

2. The Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs Applauds the Mexican American War Effort, 1943

War came, and all America changed—small town, big city, North and West. . . . The sons of the races and nations of the world, who came here to make this America, went off to fight for freedom the globe around.

The southwestern states gave their full complement, among them thousands of their Spanish speaking sons. One of them is . . . Ricardo Noyola. He was born . . . on a ranch "Los Potreros," in Texas near the Rio Grande. Like his father, Ricardo could speak no English. He had had no schooling, working as a farm hand growing cotton and wheat since he was 13. It took war . . . to bring about a change for Noyola. . . .

At Camp Robinson, Arkansas, . . . the U.S. Army . . . took Noyola and 54 other Spanish speaking boys . . . from Texas, . . . New Mexico, . . . California—and formed a special platoon. It gave them a leader who could teach them in their own language, share their troubles, advise and encourage. It sent them to Fort Benning, Georgia, and put them through 13 weeks of intensive training. . . . The result—a body of men who . . . received high commendation. . . .

. . . And today, . . . Noyola and his comrades are scattered throughout the 300th Infantry, 3 and 4 to a company. Reports the Army: "They have fallen in on an equal plane with the English speaking men and more than hold their own." . . . Spanish speaking Americans from the Southwest make topnotch soldiers. . . .

This is . . . one proof. There are others. . . .

. . . It was proved in blood at Bataan.

Bataan was a National Guard tragedy. The first soldiers ready, they were the first to go. . . . The Guards were home town units, local soldiers, local leaders. The threat of war was too great to allow time to regroup them. They went to the Philippines as they were. The 200th and 515th Coast Artillery of New Mexico were sent because they could talk Spanish and . . . because they were the crack anti-aircraft units the Filipino people needed.

On April 9th, it was over. The glory of Bataan is the nation's but the grief is in the homes of the small towns of America—from Harrodsburg, Kentucky to Salinas, California. . . . New Mexico gave the fullest measure of devotion—one quarter of the 9,000 men from the mainland lost.

Action was America's answer to Bataan.

America demanded fighters, workers, farmers. All these the Spanish speaking Americans gave to their country.

Along the U.S. side of the Rio Grande 1 out of every 2 Spanish speaking males between the ages of 15 and 65 is either in the armed forces or has left his home to farm, to mine, to build ships and planes.

In Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. *Spanish-speaking Americans in the War: The Southwest* (Washington, D.C.: Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs and Office of War Information, 1943).

Food—in this global war we have learned the old lesson that the man who works the earth is basic to us all, soldiers, civilians and allies. . . .

The Spanish speaking Americans, heirs to the oldest agricultural tradition in America, are working with their hands and their machines to add the citrus fruits of California and Texas, the beet sugar of California and Colorado, the wheat of New Mexico and the cattle and sheep of the Rio Grande to the stores of the United Nations. . . .

With so many of our men in the armed forces and in war production plants, we needed help to grow and harvest the food we send our armies and our allies.

This our Mexican neighbours provided when they came into the Southwest to help us harvest our crops—and they came with full faith in the common cause. . . .

Machines and the skilled hands they require have changed life in the Southwest. To her copper mines war has added the airplane plants, and shipyards the length of the Pacific Coast. Through training courses many thousands of Spanish speaking Americans have found a place in these front line industries of modern war.

Todos—all of us are in this war.

Spanish speaking women are nurses and Red Cross aids, Spanish speaking girls are in the Waacs, the Marines, the Waves.

And Spanish speaking women have gone to work beside their men in the plants of the Southwest. One of many examples of the special contribution they make—at the Consolidated assembly plant at Tucson, Arizona the needle craft of the Spanish speaking women has proved the very skill necessary to complete the intricate cloth and leather fittings of the planes.

De Las Democracias

A young Spanish speaking boy put it this way: "I am the last of my family—my mother and my father are dead. My brother—I am very glad now—they thought he got killed out there some place; but now the War Department has sent me a telegram, saying that's not so—he's alive. I think I'm going out there, too, just where my brother is, then we can fight together. We got to fight—we got to win this war—maybe we die for liberty—maybe not—but we got to fight—we got to win."