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## Inside America: An Analysis of the Capitalistic Domination of Mexican Farmworkers

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# Inside America: An Analysis of the Capitalistic Domination of Mexican Farm workers

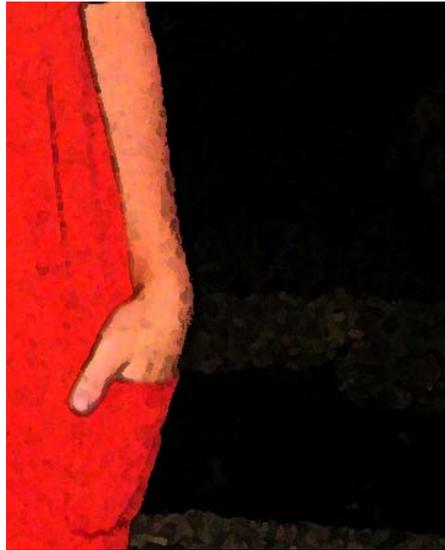
By Shamaila Taj

## Summary

*In this article the author explores the history of pressures for assimilation that has encircled Mexican Immigrant Farm workers. The phenomena is conceptualized by the author as a capitalistic Americanization process of pressure that hinders the ability of workers and their families to sustain their cultural beliefs and practices in California, a state which historically has been a mecca for the Mexican American culture, or so it seems.*

## Introduction

How does American ideals affect Mexican immigrant farm workers? In this essay I analyze capitalism's role in both the creation and hindrance of the agricultural labor community. I discuss historical events and actors that have been a part of the "Americanization" process and its effects. I present the health exposures and the Federal Laws established in respect to the safety of the farm workers and its implications in the context of The Center for the Health Assessment of Mothers and Children (CHAMACOS) of Salinas, in California.



## Self Reflection and Americanization

I was born in California, United States in 1983 as a female Muslim named Shamaila Ali Taj. The closest identifier that made me American was my geographic location. Throughout the course of my life I have tried to alter, change,

and remove myself from all of the associations that made me, in my mind, "Un-American".

All throughout my life I wanted to mold me into a society that was idealistic, capital conscious, and expansion driven. Even though I was born as an American Citizen I always felt I had to work at earning that title because of my name, my religion, and the traditions of my family. My self-conceptualization derived itself around the removal of my unique identifiers and the replacement of a fully "Americanized" individual. As close as I was to this ideal I always thought I was so far away. My political project changed this belief and brought the "Americanization" ideal into a perspective that went beyond my personal circumstances out into members of a society that was foreign to my own.

The consistent theme that I see in myself and that connects me to my political project is the process of becoming "Americanized". The term "Americanization" has various meanings and can be a single identity belief or an entire

social structure obtainment. In “Americanization from the Bottom Up” the author discusses the specific moments and people that make up our current United States community. James R. Barrett defines the term “Americanization” as “...a unified notion of what it meant to be American and more than a hint of nativism.”<sup>1</sup> There were people who were fit to *do* the “Americanizing” and people fit to *be* “Americanized”. Since majority of the people who make up America are various generational immigrants themselves, there naturally had to develop a hierarchal system of who was on top. Also, Barrett talks about why “Americanization” was even necessary. “From the late nineteenth century on, in a movement that gathered momentum after the turn of the century, teachers, settlement house workers, and professional patriots aimed to ‘Americanize’ these immigrants, to guide and hasten the process of acculturation by which they might embrace the values and behavior of mainstream America.”<sup>2</sup> It was a process that would push the new immigrants towards believing in American ideals and following American social norms.

“Americanization” still continues today, and it relates to my issue on a psychological level. Immigrants come from their countries bringing their values and beliefs with them. “Americanization” works to remove this past life and rush on the new community (in full) in which they live. This does not work out as simply as hoped. “Immigrant workers constructed their own identities, embracing those perspectives and ideas that made sense to them, rejecting those that seemed to be at odds with that they recognized as reality.”<sup>3</sup> When placed into a new setting they still try to hold

onto what they know of themselves because it is more comfortable and is much easier to do. This causes problems with language barriers and misunderstood social norms.

“The huge numbers can easily overshadow the vital element here – the human agency of the immigrants themselves. They fashioned their identities out of their own experiences, the language and ideas they brought with them and those they confronted in such union campaigns.”<sup>4</sup> All of these ideas help me think about my issue because they revolve around the conceptual process of Mexican immigrants molding into the United States. Regardless if they feel they are being “Americanized” or are a foreign people coming into a new world. No matter how it is broken down, they are displaced; the United States is not their home. They come to work here in hopes of creating tremendous financial gain, and with working here they come across employment related injuries and health risks. Where do they go in need of help and support? They are in a nation that does not claim them as their natives, but depends on them to sustain.

“Americanization” is the connection that capitalist influences have over immigrant farm workers and their quest for economic stability in America. Opportunity struck after World War II for Mexican’s to come into the United States to become a part of this process. As R. Das states in his essay, “The agricultural labor force has included a large percentage of Mexican nationals ever since World War II created labor shortages and later, in 1951, when the “Bracero” or manual laborer program inviting Mexican to work in U.S. agriculture was authorized by Public Law 78.”<sup>5</sup> The Bracero

<sup>1</sup> James R. Barrett, “Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880-1930.” *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 3 (1992): 996-1020. <http://www.jstor.org/997>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 998

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 1012

<sup>5</sup> R. Das, A. Steege, S. Baron, J. Beckman, R. Harrison. “Pesticide-Related Illness Among Migrant Farm Workers in the United States.” *Int J Occup Environ Health* Vol. 7. (2001), pp. 303-312. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/pesticides/pdfs/IJOEH-7-4-Das.pdf> 304.

program was the foundation for the rise in Mexican immigrant farm labor.

### The Bracero

The definition of a Bracero is a Mexican laborer that is temporarily admitted legally into the U.S to perform seasonal agricultural labor. It is a lifestyle still carried out today. Martin Donahoe states that, "Two thirds of migrant seasonal farm workers are shuttle migrants, returning annually to their countries of origin (predominantly Mexico)."<sup>6</sup> In "Immigrants, The Story of a Bracero" a Bracero discusses his experience coming from Mexico to California to support himself and his family through agriculture cross border labor. Rigoberto Garcia Perez (translated by David Bacon) tells about "crossing the wire" (going from Mexico to the United States) in order to work land that does not belong to him for financial gain. "When I began to think about crossing the wire, my father was against it. It was as if I had told my parents I was going to work down in the mine. His idea was that when you work for someone else, you never get free of it. For him, working on the land we were working on for ourselves, not someone else. When you work for someone else, the profit from your work stays with them. That was his advice, and it was true. Because here you work just to survive, and you don't own anything. You just survive and survive, but someone else owns your labor."<sup>7</sup> This is capi-

talism at its most heightened and powerful domination. A man with financial obligation on land that does not belong to him but will be provided with a portion of the land's value promotes a capitalistic society in the most defined way. And this struggle resonates through the community as a shared deterrent.

### Community

My definition of a community lies in the heritage of a group rather than the geography. I believe that a community is a group of people with a shared grasp of the world around them and a shared heritage of who they are as a unit. A community represents an identity, a unifying term that connects their common interests into a fellowship. When I look at my social network of immediate family and close friends I do not see that shared belief. I do not feel that my community consists of the people in my daily life, nor does my community consist of my personal relationships and kinships. My community is my cause and the people that are a part of my cause.

My goals in life are to reach out to the elements in my life that are the foundation for the creation of who I am as a person. I consider the food I eat, the clothes on my back, and the house I live in all to be privileges that I have, at the expense of another person. Someone has hand picked the lettuce in my salad, someone has hand stitched the sweater I'm wearing, and someone has chopped down the wood that is the structure of my home. Those people are my community of struggle and they are the ones that are the biggest part of my life.

I am a "do-gooder" by nature. I have a deeply rooted passion for helping others and for being part of something bigger than me. As cliché as it sounds, I am happiest when other people are happy. As I look upon the privileges in my life, I see the circle that I am a part of. I see that it begins with the one person creating an object that I use to live the

<sup>6</sup> Martin Donahoe. "Trouble in the Fields: Effects of Migrant and Seasonal Farm Labor on Women's Health and Well-being." *Women's Health in Context*. (March, 2004), pp. 1-3.  
<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/470445> 1.

<sup>7</sup> Bacon, David. 2001. "Immigrants: The Story of a Bracero" p.1-7:  
<http://dbaon.igc.org/Imigrants/24BraceroStory.htm> 1.

comfortable life that I have. Then I look at what my ambitions are and the fact that I want to help the underpaid laborers in an underprivileged country. And I see that I am part of their lives as well, I am their means to an end. It is ironic how my shared community is the building blocks for developing my goals to help solve the problems that I, at the time unknowingly helped to create. But as I become more mature and aware of the physical elements of my life that connect me to these communities of struggle I realize that I have an obligation to use my passion in a much better way without continuing the perpetuation of their hardships. Immigrant farm workers in the United States are a community all onto themselves. They are the foundation of international food distribution. I wanted to learn about this community which I felt I connected to and some how contribute to it in any way I could.

### **Political Action and the Mexican Immigrant Community in Salinas, California**

My political project was a venue in which I could connect myself to the community in which I feel that I belong to. Volunteering at CHAMACOS was my way of giving back my community.

My political action was volunteering my time at The Center for the Health Assessment of Mothers and Children of Salinas. My political goal was to promote awareness of CHAMACOS existence and their cause. I think my action was very appropriate for my goal. When I first heard of CHAMACOS I had no knowledge of their purpose or of their contribution to the community. After several weeks of volunteering I began to learn more about the basis of their research and the dynamics of the facility. It enabled me to understand the necessity of their cause and I wanted others to understand as well. By taking what I learned and providing brochures and photographs related to CHAMACOS I was able to pass my

knowledge to my peers. My goal of wanting to promote awareness was fulfilled by my political action of volunteering.

As minor as my role was, I learned a great amount about myself and my role in my community. I also feel that by discussing with others about CHAMACOS it provided a better understanding of their settings as well. My peers contributed to my feelings about supporting this cause with insight into other programs that could financial support CHAMACOS research. It was great not only to learn about the program but also to learn that my peers felt as passionately about it as I did. It was nice to know that there are others that see the great need for the health and wellness of our agricultural labor force.

After several weeks of immersion in the CHAMACOS program I felt that it truly made me take a step back and analyze my life. It influenced my assumption that health care is easily accessible, and it really made me think about how much I take for granted. After learning more about CHAMACOS and the people it focuses on, I realized that they are a group of people surrounded by a privileged community, yet are not given any of those privileges. Language, health, wages, treatment, and many other aspects keep them segregated from the nation in which they are the backbone of. My political project changed the views I had on my personal identity and further connected me to the communities I wanted to contribute to. Becoming involved with the CHAMACOS program made me aware of my obligations and position in society as a United States citizen. My personal endeavors with becoming "Americanized" changed from a self fulfilling ideal into a useful tool towards positively helping another group come to terms with this process.

My belief in what politics are strongly influenced the action I took for my political project. I believe that politics is the association one feels the most connected with in regards to shared beliefs and concerns for the events

and elements of any given time. Politics is the framework for containing a shared passion or belief within a community of people. It is the rules and the freedoms of an organization, both coexisting as a balance for creating progression. It is the movement toward change and transgression; a forward motion of pushing the boundaries of circumstances that may *appear* to be out of our control.

In order for the actions I wanted to see happen I had to, myself, first become active and involved. The way that I enabled myself to perpetuate the change that I wanted to see in my surroundings was just with simple conversations. I began speaking more openly about the things I did not fully understand, and I asked many questions about political policies, government structures, and historical events. I found many others that were apathetic or just as uniformed as I was. By making conversations with the people around me about a shared topic we formed a community of young adults that wanted to understand a concept that was a major part of our society in order to create change. By this small act of conversing with others in order to obtain an understanding that would further lead to a change in our world, I think we accomplished something political. We came together with a shared passion and moved forward towards developing our innovations for the world we live.

### **Americanization, It Affected Everyone...**

In the book, *Lakota Woman*, Mary Crow Dog tells her story of being a native American woman discovering her personal placement in her world and living in a time when her people were finding their identities as well. She discusses the anguish of growing up as an Indian woman in America. Specifically she talks about the lack of want for things they did not have. "We kids did not suffer from being poor, because we were not aware of it. We had nothing to compare our life to. We existed in a vacuum of our own. We were not angry be-

cause we did not know that somewhere there was a better, more comfortable life. The 'boob tube' brainwashes people, but if they are poor and nonwhite, it also makes them angry seeing all those things advertised that they can never hope to have –the fancy homes and cars, the dishwashers and microwaves, the whole costly junk of affluent America."<sup>8</sup> Envy did not exist because there was nothing to compare their lives to. They were happy with what they had because it was all they knew. But exposure to the luxuries of television's display of American life created the want for better things, and the anger when it is unattained.

Mary Crow Dog was a woman who had a lifestyle and because of American ideologies and as a minority without a homeland she had the perfect features of becoming the product of "Americanization". At CHAMACOS many of the migrant farm workers initially were economically stable but because of United States influence they develop a desire for financial gain. It is a capitalist ideal that is placed into their minds. Granted many of them are stripped of the resources from their homeland, but many come to United States to pursue financially better lives. Without the United States capitalist push on Mexican societies there would be much less of a want to conform to a new way of life outside of their native residence.

Federal laws are created because of a need for standards of operation and national regulations. The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act of 1947 (FIRFA), was issued by the United States Environmental Policy Agency (EPA). Also called the Worker Protection Standard (WPS), is a United States federal law that "sets an overall risk and benefit standard for pesticide registration, requiring that all pesticides perform their intended function, when used according to labeling instruc-

<sup>8</sup> Mary Crow Dog, Richard Erdoes, *Lakota Woman*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990), 26.

tions, without posing unreasonable risks to human health or the environment.”<sup>9</sup> When FIFRA was first passed in 1947, it gave the United States Department of Agriculture responsibility for regulating pesticides. In 1972, when FIFRA underwent a major revision, it transferred responsibility of pesticide regulation to the Environmental Protection Agency and shifted emphasis to protection of the environment and public health. The 1972 version is largely still in place. In regards to my political action this federal law greatly impacts migrant farm worker safety and regulates their occupational health factors. Specifically one of the requirements under this act states that the under the provisions of WPS covered employers are required to “inform workers about pesticide hazards by requiring safety training (workers and handlers), safety posters, access to labeling information, and access to specific information (listing of treated areas on the establishment).”<sup>10</sup> This required notification of harmful exposures connects with CHAMACOS purpose of monitoring pesticide exposure as well as promoting awareness of their harm. Even with the placement of federal laws, the safety concern does not reflect on the outcome of what actually occurs. Carol Sakala goes on to say that, “The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act of 1947(FIFRA) provided guidelines for minimal pesticide regulation. This act specified rules of safe application that were to appear on the labels of chemical containers. The government

did not enforce these rules, however, and generally accepted standards that had been established by chemical manufacturers with respect to consumer rather than field worker exposure.”<sup>11</sup> How can farm workers feel protected by these laws if they are not regulated? This is an injustice that leads to the development of health hazards in the farm working community.

There is very little in the United States Constitution that relates to my political project. The one particular article that closely relates to my political project is in Article 1, Section 8, 3<sup>rd</sup> line, which gives the power of congress: “To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes.”<sup>12</sup> I think that most of the farming done by the farm workers in Salinas is part of the export system within our state. The work that they do provides the food that we eat, and also may be the food that is distributed among the nation. Farm workers are part of the infrastructure of commerce that maintains the United States capital income.

I searched through the entire California Constitution and I was expecting to easily find a law relating to my political project. Even in the section regarding labor relations, I felt, did not directly relate to my political project. The one law that could somehow be connected ended up being something that relates to the personal rights of all the people who live in

<sup>9</sup> Jack L. Runyan. "Summary of Federal Laws and Regulations Affecting Agriculture Employers, 2000." *Food and Rural Economics Division, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Agriculture Handbook No. 719* <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/ah719/ah719.pdf> 16.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Carol Sakala. "Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers in the United States: A Review of Health Hazards, Status, and Policy" *International Migration Review*, Vol. 21, No. 3, Special Issue: Migration and Health. (Autumn, 1987), pp. 659-687. <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=01979183%28198723%2921%3A3%3C659%3AMASFIT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-A%3A663>.

<sup>12</sup> Mount, Steve. "Constitutional Topic: Martial Law." *USConstitution.net*. 30 Nov 2001. [http://www.usconstitution.net/constop\\_mlaw.html](http://www.usconstitution.net/constop_mlaw.html) (4 April 2008). 8.

California. In Article 1, Section 1 it states that: “All people are by nature free and independent and have inalienable rights. Among these are enjoying and defending life and liberty, acquiring, possessing, and protecting property, and pursuing and obtaining safety, happiness, and privacy.”<sup>13</sup> I think the part specifically concerning a person’s safety is the basis on why the CHAMACOS exist in the first place. Because one of the rights given to a person who lives in California is for them to reside safely within the state is jeopardized by their occupation health hazards, I think that this law is not being met in regards to the safety of our local migrant farm workers.

Not only are the Mexicans who immigrated to America subjected to “Americanization” but also the ones who still inhabit Mexico are forced to be dominated by the American overthrow. Gilbert Gonzalez states in his essay, “Americans gladly promoted themselves as the saviors of Mexico. ... Reformation, that is, Americanization, meant adjusting Mexico to continued infusions of U.S. capital for the exploitation of Mexico’s resources and labor power.”<sup>14</sup> In this twisted belief in “saving” Mexico, they invaded their country and dismantled their economy for American financial gain. “Observers concluded that Mexicans were salvageable if given the right training, and to the degree that their inveterate or cultural natures allowed. Americans insisted that they were capable of, and the lone party responsible for, leading them to redemption. That redemption, however, never contemplated the severance of the economic ties

binding Mexico to the United States. Rather, cultural Americanization strengthened the hegemonic economic position of the United States.”<sup>15</sup> The “Americanization” of these people helped to create the stable and economically powerful America that we know today. I feel that U.S. citizens have an obligation, not only with economic interest, but with consideration to keep these people healthy and to look after them with the utmost care. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

### Health and Safety for Mexican Immigrant Farm Workers

My biggest concern for the Mexican farm laborers is their health and safety. Understanding the history and reasons behind the immigrating into the United States is the foundation for why they are here. The issues that they face, physically as an entire people, is the reason why I became involved. As an American Citizen I feel that I am connected to the events of their lives and I am very much involved in the outcome of the contributions as a community. In an essay in a Health Perspective journal, the author Thomas Arcury states that, “The estimated 4.2 million migrant and seasonal farm workers in the United States constitute a population at risk for serious environmental and occupational illness and injury as well as health disparities typically associated with poverty.”<sup>16</sup> They are living and working in a death trap. “Over 200 million

<sup>13</sup> California Constitution. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 05:56, April 16, 2008, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=California\\_Constitution&oldid=203696279](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=California_Constitution&oldid=203696279)

<sup>14</sup> Gilbert G. Gonzalez. “The Ideology and Practice of Empire: The U.S., Mexico, and the Education of Mexican Immigrants” *Cultural Logic: Vol. 4, No. 1*, p.1-22 Fall, 2000. 10.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 12

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Arcury.; Sara Quandt.; Gregory Russell. “Pesticide Safety among Farmworkers: Perceived Risk and Perceived Control as Factors Reflecting Environmental Justice” *Environmental Health Perspectives*, Vol. 110, Supplement 2: Community, Research, and Environmental Justice. P233-240. (Apr.,2002) 233: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0091-6765%28200204%29110%3C233%3A%3E2.0.CO%3B2-M>

pounds of pesticide use was reported in California in 1999, of which over 90% was in production agriculture. During this period, over 60 million pounds of pesticides used were on California's list of chemicals known to cause cancer or reproductive harm."<sup>17</sup> The exposures to these pesticides do not only occur in the workplace and not only to the workers. The pesticides are brought into the home and their families become exposed due to improper storage of work clothes and sanitation. Knowing that pesticide exposure is harmful and inevitable, CHAMACOS focuses a majority of its time on teaching the farmworkers prevention of further exposure at home. They begin with informing these workers that pesticides are indeed dangerous. "Some farmworkers believe that pesticides are not dangerous to humans, and that farmers would not use chemicals if they could harm humans."<sup>18</sup> I feel that the "Americanization" of these workers contributes to this belief. To me it seems that they cannot fathom that the society that they are working so hard to become a member of has the capability of harming them during that process.

One of the saddest issues that the farm workers have is lack of influence over their environment. "Few of the farm workers felt that they had a great deal of control over reducing their exposure to pesticides."<sup>19</sup> This is where CHAMACOS is needed the most. They teach these workers that they *do* have control over the amount of exposure they have to pesticides. They provide them with storages for their work clothes, pamphlets on proper ways and places to store their work clothes, as well as the most effective ways of sanitizing before entering their homes. With this information provided by CHAMACOS I felt that they were making a tremendous difference in these

migrant farm workers lives (and I felt proud to be a part of it).

The United States health care system appears to not contribute to helping with the health issues that this group faces. "Migrant farm workers and their families have restricted access to health and human services because of their frequent relocation between states, language and cultural barriers, and limited economic and political resources."<sup>20</sup> says Gregory Betchel, an author in a *Journal of Community Health Nurses*. With the various factors against them, the farm workers lack the proper characteristics needed to receive public health care. It seems ironic to me that the agricultural labor force is so strong in our nation but their health services are so weak. "Although migrant workers may suffer from exposure to pesticides and chemicals, extreme heat and dehydration, unsanitary and unsafe working and living conditions, and on-the-job injuries, health resource availability and use are low among this group compared to the general population."<sup>21</sup> The logistics do not match up. Immigrant farm workers have the one of highest rated work related health hazards, and are the largest population of agricultural production in the nation. Why is America not taking care of their laboring food source foundation? Why are we enticing Mexicans with capitalist fantasies of fortune and prosperity and then breaking their backs for our own economic gain?

## Capitalism

<sup>17</sup> Steege, "Pesticide Related Illness among Migrant Farm Workers in the US", 306.

<sup>18</sup> Arcury, "Pesticide Safety among Farmworkers", 234.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>20</sup> Gregory A Betchel.; Mary Anne Shepard; Phyllis W Rogers. "Family, Culture, and Health Practices among Migrant Farmworkers" *Journal of Community Health Nursing*, Vol. 12, No. 1. (1995), pp. 15-22.  
Stable URL: <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=07370016%281995%2912%3A1%3C15%3AFCAHPA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-F15>.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

Capitalism as a system of domination is one of the driving forces as to why the migration occurs to begin with. As my classmate, Alexandra Ludovina states, “We invaded a country of a brown people and exploited their resources until there was no internal economic system for them to rely on. As a result they were forced to come to the country that raped their land. Once here they painfully work every day trying to become a belonging member of the society around them without ever achieving that goal.”<sup>22</sup> With capitalistic ideals and desires to be better they continue to work hard labor as farm workers. But it is not a process that is formulated without backlash. This has been resisted time and again throughout history.

Mexicans have known that even though they are large in numbers, specifically in California, they have a shortage in influence and power. Resisting capitalism and going against “Americanization”, the Mexican community has united in the past in the quest for justice. As seen in the movie, *Chicano! “Quest for a Homeland”* the Mexican’s came together to rise against American injustices placed upon them because of their racial differences. On August 29, 1969 the Mexican community rallied together for a march against the Vietnam War combined with a march for Mexican Civil Rights. Police forces took this peaceful rally as an indication of violent uprising and forcefully (violently) disengaged their gathering.<sup>23</sup> It was an event in history that was the portrayal of the all too often occurrence of minorities trying to culturally unite and progress and American forces deconstructing their forward movements.

### Critical Race Theory

<sup>22</sup> Alexandra Ludovina, SBS 350 Class, 4:30pm April 29, 2008.

<sup>23</sup> *Chicano! “Quest for a Homeland” Part I* (NLCC Educational Media, 1996).

Analyzing minority momentum in U.S history, (such as the Chicano movement) through critical race theory gives a better understanding of Mexican immigration displacement in America. Tara Yosso discusses and defines Critical Race Theory, “Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a framework that can be used to theorize, examine and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact on social structures, practices and discourses.”<sup>24</sup> The process of Mexican immigration into the agricultural field of work can be properly analyzed using CRT. Connecting as a racial identity and sharing the same heritage may help for survival and coping. Ian Lopez states that, “For Mexican Americans, racial identity reveals itself as primarily a matter of region, where region encompasses both actual and constructed space.”<sup>25</sup> It is not the physical qualities such as skin color, but it is the shared community placement that reflects their bond.

CRT also shares the idea that race has multiple definitions and can be attributed to a group of people who collectively identify as that particular race. “Nevertheless, understanding race as ‘a question of community attitude’ emphasizes that race is not biological but social.”<sup>26</sup> Race becomes an element of unification and cause for requesting justice. Race is their community. Mexican immigrant farm workers can therefore be a collective race, and as seen through CRT, have the ability to make change in their community struc-

<sup>24</sup> Tara J. Yosso. “Whose Culture has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth” *Race Ethnicity and Education*, Vol. 8, No. 1, March 2005, pp. 69–91  
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<sup>25</sup> Ian F. Haney Lopez. “Race, Ethnicity, Erasure: The Salience of Race to LatCrit theory. (LatCrit: Latinas/os and the Law: A Joint Symposium by California Law Review and La Raza Law Journal)” *California Law Review* Vol. 85, no 5. (Oct 1997) 1151.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 1156.

ture as well as the outlying American social structure they are placed in.

In conclusion, my personal pursuit of trying to “Americanize” myself gave way to a broader perspective of others involved in this process. Mexican immigrant farm workers are victims of capitalism and United States disregard for its infrastructure. My research displayed the human side of American economy. It enabled me to see that my individual identifiers are not so individual after all. “Americanization” is a multi-layered ideology and, in respect to the agricultural labor community, it is highly influential and unkind.

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