
Original Article

The impact of neoliberalism on Latinos

Rubén O. Martínez

Michigan State University, East Lansing

Abstract The neoliberal movement and its policies of the past four decades have negatively impacted the entire nation. This essay provides an overview of American neoliberalism and its elements, with particular emphasis on how it is imbued with and frames powerful racist currents, and how it has impacted Latinos. An examination of the impact of neoliberalism on Latinos shows persistently high levels of poverty, declining household income and declining levels of wealth. Neoliberal policies that reduce funding for education lead to program cuts that negatively impact Latinos. In K-12, bilingual education programs and other multicultural education programs continue to be under attack. Undocumented immigrants are increasingly incarcerated in private prisons and civil and human rights generally continue to be diminished by practices allowed under the Patriot Act. The essay concludes with a critical discussion of neoliberalism and the public good in American democracy.

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Neoliberal policies of the past four decades have negatively impacted populations not just in the United States and Western European countries, but also in countries across the globe, and especially in Latin America (Birch and Mykhnenko 2010; OECD 2011; Lansley 2012; Bright and Schostak 2013). Indeed, it was in Chile that Pinochet's ruling junta, which assumed power on 9 November 1973, embarked on implementing neoliberal policies under the guidance of the Chicago Boys and the support of the US government (Kornbluh 2013). In the 1990s, the Washington Consensus, a set of neoliberal policy prescriptions used by international financial

organizations based in the United States, guided the structural changes in the economies of developing countries. Yet, despite its influence in the arena of political economy, studies of neoliberalism and its impact on Latinos are nearly absent, with only a handful of Latino scholars recognizing the importance of conducting research on the topic (Dávila 2004; Aguirre et al. 2006; Rocco 2010).

This essay presents an overview of American neoliberalism and its elements, with particular focus on how it is imbued with and frames powerful racist currents against Latinos.¹ It then examines the impact of neoliberalism on Latinos with an emphasis on socioeconomic status, education, the criminalization of undocumented immigrants and civil and human rights. The article concludes with a critical discussion of neoliberalism and the public good in American democracy. While it cannot address the many ways by which neoliberalism has shaped the experiences of Latinos, the author is hopeful that it will help spur the systematic and critical study of neoliberalism and Latinos.

1 An earlier version of this article was presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of Chicano and Chicana Studies, 23 March 2013, San Antonio, TX.

American Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is a sociopolitical movement rooted in the struggles against socialism and communism in Europe in the early twentieth century, and which ultimately opposed and undermined social democracy in Western countries in the second half of that century. Its roots in the United States are found among right-wing libertarians, anti-communists and conservative traditionalists who gave rise to the New Right in the 1950s. The first national leader of the New Right was Barry Goldwater Jr., senator from Arizona. Known as Mr. Conservative, he is credited, among others, with the rebirth of the American conservative political movement that today consists of neoliberalism and neoconservatism. In the 1960s the New Right took on populist tones, became linked to the religious right, and began to focus on opposing the progress made by the civil rights movement on social issues. In 1971, Powell Jr. (1971), a corporate lawyer from Virginia and representative of the tobacco industry who would become a justice of the US Supreme Court in 1972, submitted a confidential memorandum to the US Chamber of Commerce in which he sounded the alarm against socialist, communist and fascist forces that sought to destroy America's free enterprise system.

Although a moderate on the Supreme Court, Powell presented a perspective in which college students, liberal professors and the mass media are viewed as responsible for the criticisms of capitalism of the period. Powell's perspective was already evident among libertarians in the 1950s (Libertarian Press 1974). In his memo, Powell set forth a course of action for the Chamber of Commerce that included a multitude of activities and resources: (i) a staff of respected social science faculty, (ii) a staff of speakers who translate the works of the faculty for the public, (iii) a speaker's bureau, (iv) scholars who evaluate social science



textbooks for balanced and fair treatment of free enterprise, (v) equal time for speakers on campuses, (vi) balanced faculties on the nation's campuses, (vii) surveillance and monitoring of national television and radio networks, (viii) scholarly journals for independent scholars who promote the free enterprise system, (ix) a mix of publications for the public, (x) paid advertisements promoting the virtues of free enterprise, (xi) direct engagement in the political arena, (xii) a staff of lawyers to influence the judiciary by acting as counsel *amicus* at the Supreme Court, (xiii) mobilization of stockholders through educational and political action programs, and (xiv) a more aggressive attitude by business leaders to participate in the political arena to promote the free enterprise system and punish those who would oppose it. All of these resources and activities, he urged, should meet standards of accuracy and professional excellence. Powell concluded his memo by arguing that threats to free enterprise are threats to individual freedom and that the nation had moved too far in the direction of state socialism. In retrospect, the shape of neoliberal efforts in this country follows the broad political contours set forth by Powell.

Powell's view is complemented by those of Huntington (1975), who argued that the United States suffered from an "excess of democracy" as a result of the civil rights movement, which expanded participation among members of marginalized groups. Huntington was one of the editors and authors of *The Crisis of Democracy*, a work commissioned by the Trilateral Commission, which was formed by private interests in 1973 to foster cooperation among Western Europe, Japan, and North America. In his chapter "The United States," Huntington argued that "the effective participation of a democratic political system usually requires some measure of apathy and noninvolvement on the part of some individuals and groups" (114). American democracy, he argued, requires a "balanced existence."

Not surprisingly, in 1973, a group of conservative legislators founded the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a non-profit organization which has been a powerful behind-the-scenes player in coordinating the neoliberal policy movement over the past several decades. Supported by major corporations and non-profit organizations, ALEC hosts state and national summits for conservative lawmakers and their supporters to present and advocate for hundreds of model legislative bills often drafted by corporations with the assistance of ALEC staffers. These model bills are then introduced by ALEC legislator "members" in state legislatures across the country (NRDC 2002; Center for Media and Democracy 2013). During the 1999 and 2000 legislative sessions more than 450 "model bills" were enacted into law (NRDC 2002), and 466 were identified in the 2013 legislative agenda targeting the following areas: (i) Voter ID and Stand Your Ground, (ii) wages and worker rights, (iii) public education, (iv) the environment and (v) citizen access to the courts (Center for Media and Democracy 2013).

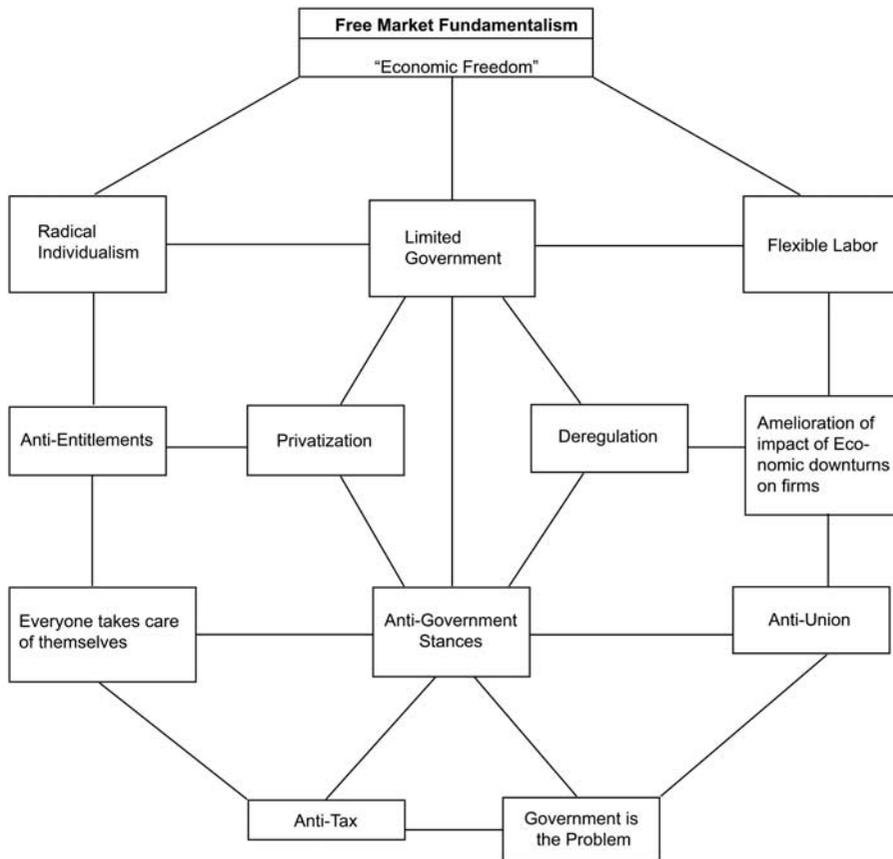
The Powell Memo, Huntington's views and the work of ALEC gave and continue to give concrete direction to the neoliberal movement in this country. As with all social and political movements, there are intellectuals whose works

influence movement leaders. As such, the Powell Memo, Huntington's views and the work of ALEC reflect a broader political philosophy and perspective that emphasizes free enterprise, limited government and individual freedom. As a movement, neoliberalism consists of a mix of economic theories and political beliefs and ideologies that have been used to mobilize a policy movement on behalf of the American capitalist class that has shaped social and economic policies for more than four decades (Birch and Tickell 2010; Miller 2010).

On the basis of the ideas of von Mises (1951), Hayek (1944), Knight (1946), Friedman (1962), Buchanan and Tullock (1962) and other free market economists (Ronald Coase, Gary Becker, and so on), the economic theories of neoliberalism emphasize monetarism in the shaping of economic policies (Palley 2004). Monetarists seek to control inflation by controlling the supply of money primarily through the setting of interest rates. Monetarism arose as a response to socialism and to Keynesian economics, which had difficulties addressing the problems of stagnation and inflation, or the stagflation that occurred in the early 1970s. Perhaps the work of Allan Greenspan, a monetarist who headed the Federal Reserve for several years before the Great Recession of 2007–2009, best exemplifies efforts to influence the economy by controlling the supply of money. Greenspan was a disciple of the radical conservative novelist, Ayn Rand, who influenced millions of readers with her own neoliberal ideas. Underlying the perspectives of neoliberal economists such as Hayek and Friedman, followers of von Mises (Johnson 1991a), a staunch right-wing libertarian (Libertarian Press 1974), are anti-socialist and anti-collectivist views.

The political beliefs and ideology of neoliberalism emphasize, first and foremost, free market fundamentalism. To this are added the principles of radical individualism, limited government, and flexible labor (see figure 1). Free market fundamentalism, the *sine qua non* for neoliberalism, emphasizes *laissez faire* ideas in which the economy is minimally regulated by government even as the state is used to implement neoliberal policies. According to Friedman (1994), he, Hayek and other monetarists believed in a “free society” in terms of nineteenth-century liberalism. What neoliberals mean by the term “freedom” is “economic freedom.” That is, individuals should be free to pursue profits and wealth in an open market without being impeded by government regulations. Presumably, such individuals will do so responsibly without having a negative impact on others; neoliberal ideology has it that individuals are free to voluntarily enter into relations with others but should not negatively impact or harm others (Friedman 1987). Moreover, economic freedom is viewed as “the indispensable basis of all other freedoms” (Knight 1946; Libertarian Press 1974; von Mises 1998), a view that, if not purely ideological, is surely open to critique and debate (see Wootton 1945).

Radical individualism emphasizes individual responsibility for economic and social well-being. It also privileges individual freedom of choice in the market over the public good. Individuals are free to pursue their interests within the



Source: Rubén Martínez

Figure 1: The elements of US neoliberalism.

boundaries of law and order, and they must not become dependent on government for their well-being. This is articulated in terms of an anti-entitlement view which negatively portrays the beneficiaries of social programs as “welfare cheats” living on government handouts (Reese 2005; Wacquant 2009a). Reductions of social programs occur through anti-tax initiatives.

The perspective of limited government emphasizes involvement of the state in the maintenance of the conditions for the accumulation of capital, including a strong military, while emphasizing limited social programs and government services to the citizenry. Limited programs and services support the anti-entitlement view emphasized by radical individualism. The state, then, maintains the order necessary for competitive markets to function with minimum restraints. State intervention in the market beyond this point is viewed not only as unfair (Johnson 1991b) but as ultimately leading to socialism (von Mises 1998). In this model, individuals are free to pursue their economic interests or wealth, but they

must also accept responsibility for taking care of themselves and their families without being dependent on government programs for their material well-being. Limited government is promoted through privatization of government services and through deregulation of the economy. Liberalization of the market, it is argued, allows individuals to be free from the restraints of market regulations, which is the cornerstone of neoliberalism.

Deregulation was set in motion with the presidency of Jimmy Carter, gained momentum under Ronald Reagan, and has continued to this day (Meeropol 1998; Cooper 2009). Privatization is seen today in charter schools, prisons and detention centers, and many other functions previously carried out by government. A legitimating notion underlying privatization is the view that the market is more efficient and effective than government, a view that is not borne out in education, corrections, public infrastructure and other areas in which privatization has occurred and given rise to corruption (see Project on Government Oversight 2011).

Finally, flexible labor is the principle that employers should have maximum flexibility in determining the conditions of employment, with the power to employ and dismiss workers without the burden of employment protection measures (see Solow 1998). Presumably this would permit firms to meet the demands of market dynamics and downturns in the business cycle. In this context, the pursuit of collective interests is virulently opposed through aggressive efforts to break up labor unions and other organizations that support workers and other group interests (Purcell 1993). Another way this principle is implemented is through the suppression of wages and benefits. This is achieved by promoting temporary employment and low-wage jobs, with workers tending to earn minimum wages without benefits (Abelda and Carr 2012).

It is this principle of neoliberalism, for example, that underlies the attack on tenure in education and public higher education, and which has given rise to the number of adjunct faculty members across the nation. Simply put, the pursuit of group interests is viewed as wrongheaded, with the freedom of individuals maximized when the conditions detailed above prevail. Supposedly, under neoliberal capitalism, those who succeed in amassing wealth do so by creating and operating firms that provide job opportunities for others to do well – in this way, wealth trickles down to those willing to work hard, and the majority of the population benefits.

With regard to racial domination and oppression, it is assumed that racism no longer exists and that all individuals are free to pursue their own well-being. There is even speculation of having entered a post-racial period, a view based mostly on the election of President Obama. In recent years, the emphasis has been on promoting color-blind approaches that circumvent intergroup issues. Indeed, from the neoliberal perspective, groups do not exist; they do not have an objective existence, only individuals exist. Thus, within the neoliberal framework, structural inequalities also are assumed to not exist. Supposedly, we live in an open



society in which structural barriers such as institutional racism do not exist. Neoliberals, despite being market focused, frequently join forces with cultural reactionaries who are guided by nativistic tendencies and who oppose immigration and the full incorporation of racial and ethnic minorities into the nation's institutions. These views fuse together to support exclusionary policies based on absolutist values that oppose cultural pluralism and multiculturalism and negatively impact Latinos and other historically oppressed groups in the United States. The next section examines the ways by which neoliberalism and neoconservatism have limited the public spaces in which issues of race can be discussed.

Race, Neoliberalism and Neoconservatism

Although both Democrats and Republicans promote neoliberal policies, Republicans are much more likely to promote views that fuse neoliberal and neoconservative perspectives. The distinction made here between the two is that, while both are authoritarian perspectives, neoliberalism focuses principally on free market fundamentalism and neoconservatism represents cultural reactionary perspectives based on absolutist values used to preserve a national culture that opposes cultural relativism, affirmative action, abortion, gay marriages, and other civil and human rights issues.² Neoconservatism is in some ways consistent with and mixes with neoliberalism, especially on anti-taxation and anti-government, with the two movements comprising core elements of the New Right. Both deny the structural nature of American racism, holding that racism exists at the individual level and that individual choice allows individuals to pursue paths that will improve their lot in society. As a result, by promoting color-blind approaches in the various life areas, such as education and employment, individuals are to be treated in accordance with their levels of individual performance and accomplishments.

These views, for example, were clearly behind the initiative in Arizona to pass and implement HB 2281, which targeted ethnic studies and declared that students in public schools “should be taught to treat and value each other as individuals and not based on ethnic background” (Arizona HB 2281 2010). This act amended Arizona statutes relating to school curriculum and was used to dismantle the Mexican American studies program at the Tucson Unified School District. HB 2281 prohibits classes designed primarily for members of a particular ethnic group and which promote ethnic solidarity. Opponents of Mexican American studies claimed the program violated HB 2281.

In short, neoliberal views are now codified as law in the arena of education in Arizona, where, according to Tom Horne, former Arizona attorney general and former superintendent of Arizona's Department of Education, one's race is not important in this society; what is important are the skills and personal characteristics of the individual (*Horne v. Martinez* 2011). Horne's ally, John

2 I recognize that from some perspectives neoconservatism is understood as part of the liberalization of markets at the global level. However, it makes sense to reserve the term to refer to the cultural reactionary movements that oppose the civil rights policies that benefit women and racial and ethnic minorities.

Huppenthal, former superintendent of Arizona's Department of Education, who opposes teacher unions and supports charter schools, argues that we are engaged in the "... eternal battle of all time; the forces of collectivism against the forces of individual liberty ... right now in our country we're way out of balance. The forces of collectivism are suffocating us, it's a tidal wave that is threatening our individual liberties, and so we need, at the national level, to rebalance this and we need to make sure that what's going on in our schools rebalances this" (Western Free Press 2012).

Similarly, anti-affirmative action policies prohibit preferential treatment on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender and so on. While these laws also tend to prohibit discrimination, this component usually goes unenforced. Indeed, legitimating political views of anti-affirmative action policies hold that such policies harm minorities themselves and hold them back in society primarily by subjecting them to the stigma of having failed to legitimately earn positions obtained through affirmative action procedures. In other words, it is for the good of minorities that affirmative action policies have been and should be eliminated.

The denial of institutional racism, according to Robbins (2004, 3), removes racism from "the realm of history, cultural practices, and social relations of power." This perspective has the effect of displacing issues of race and racism from public discourses. Within the orbit of neoliberalism, then, structural inequalities are hidden by attributing the causes to the private and personal spheres (Davis 2007). By separating inequalities from the structural features of society and assigning them to the private sphere, the issue of racism itself is removed from the public sphere. The displacement of racism from the public sphere diminishes the spaces of public discourses in which its elimination can be framed and discussed. The result is the intensification of racial oppression both by making it invisible and by muting resistance by the oppressed. Added to these neoliberal and neoconservative pressures on Latino communities is a powerful assimilationist movement that attacks the cultural pluralism that was partially institutionalized in the sixties. This includes attacks on bilingualism in all sectors, including the voting ballot. This particular emphasis uses exclusion as a means to diminish the influence of the Latino vote and thereby diminishes the values and principles of US democracy.

Latinos and the Impact of Neoliberalism

As the Latino population continues to grow, its electoral influence also grows, albeit more slowly than many would hope given the relatively low rates of voter participation. Still, Latinos and their emphasis on the common good pose a threat to the neoliberals who seek to impose policies that embed market principles throughout American society. As these exclusionary processes take hold in the electoral and policy arenas, the impact of neoliberalism in other sectors continues



unabated, particularly, in terms of socioeconomic status, education, immigration, and civil and human rights. Indicators in each of these areas are critical for understanding the impact of neoliberalism on Latinos, as neoliberal policies target both the economy and government. The next section provides an overview of the impact of neoliberalism on Latinos in each of these areas.

Socioeconomic Status

Neoliberal policies in the United States, as elsewhere, have negatively impacted the working class and the poor in society. For Latinos, the Great Recession of 2007–2009 was particularly catastrophic. Not only have gaps increased in income, education and poverty, but Latinos were hardest hit in terms of wealth because, for them, it was primarily based on the value of the houses they owned (Aguirre and Martinez 2014). Among other things, home devaluation was one of the major effects of the bursting of the housing bubble in 2008–2009. In addition, Latinos are the fastest growing major population group in the nation's prisons. Indeed, a robust school-to-prison pipeline has been developed over the past three decades. Today, with the privatization of prisons and detention centers, Latino youth and undocumented immigrants have become key elements in the fuel that powers profitmaking in privatized correctional facilities (Villarruel et al. 2002; Wacquant 2009b; Kilgore 2011). Only recently have the neoliberal and neoconservative emphases on law and order been curbed somewhat by the ruling handed down by Judge Shira Scheindlin, District Court for the Southern District of New York, in *Floyd et al v. City of New York* (2013), in which stop and frisk practices by New York City police were held to be unconstitutional because they were based on racial profiling.

Poverty, Income and Wealth

Inequality of income and fortunes was viewed by von Mises (1974) as an essential feature of capitalism. Today, it is widely held that there is growing inequality in income and wealth across the country (Kochhar et al. 2011; OECD 2011). Corporate profits are increasing as the number of working poor families is also increasing (Gilson and Perot 2011; Abelda and Carr 2012). The principal measures of inequality include poverty, income and wealth. Table 1 presents poverty rates by race/ethnicity for selected years since 1979, the year before Ronald Reagan was elected to the presidency of the United States. In 1979, Latinos had a poverty rate of 23.5 per cent compared with 9.4 per cent among Whites and 29.9 per cent among Blacks. Poverty rates increased for all groups during the 1980s, declined slightly toward the end of the 1990s (22.6, 9.1 and 24.5 per cent, respectively), increased again during the Great Recession through

Table 1: Poverty rates (in percentages) by race/ethnicity by year, 1979, 1989, 1999, 2009, 2013

<i>Race/Ethnicity</i> ^a	<i>Year</i>				
	1979	1989	1999	2009	2013
Latinos	23.5	25.3	22.6	25.3	23.5
Whites	9.4	9.8	9.1	12.3	9.3
Blacks	29.9	29.5	24.9	25.8	27.2
All Groups	12.4	13.1	12.4	14.3	14.5

^aHispanics are included among Whites and Blacks.

Source: Census Historical Poverty Tables (CPH-L-162, 165, 166, 167), US Census Bureau; DeNavas-Walt et al. (2010); DeNavas-Walt and Proctor (2014).

2012 (not shown), then decreased slightly in 2013. While the Carter regime set in motion deregulation in the 1970s and the Reagan regime set in motion privatization in the 1980s, the Clinton regime continued both processes in the 1990s, which is regarded as the decade of reform; it is the decade when the public sector was immensely reduced through passage and implementation of “welfare to work” policies (Cooper 2009). Putting persons on welfare to work was supposed to move them out of poverty, but that has not actually been the result, with most becoming part of the working poor (Abelda and Carr 2012).

Table 2 presents the median and mean household income by race/ethnicity for the year 1972 and then for decennial years from 1980 to 2010. Latinos and Blacks consistently had lower household incomes than Non-Hispanic Whites. Between 1972 and 1980, all groups experienced a slight decline in median household income, and then again between 2000 and 2010. Between 1972 and 2010, Latinos experienced the smallest increases in median and mean household incomes of all the groups, although they remained slightly higher than Blacks. Moreover, the income gap between Latinos and Non-Hispanic Whites increased between 1972 and 2010. In 1972 the mean household income for Latinos was 74.3 per cent that of Non-Hispanic Whites, and in 2010 it was 69.1 per cent, reflecting an increase in the gap of 5.2 percentage points. The gap was lowest in 1980, when Reagan assumed the presidency, but has increased since then. This is of particular importance because Reagan is hailed as the president who ushered in the neoliberal regime in this country. Today, Latinos are the most over-represented ethnic group among the working poor, comprising 15.3 per cent of the workforce and 23.6 per cent of the poverty-wage workforce (Thiess 2012).

Table 3 presents the median net worth of households by race/ethnicity for 2005 and 2009, years just before and after the Great Recession of 2007–2008. Overall, Latinos (65.5 per cent) experienced the greatest losses compared with Whites (16.2 per cent) and Blacks (53.2 per cent). The median household net worth for Latinos decreased from US\$18,359 to \$6325, while that for Whites decreased from \$134,992 to \$113,149, and Blacks from \$12,124 to \$5677. Kochhar et al.

Table 2: Median and mean household income by race/ethnicity by decade, 1972, 1980–2010^a

<i>Race/ethnicity</i>	<i>Year/decade</i>									
	<i>1972</i>		<i>1980</i>		<i>1990</i>		<i>2000</i>		<i>2010</i>	
	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Latinos	35,781	41,127	34,391	42,006	36,111	45,236	41,994	55,681	37,759	51,420
N-H Whites	48,091	55,282	47,904	55,930	51,661	64,321	57,764	77,305	54,620	74,439
Blacks	27,676	34,961	27,117	35,194	30,202	40,128	37,562	49,601	32,068	44,780
National Figures	45,196	52,602	44,616	53,064	48,423	60,487	53,164	72,339	49,445	67,530

^aIn 2010 Income cpi-u-rs (Consumer Price Index Research Series Using Current Methods) adjusted dollars.

Source: DeNavas-Walt et al. (2011).



Table 3: Median net worth of households by race/ethnicity, 2005 and 2009^a

<i>Race/ethnicity</i>	<i>Year</i>	
	2005	2009
Latinos	18,359	6325
Whites	134,992	113,149
Blacks	12,124	5677

^aIn 2009 dollars.

Source: Kochhar et al. (2011).

(2011), in their study of wealth inequality, found that wealth gaps between Whites and Latinos increased from a ratio of 7.4 to 1 to one of 17.9 to 1, and it increased even more between Whites and Blacks. The median household net worth of \$6325 for Latinos means that a significant proportion of households have little to no wealth at all. These losses for both Latinos and Blacks will be difficult to make up given that they tended to be based on home ownership, and the houses were likely greatly devalued and or lost through mortgage foreclosures. Moreover, it is unlikely that many families will be able to obtain new housing loans under the stricter mortgage guidelines that were implemented in the wake of the Great Recession.

Education

Education is widely hailed as the pathway to upward mobility in society. Yet, the education gap between Latinos and Whites has persisted over the past several decades despite important gains that were made in those years following the civil rights movement (Martinez and Aguirre 2003). Latinos continue to drop out of the education system in significant numbers before completing the requirements for a high school diploma (Center for Labor Market Studies 2009; Martinez 2011). Although the number of Latinos obtaining college degrees has increased over time, it has not kept pace with the growth of this population group relative to the country's total population. For example, between 1980 and 2011, the gap in the attainment of a bachelor's degree or higher between Latinos and Whites increased from 17 to 26 percentage points (Aud et al. 2012). Moreover, Latino males have lost ground in higher education both in terms of the number enrolled and the relative number of degrees received. Sometime between 1980 and 1990, the tipping point occurred in the decline in the number of Latino males relative to Latinas attending college and they fell below 50 per cent of the Latino/a total enrolled in institutions of higher education. At the same time their numbers in prisons across the country increased substantially (The Sentencing Project 2003). In this context, the key policy issues affecting Latinos are the rise of charter



schools, reduced state funding for public education and for public higher education institutions, and reduced funding in financial aid programs.

Providing choice in public schools has been a popular approach to reforming public education. More than anything else, charter schools embody the principle of privatization, with public funds transferred to private corporations that are exempt from several legal obligations in exchange for promising improved educational outcomes (Parker 2001). However, charter schools have not delivered the results promised, as evaluation studies show that they do not have any significant impact on student performance (Gleason et al. 2010). Charter schools have had impacts in other ways in that they have increased school segregation and provided a new avenue for white flight (Parker 2001; Renzulli and Evans 2005; Frankenberg et al. 2010). Although Latinos are underrepresented in charter schools in the West and over-represented in areas outside the West, the result has been the increased isolation of Latino and other minority students (Frankenberg et al. 2010). Consequently, the education of Latinos has suffered through increased isolation and segregation in charter schools and the defunding of public schools.

Continued defunding of public education at K-12 levels ensures that plural approaches to meeting the needs of diverse students are eliminated and the “one size fits all” model is resurrected under the guise that there are not sufficient funds available for those programs that conservatives say “pamper” students. Moreover, bilingual education programs continued to be cut as neoliberals mobilized neoconservatives to attack multicultural education under the guise that it is divisive to national unity. Once again, Arizona has been leading these attacks, first with Proposition 203 in 2000 which eliminated bilingual education programs and made public schooling “English Only.” More recently, HB 2281 eliminated Mexican American studies in the Tucson Unified School District and prohibited similar programs across the state. This has occurred at a time when the number of households in which Spanish is spoken is greater than it has ever been in the history of this nation.

Consistent with the principles of neoliberalism, radical individualism and limited government, reduced state funding to public colleges and universities has resulted in dramatic increases in tuition and fees (Martinez and León 2013). Increased tuition rates make it much more difficult for Latinos to attend colleges and universities given their socioeconomic status in society. At the same time that there have been state funding cuts to higher education, there have been substantial cuts to financial aid programs serving the poor and disadvantaged, and shifts from need-based to merit-based financial aid, and from student grants to loans (Heller 2006, 2008). Merit-based financial aid places Latinos in poor-performing schools in competition with students from better performing schools, a structural disadvantage that perpetuates the educational gap. Further, the shift from financial aid grants to student loans is part of the neoliberal strategy to reduce government support and make individuals responsible for their own

well-being, in this case, a college education. Although Heller (2008) does not refer to neoliberalism, he does capture the fit of this shift to loans with neoliberalism:

Loans fit very nicely with the conception that the economic and nonpecuniary returns to college are predominantly private, rather than social. As policymakers believe that it is the individual who more and more benefits from attending college – spurred, no doubt, by media reports and studies that document the increased lifetime earnings enjoyed by college graduates as compared to those individuals with only a high school diploma – they are likely to grow more comfortable with the notion that loans are an appropriate vehicle for assisting students with meeting the ever-increasing cost of college. (63)

It is important to note that the benefits to society and the public good are lost when the emphasis is on individual and private benefit.

Although there have been recent increases to grant aid and tax benefits, net costs to full-time students have continued to increase (College Board 2012). The result of these policies is that, nationally, the total student loan debt exceeds \$1 trillion and the delinquent rate for student loans is higher than for all other types of loans (Cauchon 2011). Both student loans and defaults on student loans have significant consequences for students, even those who obtain their degrees, as it may take them several decades to pay off the loan, and there are serious consequences for defaulting on student loans.

In addition to the increasing costs of a college education, there have been constant threats to affirmative action in college admissions and attacks on remediation programs for underprepared students. In effect, the neoliberal message is that individuals should take care of themselves and that achievement is not structurally influenced but determined by individual talent and effort – that is, individual achievement determines one's lot in life. With the impending departure of baby boomers as active participants in the economy and the misalignment between the skilled-labor demands of the economy and the available labor force (Sahin et al. 2011), the failure to educate Latinos will be felt for generations to come. Moreover, the shift of higher education from a public good to a private good will have negative effects for years to come even if a policy paradigm shift were to occur.

Criminalization of Undocumented Immigrants

Anti-immigration efforts have promoted, among other things, a criminal view of Mexicans and Latin American immigrants, and that view has been used to build support for incarceration and border enforcement, including building a wall on the US–Mexico border. Perhaps one of the most active in this effort has been John Tanton, an ophthalmologist from Petoskey, Michigan and founder of, among other



organizations, the Federation for American Immigration Reform and the Social Contract Press. An avid nativist, Tanton argues vehemently that the nation is being overrun by “immigrant aliens” engaged in criminal activities (Tanton and Lutton 1993). Such a view has been repeated by the mainstream media so that it is not uncommon these days to hear right-wing politicians (for example, Donald Trump) make pronouncements about the criminal nature of immigrants (López 2013). Indeed, it has become commonplace for right-wing politicians to use the media to characterize Mexican immigrants as drug carriers or “drug mules.” Across this and other areas, the call by Powell (1971) for excellence and professionalism in the struggle to defend free enterprise has been completely lost, with public political discourse in this country having declined to the crassest levels in decades.

Two additional key features in the growth of Latinos in federal prisons are the felony criminalization of undocumented immigrants who return illegally after having previously been deported and the privatization of prisons, which has created a vested economic interest in the incarceration of people. For example, immigration cases were the largest category of convictions in 2012, and have been for four years in a row (US Sentencing Commission 2013). At the local level, many city and county jails contracting with the federal government to hold immigrants arrested by ICE are unable to accommodate the large number of arrestees, and in some cases are having to release those who are not considered serious offenders.

The criminalization of undocumented immigrants combines with the criminalization of Latino youth, along with African American and other minority youth, to engender racial profiling practices by law enforcement officials that keep many Latino communities in a state of siege (Poe-Yamagata and Jones 2000). While the 2013 court decision, *Floyd et al v. The City of New York*, on “stop and frisk” practices in New York City lightens the pressures on Latinos, the pressure by US Immigration Customs and Enforcement continues unabated. The result is that undocumented immigrants are forced to live in the shadows of society as anti-immigrant movements in states across the country continue to put immigrant lives at risk of human trafficking, workplace exploitation, occupational injuries and deteriorating health through lack of access to health care. In effect, these anti-immigrant movements perpetuate lives of widespread social suffering among undocumented immigrants and their families here in the United States.

Human and Civil Rights

The response by the dominant group to the gains made in the area of human and civil rights by the civil rights movement has been multi-dimensional. Protests to school integration gave way to White flight in the 1960s and 1970s, and that resulted not only in increased segregation but in the phenomenon called “inner

cities” – central areas of large cities with majority-minority populations living in persistent poverty and characterized by high levels of unemployment, crime, substandard housing, underfunded schools, and so on (Detroit, for example). This was followed by anti-tax and anti-immigrant referenda initiatives in California, Washington, Arizona and other states that limited the availability of social programs, particularly to immigrants but to native Latinos as well. Throughout the final decades of the twentieth century, anti-affirmative action initiatives kept gaining momentum, resulting in the passage of Proposition 209 in 1996 in California, which prohibited the use of race and other categories in public employment, education and contracting. That initiative and several others like it have been supported by the Bradley Foundation in Milwaukee and many other conservative foundations and think tanks that promote neoliberal and neoconservative issues that undermine social democracy.

The attacks on the trade towers on 11 September 2001, resulted in passage of the Patriot Act, which limited freedoms in daily life and increased the power of the neoliberal state in its war against terrorism. In particular, it allowed indefinite detention of immigrants, searches of homes and businesses without the knowledge of owners, and searches of telephones, email and financial records without court orders. By undermining habeas corpus, or the right to a speedy trial, one of the principal elements of a democratic society has been severely weakened by a neoliberal regime engendering military conflicts in the Middle East. Following the Patriot Act have been a series of anti-immigration legislative initiatives that have resulted in the racial profiling of Latinos, increased scrutiny by law enforcement officials, and limited services to undocumented immigrants.

The anti-immigrant movement has also led to states and localities increasingly using local laws to impose criminal penalties on undocumented immigrants despite the fact that undocumented presence is only criminally punishable if an individual was previously formally removed from the country. Although global capitalism ultimately requires a globally mobile labor force, neoliberal and neoconservative forces in this country have joined together to create a reactionary nationalist movement that promotes border enforcement and criminalization of undocumented immigrants while generating profits through a system of private prisons and detention centers and border construction projects. Indeed it has given rise to manifestations of superficial patriotism as human and civil rights are diminished for citizens and immigrants alike.

Neoliberalism, the Public Good and American Democracy

While proponents of neoliberalism may actually believe that its policies are best for promoting economic growth, it does not necessarily follow that such is



actually the case or that it leads to a just and open society. Indeed, while von Mises promoted *laissez faire* capitalism and lauded its virtues, his arguments were generally devoid of empirical evidence. Alan Greenspan, former chairman of the Federal Reserve and follower of neoliberalism, acknowledged after the Great Recession that there was “a flaw in the model” that depended on bankers holding the interests of shareholders and institutions above their own. Clearly, unregulated self-interest was not understood as unleashed greed.

One of the great failings of neoliberalism is the tendency to reduce society to sets of market transactions despite the economic system being only one of several major institutions. The public sphere is reduced to adherence to neoliberal ideology and practices, and democracy as a political system is reduced to the implementation of neoliberal policies that promote the interests of corporations and the capitalist class. The result is that the higher order values of democracy and the public good are pushed out of the public sphere and supplanted by the ideology of neoliberalism. Democracy is thereby undermined if not completely replaced by an authoritarian system that promotes private interests, mindless consumerism and compliance with the exigencies of the capitalist economy as shaped by neoliberal values and policies.

In addition, the influence of fundamentalist religions in politics has blurred the boundaries between the church and state so that it is sometimes impossible to address issues within a secular framework without being attacked as a “godless liberal.” In this context, religious values have become a core frame of reference against which social issues are judged, with religious self-righteousness contributing to the muting of open public discourse on critical social issues.

Finally, the countervailing forces (namely organized labor) that had provided a balance of power under social democracy have been nearly eliminated, with neoliberal representatives of corporations gaining increased control over the state and using it to diminish, if not eliminate, the power of labor unions and to impose neoliberal policies on the citizenry. The result is that support for the public good by the state has been greatly undermined, and as labor unions lost the power they once had, corporations increased their capacity to promote their interests through the state as a captured entity. The only major countervailing force to the neoliberal state that remains is the US citizenry, but for that force to realize its latent potential it must burst through the ideological hegemony of neoliberalism and neoconservatism and recognize its own interests vis-à-vis those of the capitalist ruling class. President Obama has promoted a revolution in values over the past decade that has allowed greater opportunity to insert critical issues of social democracy and the public good into the public discourse, but the power gains of the New Right over the past several decades have halted movement toward policies that would benefit the citizenry of this country, except for the Affordable Care Act, and that was ultimately less than what it could have been had conservatives not imposed a market model on it. Emergent changes in the public discourse on these issues, however, hold the promise of a second

progressive movement in this country that could restore a proper balance to the power of corporations in society.

Neoliberal Hegemony

Neoliberalism and neoconservatism combine as the New Right to restore and maintain the power of the capitalist ruling class in society and impose policies that promote its interests while the “welfare state” and social democracy are continually dismantled, and Latinos and other minorities are pushed further and further down the socioeconomic structure. In the process, issues of racism are muted by emphasizing a radical view of individualism and the denial of structural inequality. The result has been hegemonic influence by the capitalist ruling class supported by contradictory neoconservative emphases on White privilege. That is, without the neoconservative focus on social and racial issues, neoliberalism might not have achieved the political (electoral) power required to promote its radical anti-collectivist and anti-welfare policies. In other words, policies that promote corporatism and libertarianism. In this context, Latinos and other minority populations become surplus populations that fuel the anti-immigrant and racist passions of neoconservatives and the profit-making interests of neoliberals. Thus far struggles by Latinos to counter the initiatives of neoliberalism and neoconservatism have produced limited results. Given the scope of these right-wing movements, however, successful resistance and the promotion of effective alternatives can only occur through a broad-based progressive movement that includes Latinos at the core of its efforts.

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About the Author

Rubén O. Martinez is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Julian Samora Research Institute at Michigan State University. His research interests include institutional and societal change, neoliberalism and Latinos, diversity leadership in higher education, education and ethnic minorities, youth development, Latino labor and entrepreneurship, and environmental justice issues. He is the



editor of the Latinos in the United States book series with the Michigan State University Press.

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