"[43] while Melissa W. Wright frames them as "industrial waste."[44] Their disposability lies in their amorphous cultural profile, the ways they manifest as "larger than life,"[45] and their circulation as "surplus populations."[46] But it also lies in the particular practices that enable and secure endless circuits of replaceable bodies whose lives are too easily reduced to labor and whose daily experiences render them "abandoned,"[47] "unwanted and . . . outside of the

state's care,"[48] "violable with impunity,"[49] even "*other than* . . . human."[50] But as Ranjana Khanna reminds us, disposability does not just reference those reducible to excess waste, or what she captures as the disposable camera or diaper. It also signals "something available for use," such as disposable income.[51] As she clarifies, disposable bodies are both, if not simultaneously, waste and available, a convenience that can be used as we please. Indeed, the very act of disposal insinuates sovereign control; sovereigns dispose of some bodies as they please.[52]

It is here where we can begin to think through the second pole of disposability, its connection to race and to what scholars have named "racial disposability,"[53] or a perspective on disposability that attends to racialized hierarchies of worth and value and to what David Theo Goldberg terms the "racial state."[54] That is, racial disposability marks the connected projects of racial hierarchies and disposability to assess and identify the varying racialized histories that name some bodies as excess,[55] or as Sherene H. Razack says, it is to think disposability as located in the particular racialized, gendered, sexualized, able-bodied logics in which it occurs.[56] Within the United States, the intersecting logics of race and disposability converge to produce racially disposable bodies as both highly visible, the stuff of spectacle that confirms normative associations between race (or gender, sexuality, citizenship, ability) as threat, and absolutely erased, not ever or no longer within the province of state protection.[57] The turn to racial disposability thus requires that we think about and assess disposability in its specificities—at a minimum racial, gendered, sexed, abled, and national—and recognize its differential manifestations.[58] While scholars theorizing racial disposability are clear that we cannot reduce disposability to labor, they also recognize the very real connections between race and labor, particularly within capitalism.[59]

I align myself with these arguments, as I also name deportability and disposability as rhetorical mechanisms of racialization. Turning on *rhetorical climates of deportability and disposability*, or those constellations of discourses, cultural practices, laws, and policies that coalesce to produce and maintain constitutive spaces, deportability and disposability frame and solidify Mexicanness. My emphasis on rhetorical climates underscores my argument that deportability and disposability garner their force through the work they do in public life. Again, while I neither dismiss nor trivialize the violence experienced by deported and disposed of bodies, I maintain that deportability and disposability sustain racialized regimes through their constitutive force; Mexicans are racialized into "illegality" as they are situated discursively within rhetorical climates. In this way, I share with both Torrie Hester and

Ali Bhagat the argument that deportability and disposability tell stories of bodies, notably stories of raced, gendered, sexualized, and national bodies.[60] With Lisa M. Corrigan and Amanda N. Edgar, I am interested in the constitutive and performative rhetorical strategies of disposability and deportability as they intersect with rhetorical theories of race, racialization, citizenship, and belonging.[61]

Race, Racialization, and Citizenship

Perhaps it is an odd move to look toward Mexican migrants as a way to think about citizenship and belonging within the United States. After all, by definition, Mexican migrants are already situated outside the boundaries of the nation even as they move within it. And yet it is that very liminal position that has historically and today exacerbated the tensions around the positions of Mexicans regardless of residency and citizenship status in the United States. It is within and through Mexican migration to the nation that Mexicans have been racialized. Immigration laws and practices within the United States have been intricately tied together with the racialization of both citizenship and ideal "American" as well.

A wealth of literature has advanced the argument that race is made through intersections of nation, immigration, and labor. As the considerable body of literature on European immigration and whiteness has suggested, immigration policies, practices, histories, trends, politics, and discourses have been crucial national projects, making races and citizens.[62]

But what of other incoming peoples, those who may have been differently "white on arrival?" What if we turn our gaze to Mexicans whose whiteness was legislated in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, counted, for the very first time, in the 1930 census under the category of "Mexican," and then categorized in the 1940 census as "white unless definitely of Indian or other nonwhite race."[63] As with European immigrants, for Mexicans, racialization, migration, and citizenship have long been complexly connected.

Quite simply, Mexicans within the United States have troubled racial categories from the very beginning. With the 1848 culmination of the war between the United States and Mexico and the US acquisition of much Mexican land and the people living there, Mexicans found themselves living in a new country, virtually overnight, one that formally and informally restricted citizenship to whiteness. Upon the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the war between the United States and Mexico,

Mexicans within the United States were legally named white. That legal status, of course, had limited effect and appeal, particularly in the Southwest. As Neil Foley proclaims, "For many white Texans, a Mexican American was simply a contradiction in terms, a hybridization of mutually exclusive races, nationalities, and cultures."[64] Likely linked to widely circulating narratives of Mexicans as "homers" who would return to Mexico, the United States paid little attention to Mexicans entering into or living within the nation until the 1920s, when regulations for entry were established. In what Natalia Molina names a race "all their own" of "non-white," Mexicans were racially defined as, simply, Mexican.[65] Neither white nor not white *or perhaps always and never white and not white*, Mexicans cannot be accounted for in the extensive and often brilliant body of literature that traces European "new immigrants'" racialized citizenship.[66] Instead, we need different "histories" of Mexican migration. In this book, I advance a rhetorical history that centers public discourse and locates racialization as rhetorical.

Rhetoric and Racialization

To theorize racialization as rhetorical, I turn to the scholarly literature on performativity. Guided by Judith Butler, I view race as a "stylized repetition"[67] and "a sedimented effect of reiterative practices."[68] In short I maintain that discourse brings about the effect of race. Where Butler provides the classic example of "It's a girl!" as the discursive call into being, Frantz Fanon's famous "Look! A Negro" is the speech act that compels race. Much like gender, race circulates as a regulatory ideal. Catherine Rottenberg explains, "Insofar as the performative repetition of norms is the condition of possibility for viable subjects, race performativity compels subjects to perform according to . . . fictitious unities."[69] These unities manifest around what Nadine Ehlers names the twin loci of race, "color and blood," which together and separately name the truth of race as evident both on and in the body.[70]

While performative theories of race and gender share crucial premises and assumptions, the performativity of race does not overlap neatly with the performativity of gender. The key distinction lies in the differential patterns of compulsion, desire, and identification. Within heteronormativity, Rottenberg explains, subjects are compelled to identify with and as the normative, and thus desirable, identity. That is, while gender identity may be forced upon girls and women, compelling their identification with femininity, that subject position has already been named as desirable, at least within a heteronormative frame: "wanting to 'be a woman' is coded as positive."[71] Race, however,

works differently. Only whiteness is a desirable identity. Rottenberg explains that "the forced identification with Blackness, however, is not linked with a desire to live up to norms of blackness. Rather, black-identified subjects, in order to sustain a nonmarginal existence, are compelled and encouraged to privilege and thus 'desire-to-be white,' that is, to live up to attributes associated with whiteness."[72] In ways both akin to and distinct from the porous boundaries that allegedly divide gender, the borders between racial identities are oddly rigid and permeable. Black and non-Black people of color are called both to identify in racial otherness and to desire, if not identify with, whiteness.

These complex intersections among desire, identification, and privilege are crucial to thinking about Mexican racialization. If racial performativity, like gender performativity, is regulated, that regulation mandates the boundaries—or borders—that divide racial groups. Attentive to the making of racial boundaries, Ehlers argues that the disciplinary force of law is crucial to what she names "racialized corporeality."[73] Racial purity laws, she writes, classify individuals and groups by both appearance and descent, making race simultaneously a matter of color and blood, phenotype and ancestry, or what I think of as appearance and character.[74] This point is crucial, for so long as race can been seen either *in* and/or *on* the body, race remains both static and mobile, historically fixed yet ever dynamic. Mexican migrants can desire and approximate whiteness, yet never achieve it, a force that perpetuates the persistent desirability of whiteness, promising, while denying, access. That is, if European immigrants moved in and through "probationary whiteness," Mexicans—*legally white*—might best achieve what I think of as a provisionary whiteness, a conditional spatiotemporal approximation that ensures a persistent desire, both among Mexican migrants for space within the nation and among the whiteness of the nation, which must always grapple with its simultaneous desire for and disgust of Mexican migrants.

Though guided by the interdisciplinary scholarship on racial performativity, I depart from this work in at least one key way. Rather than trace racial performativity at the level of the individual, I argue for a rhetorical approach and turn to public discourse. That is, while racial performatives account importantly for individual assumptions of race, they also inform social, shared—rhetorical—racializations.[75] As rhetorical scholar Kelly E. Happe argues, the turn to public discourse reveals the rhetorical force of institutional discourses while also taking us to both explicitly racial and seemingly race-neutral texts.[76] This move to the race-neutral is significant; it is there that we find race circulating in latent, often coded ways. That is, if race is

the effect of discourse, it is not just the effect of explicitly raced discourse. Its materialization does not lie just in the interpersonal but in the public, in those discourses, Sara Ahmed might suggest, that compel orientations toward and away from varied communities.[77] These discourses circulate broadly, shaping individual and social assumptions and orientations.

I theorize rhetorical racialization as the public, or discursive, seeing and sensing of race. Historian Matthew Frye Jacobson suggests that racialization entails the simultaneity of the perceptual and the conceptual. He argues that the making (he would say seeing) of race is "a double task of first 'recognizing' (that is, *assigning*) resemblance and then, second, reifying that resemblance by 'likening' the two different objects of perception."[78] In like manner, Matthew Pratt Guterl theorizes the "sightlines" of race that produce a "*shared vision*" of it.[79] Guterl explains it this way: "We see what we want to see, what we have been built to see, what we have to see."[80] To this emphasis on seeing race, I add what we might think of as the sensing of race, that affective orientation that propels connections or prompts disgust and withdrawal.[81] Jacobson argues that "race is *social value* become perception."[82] Though he does not name it this way, his words suggest what I think of as a perceptual/conceptual collapse. We "see" racial difference in the sightlines of race, and we thus know race. Jewish-ness, he might explain, lies in the collapse between the recognition of alleged bodily truths—skin, hair, nose—and what those truths tell us about character, essence, or being.

That shared perception of Mexicans lies at the intersections of what I name the body logics of race and the mobility logics of borders. Body logics, as I argue throughout this book, take us to the seeing of race, the assumptions that the sightlines of race reveal truths about race as a larger category intimately linked with assumptions of inferiority and superiority. Captured in, or characterized by, public obsession with and faith in phenotypic "evidence" of racial difference, body logics of race help us account for the particular assumptions of racial difference and racial truths that comprise US racial logics. They detail what Karma R. Chávez might name as the rhetorical intersection of actual bodies with abstract ones.[83] Mobility logics, closely linked to while still distinct from body logics, trace the varied racialized associations that prompt the sensing of race. Located in the spatial and temporal dynamics of borders, movement, and confinement, mobility logics of borders account for the excesses of race, the ways that it escapes the body, much as the oft-named hordes or floods of migrants spill over the border as they also trace the "lived mobilities" of everyday life as modalities of racialization.[84]

The Rhetoricity of Race

If we are to theorize race *as* rhetorical, *as* the performative effect of discourse, Mexican migration racialization between the 1920s and 1950s provides an ideal case.[85] *Deportable and Disposable* turns to this period in the first half of the twentieth century and shows that intersecting national conversations—a phrase I invoke to include public discourse as well as legal, cultural, and political practice—surrounding Mexicans and Mexican migrant movement laid the groundwork for and set the parameters of Mexican migrant racialization. These years and their interconnected politics of immigration reform, restriction, and surveillance, combined with cultural and economic mandates naming Mexican migrants not only necessary but ideal labor, meshed to produce a social and political climate in which race was made and citizenship refined.[86] Consider, for instance, Ngai's proclamation that "the 1920s was also an extraordinary time when immigration policy realigned and hardened racial categories in the law."[87] Or Molina's conclusion that in these years "an *immigration regime* [emerged] that remade racial categories that still shape the way we think about race, and specifically Mexicans."[88] Or Kelly Lytle Hernández's argument that the formation of the Border Patrol and the turn to surveillance of Mexican migrant movement was an act of racialization, making the race of Mexican migrants, if not also of US white citizens.[89] Intrigued by the gestures, however quick and slight, that these scholars make toward the constitutive force of public conversation, I situate the discourses of the early Mexican immigration regime as narratives of racialization. Prior to this time, the United States showed little, if any, legal, political, public, or rhetorical interest in Mexican migrants.[90] Then, almost overnight, Mexicans moved from invisibility to visibility, their movement and presence regulated, monitored, surveilled, legislated, and named.

Across the years that constitute the "immigration regime," Mexican migrants were identified, publicly, legally, and culturally through their deportability, disposability, and "illegality," their very bodies newly articulated into "grid[s] of intelligibility" and "optical econom[ies] of identity."[91] The turn to land border regulation and immigration law seemingly targeted *at Mexican migrants*, a conversation I take up in chapter 1, alongside rising public discourse, if not hysteria, about the "problem" of Mexican migrants, demanded the discursive racialization of Mexicans, who were suddenly, and very publicly, like undesirable immigrants before them, here, there, and everywhere.

Deportable and Disposable begins in the late 1920s, amid the national discussions around immigration that resulted in the Immigration Act of 1924

and the creation of the Border Patrol and ends with the outcry for massive deportations in the 1950s, that discourse of frenzied crisis that precedes in almost parallel fashion the anti-immigration hysteria of the contemporary moment. I attend in each chapter to what I think of as moments of rhetorical crisis, times in which the nation erupted in discourses of fear and concern that circulated around Mexican migrant bodies, attending to the figures that animate each. These include the 1930s repatriation drives centered in Los Angeles, the 1940s zoot suit riots, the 1940s emergency wartime contract labor program (named the Bracero Program), and the 1950s "wetback problem." Each of these moments turns on a particular racialized/nationalized figure: "illegal aliens," zoot suiters, braceros, and "wetbacks." I argue that each of the figures carries a particular layer of a larger ambivalence, manifesting both threat and hope and producing the promise of Mexicans as deportable and/or disposable, situating them simultaneously as the nation's ideal laborers yet despised residents/citizens. With this emphasis on labor, deportability, and disposability, I position the discourses of the early Mexican migration era as rhetorical narratives of racialization, a racialization particular to Mexicans that moves between the body logics of race that animate Black/white racializations and the mobility logics of borders that propel national racializations. In this way, I account for the rhetorical constitution of Mexican American racialization.

I offer a situated and contingent analysis of representations of Mexican migrants as they circulate in public discourse. Though each chapter centers on a single moment of crisis and forwards a particular racialized figuration of Mexicans, I chart the movement of the characterizations across the book, noting the traces, legacies, and accumulations of racialization across time. Throughout, in my attention to these narrations, I account for the rhetorical race work that the figures accomplish. Deceptively, this race work locates these figures as ontologically stable, even "real," while it simultaneously masks their rhetoricity. That is, the bodies that populated the dominant public narratives around Mexican migrants between the 1920s and the 1950s—the "illegal alien," the zoot suiter, the bracero, and the "wetback"—were typically framed in terms of their ontological "real-ness." "Grossly over-represented,"[92] they appeared, as Ahmed might argue, as *be*-ings who come to "have a life of [their] own."[93] We might think we "found" these figures, assuming they *are* "the impressions [they] leave."[94] My hope is that this book interrupts these ontological "truths," naming each embodiment so as to reveal its rhetorical racial production. Mexicans are racially made in and through these figures. Across the four chapters, I ask: Who are these figures? How did they come to

be? What work are they made to do? And how did the particular contexts in which they arose—that immigration regime—so produce them?

Moving Forward

My interest in meanings and identities guides this project. To answer my questions, I bring a rhetorical perspective, a mode of thinking of discourse as consequential and powerful. Discourse shapes and limits how publics come to think and believe, generating and framing the very meanings and identities through which we live and act. To be clear, I do not advance arguments of causality. Though I recognize the instrumental and persuasive force of discourse, I bracket those arguments and presume contingency and negotiation. That is, I think of discourse as provisional, relational, and unstable. Discourses arise in the moment yet were not born there, nor are they contained there. Both fixed and dynamic, located yet seemingly universal, discourses manifest in the moment and over time. This interplay is crucial when thinking about the rhetorical production of race, particularly in the context of Mexican migration. What we might imagine as larger discourses of race or migration arise in the specificity of the moment. Emerging through felt exigencies, such discourses name the relevant and related debates and tensions of the moment. They incite law, policy, practice, and perception. Though such discourses might appear discrete and contained, they are layered through with multiple, competing, and contradictory discourses, both of the moment and beyond it. Guided by these assumptions, I turn to the rhetoricity of discourse and trace the logics of it, those articulations that prompt new associations and meanings.

In short, I attend to discourse as constitutive and performative. I am interested in the discursive production of identities and subjectivities, or what we might think of as the assumptions of character that follow from—or perhaps are written into—race and racialization.[95] Theories of constitutive rhetoric offer a particularly apt mode of thinking about race and racialization, guiding rhetorical critics in our understandings of how social fictions, such as race, come to appear "real," as if they exist in nature.[96] I advance analyses and arguments that attend to inclusion and exclusion.[97] Constitutive and performative rhetorics, I suggest, are boundary-forming, naming those who belong and those who do not.

Constitutive rhetorics bring communities together, producing the kinds of cultural, geographic, and national bonds that bind collectives.[98] In this way, much of the scholarly emphasis on constitutive rhetorics has been on

"identity rhetorics," those discourses that, typically emanating from within populations, cultivate the identities and political motivations of those populations.[99] Still, we can and must think of constitution more broadly, assessing the ways that dominant discourse, such as the Constitution of the United States, calls into being othered populations.[100] Maurice Charland argues that constitutive rhetorics are crucial during founding moments, when a people is coming into existence.[101] Such a move takes us to discourse as disciplinary, as that which makes possible not only the ways we are named but the ways we come to be recognized[102] and the ways we come to be.[103]

In alignment with critical rhetorical scholars, I assemble in this book an archive of public accounts that circulated in and around each moment of rhetorical crisis. I am guided by commitments to uncovering how widely held ideas become naturalized. As such, I emphasize dominant media, mostly US national newspapers and periodicals; these are the most widely available accounts and thus are likely the most widely consumed ones. Though at moments I turn to government documents, I seek the quotidian, or what we might think of as those everyday discourses seen as matter of fact, *in*consequential, natural. It is the quotidian that conscribes the vocabularies that come to constitute race and racialization.[104] As Raka Shome suggests, "It is in the everyday materials of the popular . . . that the culture of a nation is secured."[105] Because my interest is in tracing the racializations of Mexican migrants within the United States, I limit my materials to US national and regional media. In my work on each chapter, I gathered somewhere between 75 and 150 news accounts. In chapters 1 and 2, while the "crisis" is national, it is overwhelmingly local. Consequently, the archive I assembled for both chapters is heavily local and regional. Chapters 3 and 4 attend to "crises" that garnered national attention. In these chapters, my artifacts are more national than local.

The case studies that follow trace the public narratives and attendant racializations across the four moments of rhetorical crisis that constitute my analysis. Chapter 1 turns to the first moment—the emergence in public discourse of the "illegal alien," a figure immediately named dangerous *and* Mexican. Across key shifts in US patterns and practices of border surveillance (the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924, the creation of the US Border Patrol, and the criminalization of undocumented entry) and in-migration to the United States (the effective elimination of all existing sources of cheap immigrant labor and the consequent cultivation of Mexicans as the new labor sources), Mexicans were situated publicly as an immigrant problem.

I argue in chapter 1 that the late 1920s and early 1930s constituted a time in which rhetorical climates of deportability produced the visible racialization

of Mexican migrants. More specifically, I suggest that we see in this moment the rhetorical production of "illegality" as a racial project and a racial performative. I build my argument through an analysis of the public discourse surrounding the repatriation campaigns of the 1930s. The 1930s installed the vocabularies and rhetorical strategies that continue to constitute climates of deportability. I turn in my analysis to the rising significance of rhetorical surveillance and climates that coalesced to create Mexican migrant vulnerability.

In chapters 2 and 3, I pause on the war years, tracking two national conversations that are strikingly parallel yet markedly divergent. In a critical departure from my otherwise focused attention on Mexican nationals, chapter 2 turns to Mexican Americans—US citizens—and their figurative removal, or disposal. In this chapter, we meet our second figure, the zoot suiter, that Mexican American (or Black or Asian American) youth who participated in zoot culture. In 1943, Mexican American youth were subject to ritualized acts of humiliation and terror. For several days in Los Angeles and Southern California, the site of massive in-migration of young white men, riots broke out. Nightly, white sailors and soldiers would descend upon the streets of Los Angeles, and later around more of Southern California, in search of zoot-suited youth. In what has been named the "zoot suit riots," military youth beat and stripped zoot-suited youth as the local (white) citizens cheered and police looked away.

Accounting for disposability, I continue to theorize the rhetorical racialization of Mexicans in this chapter. Extending my argument that the racialization of Mexican migrants occurs at the intersection of the body logics of race and the mobility logics of borders, I suggest that race is produced through threat and violence. I trace what I name a Blackened violence, akin to the typical violence woven into constructions of violent Black masculinity, that layered both foreignness and racialness onto Mexican bodies. The culmination of this racialization was disposability. Mexican bodies were racialized into a gendered/racialized/sexualized alienation that allowed for their absolute humiliation and control. The literal divestment of zoot suits stood as a rhetorical divestment of race.

In chapter 3, I turn to the massive "importation" of Mexican migrants through the Bracero Program, a contract labor agreement between the United States and Mexico responding to growers' call of an agricultural labor crisis. In this chapter, I trace an unusual, if not unique, celebratory discourse, seemingly welcoming Mexicans into the fabric of the nation. Chapter 3 features the third figure animating this era of immigration regime, the bracero, that contract laborer who entered the nation during World War II as a hero,

ally, neighbor, and savior. If the 1930s were a decade in which few Mexican migrants entered and hundreds of thousands left the nation, the 1940s brought narratives of need and welcome. It was in the 1940s that the United States and Mexico embarked on an unprecedented project, an international agreement, situated as a wartime emergency measure, that brought Mexican workers to the United States as contract laborers. The Bracero Program outlived the "emergencies" of World War II and lasted for twenty-two years, as five million Mexican braceros and countless more undocumented Mexican migrants entered the United States.

It is here that I begin to think explicitly about the simultaneity of deportability and disposability through my analysis of the rhetorical narratives surrounding the wartime Bracero Program, its early years from 1942 to 1947. Advancing rhetorical analysis of public discourse, including popular periodical accounts as well as governmental and special interest publications and records, I trace the figuration of Mexican braceros as welcome allies who eagerly came to the United States and willingly endured the arduous work of agriculture. I attend to the framing of the Bracero Program as ideal, an agreement premised on hope, control, and efficiency. I argue that the intersection of welcome and control sustained what Ahmed might name a happy promise of race. That is, Mexican braceros were racialized through Blackness in a variant of happy slave narratives, bringing something that slaves did not—their impending departure.

Chapter 4 offers my final analysis; I examine the early years of the 1950s. By the 1950s, agricultural leaders had continued to advocate successfully for the continuation of the Bracero Program and managed to wrest greater control over it. Under their influence, recruitment processes changed and oversight lessened, the results of which were considerable increases in undocumented migration. Though clearly enabled by US agribusiness, that rise fostered the fourth moment of rhetorical crisis—a nation overrun by "wetbacks," the final figure I examine in this book. Installing a discourse strikingly familiar to the tales circulating today, the mediated accounts comprising the early years of the 1950s promised national ruin and national control. Situated alongside the bracero, that happy worker who promised to work and then leave, the "wetback" reactivated both the threat of race and the promise of control. Simultaneously depicted as out of control (imagine here floods and hordes) and absolutely controlled (think deportation), "wetback," I suggest, was a racialized accumulation. Akin to the "illegal aliens" of the 1930s, "wetbacks" were constituted with the threats and hopes of race. With emphasis on the force of the term "wetback," I return to the concept of the

racial performative and argue that what occurred here was one more collapse of the bodily logics of race with the mobility logics of border that effect what I name as a racial recognition, a racialization that allows for race to be seen *and* known. That racial recognition is critical, for it is in the seeing and knowing of race that we can be reassured of the ontological security of race. Race becomes real.

In the book's conclusion, I bring together the implications of my four case studies as I sketch my larger argument about rhetoric and racialization. What does it mean that Mexicans have been and continue to be racialized into "illegality"? Reflecting on deportability and disposability, desire and disgust, I maintain that there is a necessary fluctuation at play in rhetorical racialization. While the racialization of Mexican migrants is saturated with threat, it also moves with hope. It turns on both the body logics of race and the mobility logics of borders. It is animated by larger racial scripts as it emerges in the politics of the moment. These seemingly contradictory moves are critical to the larger racialization. They enable the persistent ambivalence that sustains the paradox surrounding Mexican migration and its conflicted relationship with the nation-state.