"I'VE LOST MY CITY":

LAW, COMMUNITY, AND IMMIGRATION UNDER COLORBLIND NEOLIBERALISM

by

Jamie G. Longazel

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

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ABSTRACT

This research is centered around Hazleton, Pennsylvania's Illegal Immigration Relief Act (IIRA). Passed in 2006 and subsequently ruled unconstitutional (i.e., *Lozano et al. v. Hazleton*), the IIRA sought to punish landlords and sanction businesses who rented to or hired undocumented immigrants and to make English the official language of the city. Taking a constitutive approach to the study of law and society and using a variety of ethnographic and qualitative methods (e.g., archival analysis, in-depth interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and media analysis), this research explores how and to what effect white working class residents, politicians, and activists have made sense of social, demographic, and economic change in Hazleton. Set in the context of the neoliberal political economic climate and a post-Civil Rights era characterized by colorblind racial discourse, this dissertation argues that we can understand the IIRA as a reassertion of local collective identity made in the face of change and constructed along racial rather than class lines. I proceed in two parts. First, I explore how Hazleton residents came to misinterpret their city's economic struggles as an undocumented immigrant "invasion." In this regard I explore how local elites (e.g., developers, politicians) injected hegemonic "pro-growth" and "tough on crime" narratives with sentiments that appealed to residents' nostalgia and sense of community solidarity. Second, I explore the activism that followed the passage of the IIRA. Here I describe how a vision of rights emerged that coincided with community imaginings, leaving Hazleton's newcomers and their advocates in a tenuous position despite the legal victory in *Lozano*. Taken together,

this dissertation illuminates how social upheaval mobilizes discourses of ‘community’ and ‘rights.’ Ultimately, however, neither community nor rights are realized on the ground. In contrast, local hierarchies are strengthened and attention is diverted away from core economic troubles to the detriment of white working class residents and Latino/a immigrants alike.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

"I think it was a quiet town,"[1] Paula Nolatano, who has lived in Hazelton, Pennsylvania her entire life, told me about the city of old. "I think people that lived here worked, they contributed to the community. They took care of the town. They took care of their neighbors." She recalled the city's past with a fondness that made recent changes appear especially tragic. "Since the Hispanic population came that has just gone straight downhill," Paula said slowly as she shook her head. "I hate to be like that," she admitted, but change has not been easy for her to digest: "It's frustrating, it's really frustrating. I don't like it, I can't stand it." She described for me in detail how she perceives the city's newcomers to be starkly different from what she remembers about the way Hazelton used to be:

> They don't take care of their homes, they don't upkeep the property. They have garbage all over, there's comings and goings all hours—day and night, constantly. Loud music playing; parties going on; people screaming and yelling; kids running around—it's just chaos. And then as fast as they move in, they're gone. They move out in the middle of the night and nobody sees them again. And the house is just left—it's a mess… It just seems to be part of that culture and they refuse to change to live in our community.

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[1] Personal Interview with Paula Nolatano (pseudonym); December 7, 2009.

Our conversation continued along these lines for a few minutes, until I asked Paula about Hazleton's recent passage of the Illegal Immigration Relief Act (IIRA)—an ordinance which sought to punish landlords who rented to undocumented immigrants, sanction businesses who hired undocumented immigrants, and to make English the official language of the city. She was a big supporter. "I think the ordinance was probably the best thing to do in this area because a lot of our problems are because they are illegal, they have brought crime here, more drugs, gangs—the whole thing." She told me that the single most important thing Hazleton could do to assure a bright future is to "get rid of all of the illegals, first and foremost. You've got to get rid of them because they're bringing the whole town down." Discussing the ordinance was easier for Paula. There was a glimmer of hope in her voice when the topic was the IIRA, and her tone was decidedly unapologetic and confident. Paula conveyed a sense that relief from the problems she had been discussing was within reach—that the IIRA might be just what was needed to restore order and bring Hazleton back to where it once was.

But while she willingly attributed most of Hazleton's newfound problems to the city's newcomers, later in the interview Paula revealed a deeper set of concerns. She is unemployed. She has been looking for work, but cannot find a job. Her daughter, who recently graduated from college, has moved from the area—as so many young Hazleton natives have—because it is sorely lacking in opportunities for

professional employment.[2] Paula is having a hard time coping with her daughter's departure. The upside is that her husband has a good-paying job in one of the local factories, although she realizes that he is lucky. Hazleton's economy "is worse now than it's ever been," Paula confessed. "They've never really had a great selection of jobs here, but at one point you could find a job. Now you can't even find it. And the jobs that are out there, most of them are temporary. You work for two weeks, four weeks, Christmas, and then you're done. I'm not going to say that it was perfect before because it wasn't, there have been problems here. But it is much worse now."

How Hazelton's predominantly white, working class residents like Paula, local elites (e.g., politicians, developers), and activists have made sense of Hazleton's changing social, demographic, and economic landscape is the subject of this dissertation. As an ethnographic study centered around Hazleton's passage of the IIRA and its aftermath, this study explores how people's thinking about 'community,' 'race,' and 'law' interact and what implications such beliefs have for life on the ground in one small, racially divided community. This dissertation thus builds on a constitutive approach to sociolegal scholarship that explores the role of law in everyday life by studying how "legal discourses, logics, and language… shape the capacity for understanding social reality, imagining options, and choosing among

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[2] This was a common discussion point among city residents. As one focus group participant in her mid-20s regretfully acknowledged, "We have no friends that live here anymore. They've all moved on."

them" (McCann 2006:xiv). Such an approach can help us understand how people like Paula make sense of their social world and how the understandings they develop go on to shape subsequent interactions.

Paula's comments do well to capture the general sentiment I will be describing throughout. She longs for a bygone era—one that is the antithesis of her current view of the city. Searching for an explanation for the apparent disconnect between the way things "should" be and the way things actually are, she points her finger at Hazleton's new Latino/a population—a group that has arrived in Hazleton by the thousands since 2001.[3] More specifically, she takes aim at "illegals" and the crime, drugs, and gangs they have supposedly brought to her once-quiet community. Given her sentiments, it is not surprising that she is in full support of her mayor, Louis J. Barletta's attempt to rid the city of undocumented immigrants. Barletta has made it explicitly clear that in his estimation undocumented immigrants are responsible for Hazleton's decline. Reflecting back on his decision to sign the IIRA into law, he stated his intentions to "take back" Hazleton in unforgiving terms: "I lay in bed and thought, I've lost my city. I love the new immigrants; they want their kids to be safe just like I do. I had to declare war on the illegals."

What we later learn about Paula, however, is that the sources of her troubles are more complex than her initial position reveals. She has no job, her daughter has

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[3] I describe the specific conditions under which Hazleton's new Latino/a population has arrived in Chapter 2.

left town, and her economic future is clearly in jeopardy. Though she was hesitant at first to talk with me about her economic troubles, there is no denying they are real and shape her perceptions of the city. This dissertation investigates Hazleton's "war on illegals" through the lens of the challenging economic climate Paula describes—indeed, telling a more complex tale of loss than offered by Barletta. Over the past several decades, a new political economic order has settled in—what scholars now commonly refer to as *neoliberalism*[4]—and the effects have been devastating for working class whites like Paula, Latino/a immigrants like those who have recently arrived in Hazleton, and economically distraught communities like Hazleton more

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[4] I use the term neoliberalism throughout this dissertation to describe the contemporary political economic climate. David Harvey (2005:2) provides perhaps the most thorough definition of neoliberalism:

> Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defence, police and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture. State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because, according to the theory, the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit.

generally. Yet as Paula's tendency to prioritize the "alien invasion" reveals, the debate in Hazleton has failed to acknowledge how these macro-level shifts have undermined local economies; instead, most have opted to focus their attention on unsuspecting, racialized Latino/a immigrants.

A Ceremony of Regret

David Engel's (1984) classic study, *The Oven Bird's Song* provides important theoretical expectations for the current inquiry, which help explain why undocumented immigrants have emerged as scapegoats in Hazleton while economic policies have moved off the radar. Most germane is Engel's finding of how ordinary people in small communities experience broader economic changes and how such changes affect their views of the law. In his study of Sander County, Illinois—a community transitioning away from its long-standing agricultural base—residents were highly critical of the tendency of newcomers to file personal injury lawsuits. So-called 'insiders' labeled their 'outsider' counterparts as ""very greedy," as "quick to sue," as "people looking for the easy buck," and as those who just "naturally sue and try to get something [for]… life's little accidents"" (553). All this was despite a complete lack of evidence that newcomers were actually filing suits at higher rates. Digger deeper, Engel unpacked the meanings buried beneath such claims and determined that such complaints actually had little or nothing to do with personal injury suits *per se*. Instead, he insightfully attributed claims levied against 'outsiders' as a macro-level critique of the changes the community has undergone couched in more immediate and

accessible local terms. Criticisms of 'outsiders' litigiousness, Engel (1984:50, emphasis added) explains, were little more than a "more broadly based *ceremony of regret* that the realities of contemporary American society could no longer be averted from their community if it were to survive." The backlash was, in other words, a symbolic attempt "by members of the community to preserve meaning and coherence in the face of social changes that they found threatening and confusing" (580).

In a subsequent collaboration with Carol J. Greenhouse and Barbara Yngvesson (Greenhouse, Yngvesson, and Engel 1994), the authors expanded upon Engel's earlier insights by incorporating findings from anthropological work in similarly situated towns (e.g., Yngvesson 1988; Greenhouse 1988). This work illuminates how drawing distinctions between "us" and "them" during difficult times was not uncommon in changing communities and that "local understandings are constituted in pervasive cultural distinctions" (Greenhouse 1988:687). In each case, communities hosted a "ceremony of regret" of their own, declaring their own community's identity and values to be synonymous with "civility, self-restraint, and moderation" (Greenhouse et al. 1994:114) while demeaning the values of 'outsiders.' The law, not coincidentally, "became a vehicle for discussing changing ways of life" in all three communities (65). Whether critical of litigiousness or using a ""garbage" quarrel… [to epitomize] the struggle between old and new in the town" (70), community insider's use of law to make sense of troubling realities on the ground was "less about the pluralist possibilities of collective action… than it was about the

rhetorical management of change as local settings face new challenges beyond their design and control" (191).

The work of Engel and colleagues reveals that how local people think about, talk about, and act on law is a "cultural event, evolving within a framework of rules about what is the normal or moral way to act, what kind of wrongs warrant action, and what kinds of remedies are acceptable and appropriate" (Silbey 2005:339). In other words, legal action such as Hazleton's decision to pass the IIRA emerges as a *social process.* People are not just passive recipients of the law; rather, they may or may not choose to invoke it. And when they do, legal action is framed in locally acceptable terms that go on to shape subsequent interaction (e.g., Felstiner, Abel, and Sarat 1980-1981:632).[5]

Contributions

My study will build on these works in three ways. First, I will demonstrate how the local is constituted in the context of *specific* political economic conditions. Detailed attention to these broader shifts helps reveal the economic challenges white

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[5] Felstiner et al.'s (1980-1981) conception of naming, blaming, and claiming makes clear how law is indeed a social process. Unlike previous studies in the dispute resolution literature that explored who wins disputes, how often, and why, these authors moved the point of analysis back to the *pre*-disputing stage, asking the heretofore overlooked yet vitally important question: under what conditions do certain unperceived injurious experiences come to be perceived as injurious and why do grievances take particular forms? Conceptually similar to this approach and equally relevant to developing my thinking on this topic is a constructionist approach to the

working class residents and Latino/a immigrants alike are facing. Second, the present study places Hazleton's backlash within a specific racial context—an era of colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Here, preconceived notions about race prove to be intimately tied to preconceived notions about law. As Anne Swidler's (1986) popular analogy suggests, in times of great change people draw from their cultural "tool kits" to make sense of confusing times, and while the law is an important tool for constructing community and identity, it is only one such tool people have at their disposal (e.g., Nielsen 2000; Marshall 2003; Fleury-Steiner 2004). [6] Finally, in addition to studying how ordinary residents like Paula make sense of change, I also study those who formally organize in support of and in opposition to the IIRA. Here I unite literature on legal mobilization (e.g., McCann 1994) and rights with law and community scholarship to reveal that how people make sense of confusing times goes on to shape subsequent activism in ways that prove to be detrimental for Latino/a

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study of social problems. Here too, "the point is not so much that some conditions cause harm, but that people think of some conditions as harmful" (Best 2008:8).

[6] A number of recent and diverse sociolegal studies demonstrate that legal consciousness interacts with other "consciousnesses" in order to shape people's perceptions of particular events. For example, Laura Beth Nielsen (2000) has shown how law intersects with race, class, and gender identities as people made sense of their experiences with street harassment. Benjamin Fleury-Steiner's (2004) study of capital jurors reveals that the legal consciousness upon which decisions to implement the death penalty are based are intimately tied to the preconceived notions jurors have about race. Along the same lines, Anna-Maria Marshall (2003:659) found "while legal frames do provide crucial guidance to women evaluating the behavior of their colleagues and supervisors, working women deployed a number of other interpretive frames when deciding whether they had been harmed by such behavior."

immigrants and white working class residents alike. In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I proceed by outlining in more detail each of these contributions, in turn.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF BACKLASH

Continuing Exploitation

Throughout U.S. history, immigrants have served as an *expendable* labor force. On one hand, times of economic prosperity often led to a periodic loosening of immigrant regulations so that eager corporations could reap the benefits of the inexpensive labor immigrants provide. On the other, economic uncertainty has often led to heightened resentment and a "periodic tightening" of regulations that would reduce immigration levels (Calavita 1994:63). In other words, high unemployment levels led native-born U.S. citizens to scapegoat immigrants, but also reduced the demand for immigrant labor. Restrictionists happen to be shouting the loudest when immigrants are on their way out.

Representing by far the largest portion of immigrants to the U.S. in recent decades, Chicano/as and Latino/as are the latest in a long line of groups that have "formed a reserve labor pool that could be called up as the situation dictated" (Estrada, Garcia, Flores Macias, and Maldonado 1981:112). On several occasions, the very laborers from Mexico and other Latin American countries who were recruited by U.S. officials when their services were needed (i.e., during wartime labor shortages, when

domestic workers were striking), found themselves forced out as political and economic forces dictated. The voluntary reparations program implemented during the Great Depression when work was scarce and resentment high, for example, led to the deportation of as many as 500,000 immigrants, many of whom were sent back to Mexico on government-chartered trains (Daniels 2002). In 1954, the notorious "Operation Wetback" called for the deportation of over a million documented and undocumented immigrants not long after they were invited to the U.S. as part of the Bracero Program; a government sponsored initiative that ironically invited millions of Mexican migrant workers to the U.S. as a means to offset labor shortages created by World War II (Calavita 1992).

In today's increasingly deregulated, globalized economy, exploitive practices are as common as ever. We have seen unprecedented levels of immigration in the contemporary neoliberal era that is characterized by hyper-competitiveness, increased corporate cost-cutting, and an outright rejection of the Keynesian welfare state. Free market initiatives such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) have exacerbated international inequalities and "pushed" those who are no longer able to make ends meet in the developing world into more developed countries (e.g., Nevins 2007). Meanwhile, the pressing need to remain competitive in the global economy vis-à-vis the inexpensive labor such immigrants provide has led more developed countries to institute policies that "pull" immigrants (e.g., Calavita 2005). The meatpacking industry in the United States provides perhaps the clearest example of these practices

at work. As part of a neoliberal "survival strategy," this previously urban and unionized industry which originally employed primarily white workers has come to rely on far less expensive rural, nonunionized, Latino/a immigrant labor (Tanger 2006:70).

The New Political Economy of Immigration

At the same time that exploitation increases, resentment is at a fever pitch in the contemporary U.S. Such misdirected blame is in many ways more far-reaching and, indeed, hostile than ever before. But whereas at one time resentment would diminish as the demand for an expendable labor force declined, what makes today's backlash unique, as Kitty Calavita (1994:64-65) explains, is the structural forces that are attracting immigrants (i.e., increased competitiveness, cost-cutting imperatives) are *the same forces* that contribute to resentment (i.e., lack of well-paying jobs):

> [T]he economic processes under way in the United States since the early 1970s have simultaneously increased the demand for immigrants to fill minimum-wage, unskilled, and part-time jobs, and enhanced anti-immigrant reactions. In other words, the structural transformations in the economy that reproduce a continued demand for immigrants *at the same time* contribute to restrictionist sentiment. As Americans encounter increasing economic uncertainty, they direct some of their anxiety and hostility toward immigrant newcomers, whose numbers are increasing just as meaningful economic opportunities are dwindling.

In other words, as global competitiveness heats up and corporations relentlessly seek to cut labor costs, the demand for workers who are willing to tolerate

low wages and poor working conditions increases.[7] Meanwhile, working-class Americans who are accustomed to stable employment in sectors like manufacturing see their economic prospects fading as fewer and fewer well-paying, full-time, semi-skilled jobs are available. This is not an instance of the classic "they are taking our jobs" gripe—on the contrary, the issue now is not lack of jobs, but rather lack of *good* jobs (Holzer, Lane, Rosenblum, and Anderson 2011). The stable ground upon which working class residents once stood is now shaky, and whereas at one time resentment fueled by high unemployment rates would be quelled by the subsequent tightening of immigration restrictions, contemporary resentment does not get extinguished. Instead, recent federal immigration law has at once appealed to restrictionist sentiments while allowing, if not encouraging, the exploitation of immigrant labor to continue.[8]

At the same time, the market-driven logic of neoliberalism has developed into a taken-for-granted commonsense even, ironically, among the populations (e.g., white working class residents, Latino/a immigrants) who have been most disaffected by the structural shifts this ideology has incurred. Studies in other policy contexts are quite

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[7] Details about changes in the global economy and how such changes have affected small locales such as Hazleton are provided in Chapter 2.

[8] Recent legislation like the federal Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act (1986), for example, required that employers need only to act in "good faith" when checking the documentation status of recent immigrants. Such measures have the consequence of at once satisfying nativist demands for anti-immigrant legislation and allowing corporations to continue their exploitive practices (Calavita 2004). Recent Supreme Court decisions have served similar purposes (e.g., *Hoffman v. NLRB*) (see Longazel and Fleury-Steiner in press).

instructive here. Sandra Levitsky's (2008:551) study of individuals caring for family members struggling to meet their health care needs, for example, finds that despite the insufficiency of present systems, individual caregivers envisions alternatives that are "most consistent with previously existing beliefs about family, market, and state responsibility for care provision." Along the same lines, Jill Weigt's (2006) study of mothers' post-welfare care work suggests that prevailing neoliberal ideas that ultimately subordinate poor mothers guide their attempts to make sense of their current situation.

The result of these global processes is thus record levels of immigrants in the U.S. population (Camarota 2007) who are *coexisting* with a distraught American working class prone to scapegoat immigrant populations as somehow responsible for increased economic uncertainties that are, in fact, the result of a new, corporate-welfare driven economic order:

> Anti-immigrant passions are predictable at the very moment that more immigration is unleashed, not only because locals feel threatened by the "invasion" and must differentiate themselves, but because the same global forces that intensify immigration are also challenging national identity and community (Calavita 2005:162).

"All Immigration Politics is Local"

One of the most telling instances of these new politics of immigration is the emergence of exclusionary local ordinances like Hazleton's IIRA. As it would turn out, Hazleton was not alone in wanting to rid its city of "illegal" immigrants. In recent years, we have seen many exclusionary local- and state-level measures primed to keep

immigrants out of particular cities and states. California made the first contemporary attempt at sub-national immigration policy in 1994 when it passed its "Save Our State" ballot initiative, Proposition 187, by a wide margin. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001—a time when the terms immigrant and terrorist became conflated (Cole 2003)—more local- and state-level ordinances began to surface. In 2002, for example, Arizona passed a bill with a title that projected equal parts urgency and self-defense—*Protect Arizona Now*. Then, after the federal government's failed attempts to implement comprehensive immigration reform in 2006 and 2007, what was a "trickle of state and local immigration policy activism soon turned into a flood…"

> …In 2006, 500 bills were considered, 84 of which became law. In 2007, 1,562 immigration- and immigrant-related pieces of legislation were introduced, and 240 became law. And most recently, in 2009, approximately 1,500 laws and resolutions were considered in all 50 state legislatures, and 353 were ultimately enacted (Varsanyi 2010a:3).

These bills address a variety of issues. Some, like Hazleton's, target landlords and businesses. Others, like Arizona's recent SB1070, which authorizes police to check the immigrant's documentation status, aim at immigrants more directly. Many, like Proposition 187, seek to prohibit the unauthorized from receiving state benefits: education, health care, and the like. Others still apply a uniquely local spin. Danbury, Connecticut sought to bar "repetitive outdoor activities" in response its Ecuadorian immigrants' tendency to play volleyball in the evenings (Yardley 2005). Journalist

Alex Kotlowitz (2007:33) perhaps said it best when he declared, "all immigration politics is local."[9]

Scholars have rightfully understood the emergence of these laws as a product of the contemporary wave of resentment. Seeing these measures as an extension of "Crimmigration" policy (e.g., Stumpf 2006), many have focused on issues of crime, race, and (in)justice. These inquires explored, among other things, the local-level enforcement of federal immigration law (Decker, Lewis, Provine, and Varsanyi 2009), the "law-and-order" foundations of local ordinances (Esbenshade, Wright, Cortopassi, Reed, and Flores 2010), and the restrictionist discourse driving the passage of exclusionary local legislation (Seif 2010).

Fewer studies attend to the emergence of anti-immigration laws in the context of a nexus of racial resentment and economic uncertainty at the local-level. I have argued that the simultaneous politics of inclusion and exclusion that others have observed at more national levels—a politics of "useful invaders" (Ambrosini 1996; Calavita 2005)—is applicable on increasingly more local levels in the U.S. (Fleury-Steiner and Longazel 2010). As locales face the pressing demand of maintaining their economic health in the neoliberal environment, they have tended toward luring

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[9] The saying "All Immigration Politics is Local" was written on the cover of the August 5, 2007 edition of *The New York Times Magazine* underneath a photo of Carpentersville, Illinois—a town that experienced similar conflict over issues of immigration.

immigrants out of economic necessity while at the same time preaching an exclusionary rhetoric that is appealing to a citizenry who harbors growing discontent.

Studying California's Proposition 187, Calavita (1996:285) makes a similar case noting that passage of the California law "can best be understood as a particular type of symbolic statement, the content of which and the motivation for which are grounded in prevailing economic conditions." Monica Varsanyi (2010b:1), along the same lines, makes a compelling argument that we should understand Hazleton's IIRA and local immigration ordinances more generally as "locally scaled acts of contestation to neoliberalizing policies." Indeed, Varsanyi realizes that the contemporary political-economic climate is capable of inspiring resentment, warning scholars "not all contestations [to neoliberalism] may lead to progressive futures" (1).

In short, the harsh rhetoric of the new local politics of immigration in the U.S. has caught the attention of the media and scholars alike. But what has been overlooked is the local life of economic processes that drive the steady flow of immigrants into these locales and the simultaneous uncertainty such processes produce. The very presence of 'outsiders' makes even more uncomfortable an American workforce already experiencing economic unease. All immigration politics may be local, but they are also *global*.

Hazleton as a Microcosm for the New Politics of Immigration

Hazleton is an ideal site for studying both how the new political economy of immigration has localized and how residents of one small community have made sense

of it. In its heyday, Hazleton's coalmines made it a mecca of sorts for work-seeking immigrants from Eastern Europe. As was the case with the Chicano/a and Latino/a laborers I described above, it was the availability of jobs that lured Hazleton's original European settlers (or, stated differently, the willingness of mine owners to reap the benefits of inexpensive immigrant labor) who, ironically, faced a backlash not dissimilar to the one we are seeing today—a backlash that grew increasingly strong, not coincidentally, when the availability of jobs was at stake (e.g., Aurand 1986). Today, however, the arrival of immigrants is symptomatic of *bust*, not *boom*. After the coal mining industry went belly up in the region in the early twentieth century, Hazleton's economy was replaced with a strong base of manufacturing jobs. But such positive transitions were short-lived in Hazleton. In the neoliberal era, lower-paying, lower-skilled positions—those that are attractive to immigrant laborers and their employers—began to replace the decent-paying, semi-skilled work to which residents had grown accustomed.[10] Thousands of Latino/a workers have now arrived in Hazleton while at the same time city residents who have been making a decent living in manufacturing are blind-sided by such rapid economic changes: "I used to build equipment from scratch," said Norm, one such resident, "now, I just load furniture onto trucks" (Gilgoff 2002).

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[10] I explain this process in far greater detail in Chapter 2. My intent here is only to make summary statements in order to connect my theoretical framework to the site of my case study.

Hazleton is a microcosm for the new politics of immigration. It is a city that has experienced rising levels of immigration that it has not seen in more than a century. At the same time its workers, as Norm's comments attest, have become increasingly alienated. By remaining attentive to these specific global processes, my study provides an important update to classic sociolegal scholarship on law and community (e.g., Engel 1984). At the same time, attention to how such processes are experienced *on the ground*, allows my study to contribute a nuanced understanding of the local politics of immigration that is largely missing from the literature (e.g., Esbenshade et al. 2010; Fleury-Steiner and Longazel 2010; Seif 2010; Varsanyi 2010a).

RACE AND THE IMAGINED LOCAL COMMUNITY

Though important, it is crucial that we do not to attribute the contemporary wave of resentment to economic uncertainty alone. Doing so would be to deny the decidedly racialized character of these discriminatory laws. To understand how people in places such as Hazleton make sense of change it is therefore also necessary to remain attentive to the *racial context* in which this backlash has emerged.

Like Engel's (1984) work, my study attempts to build on a long tradition of sociological research that has explored how communities tend to reinforce their boundaries and reassert their collective identity (Durkheim 1933/1984; Erikson 1966). The deliberately offensive connotations in prior immigration laws like "Operation Wetback" and the court's previous willingness to equate whiteness with citizenship

(e.g. Haney López 2006) are two of the many examples which suggest that waves of immigration tend to spur a reworking of the socially accepted definition of what it means to be an American citizen. Unlike blatantly racist designations of the past, however, a colorblind racial ideology dominates the post-Civil Rights era in the U.S. (e.g., Frankenberg 1993; Bonilla-Silva 2006). As Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1986) explain, race has been *rearticulated* in the contemporary era. Code words such as "immigrant" and "illegal" are laced with racial meaning in ways that have allowed racism to persist into an era where egalitarianism is the expected norm.

The Latino/a Threat

The backlash that I describe in this dissertation illuminates the rearticulation of Hazleton's new Latino/a immigrants as racialized outsiders. In this way, my dissertation builds on a growing literature that draws attention to and is critical of the anti-Latino/a sentiment which has risen to a fever pitch in recent years (e.g., Chavez 2008; Nevins 2010). In his important book *The Latino Threat*, Leo Chavez (2008:2) outlines the contours of the contemporary backlash, arguing that it can best be understood as part of a broader "Latino Threat Narrative." Portrayed as crime-prone and anti-assimilationist (i.e., refusing to speak English), Latinos, so the story goes, are determined to demolish American cultural values and reclaim territory that was once their own:

> According to the assumptions and taken-for-granted "truths" inherent in this narrative, Latinos are unwilling or incapable of integrating, of becoming part of the national community. Rather, they are part of an

> invading force from south of the border that is bent on reconquesting land that was formerly their own (the U.S. Southwest) and destroying the American way of life.

This narrative is most visible in the broader popular culture, in the rhetoric of pundits, and in citizen-led media spectacles that play on misguided public fears of a racialized other. Peter Brimelow's (1995:73) best-selling book *Alien Nation*, for example, warns of an "ethnic revolution" as white Americans gradually become the minority (see Chavez 2008:31-33). Pundits such as Lou Dobbs, the infamous former CNN host whose vicious anti-Latino/a rhetoric is now broadcast in a popular nationwide radio show, devote inordinate amounts of attention to berating "illegal aliens" and dismissing the potential for racial profiling in light of Arizona's SB1070 as "poppycock and bull" (LouDobbs.com 2010). Fox News, the nation's highest rated cable news network, has likewise contributed its fair share to the amplification of the Latino Threat (Ostermanuk 2007).[11] These pundits execute colorblind racism to a tee. Rather than targeting Latino/as directly, they instead lash out against an apparently race-neutral group of "invaders" who they accuse of looting the American Dream by taking advantage of undeserved privileges such as supposedly free medical care,

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[11] On several occasions popular Fox News host Bill O'Reilly, for example, has delivered the kind of rhetoric I am describing here. In one episode of his show, *The O'Reilly Factor*, he made his views clearly known when he lambasted Geraldo Rivera over a disagreement about whether or not an undocumented immigrant arrested for driving under the influence should have been deported. On several occasions, he interrupted Rivera's arguments, screaming "He doesn't have a right to be in this country!" and "This is justice, you want anarchy!"

receiving apparently undeserved financial breaks on college tuition, and, perhaps most viscerally of all, "flooding across our borders in some cases carrying dangerous diseases" (see Hart 2009).

Whiteness and the Imagined Community

Fundamentally intertwined with the social construction of the 'outsider' is the construction of 'insider' identity. As Engel (1984) and others (Greenhouse et al. 1994; Zerubavel 1991) have suggested, declarations about who "they" are tend to be equally suggestive of who "we" are. And as an emergent literature on critical whiteness studies makes clear (Frankenberg 1993; Delgado and Stefancic 1997; Roediger 1999; Garner 2007), the social construction of "us" is every bit as racialized as the social construction of "them." Here again, assertions of the superiority of white identity are not made explicit—yet, the subtle construction of whiteness does the work of maintaining racial hierarchies by effectively depicting white identity as the norm. "Whiteness is at once so normalized as to be invisible, and simultaneously so marked by the exercise of power that it is extremely visible" (Barraclough 2008:717 citing Garner 2007). I thus demonstrate in my dissertation how in the face of change, Hazleton residents construct an idealized *imagined community* (e.g., Anderson 1983); but unlike prior sociolegal studies (e.g., Engel 1984; Greenhouse et al. 1994) my work is especially attentive to the extent to which the idealized community is racialized—it tars Latino/a immigrants and idealizes whiteness thereby portraying Hazleton as an "All-American City" and Latinos, in contrast, as the antithetical "invaders."

This particular interpretation of Hazleton's troubles proves to be important as we interrogate the hegemony of neoliberalism. Why have white working class residents disaffected by neoliberalism lashed out against undocumented immigrants rather than levying an economic critique? The tendency to construct identity along racial lines, I argue, blurs the relevance of class. Just as David R. Roediger (1999:13) points to in his critical history of the white working class, this segment of the U.S. population has and continues to "define and accept their class position by fashioning identities as 'not slaves' and 'not blacks.'"

As we will see in the Hazleton case, this particular identity construction is the result of an iterative process where elites play on citizen's racist fears to divert attention away from their own economic malice while citizens on the ground likewise construct *difference* along racial lines rather than constructing *similarity* along class lines and identifying with workers of color. As W.E.B. DuBois stated decades ago, "the problem is not just that the white working class is at critical junctures manipulated into racism, but that it comes to think of itself and its interests as white" (cited in Roediger 1999:12).

LEGAL MOBILIZATION AND THE PARADOX OF COMMUNITY

My dissertation also explores how particular constructions of "us" and "them" interact with citizen's legal consciousness[12] to shape life on the ground. While the IIRA enjoyed overwhelming support locally, a handful of residents did speak out in opposition to it. They squabbled with council, wrote letters to the editor of the local newspaper, and attempted to organize Hazleton's Latino/a community. To their dismay, however, the symbolic barriers the ordinance constructed proved impenetrable and the only hope for Hazleton's new Latino/a population was a lawsuit filed against Hazleton backed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) (i.e., *Lozano et al v. City of Hazleton*) that would ultimately result in the ordinance being deemed unconstitutional, keeping it from ever being enforced.

Despite their best intentions to defeat the discriminatory ordinance, the lawsuit did little to ease mounting tensions in the city. In fact, I will reveal that it only made things worse. The legal challenge inspired rallies in support of the IIRA that featured some of the debates' most ruthless rhetoric. Meanwhile, immigrants' rights groups scrambled not only to fend off the ordinance's escalating aftershocks, but also to accommodate Hazleton's burgeoning immigrant population with much-needed basic services as they tried to make a life for themselves in a community that is at once

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[12] Michael McCann (1994:6) provides a clear definition of legal consciousness: "the ongoing, dynamic process of constructing one's understanding of, and relationship to, the social world through the use of legal conventions and discourses."

unaccustomed to large-scale immigration, hostile to the presence of Latino/as, and dramatically under sourced in this difficult political economic climate.

Beginning with Stuart Scheingold's (1974/2004) path breaking *Politics of Rights*, law and society scholars have recognized that while litigation itself may play a limited role in bringing about real, egalitarian social reform (e.g., Rosenburg 1991), it does have the capability of producing social change in more indirect ways. It does this by mobilizing activists and providing them with a decidedly legalistic discourse around which they can rally. Michael McCann's (1994:4) *Rights at Work* perhaps best exemplifies this legal mobilization approach. Studying the efforts of pay equity reformers, he notes that, despite receiving only limited judicial support, activists "derived substantial power from legal tactics" by articulating a legal discourse that changed the way people thought about pay equity as a complex issue, and by attracting positive attention and encouraging mobilization *whether or not* court outcomes were favorable.[13]

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13 McCann (1994:57-58) writes: "…[T]he pay equity campaign developed in large part from frustration over judicial constructions of civil rights law; derived its logic from legally defined anti-discrimination concepts; crystallized into a political cause initially under the leadership of lawyers; and developed much of its symbolic power… from dramatic federal litigation. What is even more striking is that all of this was possible without ever winning a single direct judicial endorsement of the movement's basic comparable worth theory that survived appellate review."

My case study, as an alternative to McCann's (1994) more optimistic account, reveals that mobilization is possible only insofar as the broader sociopolitical conditions under which it occurs permits. When we take racial identity construction seriously, it is clear that mobilizing for the rights of a marginalized group (i.e., Latino/as) may only serve to upset majority sentiments thereby exacerbating rather than quelling backlash. My work is thus more critical of rights than most legal mobilization scholarship. Like Paul A. Passavant's (2002) study of the First Amendment, I too argue that one's ability to levy a successful rights claim is dependent upon whether or not society deems that they belong. In Engel's (1984) study 'outsiders' were ridiculed for using the law while 'insider' legality was praised as an effort to restore community harmony. In the same way I show how highly racialized constructions of "us" and "them" determine who is eligible to make formal rights claims and therefore to generate meaningful mobilization.

The Paradox of Community

As a whole, my study sheds light on a tragic irony that is especially disheartening in the high stakes, "winner take all" climate that characterizes the contemporary neoliberal era. As was the case in Sander County and elsewhere, in Hazleton solidarity with 'outsiders' does not emerge. In contrast, a heightened emphasis on 'outsider' difference serves to "recast as general and largely anonymous" "the specific events and transactions that changed the face of the towns" (Greenhouse et al. 1994:182). Hence Paula's unwillingness to be upfront with her own economic

uncertainty yet steadfast tendency to pin the blame for her troubles on Hazleton's racialized Latino/a immigrants. This is what Greenhouse and colleagues (1994:172) refer to as the "paradox of community": despite the fact that broader changes led to increased disenchantment, community members expend their efforts using the law and their preconceived notions about race to construct an imagined community. While this may permit the maintenance of local hierarchies, it does nothing to alter the conditions that created the need to shore up community boundaries in the first place.

THE PRESENT STUDY

Chapter 2 will explore neoliberalism's direct impact on Hazleton, using an in-depth case study of the city's primary community economic development group, CAN DO, to highlight how neoliberalism and the attendant structural and cultural changes it has brought have devastated this working class community. More specifically this chapter utilizes decades of archival materials, interviews with community economic leaders, and a variety of other materials (see Appendix A for a fuller account of all methods) to trace the history of the CAN DO organization and to examine their contemporary practices. This chapter reveals that in attempting to adapt to the neoliberal climate, CAN DO has abandon its original grassroots mission, becoming far more business-like. Most importantly, CAN DO has supported the piece of pro-employer state-level legislation that I argue was a crucial step in attracting Latino/a immigrants to Hazleton. Yet rather than acknowledging Hazleton's economic struggles or embracing the arrival of the Latino/a population, the development group has

appropriated powerful images of its nostalgic past and employed a "pro-growth" rhetoric focused narrowly on jobs. This has allowed CAN DO to distance itself from the immigration debate that would ensue and to divert public attention away from the organization as a catalyst for Hazleton's recent changes.

In Chapter 3, I explore in detail the events leading up to Hazleton's passage of the Illegal Immigration Relief Act (IIRA). Drawing on a comparison of the local media's reaction to two homicides (one that featured a white victim and two undocumented Latino alleged offenders and the other that featured a Latino victim and offender) as well as an analysis of city council debates, this chapter reveals how an "illegal" immigration "problem" was constructed in Hazleton. It shows how, by capitalizing on racialized imagery that depicted Hazleton as an "All-American City" being infiltrated by a group of crime-prone 'outsiders,' politicians were able to swiftly and thoughtlessly pass the self-defensive IIRA.

I turn to ordinary residents in Chapter 4. Drawing on focus group and interview data, I reveal in this chapter that distraught local residents are prone to constructing an idealized and racialized *imagined local community*. They evoke positive images from the past and disturbing images from the present in order to reassert who they are. By revisiting the discourse that surrounded the passage of the IIRA with this notion of the imagined local community in mind, the second part of this chapter finds that the passage of the bill embodied local resident's sentiments. It encompassed, in other

words, their moral, material, and nativist desires and fears that resulted from the city's drastic change.

Whereas Chapters 2 – 4 (i.e., Part 1) unpack the local response to change, Chapters 5 – 7 (i.e., Part 2) explore the implications of these responses going forward. Chapter 5 begins by studying the efforts of a small group—whom I refer to as Hazleton's Latino/a Leaders—that came forward initially to resist the IIRA. Drawing on interviews with these activists, I find that their immigrants' rights narrative challenges directly the dominant image of 'community' that has emerged in Hazleton. When I investigate the local response to their activism, however, what I find is that the imagined community proves too powerful to resist and that their 'rights' discourse gets inverted by the community majority in such a way that they are cast as villains rather than activists. Undeterred by Hazleton's anti-immigrant majority, this group turns to powerful national immigrant rights organizations to have the ordinance struck down. Such a strategy to go against the community, however, inspires the fierce pro-IIRA activism that is the subject of Chapter 6.

In response to the legal challenge, a group of activists known as the Voice of the People, USA (VOP) emerged to support Mayor Barletta and the IIRA. Holding a conception of law and rights that that sees 'insiders' as entitled to rights and 'outsiders' as not, I argue that this group's vehement protests effectively amplified the local backlash by making the local debate about something much more than Hazleton and something much bigger than immigration.

Interestingly, Chapter 6 also highlights how members of the community were not in full support of VOP's extreme agenda. Their rhetoric was often more abrasive than community members were willing to tolerate and it represented an augmentation of what community residents were feeling. Yet, there is no denying that the VOP-led amplification of the backlash had a derisive impact. In Chapter 7, I explore the work done by a group of activists known as the Concerned Parents of the Hazleton Area (CPH) who have initiated a style of activism that conforms wholeheartedly to the colorblind narrative of community and rejects ardently any attention to Latino/a rights. Despite CPH's claims of pro-immigrant advocacy, their rhetoric adopts much of VOP's anti-rights discourse. Though its strategies are meant to empower Hazleton's Latino/a newcomers, I argue that a colorblind approach does not challenge Hazleton's nativist, racial hierarchy and is thus unlikely to bring about any real change in the community. Indeed, when we consider how the community proved to be impenetrable for this group despite their conformity, we see that lurking behind the imagined community of colorblind equals is a deep-seated fear of the racialized "Other" and a strong desire to maintain local hierarchies in the face of economic uncertainty.

I conclude in Chapter 8 with a discussion of the perils of "community" and "rights" in this context. I also make the case for a *pro-immigrant populism* (Schlesinger 2007) that is attentive to real-life issues facing residents on the ground and critical of overly idealistic and racialized constructions of community that, my

dissertation shows, are detrimental to new immigrants and native-born working class residents alike.

Chapter 2

NEOLIBERALISM AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

I open this chapter with a look back at the founding of CAN DO—an economic development group that emerged in Hazleton in the 1950s in response to the demise of coal and continues to operate as Hazleton's primary economic engine in the present day. In retelling this founding story, I rely on CAN DO-based information as much as possible with the hope of communicating the social meaning of these events as CAN DO recounts them.

"A Phoenix Rising from the Ashes"

The story is so great it is no wonder they tell it often. The year was 1955 and Hazleton's unemployment rate hovered around 25%.[14] Coal was once king in this small city of about 35,000, but thanks to the advent of more mechanized mining methods and the rise of oil as the nation's dominant energy source (e.g., Dublin and Licht 2005), the mining industry had gradually sunk. "Gone to Jersey"[15] became a

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[14] A 50th Anniversary DVD given to me by the CAN DO organization which depicts Dr. Edgar L. Dessen recalling CAN DO's founding provides this figure.

[15] Personal interview with CAN DO's current president W. Kevin O'Donnell; December 3, 2009. He adds: "They didn't just go to New Jersey, they might go to Connecticut to the shipyards or to New Jersey to work at Bethlehem Steel of something like that; but it meant the family could no longer find work in the Hazleton area and they had to move elsewhere to find work." Gregory Wilson's (2002) historical study confirms this observation and adds that most leaving the area were between the ages of 18 and 50.

popular local slogan as scores of families began leaving the place they called home in search of work elsewhere. Hazleton was "swiftly becoming a ghost town" (CAN DO 1974:7).

"But a small corps of merchants and professional men had faith that… they could turn the tide" (CAN DO 1974:7). Among them was Dr. Edgar L. Dessen, a local radiologist who had recently been named the president of the Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce. Dessen had a new vision for Hazleton; one of "a Phoenix rising from the ashes" (CAN DO 1991:5). "In the face of the inherent disillusionment… and the prevalent atmosphere of depression over the entire community" (CAN DO 1974:7), he saw the potential for realizing this vision through the creation of an economic development organization. Dessen recalls his dogged persistence in the face of doubt:

> One very prominent local banker in town from one of the larger banks just was extremely pessimistic about this whole concept. He just said flatly: you can't do it, you can't do it. And of course those words rang in my ears. That night I couldn't sleep because those words were there: you can't do it. So that was the night that I decided to name the organization CAN DO.[16]

Hazleton's new community economic development group was thus born out of a spirit suggested by its name: CAN DO. It was not until weeks later when the group's founder arranged the words Community Area New Development Organization to fit

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[16] Quoted from CAN DO's 50th Anniversary DVD entitled: *Vision, Determination, Drive: The CAN DO 50th Anniversary*. On file with the author.

the acronym. “Little did Dessen then realize,” however “how appropriate both the name and acronym would be in the years to come” (CAN DO 1991:5). Seemingly against all odds, the organization quickly grabbed the local economic reins and assumed the role of community savior. It began with a fund drive where residents were encouraged to donate a “dime-a-week” to the efforts of attracting industry. A reflection of the CAN DO spirit of the time, the drive…

> …involved people from all walks of life, thereby helping to revive community spirit. Hundreds of bright red lunch pails were placed in restaurants, stores, public buildings, plants, and other places where people congregated. The slogan “Operation Jobs” was painted on the lunch pails… A windup phase of the drive was a “Miles of Dimes.” People were asked to place a mile of dimes, end to end, on tape glued to Broad Street between Laurel and Wyoming Streets. The long lines of tape were quite impressive. Starting early one Saturday morning, men, women, and children came to place their dimes on the tape. It was heartening to watch the money line grow (CAN DO 1991:3).

With the initial drive generating funds and reviving community morale, subsequent efforts followed. Parades, bond sales, and media campaigns continued to excite Hazleton’s increasingly downtrodden public. “The more they became involved, the more enthusiastic they became” (CAN DO 1974:12). One fund drive generated so much excitement that social clubs were practically “fighting in the streets” (Rose 1981:132) over who could sell the most bonds. Ministers, priests, and rabbis supported CAN DO, giving sermons about the importance of the drive (Rose 1981). Local media outlets covered the drive extensively and rewarded donors by publishing their photos.

"Being a part of the CAN DO movement [was] the THING to do in Hazleton" (CAN DO 1974: 14 capitalization in original).

"The drive was overwhelmingly successful" (CAN DO 1991: 14). Ultimately, over two million dollars were raised; more than enough to purchase land and develop an industrial park. From there, "it didn't take long for CAN DO to prove to Greater Hazleton that if you provide a developed industrial park, new industry will be attracted." Hazleton's once booming coal industry was thus replaced with a manufacturing base that would, at the very least, provide subsistence to the working people of Hazleton. It may not have returned the city to its coal era prosperity,[17] but it gave residents a newfound sense of security.

Neoliberalism, Organizational Change, and the Manufacturing of Nostalgia

This story of economic recovery is an important part of the larger tale I tell in this dissertation for two reasons—one structural, the other cultural. For one, it reveals what was possible in the way of community economic development prior to the rise of neoliberalism. Not only did CAN DO resurrect the city from the demise of coal in the 1950s, but throughout the 1960s and 1970s CAN DO continued to build on its initial success. Dozens of factories operating out of CAN DO-owned industrial parks provided Pennsylvanians with gainful employment during that era, and, in 1967,

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[17] I refer cautiously to Hazleton's coal era as prosperous. Relatively speaking, Hazleton's economy during that era was indeed strong, but it is important to keep in mind that only a few prospered while many suffered.

Hazleton was named an "All-America City" thanks to CAN DO's efforts.[18] Though it continues to serve as Hazleton's primary economic engine today, however, we will see that the organization's contemporary tactics are a faint resemblance of this storied past. Drawing from my intensive analysis of more than five decades of archival material, I focus on CAN DO's changing organizational prerogatives in the first part of this chapter, paying particular attention to the broader political economic climate in which they occurred. I note how, beginning especially in the 1980s and largely out of necessity, CAN DO has abandoned its grassroots mission and instead taken on a decidedly more corporatized approach that has tended to neglect what is in the best interest of the community; not necessarily out of animus or greed but rather as an adaptation to the increasingly competitive neoliberal climate.

How, why, and to what effect CAN DO *chooses to tell this story* reveals its cultural importance. As broader economic shifts begin to affect Hazleton and residents struggle to find a way to make sense of such shifts, nostalgic stories such as CAN

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[18] The All-America City Award is a prize given annually by the National Civic League (NCL). NCL offers the following description of the award: "The National Civic League recognizes ten communities each year for outstanding civic accomplishments. To win, each community must demonstrate innovation, inclusiveness, civic engagement, and cross sector collaboration by describing successful efforts to address pressing local challenges. More than 600 communities have won the award, some as many as five times. All-America cities have shown the ability to innovate in such areas as job creation, neighborhood revitalization, crime reduction, new housing for low income people, improving education, and engaging youth" (NCL 2011).

DO's founding prove vitally important for local elites who seek to maintain legitimacy in the community. In the second part of this chapter, I treat CAN DO's founding story as an *origin myth* (e.g., Eliade 1963; Engel 1993) and note how it, along with various other tactics employed by the organization (e.g., touting a colorblind, pro-growth agenda), have allowed what one would expect to be an unpopular organization in this time of economic decline to maintain its legitimacy and gain support for otherwise controversial decisions. By focusing on a number of CAN DO's contemporary tactics—their "selling" of a piece of state-level legislation that would ultimately transform Hazleton, the fate of a group of CAN DO resisters, and CAN DO's dealings with Hazleton's new Latino/a population—I reveal how CAN DO has amassed a great deal of power locally despite the negative effects that their recent decisions have wrought.

FROM GRASSROOTS DEVELOPER TO NEOLIBERAL CONDUIT

Waging Economic War

While fascinating, the CAN DO story is not very unique. During the 1950s and 60s, organizations like CAN DO were emerging all over the United States. This "first wave" of community development corporations (CDCs) (Fisher 1994) emerged in an era of strong union presence (Clawson and Clawson 1999) with the hope of creating a neighborhood controlled and owned economic enterprise. In urban areas where the CDC concept was popularized, the original focus was on overcoming the

unwillingness of employers to hire minorities. CDCs focused more narrowly on attracting jobs to the area in more rural cities like Hazleton (Perry 1971). Regardless of the context, however, both relied heavily on government support for their initiatives as "the idea that the market should be allowed to make major social and political decisions" was "utterly foreign to the spirit of the time" (George 1999).

Crucial ideological and structural shifts came about in the 1980s, however, that put these early community-based mobilizations to the test. The Reagan administration ushered in such changes with a blatant hostility towards the state and an unbridled commitment to the market (e.g., Tickell and Peck 2003). As such, in the 1980s alone, "Nonprofits that relied on federal community development funding faced 70% cuts" (Koschinsky 1998:123). With government support shrinking and the assumption that, outside the market "there is no alternative" (George 1999) gaining ground, CDCs ability to "to prioritize standards of participation, neighborhood control, community building, and long-term affordability" (Koschinsky 1998:117) were severely hampered.

In the absence of federal support, it became increasingly clear that community development groups would need to fend for themselves. One of the defining features of neoliberalism has been its tendency to transfer state power upwards to global institutions (i.e., World Trade Organization) and state responsibility downwards to municipalities—a process Swyngedouw (1997) appropriately terms *glocalization.* Despite being advanced as an effort to reduce the role of government (see Tickell and

Peck 2003) and provide localities with increasing economic freedom (e.g., Kodras 1997), such structural shifts have had the effect of severely limiting the economic options available to locales. Places like Hazleton are left with a zero-sum option: *adopt a market-based approach to community economic development or fail*. Struggling rural communities in particular began marketing themselves by offering amenities and incentives to potential employers. In an almost social Darwinian embrace, the ideology of community developer is if they do not help themselves their communities will perish (Buss 2001). In short, market-driven neoliberal glocalization has exerted "economic discipline" (Harvey 1985) on locales while disillusioning them with a "myth of community control" (Stoecker 1997:8). Rather than relying on government support to keep their economies afloat, the neoliberal era forces locales into a fierce competition *amongst* rather than *within* municipalities (e.g., Cox and Mair 1988). This situation is akin to what Burstein and Rolnick (1994) refer to when they use the phrase "economic war."

"Changing its way of thinking in order to compete"

The rise of neoliberalism thus reshaped the meaning of community development in the United States. Despite their populist foundations, many CDCs have since abandoned their grassroots-centered development imperatives (i.e., Fisher 1994; Newman and Ashton, 2004). Out of necessity, many have become far more business-like (e.g., Fisher 1994) or formed partnerships with corporations. The locus

of control is no longer local but rather residing within the confines of a complex "community development industry system" (e.g., Yin 1998).

In the mid 1980s, CAN DO began to realize that the battle for local economic viability had intensified. Recognizing the cutthroat nature of the emerging economic war, CAN DO officials publicly acknowledged that "competition for attracting industry to an area is tougher than it was years ago" and that "local development groups must be more tenacious in their pursuit of prospective industries." At that time, CAN DO was involved in a bidding war to have Saturn, a new division of General Motors, locate its plant in the Hazleton area. Having successfully attracted industry to the city for more than 30 years by this point, CAN DO had indeed faced competition, but never before had it been so ferocious. As one official remarked, local economic development was now characterized by "frantic one-upmanship."[19]

The competition for Saturn is an important turning point for the CAN DO organization—indeed, a *critical juncture* (Gal and Bargal, 2002).[20] Unable to successfully lure the auto manufacturer, executives soon realized that "CAN DO has to

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[19] CAN DO Archive, Book 7. "Wright: CAN DO must change its thinking," May 16, 1985.

[20] Gal and Bargal (2002:432) note that critical junctures in the lives of organizations are "specific periods of time during which decisions taken not only reflect major digressions from previous policies, but also have a lasting impact upon subsequent decisions and structures."

change its way of thinking in order to compete in today's fight to attract industry."[21] They thus embarked upon a wholesale remodeling of the organization. The hope was that such changes would lay "the foundation for coordinated and more professional marketing efforts to attract industry."[22] Within a period of six months, CAN DO announced that they would hire a public relations firm,[23] begin a new campaign featuring magazine advertisements,[24] develop a new brochure,[25] and merge with other local development groups "to get more aggressive" [26]—efforts that one CAN DO executive called "a new path for the nonprofit organization."[27] Officials publicly acknowledged that CAN DO would begin "sprucing up its approach to luring industry" and even begin making "sharp deviation[s] with past CAN DO policy." The

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[21] CAN DO Archive, Book 7. "Wright: CAN DO must change its thinking," May 16, 1985.

[22] CAN DO Archive, Book 7. "CAN DO hires public relations firm," August 14, 1985.

[23] Ibid.

[24] CAN DO Archive, Book 7. "CAN DO ad begins new campaign," November 13, 1985.

[25] CAN DO Archive, Book 7. "Industrial groups have new brochure," February 1, 1986.

[26] CAN DO Archive, Book 7. "CAN DO hires public relations firm," August 14, 1985.

[27] Ibid.

message was clear: by "reshaping" its image and "redesign[ing] its marketing tools," CAN DO hoped to survive the looming economic war by differentiating itself from other areas.[28]

Reluctantly Embracing the Neoliberal Agenda

It should be emphasized that the decision to abandon the inclusive, grassroots-oriented approach that the organization embraced in its early years was not necessarily out of animus, greed, or even a mere preference for market-based development. Frankly, it appears that CAN DO was in over its head and forced to adapt to an increasingly cutthroat global economy. In 1986, just over a year after Saturn had announced its decision not to locate in Hazleton, local development officials spoke out against the Reagan administration's rollback policy of cutting federal funding for community development at a Congressional field hearing hosted in Hazleton by Pennsylvania Representative Paul Kanjorski.

At the hearing, Kanjorski asked the panel of local development officials to comment on the Reagan administration's funding cuts. All officials expressed vehement opposition. Howard Grossman, who was then the Executive Director of the Economic Development Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania, called the elimination of federal programs "deleterious," adding, "The absence of federal support…would be a great handicap in many respects a great tragedy." A county level developer told

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[28] CAN DO Archive, Book 7. "CAN DO reshapes image," January 15, 1986.

Congress that there was "no question" that local projects "will suffer." Most notably, W. Kevin O'Donnell, CAN DO's current president[29] testified: "Cutting back [on federal funding] is like taking our toolbox away, or like taking tools out of our toolbox."

CAN DO's decision to alter its approach despite firm initial disagreements with the ideological underpinnings of what would embody their new organizational consciousness thus reveals further that their changing organizational prerogatives are an *adaptation* to broader, macro level political economic forces. While they expressed firm opposition to the Reagan administration's neoliberal agenda, the organization nevertheless underwent a dramatic transformation that would lead them to embody that agenda.

The New CAN DO

The economic war's end-game is straightforward: do whatever it takes to recruit firms that will jumpstart local economies. After its pleas that the federal government restore funding for community economic development fell upon deaf ears, CAN DO out of necessity continued its path toward creating a more neoliberalized version of its previous self. In 1990, the organization opened a $3 million dollar

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[29] At the time of the hearing, O'Donnell was the Executive Vice President of CAN DO.

business facility[30] in the heart of downtown Hazleton that would serve as the "focal point when important people visit the area."[31] More recently, it was reported that when representatives of potential firms visited Hazleton, CAN DO officials strategically routed the prospective clients through the city so that they would not see the "eye sores" that are Hazleton's abandoned coalfields, directing them instead through more scenic parts of the community (Dino 2007). When asked about one firm's questionable practices, CAN DO executives exposed their community abandonment when they responded, "We are a private organization—we're not a public entity".[32] Perhaps reflecting the organization's changing objectives most accurately is the current mission statement, which declares, "Our mission is to improve the quality of life in the Greater Hazleton Area through the creation of employment opportunities" (CAN DO 2007)—indeed, a profound departure from the organization's original mission to "involve the entire community, to raise money, to represent all facets of the public on the board of directors" (CAN DO 1991:5). Clearly, this corporatized approach lacks the community involvement indicative of early

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[30] CAN DO Archive, Book 10. "CAN DO building seen as downtown catalyst," September 8, 1989; CAN DO Archive, Book 11. "New building should impress prospects," November 23, 1990.

[31] CAN DO Archive, Book 11. "CAN DO tour shows Casey state funding in action," October 24, 1990.

[32] CAN DO Archive, Book 19. "Mission Possible: CAN DO President W. Kevin O'Donnell says the organization's goals haven't changed, but tactics have due to changing economy," August 13, 2003.

CDCs. In fact, grassroots organizing on issues of community development in post-1980 Hazleton often opposed decisions made by CAN DO[33] (see also CAN DO 1991:73-75).

Desperate Times

Unfortunately for CAN DO, neoliberalism creates an environment which is so competitive that even a highly entrepreneurial locale is not guaranteed economic success (Kodras 1997). In Hazleton, the economic woes brought on by the demise of the coal industry persisted into the twenty-first century despite its primary economic development group adhering to neoliberal demands. Figure 1 reveals the decline in manufacturing jobs Hazleton and surrounding areas experienced despite CAN DO's new persona. Prior to 1980, the number of manufacturing jobs in Hazleton's Luzerne County was consistently above 40,000. By 1990, that number dropped to below 30,000; it was only about 25,000 in 2000, and most recent figures suggest less than 20,000 Luzerne County residents work in the manufacturing sector.[34] Meanwhile, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that Luzerne County's unemployment rate for February 2010 was 11.1%. This is the highest rate in the county in almost 20 years.

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[33] E.g., CAN DO Archive, Book 11. "Anti-prison group will meet Wednesday," February 19, 1991; CAN DO Archive, Book 10. "Fay calls Hazle meeting on plans for steel plant," September 7, 1989.

[34] Pennsylvania as a whole has likewise lost 207,300 manufacturing jobs since 2001, 24.3% of all such positions (McMillion 2008).

Additionally, 12.8% of all people in Luzerne County now live below the poverty line—a number that has also increased in the last decade (Staub 2010). Indeed,

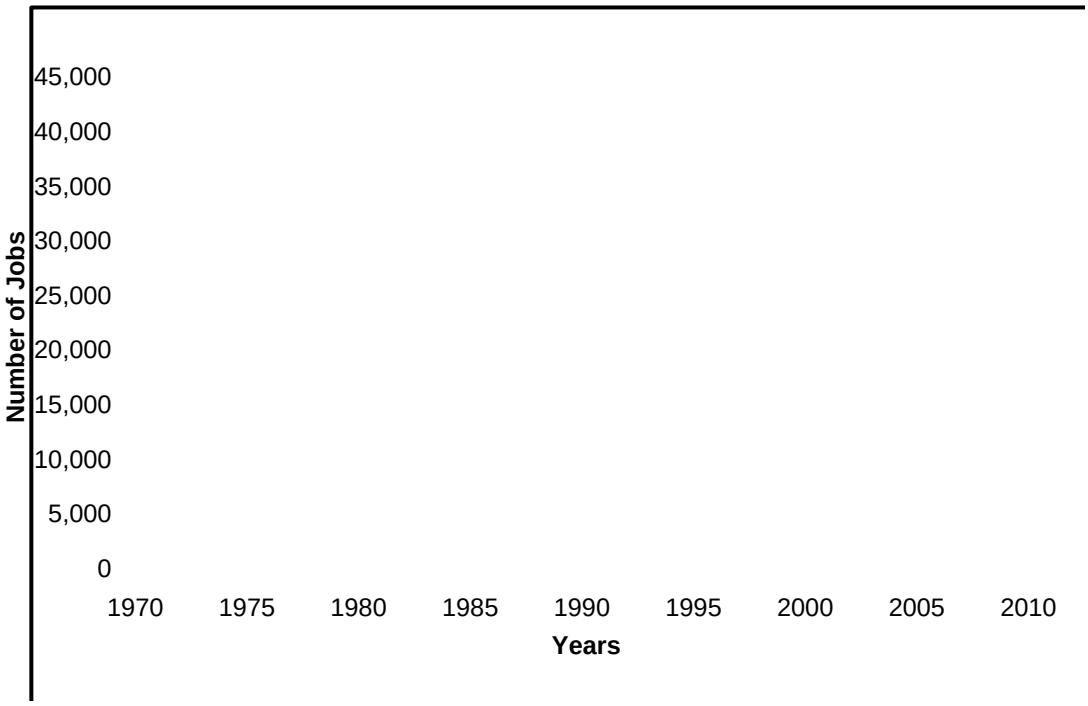

Figure 1: Manufacturing Jobs in Hazleton's Luzerne County 1975 - 2008

Source: PA Department of Labor & Industry; Center for Workforce Information & Analysis

Hazleton's economy continues to struggle.

Desperate Measures

As the economic war wages on, many locales are forced to act out of desperation, often making huge sacrifices that have profound effects on the local

economic landscape; sacrifices they would not have dreamed of under normal circumstances. Municipalities in the neoliberal era have offered incentives to retailers, airports, and professional sports teams (LeRoy 2005). Yet, "while states spend billions of dollars competing with one another to retain or attract businesses, they struggle to provide such public goods as schools and libraries, police and fire protection, and the roads, bridges and parks that are critical to the success of any community" (Burstein and Rolnick, 1994). In other words, neoliberal policies are fundamentally at odds "with a culture of democratic participation, neighborhood control, and community building" (Koschinsky 1998:129).

In CAN DO's case, their sacrifice came soon after they had failed to lure a warehouse of the popular national chain store *Target*. CAN DO was confident about its chances for *Target* given that it had at its disposal a county-level tax initiative[35] that would make it rather inexpensive for *Target* to do business in Hazleton. CAN DO officials admit that without such an incentive, they "would be out of the game"[36] as *Target* was receiving "tax breaks from everyone."[37] Yet despite the generous offering,

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[35] Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Act, Pa. Stat. Ann. Tit. 72 §4722 et seq. (LERTA). "LERTA is a tax incentive program in which a business or industry foregoes paying property taxes for a time, but eventually works its way up to paying the full tax within a 10-year period" (CAN DO Archives, Book 17. "CAN DO deserves help to reel in big fish," January 4, 1998).

[36] CAN DO Archive, Book 17. "Major retailer gets tax breaks from everyone," January 16, 1998.

[37] Ibid.

Target was lured to New York—the state that, not coincidently, led the nation in reducing business taxes at the time.[38]

Still fighting for its economic life, CAN DO was yet again forced to further entrench the neoliberal ideology into its organizational consciousness. By this point, the "rollback" policies of the 1980s which sought to eliminate government involvement (Tickell and Peck 2003) had been replaced by policies that do involve the state "but in more neoliberalized forms" (McCarthy 2005:998). In 1998, CAN DO opted to utilize a state-level tax incentive, the *Keystone Opportunity Zone initiative* (KOZ). Modeled after similar "enterprise zone" legislation whose goal it was to "remove as much government as possible" (Butler 1991:27) with the hope of stimulating economic growth in struggling areas, laws like KOZ were promoted heavily by the Reagan administration (Mossberger 2000) and utilized previously in other states as an economic development tool. Pennsylvania's version was pioneered by Republican Governor Tom Ridge and its purpose was to allow municipalities from across the state to compete for the right to designate certain properties within their jurisdictions as "opportunity zones" where businesses could set up shop while being exempt from all taxes for a dozen years. The bill's neoliberal roots are clear. According to Ridge, this approach represents "the most powerful market based

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[38] CAN DO Archive, Book 17. "Hazleton misses the target: Major retailer going to New York instead," March 4, 1998.

incentive: no taxation" (Argall 2006:81).[39] KOZ sponsor Joseph Gladeck (R) echoed these sentiments when he said: "rather than pumping millions of state funds into various state and local run programs… [KOZ] gets the government out of the way" (Argall 2006:83-84).

When KOZ was introduced, Pennsylvania municipalities were invited to compete for the opportunity zones by demonstrating the magnitude of their economic need and the presence of blight in the community—criteria that fit Hazleton "very well"[40] given the abundance of mine-scared land and above-average unemployment rates. So well, in fact, that Hazleton's Luzerne County received more KOZ acreage than any other Pennsylvania county (Argall 2006). This is a direct result of the fierce competition amongst municipalities described above. The five counties awarded the

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[39] I draw extensively in this section from David Argall's Ph.D. dissertation, *A Policy Analysis of the First Six Years of Pennsylvania's Keystone Opportunity Zone Program, 1998 to 2004*, which is a far-reaching policy analysis of the KOZ initiative (Argall 2006). Argall serves as a State Representative in a district neighboring Hazleton and was involved in the passage of the KOZ legislation. Rep. Argall is an authority on the KOZ program specifically and similar development initiatives more generally.

[40] The full remark CAN DO's current president W. Kevin O'Donnell made to me was that: "Northeast Pennsylvania fit very well into this because of the past coal industry and because of our mine lands and stuff like that. A lot of the land that we own or owned fit into that category of not brown-field, but as we say, grey-field. And also it fit into the criteria of unemployment; because the high unemployment of this area was part of the criteria."

most KOZ acreage all suffered from high unemployment rates (e.g., Argall 2006)[41] and given their woeful economic conditions, these areas were not surprisingly more willing to take risks in attracting industry to their communities.

Latino/a Immigrants' Arrival

Armed with a surplus of corporate-friendly tax-free land, CAN DO this time was able to yield results, but not the sort of results that the city has grown to expect from its mid-century redeemer. Rather than attracting the well-paying manufacturing jobs which have kept Hazleton on its feet in recent decades, KOZ has served as a magnet for "big box" warehouses, distribution centers, and perhaps most prominently of all, *Cargill Meat Solutions*, a meat packing plant notorious for low wages, poor if not outright dangerous working conditions, and the exploitation of immigrant labor.

The arrival of *Cargill* can thus be directly attributed to CAN DO's changing practices which I have shown to be the product of changes in the broader political economic climate. Representatives from the meat packing plant have openly acknowledged, "the decision to locate in Hazleton rested largely on… the KOZ program." [42] Not coincidentally, the large-scale demographic shake-up Hazleton experienced in recent years is also a link in the same causal chain. Hoping to benefit

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[41] Conversely, the seven Pennsylvania counties *not participating* in the KOZ program were locales with the state's lowest unemployment rates (Argall 2006).

from Hazleton's newly acquired tax incentives, *Cargill* arrived in 2001 just one year after the census calculated that 95% of Hazleton's approximately 24,000 residents were white. When it opened, it employed an estimated 800 workers, approximately 90% of whom are Latina/o.[43] Upon their arrival many of these workers, the majority of whom were immigrants who had originally settled in either New York or New Jersey, quickly told friends and family about Hazleton. In contrast to more urban areas where they originally settled, Hazleton's availability of jobs, low cost of living, and quiet family-friendly atmosphere enticed recent immigrants.[44] Suddenly, by 2006, estimates suggested that 30% of Hazleton's population—which now numbered around 36,000—were Latino/a. By 2009, Hazleton's Luzerne County ranked number one in

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[42] See CAN DO Archive, Book 19. "Meat Plant to Hire 700: Excel Starts Construction on Location Near Hazleton." April 19, 2001.

[43] Estimates of the number of employees who work at *Cargill* vary from 800 (e.g., http://www.hazletonchamber.org) to 1,300 (a number people consistently gave me when I was in the field). Regardless, even the lowest estimates would make *Cargill* by far the largest employer in any of the Hazleton area's industrial parks. Estimates suggesting that between 70% and 90% of this labor force is Latino/a would likewise make Cargill the area's largest employer of Latino/a migrants (see Sheehan and Cardenas 2005).

[44] One recent Latina immigrant I spoke with said that she came to Hazleton "because of the economy; the rent is cheaper here… Another thing is there is a lot of companies here, and they offer a job [and] the opportunity to raise your kids in a different way." These reasons were common among almost all Latina/os I spoke with. She further describes the snowball effect that followed—another common story told by newcomers to Hazleton: "after me came four families and one of my friends. She came to live here because of me… Now three of her cousins came; so everybody is bringing someone."

the nation in terms of Latina/o population growth (Light 2009). Perhaps more than any other single change, the arrival of *Cargill* created an explosion of a new Latino/a immigrant labor force which has been subject to backlash in Hazleton.

"Not a Word"

Yet few locals have pointed their finger at *Cargill* and its exploitive reputation as the reason for this demographic shakeup. Instead, as I'll detail in subsequent chapters, local officials depicted demographic shifts as an "alien invasion," gaining national attention by touting a "crackdown" on "illegals." But even if we put the immigration issue aside for a moment, we see that locals were still relatively quiet about *Cargill*. Few offered critiques of CAN DO's willingness to settle for a company that offers very little to the community, and fewer still had anything to say about the pro-employer KOZ initiative which fundamentally altered the local social and economic landscape. Hazleton's history is rich with revolt against capitalism's injustices,[45] yet as one activist I spoke with explained, when it came to criticizing

[45] On Labor Day in 1897, for example, a group of Slavic miners protested the poor wages and horrendous working conditions the coal industry forced them to endure. After marching toward Lattimer, a patch town on the outskirts of Hazleton, nineteen miners were shot and killed by a sheriff and his posse (see Novak 1978). Strikes followed in subsequent years as well, as Hazleton area miners grew unwilling to tolerate injustice.

CAN DO, their support of KOZ, and the arrival of *Cargill* area residents uttered "not a word."[46]

COLORBLIND NEOLIBERALISM AND CAN DO'S LOCAL POWER

Why have Hazleton residents been so accepting of sweeping CAN DO-led decisions?[47] I argue in this section that we can understand CAN DO's grip on the community as a product of two strategies the organization has managed to implement successfully in recent years. The first is their ability to take advantage of the working class necessity of attaining gainful employment, especially in the midst of economic crisis. The second pertains to the organization's ongoing public relations campaign. CAN DO has been able to align their own organizational identity with the identity of

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[46] Personal Interview with Renee Lang (pseudonym); May 8, 2009.

[47] I use the phrase "accepting" with caution here. While few Hazleton residents have spoken out publicly against CAN DO, my conversations with ordinary residents often revealed displeasure with CAN DO practices. As one of my respondents summarized: CAN DO is seen as a "necessary evil." Prior research on Hazleton likewise has found a split public consciousness when it comes to CAN DO (e.g., Dublin and Licht 2005; Rose 1981). I believe that my analysis in the second part of this chapter helps explain why attitudes are split as such. CAN DO has failed to provide working class residents with well-paying jobs that offer upward mobility and this has fostered discontent. Yet, because the tendency in the community is to identify along racial rather than class lines, as I will argue, CAN DO's depiction of itself as an "All-American city" provides these residents with at least some assurance that the organization is on its side. The result is a sort of timid embrace—that, for the sake of this analysis, I comprehend as an "acceptance." Among community leaders, however, it appears as though the support for CAN DO is more widespread. As the following analyses reveal, this group—who by and large is of a higher socioeconomic strata—is influenced by the positive depictions of CAN DO but not influenced negatively by their less-than-stellar recent record on economic development.

their primarily white working class constituents thereby amassing community support for otherwise controversial decisions. Part of this alignment, I argue, is a concerted effort by CAN DO to distance itself from social conflict. Thus despite luring exploitive industry and thereby enabling the continuation of neoliberal processes, CAN DO retains a colorblind organizational consciousness which allows them to remain committed to aligning with a particular dominant racial community.

Jobs, Jobs, Jobs

In their oft-cited article, *Locality and Community in the Politics of Local Economic Development*, geographers Kevin R. Cox and Andrew Mair (1988) provide an important framework for understanding how developers, especially in the current climate of intense inter-local competition, are able to sell initiatives like KOZ to an otherwise highly resistant public. They note that in order to get citizens on board with their efforts, development groups creatively need to merge their interests with the interests of ordinary local residents. In other words, they need to "sell" change to a community that may be resistant of it. The first way they do this is by using the intense competition described above to their advantage. Developers, that is, "exploit the crisis" (e.g., Klien 2007:7) by sending a territorializing message to the public that *there is an economic war being waged and if we do not make a move to keep ourselves ahead, someone else will*. The implication of this message is to suggest that inaction will send all of the jobs elsewhere, leaving hometown residents jobless and forced to relocate. Because moving is the last thing many residents want to do, they become

easy sells. Thus, by exploiting the working class necessity for attaining gainful employment, groups like CAN DO are able to preach a territorialized rhetoric of growth that emphasizes "jobs" when, in reality, it is their own organizational survival that is often at stake:

> Perhaps the key ideological prop for the growth machine, especially in terms of sustaining support from the working class majority… is the claim that growth "makes jobs." This claim is aggressively promulgated by developers, builders and chambers of commerce; it becomes a part of the statesman talk of editorials and political officials. Such people do not speak of growth as useful to profits—rather, they speak of it as necessary for making jobs (Molotch 1976:320).

CAN DO's Pitch for KOZ

CAN DO's tendency to tout "jobs" and "growth" was clearly evident as they convinced community residents that the Keystone Opportunity Zone legislation was in the best interest of the community. Governor Tom Ridge signed KOZ into law on October 6, 1998. The bill included an application deadline of December of that year, giving locales interested in applying for KOZ status just three months to compile their materials. In order to apply, CAN DO needed first to get permission from a number of local entities—namely, the Hazleton Township Board of Supervisors and the Hazleton Area School Board, among others—because the changes to the tax base that would result from KOZ implementation would drastically affect the day-to-day functioning of each of these locally elected boards. The school board alone faced the possibility of

losing nearly 18 thousand dollars per year in property taxes (Kelly 1998). The decision of whether or not to approve was an important one.

"At Least you'll be Putting People to Work"

When they met with both the Board of Supervisors and the School Board CAN DO representatives offered a similar pitch. In both cases, they emphasized primarily the competitive nature of the KOZ application process and added to it a sense of urgency that made inaction on the issue appear downright foolish. [48] They stressed to supervisors: "realistically, we're trying to get one of the six KOZ which will be left" (Tarone 1998) and told the school board that because of the limited number of zones available, Hazleton was "not exactly high up on the list. It's basically do-or-die time. We're either in or out" (Kelly 1998).

Once they made the fierce competition apparent, developers depicted KOZ as an economic panacea for Hazelton. "Businesses which are considering a move to Pennsylvania have asked the (Ridge) Administration, 'show us the Keystone

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[48] It is interesting to note that CAN DO's application to the state of Pennsylvania takes an entirely different tone. Here, CAN DO is upfront with the state about the region's poverty. They tell state officials that "the region continues to suffer from the demographic and socioeconomic aftereffects of prolonged economic stagnation" and backs up such claims with figures such as this one: "CAN DO's service area exhibits per capita income levels that is eighty (80) percent or less of the national average per capita income." Nowhere is such recognition of Hazleton's economic troubles during CAN DO's reign evident in their local publications, however. Contrarily, these publications depict a CAN DO that has been highly successful even in difficult economic times. As one community newsletter's title put it, CAN DO is "meeting the challenge."

Opportunity Zones,'" (Tarone 1998) said one CAN DO executive. Another praised the KOZ program, calling it the "'brass ring' for attracting new businesses" (Kelly 1998). CAN DO execs, in short, presented KOZ as nothing less than an opportunity "to make the community as attractive as possible to business and industry" (Tarone 1998).

Wisely, however, CAN DO's pitch included a disclaimer which suggested that if it were up to them, such drastic steps would not be necessary. "It's kind of scary to think that's where we're headed, but that's what's happening" (Tarone 1998), CAN DO's President told the Board of Supervisors. Yet all the while CAN DO stood firmly behind KOZ, depicting it as the *only option* for the continued employment of area residents: "Northeast Pennsylvania must file an application so the job-creation tool isn't lost to the region" (Tarone 1998). Their underlying message was that "without the chance to get a KOZ designation, community development and job growth in Hazleton would grind to a halt since businesses looking to move into the state would likely choose a spot in a KOZ" (Kelly 1998).

Both boards, as it turns out, "were easy sells" (Tarone 1998). Believing that KOZ was the best option for Hazleton, each unanimously approved CAN DO's application. In all likelihood, they were convinced that KOZ was the only way to bring essential jobs. As one approving supervisor's statement testifies: "I'm all for it… At least you'll be putting people to work" (Tarone 1998).

CAN DO thus sold an initiative to the community that, as we now know, would bring sweeping changes to Hazleton. As Cox and Mair's (1988) framework

suggests, the prevailing economic war between competing locales was co-opted by CAN DO to construct a territorialized narrative of "job creation" which implies that if "we" don't get these jobs, "someone else" will. When I spoke recently to CAN DO's current president W. Kevin O'Donnell about the KOZ initiative, he provided me with a statement mirroring this all-or-nothing prerogative, confirming that CAN DO has indeed resorted to neoliberal policies as a way to survive the economic war:

> I don't think there's an economic developer in the United States today that likes these giveaway incentives. However, having said that, if you don't use them you're out of the game because every other community is using them and if you don't then they're going to go to the other communities and your town is going to be the ghost town.

After KOZ was implemented and *Cargill* arrived, more of this rhetoric could be seen in Hazleton. The media delivered hyperbolic pronouncements when *Excel*, a *Cargill* subsidiary that the was original name given to the meatpacking plant in Hazleton that is now simply *Cargill*, agreed to open in the city. "Meat plant eyes up to seven-hundred jobs for Hazleton"; "new jobs for area… 'Excel-lent.'"[49]At the same time, they conveniently ignored readily available details about *Excel's* (i.e., *Cargill's*) reputation as anti-worker rights and, most importantly its record of using exploited undocumented immigrant labor. Indeed, before the multinational meatpacking company was lured to Hazleton "several towns [have]… hung out a "not welcome" sign when Excel came knocking. In some markets, critics ran television ads, urging

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[49] CAN DO Archive, Book 19. "New Jobs for Area… 'Excel-lent." April 19, 2001.

locals to resist relocation efforts." Elsewhere, "a high school guidance counselor went door to door seeking signatures on petitions against the plant" (Tarone 2006). Their ability to exploit the working class necessity for attaining gainful employment and adoption of the neoliberal emphasis on hyper-accelerated market-based growth, however, helped CAN DO to make this ugly back-story obsolete. CAN DO was able to silence any potential critics and depict KOZ and, ultimately, *Cargill's* arrival as a step in the right direction.

Community Worthiness and the "All-American City"

Promising jobs allows developers to make growth appealing, but there is no denying that growth brings changes, such as we have seen in post-*Cargill* Hazleton, that are capable of jarring loose initial support. To avoid this, Cox and Mair (1988) note that developers employ a second strategy: they work to build majority group cohesion and pride. They must, in other words, symbolically weave local imaginings of the community into their development efforts so as to make otherwise controversial changes appear to be acts that conform with all that the community holds dear. In other words, by "recasting concepts of local community in a form that better suits their needs" developers thus portray the…

> local community as a worthy community, as the realization of an idea, as an exemplar of widely held values; held, that is, beyond the confines of the locality. The local community is presented as a caring community, a producer of brave men, of great men and women, of ideas and inventions. This image suggests, and is intended to suggest, that the local community is worth defending and safeguarding (Cox and Mair 1988:317).

The tale I opened the chapter with about CAN DO pulling Hazleton like a "Phoenix from the ashes" is CAN DO's version of a *community worthiness* narrative. In fact, I would go beyond Cox and Mair's (1988) notion of community worthiness, to argue that CAN DO's founding story is Hazelton's quintessential *origin myth* (e.g., Engel 1993). To be sure, labeling this tale a myth is not to deny the facts of the story but rather to highlight that it is embedded with meaning (e.g., Eliade 1963). As David Engel (1993:785) notes in a study of the parents of children with disabilities, "origin myths… clarify the meanings of important events, reaffirm core norms and values, and assert particular understandings of social order and…. identity." The retelling of stories allows organizations in this same way to *remythologize* in a way that "summons back to consciousness the founding ideals and the oft-told tales that helped establish and maintain an organization's identity, thus linking the primal energy with present conditions" (McWhinney and Batista 1972:46). As they seek legitimacy within the community, then, developers are able to align what might otherwise be controversial decisions with the more positive, value-reaffirming images conjured by their storied—indeed, *mythical*—pasts.

CAN DO's founding story is loaded with elements that depict CAN DO as an "All-American" organization who is fit to lead Hazleton, the "All-American City" along the path to economic prosperity. Their emphasis on Dr. Edgar L. Dessen as a leader of the CAN DO movement is an example of this. He is depicted as a relentless individual who embodies Hazleton's resilience with his refusal to give up despite

pressing doubts. CAN DO's decision to "start small"[50] by raising just a dime at a time is likewise compelling to folks who value a "small town" lifestyle. In short, the bedrock of CAN DO's story is one of a resilient and resourceful community.

To be sure, alternative versions of these events do exist. Dan Rose's (1981) study of CAN DO's early years suggests that the movement was by-and-large elite-driven, not a grassroots initiative.[51] And, as I've already discussed, CAN DO appears to be much less self-sufficient and reliant on federal funds than they are willing to claim.[52] In other words, while it may have been broader economic patterns and not the meritorious actions of one individual or organization alone that was responsible for the rebirth of Hazleton vis-à-vis the arrival of manufacturing jobs, the organization is more apt to tell their version of this tale because it evokes certain values that are vital for helping them maintain legitimacy in the community.

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[50] CAN DO's current president W. Kevin O'Donnell emphasized this as a value when I spoke with him and the point is also made in CAN DO's own account of its history: "This miniscule fund drive once more proved the old adage that, "You can't do big things until you learn how to do little things in a big way."

[51] Rose notes that contrary to the message cast by the story, "The CAN DO people were made up of a part of the regional elite" (Rose 1981:115).

[52] Rose (1981) highlights the "double edged" nature of CAN DO—the fact that they at once operate within and gain support from the community, but also that their organization is "fashioned to deal in a systematic way with resources for the community that existed outside community boundaries." CAN DO is thus highly dependent upon broader economic patterns, but their discourse would lead you to believe noting of the sort.

It should not come as much of a surprise, then, that CAN DO tells this mythical tale at nearly every chance it can get. Examples of CAN DO's remythologizing work abound. One only need consider its community newsletters, website, and self-published histories. They are replete with references to their founding and CAN DO continually forges connections between their past and their present. A recent brochure makes the past-present connection almost literal by positioning black and white photos of the past alongside color photos depicting modern "growth." Memorabilia from the founding era are also prominent. An encased bronze statue of Dessen and an original dime-a-week "tool box" greets one who arrives at the CAN DO offices in downtown Hazleton.

As consumers of these stories, ordinary residents become convinced that organizations such as CAN DO truly do exemplify their values (i.e., hard-work, individual responsibility) and CAN DO is given the go-ahead to serve as the economic engine for the "All-American City." Working class residents' otherwise conflicting interests suddenly seem to gel with those promoting growth and, by implication, wholesale change. In short, residents become convinced that developers are on their side fighting to protect their values and way of life. We can see clearly the community's embrace of CAN DO when we explore how other community officials talk about the organization and how those who oppose CAN DO are received by the community.

"We Entrusted CAN DO"

When I spoke with some of the members of the boards who voted in favor of CAN DO, the influence of the organization's mythical story became clear. Harold Bates, who has since become disgruntled with the effects of KOZ, expressed his disappointment *in light of* CAN DO's past accomplishments, revealing that he expects great things from the organization given their storied founding:

> The personnel who are running [CAN DO] are only a mere shadow of the folks who established [CAN DO] in the first place. They are not pushing hard to get outstanding new industry in this community and I find that to be very sad… In the past [CAN DO] has shown great resilience and I think it's done a great job from the 1950s to the 1990s. But since then it has been deplorable and it's very sad.[53]

Given Bates' acceptance of CAN DO's fabled past, it is not surprising that he originally voted in favor of KOZ because he trusted that the interests of CAN DO would align with the interests of the community as a whole:

> [P]rospectively we were certainly aware that the KOZ designation could bring in a Saturn plant for our people. We entrusted CAN DO with KOZ designated properties; we anticipated that they would be looking for reasonable jobs for the people who live in this community.[54]

Yet, he is now aware of KOZ's failure, and in retrospect he sees CAN DO's ability to "sell" the KOZ initiative for what it is; namely, a self-interested play on the

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[53] Personal interview with Harold Bates (pseudonym); December 2, 2009.

[54] Ibid.

community's naïve desire for its mythological past as an "All-American City." When CAN DO returned to the board seeking KOZ renewal, Bates was less than enthusiastic:

> And as you know I was very upset with CAN DO coming in front of us… and playing on our naivety and getting us to give 500 thousand dollars in tax breaks yearly for 7 years… But they came to us and instead of saying look at the jobs we're bringing in here—these big buildings are the size of 9 or 10 football fields strung together—and you're really not going to get much back from them when it comes to wages, salary and things of that nature. It's not going to happen. Instead of coming to us and saying: this is not a good investment for you folks…instead of doing the good partner approach, instead of doing something that would help the community to get out of its downward spiral, [CAN DO] came to us… and asked for $500,000.[55]

Especially critical of CAN DO's rhetoric, Bates realizes that their interests are not to the benefit of the community. He describes having a complete change of heart on the KOZ initiative. His experience, however, is not representative of the majority of community leaders. Many still have failed to connect CAN DO practices with the current troubles facing the city. When I explained the connection between KOZ, *Cargill*, and demographic change informally to another board member who had also voted in favor of KOZ, the board member responded: "Gee, I never thought about KOZ like *that*."[56]

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[55] Ibid.

[56] Informal conversation; May 2009.

They're B.A.N.A.N.A.S.: A Closer Look at CAN DO's Power in Hazleton

CAN DO has done a masterful job in casting its development initiatives as Hazleton's only hope for economic survival. In this way, the organization has long had a powerful hold on public opinion and the city's chamber of commerce; CAN DO is accepted as the "obvious" key to Hazleton's local economy. To be sure, some community members have long been outspoken against CAN DO's practices (e.g., Rose 1981). Yet as you might imagine, resisters have had limited success, and indeed their failures further exemplify just how entrenched CAN DO's hold on Hazleton's economic future has become.

Of the resisters I was able to indentify in Hazleton, each approached the topic somewhat differently, but each begrudgingly acknowledged giant hurdles they must overcome if they are to bring about any meaningful change. In a word, their dedication to real-life, on-the-ground issues facing the city is *dwarfed* by CAN DO's longstanding origin myth as protectors of the "All-American City." One activist, Charlie Dagos,[57] has battled against the negative environmental and social consequences CAN DO has brought to Hazleton. When we met, he explained how he tried to raise concerns about KOZ and CAN DO at a school board meeting. Dagos describes being immediately attacked by a board member for challenging CAN DO. "Where do you think Hazleton would have been if it wasn't for CAN DO?" the board member angrily retorted. "If we

[57] Pseudonym

didn't have CAN DO, what would it be like today?"[58] Another activist, Frank Halliday, has passionately worked to raise awareness of the public health crisis that CAN DO's industrial parks have generated in the city—namely, how the severe polluting of Hazleton's environment caused by CAN DO factories has led to disproportionately high rates of cancer and other disease in Hazleton. When calling on CAN DO to take responsibility and address this grievous lack of responsibility, he was called "a crazy man, a crackpot, a screwball, and everything else under the sun." Throughout my interview, Halliday did his best to maintain a sense of humor regarding CAN DO and the public health calamity they have helped create, but his passions eventually overtook him and at one point his faced turned urgently serious as he described how CAN DO has relentlessly worked to undermine his credibility. "They say I'm against everything."[59] A third activist, Helen Nance, echoed Halliday's sentiments. She was against KOZ from the beginning and has been outspoken about the negative effects 12-hour shifts and low wages are likely to have on the community generally and on Latino/a workers specifically. Yet she too has been silenced because, frankly, "who's going to stop it because they are saying jobs are coming in? Who wants to say we don't want this because we don't want the jobs coming in?" Not only

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[58] Personal interview with Charlie Dagos (pseudonym); December 2, 2009.

[59] Personal interview with Frank Halliday (pseudonym); December 9, 2009.

is it difficult to speak out against "jobs" but it is equally difficult, she added, questioning CAN DO in Hazleton:

> [T]hey would never speak against CAN DO, they think that is the savior of this town. It really wasn't because when CAN DO was formed the first plant they brought in was Beryllium and… a lot of people… ended up dying and getting sick. But this is the savior of the world. And everything that comes—you know, Cargill Meat: It's going to be wonderful…They are not so wonderful. These guys are 12 hour shifts, these guys are killing themselves. They are going to be like this great plant. Oh, you'll see they are going to get involved in your community. No, none of these plans get involved in the community. These people don't live here that are the bosses that are the engineers. They are gone. They don't live in this community.[60]

As concerned community members, residents such as Charlie, Frank, and Helen are cast as radical threats to interests of the community at large. Despite their substantive concerns with public health and documented environmental degradation, they are cast as outsiders. In a word, CAN DO has not only transformed Hazleton's economy but it has fostered a culture of denial and, indeed, a dangerous silence on issues with serious consequences for the community.

A myriad of evidence suggests that CAN DO has been involved in these kinds of anti-resistance campaigns especially since the mid-80s. Consider a group of local grassroots activists in the 1990s that protested a CAN DO plan that would rezone and industrialize land that was originally protected by local law to remain in its original state. CAN DO aggressively countered these claims by invoking its nostalgic past as

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[60] Personal interview with Helen Nance (pseudonym); December 3, 2009.

"saviors of the community"; thereby radicalizing otherwise very legitimate public concerns. Just days after the case was brought to court, a well-known local columnist wrote an op-ed piece claiming that "if it wasn't for CAN DO, many of us wouldn't be here."[61] Soon thereafter a CAN DO attorney made telling comments regarding the ensuing legal battle: "the anti-growth, anti-park, anti-progress people will not prevail. We will."[62] Again in my interview with O'Donnell the durability of CAN DO's ideology was all too apparent. Specifically, he referenced pejoratively a group he calls BANANAS—a play on the NIMBY acronym that stands for Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything.

CAN DO as Colorblind Enabler

By exploring CAN DO's ability to both exploit the working class necessity of attaining gainful employment and aligning themselves with the dominant local identity, we begin to see for the first time how it is an anti-immigrant and not an anti-CAN DO backlash that materializes in Hazleton. In other words, how local elites *enabled* the continued construction of white working class identity along racial rather than class lines (e.g., Roediger 1999) and the continued exploitation of immigrant

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[61] CAN DO Archive, Book 9. "Without CAN DO, many of us wouldn't be here." November 26, 1988.

[62] CAN DO Archive, Book 12. "CAN DO will push with business park." January 20, 1992.

labor begins to become visible as we consider the organization's contemporary practices.

Though not explicitly racial, CAN DO's narrative helps to *whiten* the identity of Hazleton while at the same time it blurs the city's working class roots. Although their very existence is the result of the need to save Hazleton from the perils of the market, the underlying message cast by the story lacks a class-based critique and instead depicts the homogenous Hazleton of the 1950s as a case study in venture capitalism. We do not see in the CAN DO narrative a community of once-exploited coalminers left jobless as the industry abandoned them but rather a community working together to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. Dessen himself made it clear that the group aspired to a classist identity that ignored capitalism's injustices when he interviewed with *Time Magazine* in 1964:

> Federal programs will never rebuild towns that just aren't capable of helping themselves. Some towns should be allowed to become ghost towns—they did in the West. We should not try to create a vast WPA that will make people dependent on the Government forever (Time Magazine 1964).

CAN DO at the same time has employed a decidedly colorblind approach in dealing with the city's new Latino/a population. Indeed, it appears as though the organization is unwilling to risk severing the identification with white workers that they have forged. Prior to the passage of the IIRA, Latino-owned businesses played a significant role in the revitalization of the city's downtown, an area that had previously

been a line of empty storefronts. Rather than embracing this as a viable option for economic growth, however, CAN DO ignored pleas from a group of Latino/a business owners who feared the obvious economic damage the IIRA would bring to their customer base. The result was that businesses began closing rapidly after the passage of the ordinance—as many as twenty, according to one report (Katchur 2008). Realizing that their entrepreneurship was a lost cause, Latino/a business owners began opting instead to earn a living in the factory. Small business owner Eduardo Rodriguez explains how CAN DO's effectively closed the door on locally-owned investment alternatives:

> CAN DO and the Chamber of Commerce are more receptive to chain stores, which leaves Latino small business owners forced to go their own way. So it makes no sense now to open a business when you can make more money working in a factory. [63]

When I asked O'Donnell about CAN DO's failure to engage this initial burst of Latino/a entrepreneurship, he responded in the most colorblind of terms revealing that the organization has no desire to identify as pro-Latino/a. "We've now started a business incubator which is not open to just one nationality, it's open to everybody" he told me, revealing this colorblind ideology, "If they want to start a business we welcome anyone into our business incubator." O'Donnell offered more of the same when I asked him about CAN DO's unwillingness to speak out against the IIRA—an

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[63] Personal interview with Eduardo Rodriguez (pseudonym); April 30, 2008.

ordinance passed in response to conditions that his organization allowed to filter into Hazleton: “We’re rather apolitical. We’ve got our job to do and we try to stay focused on what we’re doing and we didn’t really see the need to take sides in something that was either going to happen or not happen with us or without us.” And even when it came to dealing with the reality that CAN DO, their adoption of KOZ, and their luring of *Cargill*, O’Donnell was careful to distance CAN DO from Hazleton’s Latino/a immigrants: “We shouldn’t take the credit or the blame for something like that.”

Others have noted that neoliberalism thrives on the sort of colorblind ideology CAN DO has exhibited. Movements are often fragmented along race and class lines as racial *difference* rather than class *similarity* is implied despite an apparently race-neutral script. Rose Ernst (2010), in *The Price of Progressive Politics*, for example, demonstrates how the colorblind era as infected welfare rights activism such that white activists tend to avoid confrontation with the “welfare queen” image. The result is that such activism fails to address inequality adequately, leaving the movement for welfare rights fragmented and therefore ineffective. Along the same lines, David Theo Goldberg (2009:361) argues in *The Threat of Race* how colorblind racism drives neoliberalism:

> This is not to say that what can be identified as traditional racisms have disappeared; quite the contrary. There is here the condition without the category and mode without the (same) meaning. The modes, forms, sociologics, even their rationales more often than not mimic classic racisms. But they lack the sharpness of their identifying account or defining contours, torn as they are from the classic conditions of their articulation. These anthraxic racisms without the ostensive reference of racism exacerbate humiliation and degradation, debilitation and

> desecration, desacralization and distortion. They underpin torture in denial ("We don't torture" even as "we" waterboard) and collateral damage under apology ("Sorry, we didn't mean it, they got caught in the firing zone"). So as racisms have become more difficult to track and trace, more blurred, new targets and their rationalization have appeared.

CAN DO, in short, has mastered the art of playing, at once, to its constituents' racialized nostalgic imagining of Hazleton and to the pressing need to benefit from immigrant labor so that the organize and Hazleton can stay afloat in these rough economic waters. In this context, it is thus not surprising that CAN DO has opted not to embrace the lively Latino/a entrepreneurship that began to emerge in Hazleton. This would have threatened their legitimacy in the community. An organization that thrives on exploiting the crisis and on aligning with their constituents' race-based identities would be foolish, under the logic of neoliberalism, to promote class solidarity or to align with a marginalized group of Latino/a immigrants.

CONCLUSION

Structural changes in the global economy have left communities such as Hazleton little choice but to develop entrepreneurial personas prone to take risks they would have never envisioned under normal circumstances. At the same time, the community has accepted neoliberal development strategies and organizations such as CAN DO, perhaps out of desperation, have supported sweeping legislation like KOZ with minimal resistance. To be sure, any form of local economic development is going to be difficult in the current climate, but what is disturbing in Hazelton are the actions

of local developers—they opt to hide behind a mythical past transparently designed to further their own agenda rather than openly engage their community with the challenges of adapting to the myriad problems globalization causes for working class whites and Latino/a immigrants alike.

Hazleton has undergone a substantial restructuring largely against its will. And the majority have stood behind CAN DO without serious critical debate. Such a climate then is not surprisingly ripe for scapegoating the city's new population of marginalized Latino/a immigrants. As I have shown here, more than ten-thousand Latino/as have migrated to Hazleton since 2000 *as a result of* the economic shifts I have described. Yet, as we will see, rather than openly acknowledging the broader economic struggles associated with CAN DO's development strategy, Latino/a newcomers are held responsible for the city's downward spiral. The next two chapters detail how the scapegoating of Latino/a immigrants in Hazleton as the racialized "Other" provides a new commonsense for the city's majority—indeed a way for them to make sense of large scale change which was heretofore unexplainable. Taking a page from CAN DO's playbook, politicians appropriate powerful images of the "All-American City" to divert attention away from the deep structural problems that they have allowed to deepen. Shielding themselves, they tar so-called "illegals" as the real source of Hazelton's problems thereby alienating local residents and criminalizing the newly arrived Latino/a population. In this way, the discourse of local elites, I will show, effectively *whitens* Hazelton into a profoundly antagonistic racial community.

Perhaps most disturbingly, Hazelton's mayor and other local political elites capitalize on Hazelton's new nativist conception of itself as a white community under invasion by the Latino/a "Other."

In her research in Spain and Italy, Kitty Calavita (2005:75) exposed a politics of "useful invaders" where immigrants were included in the global economy on one hand via integrationist policies and harshly criminalized and left "suspect for their otherness" on the other. She credits global competitiveness for the advent of these policies and persuasively shows how the ills of this harsh economic environment are filtered down to the ground where immigrants themselves are forced to bear the burdens of neoliberalism. In this same way—as I have shown here and will expand upon in the next chapter—a similar politics of "useful invaders" has localized at the community level in Hazleton. But whereas the national narrative that Calavita describes utilizes a nation-building discourse with terms such as "integration," we will see that a particular set of local tropes that strike a nerve at the very heart of the community characterize the local backlash.

Chapter 3

THE "ALL-AMERICAN CITY" "UNDER SIEGE"

Hazleton's Mayor Louis J. Barletta sat next to Philadelphia Police Commissioner Sylvester Johnson and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg. Senators Ted Kennedy and Arlen Specter listened attentively from across the room. Without intimidation, the small town mayor delivered testimony to the U.S. Senate that explained the justification for the city's recently implemented ordinance known as the "Illegal Immigration Relief Act" or simply IIRA:

> Late on the night of May 10, 2006, a 29-year-old Hazleton resident, Derrick Kichline, was standing near his truck a few blocks from the heart of Downtown Hazleton when he was accosted by two men. These men approached him and shot him in the face from about a foot away. Kichline fell to the pavement and died. The very next day, a 14-year-old boy took out a gun and started firing shots in a crowded city playground—a place I consider sacred ground. Both of these gruesome incidents forced detectives and officers in the Hazleton Police Department to work more than 36 straight hours to solve these crimes. Four were arrested in the murder case. All four are illegal immigrants. The teenaged gunman was caught and taken into custody carrying 10 bags of crack cocaine. He is a 14-year-old child—an illegal immigrant. A few days later, we had a Federal drug bust. Some of those arrested were illegal immigrants. We've seen a dramatic increase in gang-style graffiti, some of which includes threats to kill our police officers. Graffiti has marred an award-winning redevelopment project that turned vacant factories into family homes. Now, those homes, those families, are threatened by hoodlums who don't respect people or their property. As mayor of Hazleton, I have had enough! (U.S. Senate 2006).

Small Town Defender

The "illegal" immigrants Barletta describes are ruthless criminals. They will not hesitate to shoot from pointblank range or to fire blindly into a crowded playground. They dabble in drugs, threaten police, and freely deface family homes. His testimony suggests that these "immigrant hoodlums" are, indeed, unwelcome "invaders." According to Barletta, Hazleton was previously not unlike any other "small town" (read racially homogenous) in America. It was a "respectable" place relatively free of crime, drugs, and danger. No more. Some of the most sacred elements of "his" community are now at risk and he therefore simply had no choice but to fight back. Lou Barletta thus projects himself as a *small town defender*.[64]

This persona has brought him a great deal of political success. In his first reelection campaign following the passage of the IIRA, "Mayor Lou," as he is fondly referred to in Hazleton, won by the largest landslide in city history. He received 94.4% of the votes in the Republican Party primary and won the Democratic primary quite handily, receiving 63% of vote as a write-in candidate (Tarone 2007). He has also gained notoriety beyond city limits. Representatives from his office have said "the phone hasn't stopped ringing" (Monitz 2007) and he commonly boasts about the

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[64] The name of the website that Barletta has used to raise funds for the defense of the legal case filed against the city is *Small Town Defenders* (http://smalltowndefenders.com). We can take this as evidence that this is precisely how the mayor of Hazleton has sought to portray himself.

abundance of letters and emails that his office receives from "literally every state in the union."[65] The invitation he received to testify in front of Congress alongside nationally recognizable figures indeed speaks volumes about this role as representative of small town, USA, as do his numerous appearances on national television and countless opportunities to speak across the country about the negative effects of "illegal" immigration.[66] CNN's Lou Dobbs perhaps captured his popularity and persona best when he said during a live broadcast from the rural Pennsylvania city that, "Hazleton, the community, is leading the battle against illegal immigration" (see Media Matters 2007).

Debunking Claims of an "Illegal" Immigrant Crime Wave

When we unpack his alarmist rhetoric, however, we see that the story Mayor Barletta tells about ruthless outsiders invading small town, USA—his depiction of Hazleton as an *All-American city under siege*—curiously relies on just a handful of cases, leaving one to wonder just how dangerous Hazleton's new class of so-called criminals really are. The mayor has said that "one-third of all recent drug arrests in the

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[65] In a speech to Hazleton City Council on the night the IIRA was proposed, he boasted: "… my office has received more than 8,000 emails supporting the measure. We have received overwhelmingly positive responses from literally every state in the union, from Maine to Hawaii and Alaska. But we don't have to look far to see some of our most vocal support. Grant Street, Locust Street, Laurel Street, Arthur Street, Fulton Court, Berner Avenue, South Pine Street, Birch Street, Church Street, Nineteenth Street, Seventh Street, Diamond Avenue… We received hundreds of letters of support from every section of the city" (Hazleton City Council, July 13, 2006).
[66] For example, he was invited to speak at the 2007 Notre Dame Immigration Forum.

City have involved illegal immigrants"[67] and has pinned responsibility for a rise in gang activity on this group, noting, "30% of the gang members that were arrested here in Hazleton were illegal aliens" (poi123148 2007).

Closer inspection, however, suggests that there is little truth in such claims and that his alarmist rhetoric is entirely unjustified. Only 10 of the 235 drug offenders arrested in Hazleton between 2001 and 2006, for example, were undocumented immigrants (4.3%).[68] Moreover, Hazleton is relatively gang-free. Only 5 *total* alleged gang members were arrested in Hazleton between 1997 and 2006 meaning that even if the mayor's 30% figure is accurate, Hazleton police can still only expect to arrest just one gang-involved undocumented immigrant every six years or so.

Aggregate crime statistics cast more doubt on the validity of Barletta's claims. Contrary to what politicians have led Hazleton citizens to believe, crime rates in

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[67] *Lozano et al. v. Hazleton*, Plaintiff's Post-Trial Proposed Findings of Fact and Brief

[68] The figures I review in this section were part of the plaintiff's case in *Lozano et al. v. Hazleton* (Lozano et al. v. Hazleton, Plaintiff's Post-Trial Proposed Findings of Fact and Brief). Obtaining accurate crime statistics from Hazleton has been a challenge for many interested in the case, but the figures presented at the trial appear to be the most accurate as they clarify ambiguities evident in numbers presented elsewhere (i.e., the statistics that Mayor Barletta and others have offered are highly selective and skewed toward representing undocumented immigrants as especially crime-prone).These findings were consistent with those presented by a comprehensive review of post-IIRA Hazleton conducted by Zogby International where the conclusion was that "reported crime in the city of Hazleton is decreasing. Most forms of crime in Hazleton have decreased since 1999" (Zogby International 2007:3).

Hazleton have not increased since the city's new Latino/a population arrived. In 2001, 1,358 crimes were committed in Hazleton, compared to 1,397 in 2006—a 2.8% increase in *incidence rate*. When we take into consideration that Hazleton's population increased by about 12,000 people during this time, however, such figures actually show Hazleton's *crime rate* has *decreased* significantly. And while we might not have any way of knowing exactly how many of Hazleton's new immigrants are undocumented, what we do know is that undocumented immigrants are not committing crimes at nearly the rate that the mayor has suggested. Of the 8,571 crimes reported to Hazleton police between 2001 and 2006, undocumented immigrants were charged with only 21 of these crimes. That's 0.25%.

The inconsistency between rhetoric and reality is glaring, and certainly begs the question: how was the proposal of this discriminatory ordinance justified despite the lack of credible evidence suggesting its necessity? This inquiry is the subject of this chapter. I begin by tracing the ideological roots of Hazleton's crackdown, noting how politicians have been increasingly prone to play on the public's fear of crime in recent decades—particularly crimes committed *by* racial/ethnic minorities and *against* whites. I then contrast media coverage of two homicides—one case involves an offender and victim who are Latino and in the other a pair of undocumented immigrants were the alleged assailants and a white, life-long Hazleton resident was the victim. This analysis shows how the law and order ideology and the racialized images upon which it is based has allowed Hazleton officials to construct a local "illegal"

immigration "problem." Finally, I show how this disparate media coverage carried into the city council chambers. Building on conceptions of "us" and "them" that developed early on, I show how local officials were able to get the Illegal Immigration Relief Act (IIRA) signed into law with minimal debate by riding the assumption that "they" are inherently crime-prone and "we" are virtuous.

THE IDEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF HAZLETON'S CRACKDOWN

Law and Order Politics

Politicians talk about crime a lot these days. From three strikes laws to border security, elected officials have hardened their stance toward crime and criminals. They have done so, interestingly, not in response to increasing criminal behavior nor as an effort to satisfy public demand—political discourse about crime is often most visible even as crime rates fall and the public seems to be responding to elected officials rather than the other way around. Instead, as Katherine Beckett's (1997:3) analysis reveals, the ascendancy of political talk about crime in recent years has been the direct result of the emergence of what she refers to as a law and order politics. Politicians "have made crime-related problems central campaign issues and struggled to identify themselves as tougher than their competitors on crime, delinquency, and drug use."

The media have undoubtedly fueled the politics of law and order. Pressured by the need to sell papers, an "if it bleeds, it leads" mentality has consumed the press as crime stories often find their way onto the front page. This is especially true of violent

crime stories that involve racial typifications (i.e., black offender, white victim). These cases provide journalists with an "obvious template" (Oliver and Meyers 1999:46) for presenting the story in a way that the public will understand. This crime beat reporting, moreover, relies almost entirely on elected officials and law enforcement as sources (e.g., Chermak 1994) allowing public officials to communicate through the media a message of looming crisis thereby creating a public yearning for policies that emphasize deterrence, retribution, and incapacitation (Becket 1997:99).

Governing Immigration Through Crime

Beckett's (1997) study is important in that it illuminates the influence of political elites on the public's preoccupation with crime. Yet it perhaps underestimates the extent to which such obsessions have seeped into other realms of lawmaking. Jonathan Simon's (2007) *Governing Through Crime* thus takes Beckett's approach a step further by pointing out that policies made in realms that would otherwise have little or nothing to do with crime are increasingly guided by a logic of security and risk. Schools, for example, have installed metal detectors, employed dress codes, and banned the use of book bags not for educational purposes but rather out of safety concerns (Kupchik 2010). The rise of the gated community, the popularity of the SUV, and the advent of mandatory drug testing are all examples of the modern "gated civil society" in which "a zero-risk environment is treated as a reasonable expectation, even a right" (Simon 2007:16).

Crime provides a potent discourse of risk that is easily adaptable to the so-called immigration crisis. Recent sweeping legislation at the federal level—what has been called "crimmigration law" (Stumpf 2006)—has treated immigrants as criminals rather than as mere violators of immigration law. Such policies are driven by what has become a taken-for-granted assumption that those migrating to the U.S. from south of the border pose a substantial risk that only increased border security is capable of obstructing.

Nevis's (2010:139) study of the U.S. government's Operation Gatekeeper illuminates how a governing through crime logic drives contemporary immigration law. Putting contemporary policies in their context, he notes that the "preoccupation with unauthorized migrants and boundary enforcement… is of relatively recent origin" and has had the effect of militarizing the border, criminalizing immigrants, and creating the public perception of invasion. The very use of the term "illegal immigration" is a reflection of these changes. Tracing the term back to 1924, Nevis (2010:139) finds that "the rise of the illegal" occurred only recently and that the phrase first appeared, not surprisingly, in state discourses and sensationalist media coverage, only later to become part of the American public's lexicon.

The Myth of the Immigration-Crime Nexus

One cannot deny the effects of these elite-led discourses on public consciousness. Seventy-three percent of Americans believe that immigrants are at least somewhat more likely to increase crime (Press 2006). This is despite a "scholarly

consensus" (Lee and Martinez 2009:3) which has emerged suggesting that immigration *does not* increase crime, and that it may actually help to *reduce it*. The figures I presented from Hazleton are thus in line with empirical findings from studies conducted elsewhere. Robert Sampson (2008), for example, has found that first-generation immigrants in Chicago are 45 percent less likely to commit violence compared to third-generation Americans, implying that *becoming American* is a better predictor of violent behavior than *foreignness*. Ramiro Martinez (2006) likewise finds that despite often having the highest poverty rate—a variable that frequently correlates with criminal behavior—Latino homicide rates were lower than the rates of other groups. Macro-level studies also show that violent crime rates continue to decrease even as immigration increases (Martinez 2006). In fact, "incarceration rates among young men are lowest for immigrants, even those who are the least educated. This holds true especially for the Mexicans, Salvadorans, and Guatemalans who make up the bulk of the undocumented population." (Rumbaut and Ewing 2007:3).

"Us" versus "Them" as the Driver of Law and Order Politics

Words thus speak louder than actions when it comes to governing through crime. But to focus solely on the political fixation with crime would be to miss an important driver of this powerful political discourse: the racialized construction of "us" as potential victims and "them" as potential offenders.

Simon (2007:77) explains that the crime victim has become the "idealized subject of the law" meaning that government intervention hinges on the existence of a

"worthy" victim. Not coincidentally, our collective conception of what constitutes a worthy victim is deeply racialized: "It is not all victims, but primarily white, suburban, middle-class victims, whose exposure has driven waves of crime legislation" (76). In this way, the contemporary crime legislation is cast as protection for "safe and respectable residential areas, typically in the suburbs, with a definable margin against which crime, poverty and, typically, minority demographics are pushing" (76).

On the other hand, such legislation also requires the identification of a potentially dangerous offender. Legislators tend to draw from our "contemporary catalogue of 'monsters'" (Simon 2007: 77) in envisioning who we need to be protected from. Immigrants, particularly the unauthorized, have recently served as easy scapegoats in this regard. Nevis's (2010) work as well as Leo Chavez's conception of the "Latino Threat" describes how supposed immigrant criminality has become a taken-for-granted truth reinforced by elite-led campaigns. Politically, the phrase "illegal immigrant" serves as a useful codeword (Omi and Winant 1986) for tough-on-crime politicians who can play on the public's racialized fears of a looming threat without violating post-Civil Rights racial etiquette.

Legislation designed to protect "we the victims" (Simon 2007:75) from the ever threatening racialized outsider generally and the Latino/a immigrant "invader" more specifically is thus likely to face virtually zero push back.

Governing Hazleton's "Immigration Crisis" through Crime

The next two sections show these ideologies in-action on the local level. First, by contrasting the media coverage of Derek Kichline's murder with coverage of a less impactful but nonetheless highly publicized murder committed just months prior against a Latino, I will highlight the political tendency to turn to a politics of law and order when both an idealized victim (i.e., a white, local resident) and an idealized offender (i.e., racial/ethnic "outsiders") are involved. I then show how the momentum generated by this us/them binary allowed local officials to justify the discriminatory IIRA by expanding Derek Kichline's victimhood to include Hazleton more generally as victims of "their" incessant criminality.

A TALE OF TWO HOMICIDES

Julio Angel Majica Calderon was 32-years-old when he was shot and killed by an acquaintance, Antonio Castro Sanchez. Both men were Latino U.S. citizens. The homicide occurred in October 2005, some five years after the beginning of Hazleton's immigration boom. According to police affidavits, Sanchez had struck Calderon's wife following a dispute over a borrowed vehicle. Fearing retaliation, Sanchez shot a fleeing Calderon three times in the back, leaving him for dead in broad daylight not far from one of the city's busiest intersections (Ragan 2005).

As the mayor's senate testimony eluded, Derek Kichline was shot and killed just before midnight on the evening of May 10, 2006. According to police affidavits, two men on foot allegedly walked past Kichline's home where he had just finished

working on his truck at 11:40 pm. The men allegedly shot Kichline and departed on foot. While reports did not mention a specific motive, authorities declared on several occasions that the incident was not random. The men charged with the crime were both undocumented immigrants, although following the deportation of a key witness, they were never brought to trial. The case remains unsolved.[69]

The Kichline homicide, more than any other event, was cited as the catalyst for the proposal of the IIRA, with the mayor frequently referring to this event as the "straw that broke the camel's back" (e.g., Mocarsky 2007). The Calderon homicide, of course, was not nearly as impactful, although it did generate a great deal of attention locally. Hazleton's local newspaper, the *Standard-Speaker*, rated it the top local news story of 2005 just as it declared the Kichline homicide to be the top news story of 2006. The two cases have a number of other commonalities as well which make them useful comparisons: most obviously, both crimes were committed in Hazleton while the city was in the midst of its massive demographic shift, the assailant(s) in both cases were Latino, and other unrelated gun crimes were committed in Hazleton in temporal proximity to each homicide. The primary and important differences between

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[69] Because the two men who were charged in Kichline's murder were never brought to trial, we should assume their innocence. However, the media coverage of the crime and the discourse that followed (i.e., Barletta's senate testimony) worked under the assumption that these two men had in fact committed the murder. Because of this, I treat them as the offenders in my analysis, although I am careful to refer to them as *alleged* offenders.

the cases are the citizenship status of the (alleged) assailant(s) and the ethnicity of the victim—Kichline was white, Cabrera Latino.

A detailed account of my rationale for studying the local news and of my article selection criteria is available in Appendix A. Briefly, I studied reports of each homicide appearing in the S*tandard-Speaker*, Hazleton's primary local newspaper, beginning with either the identification or apprehension of a suspect and ending one month following the event. Having strict selection criteria left me with a small but rich sample of news stories relating to each case.[70] In order to more effectively compare the coverage of the two crimes, I separated coverage of the events into three sections: *reaction*, *response*, and *reflection* which are marked accordingly below.[71]

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[70] In all, I studied five articles relating to the Calderon homicide and six relating to Kichline's slaying.

[71] The first stage, which I've labeled reaction, consists of stories that appeared in the newspaper immediately following the apprehension/identification of the suspects. The content of such stories typically features reporters and public officials discussing the cases in a rather unorganized, haphazard way. Still unaware of the social significance of the case, officials and reporters clumsily try to make sense of what happened by drawing on only culturally available images—what Anne Swidler (1986:273) has called a cultural "tool kit." Despite their unorganized nature, these reports set the stage for the substance of the reports to follow—an indication that cultural tool kits shape not just our initial reaction, but also how we later respond to and reflect upon a particular case. Commentary that draws largely on statements made by public officials characterizes the response stage. In this stage, officials are proactive rather than reactive and the result is reports that are more organized and authoritative. The news consumer is provided with definitions of the situation that are very concrete and a sense of control over the circumstances is conveyed. Finally, the reflection stage comes in the form of an attempt to provide the case with a lasting image. This time, it's the media rather than officials who are proactive. Having had more time to think

Reaction

The identification of Calderon's slayer sparked two front-page articles.[72] The articles begin with a decidedly non-judgmental tone: "Hazleton city police *identified the man* suspected of *shooting another man* to death at a busy intersection one block

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about and research each case, journalists in this stage provide detailed reports, giving the case a legacy.

[72] I use caution when comparing the quantity of coverage regarding the identification and apprehension of suspects for several reasons. First, identification and apprehension are different events and while my data cannot prove it, one would expect apprehension to solicit more coverage. Likewise, the media may have exhausted much of its dramatic effect relating the Calderon homicide when initially reporting on the incident. The next day, the *Standard-Speaker* carried a front page story accompanied by a graphic photo featuring Calderon's lifeless body lying on the street with a massive heading that read "CITY MAN SLAIN" (Galski and Christman 2005; capitalization in original). It is interesting to note, however, that this article—which was written at a time when the offender was unknown—is more racialized than subsequent articles about the case. It makes many references which suggest that this was a gang-style "street crime" (i.e., reference is made in the article to graffiti on a garage door that can be clearly seen on the photo of Calderon's body; the article acknowledges that a Glock 9mm was used in the crime and refers to this gun as being typical of street crime; and finally, a subtitle of the article calls the shooting a "drive-by" despite facts suggesting that the shooter knew his victim and he got out of his car and chased him on foot before firing the fatal shots). Indeed, others have pointed to this as the trigger for the moral panic over undocumented immigrants in Hazleton (Fine and Ellis 2010), and I do not disagree with this entirely. Even a Latino-on-Latino homicide is likely to inspire a perception of a crime increase in a small community with a relatively low violent crime rate. My emphasis here, however, is on the elite construction of the crime problem—and more specifically on the perception of an undocumented immigrant "invasion." In this way, that the narratives which emerged in the Kichline homicide remains decidedly alarmist in contrast to a crime that very well could have been the impetus for a moral panic suggests that coverage of Kichline's homicide was indeed hyper-sensationalized.

away from Broad Street Thursday afternoon" (Ragan 2005).[73] This tone persists throughout the articles as reporters and their sources, who are primarily officials, take steps to distance this crime from the broader cultural images that drive law and order politics—namely, the symbolic linkages between drugs, gangs, and the dangerous "Other." As such, reporters neither mentioned nor implied the ethnicity of the offender at this stage of the case.[74] A declaration is made that drugs and gangs *were not* involved and the event was made to appear as a random incident rather than an emerging local problem: "[Hazleton Police Chief Robert] Ferdinand emphasized that *the shooting was not drug- or gang-related* and that it *could have happened in any city, town or borough*" (Ragan 2005). Such a statement settles any question as to whether "we" are "under attack" and prompts further consolation from officials: "[R]esidents *should not feel unsafe* because of the shooting" (Ragan 2005) the police chief told reporters, to which the mayor added: "The public *should not take this as a reason to fear* for their own safety" (Ragan 2005). Reaction to the case did lead to increased calls for law enforcement, but these calls are vague and unfocused, appearing to be protocol.[75]

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[73] All emphasis in direct quotes from newspaper articles in this section is added by me for effect.

[74] The only reference to ethnicity was in a review of the police affidavit in which a witness provided a description of the men.

[75] One article read: "Barletta emphasized that the police will continue with saturation patrols, foot patrols, and bike patrols" (Ragan 2005).

Four articles appeared on the front page of the *Standard-Speaker* the day after Kichline's alleged killers had been charged. From the start, and in sharp contrast to the Calderon case, the articles took on a highly judgmental and racialized tone. Exploiting cultural connections between drugs, crime, and immigrants—particularly "illegal" immigrants—the media and the public officials they relied on began seeing the case through a law and order lens. Prior to any mention of case details, the victim's name, or a motive, for example, the report emphasized the citizenship status and prior criminal history of the alleged offenders:

> A pair of 23-year-old men *who are illegal immigrants* were charged Tuesday with the murder of a Hazleton resident that occurred six days earlier. Joan Romero and Pedro Cabrera lived together… [and] *came to the United States illegally* from the Dominican Republic and were *heavily involved in drug dealing* before their arrests… (Jackson 2006a).

The "illegal" tagline opened a well of potential linkages between the offenders and their supposed propensity towards crime. The mentioning of other crimes then strengthened the "illegal" immigrant-crime nexus thereby allowing what was once a single incident quickly to appear as an undocumented immigrant crime wave. Although officials acknowledged that these crimes were unrelated to the murder, their mentioning provides the reader with the feeling that the presence of "illegals" that are using drugs, firing guns, and involved in gang activity is indeed widespread:

> …a man whose vehicle police stopped at Hemlock and Laurel streets on Thursday night was charged with possession of crack cocaine. Police also found crack cocaine and marijuana inside the truck (*sic*) of a car that they stopped on Friday night near Pine and Maple Streets.

> While looking into the murder, police also gained evidence that led to the arrest of two boys, one 14 and the other 17, for each firing guns at the Pine Street Playground on Friday. The younger boy tried to hide four bags of cocaine in his mouth when arrested, and might be in the country illegally and faces deportation, police said. The playground incident was not related to the murder, but police said both boys are involved in gang activity (Jackson 2006b).

Once the perception of a crime wave was created, public officials responded by making calls for increased law enforcement that were far more innovative and targeted than the calls that followed Calderon's murder, conveying their intention to "use every resource to take back *our* streets" (Jackson 2006b):

> Hazleton police are *hiring officers*, which will *enhance their patrol efforts*, the chief said, and the mayor said he wants to use *video cameras* to watch high-crime areas… [Barletta] and Ferdinand assigned *more men* to be *narcotics detectives*, whom people might not even recognize. "They may be *undercover*… people want more police presence, but we know the *root of the crime problem is drugs*" (Jackson 2006b).

Officials then further put Hazleton's apparent crime wave into context as continual references were made to the national level immigration debate, and to the pathology commonly associated with the U.S.-Mexico border (e.g., Nevis 2010). The title of one of the front page articles aptly declared that it's "time to seal off the border," (Jackson 2006c) and the implication throughout the article was that the broader "illegal" immigration "problem" has seeped into this once safe Northeastern Pennsylvania community. Initial reports of the Kichline homicide emphasized that the assailants were "born in Santo Domingo and lived in New York City *before* coming to

Hazleton" (Jackson 2006c). Repeated pronouncements like this reminded the reader that these offenders could not possibly be a product of the "All-American City" as they amplified the sense of invasion. Comments by the police chief attest to this. In his mind, the most appropriate approach to halting the impending invasion is to "seal off the border, then work from there" (Jackson 2006c). Perhaps reflecting the perception of an *All-American city under siege* most pointedly was Barletta himself whose take on the situation likened immigrants to a deadly, invasive disease that infected his once healthy city: "once they cross the border, they don't stay long. They come into cities such as Hazleton. It's like a cancer" (Jackson 2006c).[76]

In sum, the initial coverage of both homicides showed Hazleton officials tailoring their reaction to the broader politics of law and order. Officials told residents to stay calm in the first homicide when a Latino man was the victim because drugs and gangs were not involved. Moreover, this case lacked a codeword that would racialize the issue, allowing residents to interpret it as a mere incident rather than a larger problem. In the second case, the presence of drugs and the citizenship status of the alleged offenders allowed officials to employ the racialized typifications of the law

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[76] The elite-led nature of this panic over "illegal" immigrants should not be denied. Even Derek Kichline's fiancé was careful to make the distinction between the murder of Kichline and the ethnicity of the suspects: "It so happens they're Dominican" she said, adding that "they could just as easily have been two white men" (Gregory 2006).

and order campaign as they constructed a moral panic.[77] As I will show, these early interpretations of both crimes guided officials as they responded to and reflected upon these events.

Response

The second stage of reporting on the Calderon case came in the form of a press conference. The continued message here was that this was an isolated event. Reassurances that the city was not in a state of chaos once again abounded, law enforcement efforts were commended, and both the police chief and the mayor made statements assuring residents of their safety. When other crimes that had occurred in the same week of the murder were mentioned (i.e., multiple shootings), police emphasized that they were not related to the murder and provided additional consolation to city residents.[78] Moreover, the deterrence philosophy, which is usually at the core of law and order politics (Beckett 1997), was abandoned as officials continued to remind residents that it wasn't *that* type of crime. Calls for additional law

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[77] The local reaction to the Kichline homicide is a prime example of what Stanley Cohen (1972) now famously referred to as a moral panic. I avoid using this language to describe the event, however, because I am concerned less with the general reaction to deviance than I am with the specific tough-on-crime response to racialized immigrants. In other words, my interpretation is more in line with what Feeley and Simon (2007) refer to an "institutionalized moral panic."

[78] The police chief emphasized: "All shootings in these cases were directed at specific persons and were not random shootings. It's important to realize that" (Gregory 2005).

enforcement did persist, but the hard truth that crime is impossible to eliminate accompanied these calls:

> We hope the quick arrests made in these cases and the increased patrol activity shows citizens that although criminal activity can *never be completely deterred* anywhere, they are still being protected as well as possible by the Hazleton police. I would like to assure them that I don't believe Hazleton was any less safe than it was. It's unfortunate that we have these types of *incidents* that occur, but due to the nature of them, *I don't believe there's any way to completely deter it* (Gregory 2005).

Whereas coverage of the Calderon homicide conveyed a sense that all was well, response to the Kichline homicide suggested that the battle had only begun. Presented in the form of a drug raid, the media responded to the murder in a way that solidified the link between drugs, criminals, and Latinos. The message was that drugs were at the root of the unruliness that the city has been experiencing and that only aggressive law enforcement tactics could restore order. The first line of the article set the tone for the content to follow:

> Hazleton's special weapons and tactics team, federal agents and state police troopers burst into homes and businesses in Hazleton and West Hazleton on Thursday looking for drugs and criminals (Jackson and Gregory 2006).

Subsequent statements further communicated the uncompromising law enforcement tactics:

> After searching the premises with a trained dog, police stuck signs to the store windows that said "Sorry… They're out of business. If you sell drugs, you lose…"

> Police milled around the front of the store. They carried a variety of guns. Some wore ski masks, helmets and bullet-resistant vests, others wore jackets, shirts or vests saying "DEA", "State Police" or simply "Police" (Jackson and Gregory 2006).

While the raids did not target any individuals thought to be involved in the Kichline murder, the articles did mention the murder and forged a clear link between the two cases. The portrayal of the raid also did the rhetorical work necessary to solidify further the linkage between drugs, Latinos, and crime. Coverage suggested that the intent of the raids was to "show how serious the city is about stomping out drug sales" (Jackson and Gregory 2006), and it provided unmistakable clues about the ethnicity of those involved. A list of suspects taken into custody, for example, featured names of obvious Latino origin followed by an alias. These names appeared in isolation without any other information about the individuals or their alleged offenses. The sole purpose of their mention, it seems, was to imply without elaboration that the subjects of the raid were indeed Latino.

To recap, coverage of the Calderon homicide continued to downplay the impact of the crime, portraying it as an isolated incident rather than a larger problem. In contrast, coverage of the Kichline homicide strengthened the emerging perception that dangerous, drug-using "illegals" were invading Hazleton.

Reflection

After downtown business owners expressed worry that the recent crime would deter customers from frequenting their stores, Mayor Barletta held a public meeting to

reassure his concerned constituents. Coverage of this meeting comprises the reflection stage of reporting on the Calderon homicide. At the meeting, residents were assured by officials that "you can walk anywhere in Hazleton and feel safe" (Monitz 2005). Rather than playing on the public's fears, the mayor himself uncharacteristically dismissed their worries as mere perception and invalidated all linkages between Hazleton's new Latino community and violent crime: "The mayor said he knows that out of the thousands of people who've come to Hazleton in recent years, only a couple hundred are bad people" (Monitz 2005).

The report then ceased to include Barletta and the police chief as primary sources, turning instead to local university professors who discussed issues of overcoming ethnic conflict and dealing with social change. Using their knowledge of local history, the professors explained that misperceptions about early Italian and Polish immigrants were common and encouraged residents to avoid making similar faulty assumptions. Even Barletta himself saw parallels between fears of Latino crime and unjustified fears of the past: "Some people fear the Hispanic population… [but] the perceptions aren't much different than the established community's ideas from years ago" (Monitz 2005). Admirably, those attending and reporting on this meeting discussed ethnicity openly and thoughtfully. They admitted that clouds of resentment may be drifting over the city, they were forthright about the irrationality of such resentment, and they worked together to come up with ways of moving the city forward.

This would not be the case when the media reflected on the Kichline killing. Reflections on the 'straw that broke the camel's back' came in the form of an investigative report exposing the extensive criminal history of one of the alleged perpetrators and the failure of the criminal justice system to impose a high bail and keep him detained following a DUI arrest that occurred months before the murder. This report conveyed a sense that we can prevent tragic crimes like the murder of Derek Kichline if the system were more punitive, especially when it comes to policing undocumented immigrants. The report concluded with a quote from the mayor that summarized the article's more general message: "Maybe we'd have one less homicide had this guy been kept in prison" (Kelly 2006).

Hazleton as an Idealized Subject of Law

When two undocumented immigrants allegedly murdered a white, life-long resident of Hazleton, the media response was clearly more pronounced than it was when Antonio Sanchez murdered Julio Calderon, a person of color. This is in large part the result of officials' reliance on the broader law and order ideology and the cultural tendency to make sense of a tragedy drawing on deeply embedded conceptions of "us" and "them." In fact, so disparate was that reaction that in a matter of weeks the city of Hazleton had announced that it would propose the Illegal Immigration Relief Act (IIRA). As we've seen, to make their own communities appear as worthy victims in need of protection, opportunistic small town politicians need only to depict their locales as home to a virtuous population of "us" (recall Mayor Barletta's conception of

the city playground as “sacred ground”) and to make the case that a not-so-virtuous population of “them” is threatening to stomp upon their hallowed grounds. Given such conceptions, as we will see, a single incident where one of “them” victimizes one of “us” can easily come to represent a more urgent crisis where all of “us” are at risk. In other words, how places such as Hazleton are able to pass self-defensive legislation like the IIRA becomes clear when we take into consideration the deeply embedded and highly racialized local distinction between insiders and outsiders.

FROM INCIDENT TO ORDINANCE: FORGING A “LINE OF DEFENSE”

Introducing the IIRA

Townspeople filled the Hazleton City Council chambers on June 15, 2006 when council introduced the IIRA and again on July 13 when they passed it. Each meeting opened with a prepared report by Mayor Barletta where he described the ordinance, discussed why he thought it was necessary, and outlined what he hoped it would accomplish. Council allowed city residents who had questions or comments to speak at the microphone for three minutes, and the mayor personally responded to some of their concerns. Amidst dealing with other business, members of the five-person council also provided their perspectives and engaged in a dialogue with the mayor and city residents.

The meetings were intense. Many local residents had strong feelings both in opposition to and in favor of the ordinance. Opponents of the law, who were primarily

Latino/a residents, were respectful but not shy in pointing to the number of problems such a law would create for the city's new immigrants. To their dismay, however, the chambers' clear pro-IIRA majority scoffed at many of their claims. Supporters of the IIRA took to the microphone as well. They often defended the mayor against his critic's claims and thanked him for introducing the measure.

The Law and Order Consensus

Disagreement was less common among council members despite an even partisan split (the mayor and two other council members were Republican, while three council members were Democrats). Each discussed the measure as a decidedly law and order issue, reaffirming the consensus that emerged during the media's coverage of the Kichline homicide.[79] In other words, there was little question as to who was responsible for recent crimes and the ominous invasion of the "All-American City." "Illegal" immigrants had emerged as clear scapegoats. Throughout the debate, Council members drew from the Latino Threat Narrative (Chavez 2008) and used "illegal immigrant" as a codeword (Omi and Winant 1986) to racialize the issue even further. Councilman Jack Mundie, for example, brought up the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in order to put emphasis on the threat that the unauthorized posed. "A lot of people are forgetting 9/11," he said, "and the people who caused it, some of those

[79] A front-page story subsequently published in Hazleton's *Standard-Speaker* further demonstrates how the "illegal" immigrant-crime nexus has become a taken for granted

people were here illegally." Council President Jack Yanuzzi was even more candid when he expressed his belief in the undocumented immigrant-crime nexus: "if you are illegal you are a criminal. That is the gist here."[80]

With the perception of threat firmly in place, local politicians turned to law and order politics, their most effective tool in devising a response to the pressing "invasion." Their reasoning here built on the conclusions drawn in the coverage of the Kichline homicide: *if only we had been tougher, none of these atrocities would have taken place*. Councilman Mundie concluded his remarks about 9/11 with such law and order rhetoric when he stated, "If some of those laws were in effect in those years, maybe it wouldn't have happened."[81] Barletta then quickly brought this line of thought into the local context, reminding residents that a similar unwillingness to be tough on crime has put Hazleton in this difficult position: "Sadly, some of those allegedly involved in these crimes were detained by other law enforcement officials over the years, but somehow allowed to remain in this country."[82]

When disagreement did arise, the power of this narrative allowed council to find a common ground to resolve their differences. In one instance officials clashed

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truth in Hazleton with the bold headline: 'ALIENS' CAUSE CRIME (Jackson 2007d; capitalization in original).

[80] Hazleton City Council Meeting; June 15, 2006.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid.

about the provision in the ordinance that required landlords to check the documentation of potential tenants. Whereas Barletta and Yanuzzi thought it best that landlords check documentation, Councilman Nilles thought that having City Council do the checking would be a more effective tactic. For Yanuzzi, the merit of his own approach rested in its capacity to send an unwelcoming message: "These illegal aliens they will know. They know they are here illegally. They will see one or two of them get arrested and they will change their tune." For Nilles, such demands were unrealistic and unenforceable. "I want to put teeth in the law!" he demanded. Their disagreement eventually subsided when it became clear that the argument was really about what approach would be "tough enough." At this point, Nilles' suggestion won out. Conceding, Barletta prompted: "I am all for making it tougher. You are talking to the right guy."[83]

"They" are Violent

The law and order approach thus made the ordinance appear to be a surefire tactic for deterring crime—or, more accurately, for deterring crime committed *by* undocumented immigrants and *against* Hazleton residents. Councilman Yanuzzi later made this clear when he acknowledged, "there was a violent crime committed. That's all I needed" (Jackson 2007a). Of course, the minimal response to the violent crime committed against Julio Calderon exposes the inadequacies of this statement. There

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[83] Ibid.

was a violent crime committed by an undocumented Latino immigrant against a white Hazleton resident—*that is all he needed*. Despite having no stipulations that targeted crime per se, the mayor too remained convinced that the ordinance would "eventually deter crime in Hazleton." He reasoned: "Deprived of a place to live and without family or friends who live and work in Hazleton legally, other illegal immigrants may choose to look elsewhere when choosing a place to commit a crime."[84] His logic, of course, draws heavily on the assumption that undocumented immigrants are crime-prone. As he sees it, the tendency of undocumented immigrants to commit crime is so entrenched that for them it is not a decision of *whether* but rather *where* to commit crime. It also highlights his desire to keep this undesirable population out of "his" city at all costs. The provision of the ordinance that would punish landlords who rented to undocumented immigrants would, in this way, be successful in keeping "them" out and, by implication, keeping crime out. "I could tell you when illegal immigrants come to Hazleton, they are not sleeping at Lou Barletta's house" the mayor assured the crowded council chambers, "We need to attack this differently than it is being attacked anywhere else in the country. That is, we need to attack the places where they may be employed or the place where they sleep. So I am asking the landlords to be our first line of defense."[85]

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[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

Barletta's authoritarian approach and his not-so-subtle references to war or "attack" in phrases like "line of defense" make clear that he has positioned himself as a "general" in Hazleton's war on crime—indeed, a small town defender. He is hell-bent on keeping supposedly crime-prone undocumented immigrants out of his territory at all cost and is willing to employ local landlords as foot soldiers in his brigade. Without such efforts, the danger he reasons is that "Anybody can walk into the city right now, give the landlord $400, put their bags in a room and go shoot somebody in the head tomorrow."[86]

"We" are Virtuous

In addition to strengthening the narrative about crime-prone undocumented immigrants that developed during the local media's coverage of the Kichline homicide the move from incident to ordinance also reinforced the emerging idealized depiction of Hazleton, the community. The result was that Derek Kichline's homicide comes to represent a threat in a much broader sense. This narrative suggests *Hazleton more generally* is at-risk of subsequent victimization. The symbolism inherent in Mayor Barletta's wearing a bulletproof vest to the second meeting perhaps captures this best. According to him, Hazleton was in real danger and it was his duty to *protect* the city's virtuous residents (i.e., white, working class citizens) from the threat posed by "lawless" newcomers:

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[86] Ibid.

> I am the Mayor of Hazleton. I swore an oath to protect the residents of this city—the legal residents of this city. When people are gunned down outside their homes, I cannot sit by and wait for a solution. When residents are afraid to walk down the street, I cannot ignore their complaints. When children—children—are afraid to go to a playground, I must act.[87]

Notice the mayor does not only describe gun-toting "illegals," he also places emphasis on the seemingly innocent "legal residents of this city" who are deprived the deserved privileges of a small town lifestyle to which this narrative alludes. Mentioning people being "gunned down outside their homes" conjures up a particular image of the murder. Rather than being the result of a dispute, this language suggests imagery of innocent and friendly neighbors camped out on porches who suddenly become the victims of a horrible crime. Barletta seems to suggest that even the simplest pleasures of small town life are under attack solely because of undocumented immigrants. Peaceful strolls are now impossible. And what is perhaps most incendiary of all is that the very memories which make small town life so desirable appear to be escaping the newest generation of residents as children can no longer safely play on the playground. That is to say, Hazleton's past, present, and future as a peaceful, white working class community are now at risk of being eliminated by the racialized outsiders.

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[87] Hazleton City Council Meeting; July 13, 2006.

There are other examples of this storyline as well. Working under the assumption that undocumented immigrants are going to commit crime no matter where they settle, Barletta realized such behavior might be inevitable; what is important to him is that they commit crimes in other places. It should not be happening *here*. "Hazleton is small town, USA. We are an All-American City. We are a place where people should be able to raise their families free of fear."[88] He later echoed this point in his comments to the U.S. Senate when he testified that the undocumented immigrants who allegedly murdered Derek Kichline "should never have been in this country in the first place, *let alone in Hazleton, Pennsylvania*" (U.S. Senate 2006, emphasis added). The tragedy caused by undocumented immigrants for Barletta thus extends beyond individual victimhood to include all residents of the city: "They eventually migrated into Hazleton, where they helped create a sense of fear in the good, hardworking residents who are here legally." Even drug abusers—a contingent who typically occupy the position of town deviant—are seen as being victimized by incessant undocumented immigrant criminality. In response to accusations that he was a political opportunist and that his proposal of the ordinance was racist, Barletta depicted himself as protector of a city devastated by an "illegal alien" barrage:

> I am personally offended by those accusations, not because they insult me, I am offended because… they insult the children who are no longer allowed on the Pine Street Playground… They insult the fathers and

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[88] Ibid.

> mothers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, of those in our community who are addicted to the drugs sold by illegal immigrants.[89]

"I Don't Need Numbers": The Passage of the IIRA

Given the depiction of undocumented immigrants as crime-prone invaders and Hazleton residents as virtuous victims of their incessant criminality, it should not come as much of a surprise to hear that the IIRA made its way through city council faster than most measures do. Consistent with Simon's (2007) observation that legislators design contemporary crime legislation to protect one group of "deserving" citizens from a dangerous group of "outsiders," the passage of the IIRA was unusually swift and practically thoughtless. Rather than carefully drafting a law that would address Hazleton's specific problems, the mayor relied on one of his Internet-savvy friends to search the web looking for "something that we could do to protect ourselves in the form of an ordinance" (Jackson 2007c). The result of the search was an ordinance drafted by "proud nationalist" Jim Turner of the California-based Save Our State. Turner unsuccessfully pushed the same ordinance in San Bernardino, California with the hopes of warding "off the threat from inferior cultures who would turn ours into a 'Third World cesspool'" (Right Wing Watch 2010). With little concern for its racist origins, Hazleton quickly made the ordinance its own making only minimal adjustments. "Normally, council waits at least 10 days between the first and final

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[89] Hazleton City Council Meeting; July 13, 2006.

readings of an act" but in this case they "approved all readings within three days" (Jackson 2007b). Not surprisingly, the approval was almost unanimous. Only one council member dissented and he did so because he had doubts about the bill's legal durability. He too, however, expressed firm agreement with the bill's more general message.[90]

All this is despite the fact that the police chief presented *no figures* to council about the extent to which undocumented immigrants were *actually* wreaking havoc on the city. Yanuzzi later admitted that local lawmakers "did not receive or review any police reports, shift incident reports, crime data or statistics showing the numbers of crimes claimed to have been committed by illegal aliens… City Council heard only from Barletta, who asserted that illegal immigration increased crime. The only crime mentioned was the Kichline homicide."[91] Barletta himself, when asked at trial about the apparent disconnect between rhetoric and reality, responded: "When you have violent crimes committed, it takes away and chews at our quality of life. I don't need numbers… The people in my city don't need numbers" (Right Wing Watch 2007).

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[90] See Hazleton City Council Meeting; July 13, 2006.

[91] See *Lozano et al. v. Hazleton Plaintiff's* Post-Trial Proposed Findings of Fact and Brief. Retrieved January 17, 2011 (http://www.aclu.org/files/pdfs/immigrants/hazleton_posttrial_brief.pdf).

CONCLUSION

Hazleton's Latino/a newcomers have not committed crime at anywhere near the rates local politicians have suggested. Yet, the assertion that these "outsiders" are crime-prone remains politically popular and powerful in this era of governing through crime and widespread anti-immigrant attitudes. As I've shown here, this is particularly true on the local level where idealistic depictions of small communities on one hand and dangerous outsiders on the other render empirical realities obsolete and allow for the passage of otherwise unjustified, highly discriminatory local measures. I have also demonstrated in this chapter the back end of a local politics of "useful invaders" (Calavita 2005). Just as CAN DO was able to employ a pro-growth rhetoric as they detached themselves from the unstable economic and social conditions they helped to create, so too did officials here successfully employ a racialized law and order narrative that at once played on the public's fears and excused elites from facing the larger political economy that created such conditions in the first place.

When I explore in more detail the sentiments of ordinary Hazletonians in the next chapter, the extent to which the local construction of Hazleton's immigration "problem" played on the public's desires and fears will become even more apparent. What I find is that the elite-led narratives we saw in the previous two chapters whet ordinary residents' appetites for a return to a "golden era" of the "All-American City" that CAN DO so perfected in its use of nostalgia to trip up challengers. Staring into the abyss of economic decline, I show how local residents yearn for a more idealistic

vision of their community far different from that which contemporary conditions offer. As such, it becomes even less surprising why mythical stories of community renewal and the racialized “us” versus “them” narrative is so readily accepted. The IIRA wooed the residents of this declining city and they embraced it in lieu of an economic critique precisely because it appealed to their ardent moral, material, and nativist fears. In other words, we will see in the next chapter as we saw here that the collective identity of Hazleton is constructed along racial rather than class lines as the IIRA campaign helps shift community attention away from the growing economic discontent of the white working class, exploitation of undocumented immigrants and, indeed, the shared economic fate of the community at large.

Chapter 4

COMMUNITY REIMAGINED

Like Paula, whose sentiments I described in the opening of Chapter 1, nearly all Hazleton residents I spoke with in the course of my research[92] were quick to express to me in one way or another the feeling that the city "went to hell."[93] In most cases, residents connected Hazleton's downfall to the arrival of the Latino/a population. Some were more explicitly bigoted, using epithets and the like to express their distaste, but most took a more subtle approach, opting instead to use ten-cent terms like "city people"[94] to describe those who in their minds brought Hazleton to its knees. In contrast, few had a problem recalling the "good old days"[95] with affection.

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[92] Appendix A provides a detailed record of whom I spoke with in Hazleton. Briefly, my focus was on white ordinary residents (i.e., not city officials, activists, nor community leaders) who have lived in the city for most or all of their lives. I spoke formally (in focus groups or interviews) with eleven city residents and spoke informally with hundreds of others.

[93] When I spoke with the member of a local social club asking whether he or his fellow club members would be interested in talking with me about the changes the city has experienced, for example, his response was, "Well I already know what they are going to tell you. They are going to tell you the city went to hell. That's what they are going to tell you."

[94] Focus Group Participant; December 2, 2009.

[95] Mini Focus Group participant; December 7, 2009.

They told me about "the wonderful stores on Broad Street,"[96] reminisced about a since-demolished downtown theatre, and recalled an era when "life was simple."[97] Fondness for the past and distaste for the present was on the tip of nearly all Hazletonian's tongues. It took little provoking on my part to get them to tell tales of a great city that once was—tales that began "I remember when we used to…"[98] and ended "… it's not like that anymore."[99]

Concerns about the city's economy were expressed as well, although to hear about the lack of good jobs, the departure of the city's educated youth, and the hard truth that "the plants don't pay what they used to"[100] I usually had to ask more directly. This isn't to say that residents weren't feeling the effects of Hazleton's economic change but rather to point out that their understanding for why the city is in disarray rarely took economic decline into consideration. They stood firmly behind their belief that Hazleton had always been a "make-a-living kind of town"[101] and opted to focus on declining values rather than their dwindling bank accounts.

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[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Focus Group Participant; December 2, 2009.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid.

Perhaps not surprisingly, most of the ordinary residents I spoke with supported the IIRA. Almost across the board, residents "totally agreed with it"[102] and saw its merit, at least initially, in solving exactly the sort of the problems they had been experiencing. After the ordinance passed, "it seemed the population changed," one man told me, "it wasn't as bad downtown anymore."[103] To their dismay, however, most observed that such effects were short-lived—while "it seemed like a big whoop-de-do when it came out," eventually the effects "just seemed to fizzle away."[104]

Unpacking Local Sentiments

My goals in this chapter are twofold. First, I want to sort through the sentiments of Hazleton residents as they make sense of change. Sociologists have long acknowledged that change puts people in a position where they feel compelled to reaffirm societal boundaries and to reassert their collective identities (e.g., Erikson 1966). As I unpack the stories ordinary Hazleton residents told me about their once-great city, these insights become particularly useful for understanding how residents have responded both to Hazleton's economic decline and to the arrival of Latino/a newcomers.

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[102] Ibid.

[103] Mini Focus Group participant; December 7, 2009.

[104] Focus Group Participant; December 2, 2009.

Ordinary Hazleton residents, I will show, cling to idealized imaginings of their city's past because it affords them a temporary escape; it allows them to reassert who they are at a time when their identities have become increasingly unclear; it provides them with important symbolic assurances that the values they have embraced are indeed noble. In short, it helps them to disassociate their own identities from the city's decline to say, "This must have been the doing of some outside forces, our core values could not have possibly allowed for this to occur."[105]

My second goal is to explore how we can understand the IIRA as an *embodiment* of residents' interpretations of the city's decline. In other words, how did the passage of the IIRA satisfy the moral, material, and nativist desires and fears stirred by a changing Hazleton? Shedding light on this question helps to understand why undocumented immigrants and not a changing economy captured the passions of residents and activists alike. What I find first is that by depicting an enemy coming from outside of the city's borders, the IIRA affirmed residents' moral sentiments by assuring them that the decline was not their fault. Second, by harping on the financial problems that supposedly accompany undocumented immigrants, elites were able to provide a rationale for explaining the city's obvious financial troubles that at once appealed to citizens' neoliberal economic consciousness and freed them from having to explain more complex questions regarding costly development decisions. Finally, I

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[105] This is a hypothetical statement.

find that the focus on *illegal* immigrants satisfied nativist fears by allowing residents to speak out openly against the city's new Latino/a population without disturbing the image they have of themselves as a welcoming, tolerant city.

REIMAGINING COMMUNITY

Community identity usually goes unsaid. It is something that members intuitively understand and therefore requires little explanation. Yet at the very moment when some outside force challenges or threatens community identity, the need to acknowledge or assert it becomes pressing (Bell 1994; Fine 2001). In studying how the Sauk Center community dealt with the "bad reputation," which followed the publication of Sinclair Lewis's (1920) *Main Street*, for example, sociologist Gary Alan Fine (2001:236) describes how communities are "self-conscious," meaning that "a community may have some sense of group identity, but until that identity is questioned, it remains largely undefined and unarticulated." Arthur Vidich and Joseph Bensman (1958:32) echo this point in their classic work *Small Town in Mass Society*. They describe how negative press about their community from a neighboring town triggered a reassertion of identity for the residents of Springdale. Such a challenge to the town's image, they write, "cuts deep and helps to re-create the sense of community when it is temporarily lost." Structural change produces similar effects. Communities conceive of economic restructuring as a test of their own boundaries and thus respond by doing the rhetorical and conceptual work necessary to reassert who they are (e.g., Engle 1984; Stein 2001).

When community identity is called into question as such, one of two methods is typically employed by community members to reassert their collective identities. They either nostalgically look back on their past in an effort to contrast it to the less-than-desirable present (e.g., Davis 1979) or they contrast their own values with the values of an "undesirable" group (e.g., Zerubavel 1991). Nostalgia aids in identity construction because it provides an "escape from contemporary conditions that are perceived to be inhospitable in order to provide individuals with a secure place of resistance" (Aden 1995:22). Similarly, the "vis-à-vis" nature of community identity (Suttles 1972:13) gives disgruntled residents much-needed assurance about the appropriateness of their own core values by contrasting them with the values (or, more appropriately, lack thereof) held by those perceived to be contributing to the community's decline. Both types of identity construction thus serve the important role of helping residents locate conflict or undesirable change *outside* of the community (e.g., Greenhouse et al. 1994:150).

Idealizing the Past

I began the focus groups and interviews I conducted with ordinary Hazleton residents by asking a set of general questions: has Hazleton changed? If so, how has it changed? And finally, why? Interestingly, no one responded to these questions with a critique of the economy resembling the story I told earlier. There was no discussion of demanufacturing. No one mentioned the Keystone Opportunity Zone initiative that provided tax breaks to less-than-desirable employers. Few were inclined to discuss

CAN DO and their changing prerogatives. No one even brought up *Cargill* as a catalyst for the so-called "immigration problem." On the other hand, they did not have much to say about undocumented immigrants, either. In almost all cases, my respondents did not mention phrases like "illegal immigration/immigrant" until after I asked specifically about the IIRA.

Residents instead responded to these questions with talk about more immediate local concerns—concerns they expressed through narratives about the past and the profound departure from it that they see embodied in contemporary Hazleton. They told me stories about how safe, simplistic, and community-oriented the town once was. "When we were young I used to walk anywhere – 6 miles just to visit a friend," one resident told me in a reminiscing tone before admitting, "It's not like that anymore."[106] Other stories alluded to community strength by mentioning the city's bygone informal social control measures: "There used to be a curfew that you had to be home by 10 o'clock; the curfew went off and if you were still on the streets you were in trouble. Now there is nothing."[107] Indeed, youth were careful to engage in any misbehavior beyond minor infractions or else fellow community members would

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[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid.

assure such actions "would get back to your mother."[108] For these respondents, such strengths were the result of community stability that they feel Hazleton has now lost:

> You knew everybody… everybody was a long-time resident. If you were over 6 or 8 blocks your mother still knew who lived in that area and where you were walking by and that type of thing. But now I think it's just the fear of the unknown… like, we don't know those people.[109]

Residents repeatedly reminded me "we had it so good here."[110] In the words of one resident: "It was a wonderful town, I could tell you that."[111] To them, the past represented "a point in time when these values actually "worked"" (Greenhouse et al. 1994:150). In a town that functions according to their accepted rules, as this story goes, *all is well*. And without these core values, *all is lost*. As a man in his 70s who has lived in Hazleton his entire life said: "we made this city by working… we built this place and now look what they have done to it."[112] Back then, "life was simple. It was

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[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Personal Interview with Larry Boman; May 20, 2009.

[111] Mini Focus Group participant; December 7, 2009.

[112] Informal conversation with an elderly Hazleton man.

just so nice."[113] Now, "it just went from being a really small town to not seeming like a really small town anymore."[114]

Lamenting the Present

Animated expressions reflecting distaste for the newcomers' "whole different lifestyle"[115] often followed such tales of longing and loss. Residents gave accounts of how the values of newcomers are starkly different from their own. Many used the contrast between city life and small town life that case studies in other rural locales have found to be particularly common ways of asserting identity (e.g., Vidich and Bensman 1958). "They come from the city and this is the way they did it there"[116] is how one resident described the differences she has observed. Others used oppositional family values as an illustration of difference. In contrast to the strong family values that people felt were observable in the Hazleton of old, residents told stories about neglectful parents who send their children to school with lice, allow cockroaches to get into kids' toy trucks, and see their children off for school without a coat in the rain. They also had plenty to say about the tendency of newcomers to live with their

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[113] Mini Focus Group participant; December 7, 2009.

[114] Focus Group Participant; December 2, 2009.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Ibid.

extended family. They complained about how this makes for conditions of filth, noise, and transience, not to mention a disintegration of the traditional family structure.

Unlike prior generations who have taken copious care of their property despite modest circumstances, newcomers whose "houses are falling apart"[117] are sloppy and careless in the minds of the townspeople. They also accused new residents of "taking advantage of the medical system, food stamps, welfare… [and] housing"[118] rather than working hard and deserving any benefits they may receive. And whereas Hazleton residents see themselves as taking pride in honesty and personal responsibility, the city's newcomers are considered a much more manipulative bunch who are prone to "know English but pretend they don't"[119] often with the goal of exploiting the benevolence of city residents.

By far the most prevalent critique offered by native-born Hazleton residents of the city's Latino/a newcomers is their tendency to commit crime. Many of the elderly residents I spoke with told me how they no longer leave their house after dark. One man told me 10 years ago he used to walk everywhere without any trouble—now he drives. Plenty of others had a lot to say about how Hazleton is "a lot more

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[117] Ibid.

[118] Mini Focus Group participant; December 7, 2009.

[119] Focus Group Participant; December 2, 2009.

dangerous."[120] Unlike years ago when street corners were populated by relatively harmless "long-haired hippies," now "there's a lot of gangs in this area."[121] Hazleton residents did not excuse themselves from all wrongdoing, to be sure, but the misbehavior they remember engaging in—throwing rocks, pushing students on the school bus, and so on—was petty in comparison to what they perceive today: "If you ever read the paper, it's nothing for them to have knives or guns or they beat up women."[122] One woman articulated this pervasive fear of crime quite well:

> … everybody has a gun—everybody just carries a gun. You just say something the wrong way out of a car and they're going to shoot you; or they're getting out of their car and beating you up, or they're stopping you because you might have cut them off or they cut you off.[123]

Table 1 depicts a list of several themes that recurred in stories told during the focus groups, formal interviews, and informal conversations that I conducted. As you will see, the values expressed in stories about the Hazleton of old—who "we" are—are direct opposites of the traits that emerged from stories about the city's newcomers.

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[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Focus Group Participant; December 2, 2009.

Table 1. Core Values Expressed in Focus Groups and Interviews

"We" are…	"They" are…
Close Knit	Strangers
Obedient	Disobedient
Quiet, Neighborly	Loud, Disrespectful
Take care of property	Messy, Careless
Family-oriented	Dysfunctional families
Hardworking	System-milking, Lazy
Harmless wrongdoing	Uncontrollable, Lawless
Honest	Manipulating

The Available Past

What is interesting about the residents' narratives of the past is that they were decidedly ahistorical. No one ever referenced a particular year or even a decade when things were as wonderful as they describe. "When we were kids"[124] was the most popular reference point, but even that slogan was problematic because it was used by residents of varying ages. People in their 70s, 50s, and even 20s all told joyous tales about how life was different when they were young. Moreover, temporal accounts of the city's shift from "wonderful"[125] to "disgusting"[126] were rarely given; instead,

[124] Ibid.

[125] Mini Focus Group participant; December 7, 2009.

change seemed to have happened overnight. In other words, while it was agreed upon that "then" was different from "now" no one offered a chronology about what happened in between. The "present," in short, was the "turning point" (Greenhouse et al. 1994:150).

This is not to say that Hazleton residents somehow fabricated their memories. To the contrary, while "the formation of community identity is a constructive process" it is "not a purely imaginative one" (Fine 2001:244). The stores on Broad Street did exist and a curfew bell really did ring. . What the tendency to selectively draw positives from the past means, instead, is that residents were apt to draw from what scholars of nostalgia refer to as an "available past" (Schudson 1989). They choose particular memories, favoring those which best represent their collective identities and leaving behind those that do not. The past, in this way, becomes "a resource used for meaning" (Cohen 1985:99).

Consider, for example, that no one I spoke to drew parallels between Hazleton's coal era and today—two eras where immigrants were exposed to extraordinarily similar conditions and social reactions. Doing so would have suggested *similarities* between today's immigrants and Hazleton residents' conception of themselves. In a word, they are trying to *manufacture difference* in the face of momentous change. Drawing parallels between previous hard times simply does not do when the goal is to make it seem as though the prevailing decline is not of their

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[126] Focus Group Participant; December 2, 2009.

own doing. Residents refer to the coal era, not surprisingly then, only as a way for locales to portray their own ancestors as more moral than today's "invaders." Their emphasis is on how, unlike today's Latino/a immigrants, their ancestors "came here legally" and "had the desire to learn English and fit in."[127]

The Available Present

In addition to drawing from an available past, residents also seemed to be drawing from an *available present*. Their discussions about the shortcomings of the city's newcomers rarely came from real-life experiences with Hazleton's Latino/a community and respondents usually left out any positive imagery about the city's current state. Most residents I spoke with admitted having "no contact with [Hazleton's Latino/a population]." One respondent, for instance, told me frankly, "The closest interaction [he has with Hazleton's new immigrant population] might be out at Lowe's [home improvement store] when one of them is in front of me in the checkout line." Yet even then, words are rarely exchanged: "if I go to Lowe's and I see somebody that happens to be next to me, I might start talking to them; but if it's a Latino I won't even waste my time because they probably can't speak English."[128]

This is quite disturbing considering that when respondents recounted times when they did interact with the city's newcomers, stories about these interactions were

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[127] Mini Focus Group participant; December 7, 2009.

[128] Ibid.

usually positive. When I asked residents to describe their cross-ethnic day-to-day interactions, most eased up on their harsh critiques and began talking about co-workers who are great people, cute Latino/a children, and friendly neighbors. "The Dominican guys I work with, as much as I hate to say it, are nice, hardworking people," [129] one man, whose attitude was otherwise anti-Latino/a, disclosed to me. Residents often reconciled what became contradictory statements about Hazleton's Latino/a newcomers by describing how there are "good and bad in every race."[130] They would go on to explain differences in terms of who the welfare users are and who are the hard workers; who wants to learn English and who does not; who "make that effort to become Americanized" and who have no desire to do so.

In their recent book, *The Global Grapevine*, Gary Alan Fine and Bill Ellis (2010:99) devote a chapter to local rumor patterns which have spread in Hazleton over the last decade. Their findings are consistent with what my focus group and interview data seem to suggest. Staring drastic change in the face, or, in their words, "when settled existence of a community is disrupted" rumors, they note, like the reconstruction of identity, emerge as ways for people to make sense of and understand change.[131] Of the rumors the authors describe, most are ripe with meaning but lack a

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[129] Personal Interview with Chuck Rizzo (pseudonym); July 29, 2009.

[130] Mini Focus Group participant; December 7, 2009.

[131] My analysis is slightly more nuanced than that which is offered by Fine and Ellis (2010), however. Their claim is that the disruption community members are feeling is

factual basis. Take, for example, "The Grapevine" rumor that depicted Hazleton residents as being threatened by inhabitants of Wyoming Street, Hazleton's Latino hub:

> [My] great aunt… told me a story about the Puerto Ricans that live on Wyoming Street in Hazleton. She said that her friend went to drive through the street but the entire street got blocked by Puerto Ricans. She demanded that the driver pay five dollars in order to pass. Eventually police showed up and the crowd disappeared (Fine and Ellis 2010:99).

These rumors, like the narratives in my data, are void of historical or contemporary fact. Here again, residents drawing from the local rumor mill seem to be circulating such tales as a way to express broader values rather than telling tales about events that actually occurred. In the case of this particular rumor, sociologists have found that a nearly identical story surfaced in rural Montana nearly a generation earlier when a similarly homogeneous community was experiencing social change (Balch and Gilliam 1991). The same was true of much of the other local lore that the authors discuss.

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the result of violent crimes committed in Hazleton (i.e., the homicides I discussed in Chapter 3). My contention is that Hazleton's community disruption is more far reaching and a product of the city's larger economic decline. The homicide itself, in my view, did not disrupt the community but rather became a sounding board upon which distaste for the city's changes could be expressed.

The Imagined Community

We can say with some certainty, then, that the stories Hazleton residents have told are indicative of their attempt to reconstruct, or perhaps more accurately, to *reimagine* their community. Anne Swidler (1986:278,273) has written that when citizens' lives are in a state of flux, or "unsettled," they tend to craft new cultural "tool kits" from which they can construct a new identity for themselves. Building on Swidler's tool kit analogy, Joane Nagel (1994:162) argues that rather than merely drawing from a tool kit, "we also determine its contents." Thus a more appropriate way to conceive of culture generally and the construction of community more specifically is by envisioning not just a tool kit from which residents draw, but also a "vessel" (Barth, 1969) or a "shopping cart." "Culture is not a shopping cart that comes to us already loaded with a set of historical cultural goods. Rather we construct culture by picking and choosing items from the shelves of the past and the present" (162).

This is idea is consistent with Benedict Anderson's (1983:4, 9) notion of the nation as an *imagined community*. He makes a convincing case that the reason nationalism inspires "such deep attachments" is "because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail… the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship." By referring to the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, he shows how, in a manner consistent with Nagel's shopping cart analogy, the very uncertainty of the tomb allows our national culture to construct whatever image of the buried soldier we so desire. In his words, "void as these tombs are of identifiable

mortal remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly *national* imaginings."

Immigration and the Imagined Local Community

Leo Chavez (2008: 2) uses Anderson's notion of the imagined community to understand the contemporary backlash against Latina/os at the national level. As he sees it, the Latino Threat Narrative is a discourse used to sharpen our conception of what it means to be American. For this reason, our cultural conception "does not imagine Latinos, whether immigrants or U.S.-born as part of the national community." Instead, "When [Latinos] do enter the social imaginary… it is as an internal threat to the larger community" (42).

Chavez's conception is thus not unlike the narratives from Hazleton that I have collected. The key difference is that narratives coming from the ground in Hazleton are *local* tales. Chavez (128) presents a list of binaries in his book much like the one I presented in Table 1. His list includes binaries such as inside the nation/outside the nation; citizen/non-citizen; native/foreigner; legal immigrant/illegal immigrant. At first glance the narratives my research subjects describe are similar to those emerging nationally, but closer inspection suggests that Hazleton residents are more concerned with Hazleton, the city, rather than broader notions of nation, citizenship, and the like. Rather than borders and nations, they are concerned with neighbors and schools. In a word: it is the *day-to-day*, not the abstract or the ideological, that has their attention. The people I spoke with in Hazleton, indeed, had little to say about the national

immigration debate. Many even made plain that they were quite unaware of immigration law or of contemporary debates regarding the subject. Ordinary Hazleton residents appear to be constructing, in short, an *imagined local community*.

The Imagined Local Community and the IIRA

I have shown thus far how Hazleton residents are experiencing and coping with change by reimagining their community. But how does this reimagining coincide with resident's unwillingness to point fingers at CAN DO or KOZ and their widespread acceptance of the IIRA? In the second part of this chapter, I draw parallels between the re-imagining I just discussed and the narrative surrounding the IIRA in order to reveal how the local imagined community that residents have constructed is *embodied* in the *Illegal Immigration Relief Act*. In other words, my focus in the second part of this chapter is on how the IIRA is a reflection of Hazletonians' values, desires, and fears.

I focus on three particular collective sentiments that were present in the narratives of my focus group and interview participants: 1) their desire to assert what Arlene Stein (2001:70) has called "a morally orienting sense of identity" 2) their longing for an explanation for the city's decline that both locates the problem outside the community and gels with their economic consciousness and 3) their search for a way to express their nativist fears. When we revisit the passage of the IIRA attuned to the fact that these concerns are paramount for Hazletonians, we understand further how the backlash was constructed along racial lines, why the passage of the IIRA,

despite its glaring inconsistency between rhetoric and reality was widely supported, and how CAN DO was able to absolve themselves of blame.

THE IIRA AS THE EMBODIMENT OF THE IMAGINED LOCAL COMMUNITY

"A Morally Orienting Sense of Identity"

In *The Stranger Next Door*, a study of a small community's vehement backlash against homosexuality, Arlene Stein (2001) notes how the residents of Timbertown, a place in the midst of profound economic upheaval, found solace in the Evangelical Christian Church because it appealed to their "desire for connection, community, and belonging" (70). Preachers in the church were apt to "play on the contrast between the warmth, familiarity, and trust of the congregation and the cold, cruel, and heathen outside world" (80) thereby providing distraught residents with a much-needed "morally orienting sense of identity" (70). Coping with change was easier for the residents of Timbertown when a moral authority assured residents that they were in fact virtuous, especially in comparison to a group of "heathen" outsiders.

As I have already reviewed, my focus group data suggest that Hazleton residents share with the residents of Timbertown a longing to reaffirm their values. They also exhibit a similar tendency to construct difference by contrast. If you recall the rhetoric surrounding the IIRA, it is unquestionable that officials played to these sentiments. The rigid us/them dichotomy that I described in the last chapter with its

demonization of immigrants on one hand and praise for Hazleton's "good, hardworking residents"[132] on the other is a case and point.

Just as Stein's study of Timbertown residents shows how members of the community sought assurance from the moral authority of the church, Hazleton residents received assurance from a similar albeit more secular source—the law. Throughout the debate over the ordinance, while the symbolic connections forged between Latinos, crime, and drug use were powerful, there is no denying that the emphasis on the *illegality* of newcomers drew perhaps the sharpest distinction. The majesty of the law, in other words, satisfied distraught Hazleton residents' desire to draw a line in the sand. Recall that officials cast the IIRA as a measure designed to protect residents "who are here legally." Throughout the debate, officials, residents, and activists likewise adopted "illegal is illegal" as an unofficial slogan. Barletta went so far as to jokingly note while on the stand in *Lozano et al v. Hazleton* that the phrase will be on his tombstone. A local pub posted a sign out front that read: "all legals served."[133] Rather than engaging in complicated debates about sensitive topics like race and immigration, references to legality provided citizens with a simple yet powerful tool of differentiation. Many asked, "What part of illegal don't you understand?" (American Humanity 2008).

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[132] Hazleton City Council Meeting; June 15, 2006.

[133] Photo on file with the author.

Immigrants as Economic Scapegoats

In her study of the politics leading up to the passage of California's Proposition 187, Kitty Calavita (1996:285) makes the important point that California's law embodied residents' symbolic *and* material concerns. It was "neither simply an instrumental response to economic conditions, nor a purely symbolic measure meant only to declare the cultural or political dominance of the majority." Proposition 187 was passed to both "send a message" and to express discontent with "stagnant wages and increasing insecurity."

A similar analysis applies to the IIRA. While its appeals to citizen's desire to make distinctions is evidence that the IIRA was indeed symbolic legislation (compare Gusfield 1963), a closer look reveals that distaste with economic conditions was also important. This is the second way in which the ordinance embodied local sentiments. To be sure, the residents I spoke with sparsely discussed economic issues, but there were plenty of instances when they made clear that they were unhappy with Hazleton's economic state. Yet most of the economic-related stories that residents told criticized social welfare programs while paying little attention to private-sector harms. Residents, in short, revealed a decidedly *neoliberal economic consciousness* defined by colorblind racism and a blatant hostility toward the state and the minority groups it supposedly privileges. They often note, for example, how it is unfair that immigrants benefit from the state's generosity while Hazleton residents suffer. One of the most frequent complaints I've heard in Hazleton had to do with immigrants use of the

ACCESS card—a Pennsylvania welfare program which provides food to needy families at discounted rates—and how unfair it is that they receive such benefits and ordinary Hazletonians have to work for what they earn. Others complained of tax breaks that they think undocumented immigrants receive and the supposedly free medical care they enjoy, despite the existence of clear evidence to the contrary (e.g., Ku and Matani 2001).[134]

In discussing the ordinance, local officials were wise to at once acknowledge the city's obvious decline yet at the same time draw attention *away from* failed economic policy (e.g., CAN DO, KOZ, and *Cargill*) and *toward* undocumented immigrants as the source of this decline. Take for example Barletta's likening of the presence of undocumented immigrants in Hazleton to a "cancer." Indeed, he willingly acknowledges what Hazletonians are feeling: some sort of invasive disease has inflicted Hazleton. Rather than being forthright about the city's financial woes, however, he simply scapegoats undocumented immigrants, making them appear financially burdensome and therefore responsible for economic hardships.

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[134] "Recent policy changes have limited immigrants' access to insurance and to health care. Fewer noncitizen immigrants and their children (even U.S.-born) have Medicaid or job-based insurance, and many more are uninsured than is the case with native citizens or children of citizens. Noncitizens and their children also have worse access to both regular ambulatory and emergency care, even when insured. Immigration status is an important component of racial and ethnic disparities in insurance coverage and access to care" (Ku and Matani 2001:247).

The mayor's testimony in front of the Senate likewise reveals the political tendency to appeal to residents' sense of decline while scapegoating immigrants rather than taking on the challenges of globalization for struggling local economies. After New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg had just finished describing to the Senate how "it would be devastating" (U.S. Senate 2006) to New York City's economy if they were to lose the 500,000 undocumented immigrants who work and pay taxes in the city, Barletta was given permission to follow up on his big-city counterpart's comments. Unquestionably this would have been an opportune time for the small town mayor to bring up the economic crunch that locales such as Hazleton have been experiencing in the neoliberal environment (as CAN DO did years ago when they had the opportunity to testify to Congress). He could have told the Special Senate Subcommittee how Hazleton, like New York, has come to rely on immigrant labor—or alternatively, he could have offered a critique of the pressure that the looming economic war has placed on his small locale. Better yet, he could have pleaded his case for regulation, for increased federal funding, or for an end to outsourcing. But rather than acknowledging such economic pressures, he opted instead for a more simplistic, racially-laden view of the city's economic troubles that gelled with citizen imaginings and was a better fit for the political persona he had been trying to forge: "We are spending the little amount that [we] do have chasing illegal immigrants around the city of Hazleton" (U.S. Senate 2006).

The bigger picture of Hazleton's financial situation is therefore made to fit the more narrow exclusionary narrative around which the ordinance was based. Take the English-only portion of the ordinance as a third example. It was justified on the grounds that Hazleton lacked the financial capacity to translate documents from English to Spanish. Officials, in other words, cast the city's new Spanish-speakers as a fiscal drain. Yet as was the case with crime rates, they offered no numbers indicating how much it would cost to translate documents. One desperate Latino man went so far as to offer to buy a copy machine for the city to make this process easier. Another offered to provide the service free.[135] Such offers were ignored, however, and the political goal of scapegoating undocumented immigrants as responsible for Hazleton's struggling economy was accomplished.

Finally, recall that one of the stipulations in the IIRA was to punish businesses who hired undocumented immigrants. Interestingly and consistent with the trend I am describing here, this measure received by far the *least* attention during council debates. If anywhere, it is during discussions of this portion of the ordinance where we would have expected discussions of corporate exploitation to arise. Yet all that the mayor said was that "businesses who knowingly hire illegal immigrants will lose [their] city business for five years after their first offense and 10 years following their second." Such language seems to suggest that small businesses would be the target; it is

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[135] Hazleton City Council Meeting; June 15, 2006.

unlikely that such a city-level sanction would deter a multinational giant like *Cargill*.[136] As is the case with employer sanctions in national legislation, the purpose here seemed to be to appeal to residents' sense of economic discontent while at the same time allowing the current exploitive practices to continue unencumbered (Calavita 1994).[137]

Colorblind Racism: "It is with the mouth that the fish dies"

The third way the IIRA embodies local sentiments is that it accords to their desire to express resentment while at the same time adhering to egalitarian norms. Remember, Hazleton's population went from being 95% white to 30% Latino/a in a

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[136]We can explain the reason for this portion of the ordinance being included but not discussed in another way as well. Recall that officials put little thought into the content of the ordinance. The language of the IIRA was borrowed from an ordinance first proposed in San Bernardino, CA. Mayor Barletta went looking for a local level ordinance against illegal immigration and he found one that just so happened to have a sanction against employers. Since discussion of this portion of the ordinance would have muddied the narrative, it could be that it was simply neglected in favor of the other portions of the bill that aligned with the general message.

[137] Indeed, this lack of attention should not come as much of a surprise. Provisions that punish businesses, we have seen in other contexts, often show up on the books as a response to public outcry, but are rarely implemented because they would jeopardize the economic imperative of exploiting inexpensive immigrant labor. The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, for example, responded to the public's restrictionism by including a provision that would punish employers. But as Calavita (1994) persuasively argues, employers face almost no risk of punishment under this bill because they are only required to act in "good faith" when checking the documentation status of their workers. Employer requirements were so watered-down in fact, that by the time the legislation was passed lobbyists representing corporations who employ undocumented immigrants had little to say about the final provision.

matter of five years and my research shows that most native-born white Hazleton residents are uneasy about this (see also Zogby 2007).[138] In the wake of the Civil Rights Movement, however, egalitarianism is the expected norm and so it is not surprising that Hazleton residents want to portray themselves as in support of diversity and not as coldblooded racists. Thus despite their desire to express their rage against the city's Latino/a newcomers, they find a way to do so without upsetting the balance of what is considered socially acceptable discourse. Only a few residents I spoke with during the course of my fieldwork openly admitted being racist. Most, instead, as mentioned previously, used generic, race-neutral terminology like "the bad element,"[139] "city people,"[140] "different ethnicities"[141] only to reveal later that these were implicit references to Latino/as.

The use of such implicit racial references is consistent with what Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1986:114) describe as a *rearticulation* of race: "the forces of racial reaction have seized on the notion of racial equality advanced by the racial

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[138] The racism I witnessed in my research was at times blatant, but often more subtle. Along these same lines, Zogby International's (2007:4) comprehensive report on post-IIRA Hazleton came to a similar conclusion. They write: "Racism is a critical local issue in Hazleton, and a massive community effort needs to be made to root out the disease of racism."

[139] Mini Focus Group participant; December 7, 2009.

[140] Focus Group Participant; December 2, 2009.

[141] Ibid.

minority movements and rearticulated its meaning for the contemporary period. Racial reaction has repackaged the earlier themes—infusing them with new political meaning and linking them to other key elements of conservative ideology." One of the ways this is accomplished is with code words, or "nonracial rhetoric used to disguise racial issues" (Omi and Winant 1986:114). Placed alongside socially constructed negative attributes, code words such as "welfare queen" and "inner city crime" allow one to express resentment while remaining on solid moral ground: "I'm not racist, I just think that people need to work rather the collect welfare," the logic goes.

Understanding such colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2006) is important in this context because it allows one to appear as though she or he conforms to values of equality and fairness. It is then surface level declarations (i.e., "I'm not racist") that become important. The social construction of "us" thus simultaneously hinges on a racialized construction of the "Other" but also a depiction of a community that is diverse, inclusive, and welcoming.

Use of the term *illegal immigrant* is a prime example of colorblind racism. In Hazleton, such an ideology allowed residents to express resentment outwardly in a way they had previously been unable. By using the phrase "illegal immigrant," residents now appear only to be in support of the rule of law. Yet buried within this legal literalism are negative associations increasing numbers of whites typically take for granted when talking about the U.S. Mexico border (i.e., Seventy-three percent of Americans believe that immigrants are at least somewhat more likely to increase crime

(Press 2006)). But how do we determine that this is indeed color-blind racism and not a genuine concern with the law? Through the course of my research, I have discovered upon numerous instances where resentful residents *slipped*—or, failed to keep their discourse on solid, politically correct ground. Residents, activists, and politicians often lost their discursive footing and revealed a deeper belief that it was not just the illegality of undocumented immigrants that they were protesting, but also the presence of Latinos more generally. Pro-immigrant activist Luis Lopez describes his experience with one such slip quite well:

> I went to the city building, the City Hall, and I spoke to people about it… I said: I just want to know what you guys think. I mean [Lou Barletta] is your boss, what do you think? And one woman was very kind to sit with me and actually talk about it… and this woman said, for example: illegal immigrants, you know, they don't have permission to be here and this and that. And I said: okay, yeah, fine, sure you have a point, but I think this goes beyond that, you know. And we started our conversation like this… and in some places it slips you. In my country, in Peru, we have a saying that says: it is with the mouth that the fish dies saying that if you open your mouth and you say something that is what really shows what is behind, what you really think. So the woman said: yea but have you seen them on the streets? They are taking over the street, and their music is so loud. I said: ok, but you don't know that they are illegal immigrants. That is when I left the conversation because I got what I wanted. I got what really was behind [her words].[142]

The woman at the city hall was not the only one to slip in this way. Numerous residents I spoke with began by discussing "illegal" immigration but then branched out

[142] Personal Interview with Luis Lopez; May 13, 2009.

to include in their critique Latino/as more generally.[143] One activist told me a story about her sister-in-law who feels justified in her prejudicial language because "well, they are illegal." But when challenged with "well, how to you know they are illegal" her response was "Well I really don't know, but I don't care."[144] The mayor himself has also committed such racist "slips of the tongue." During an interview with CNN's Kiran Chetry conducted while the ordinance was still in the national spotlight, Mayor Barletta was asked the following question:

> You say the illegal immigrants have brought with them drugs, they brought with them crime, gangs, and that your city is overwhelmed; the police force as well as the schools and hospitals. Can you elaborate on the impact, the negative impact, that you say illegal immigrants have had on your community?

To which he responded:

> Yeah, absolutely. For example, English as a second language in the year 2000, the budget was $500. Today, it is $1,145,000. Our small budget here in the city cannot absorb the cost of illegal immigration."

Barletta does not refer to the negative impact that *illegal* immigrants have had on the city as Chetry asked him to explain in her question. Instead, he merely points out that ESL classes are now a priority in the city. Of course, ESL has become a

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[143] For example, when discussing "illegals," many made reference to Wyoming Street, a strip in Hazleton where many Latino businesses are located and where Latinos tend to congregate.

[144] Personal Interview with Helen Nance; May 6, 2009.

necessity in Hazleton because of the increase in Spanish speakers. More than 12,000 Latino/a immigrants have arrived in Hazleton during the time Barletta is discussing. For Barletta, it is not genuinely at issue whether immigrants are authorized or not to be in the U.S.

A License to Hate: Explaining the IIRA's Widespread Support

Exploring how the ordinance came to embody resident's moral, material, and nativist desires can indeed help explain why so many people go on board in support of it. It provided distraught residents a discourse where one previously had not exited which encompassed at once their fond imaginings of Hazleton, their displeasure with economic decline, and their nativist fears that accompanied the mass arrival of Latino/a immigrants. The IIRA allowed them to make sharp distinctions, to critique the economy using in a manner consistent with their worldview, and to act on their racial biases without impunity.

It was not "illegal immigration" residents were concerned with, but lashing out against the unauthorized allowed them to express their collective sentiments. The fact that almost no one in Hazleton was talking about "illegal" immigration prior to the Kichline murder testifies to this. Prior to the passage of the ordinance, there were few mentions of undocumented immigrants in public debate. Figure 2 depicts the number of times the *Standard-Speaker* mentioned the phrases "illegal immigrants" or "illegal immigration." This chart clearly shows that prior to the Kichline homicide in May of 2006, the media had very little to say about the topic.

Letters to the editor of the same newspaper show a similar pattern. A string of letters written in 2004, for example, reveals residents lashing out against the Hispanic population specifically and tolerant citizens responding vehemently against their racism.[145] With the exception of one local resident who has been writing letters about the topic for years, no residents mentioned the phrase "illegal" immigration in their complaints about the city's problems prior to 2006. After 2006, however, the focus of letters is usually on undocumented immigrants more specifically and negative reactions to this blatant racism are largely absent. Such letters, albeit to a slightly lesser extent, continue to appear in the *Standard-Speaker* to the present day.

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[145] A letter printed in the *Standard-Speaker* on June 23, 2004, for example, features one residents lashing out against Hazleton's newcomers with complaints such as "In the last election, the county sent interpreters to help the Hispanic people to vote and yet they are not American citizens." Another written on July 7 of the same year goes on to blame "the Hispanic population" specifically for a number of problems: he accused them of ruining property, of being sexually promiscuous, and of blocking city streets. In response to these and other letters, some concerned citizens responded, calling the blatantly racist accusations "a bunch of B.S." and assuring readers that "White people are no better than anyone else." All letters to the editor are on file with the author.

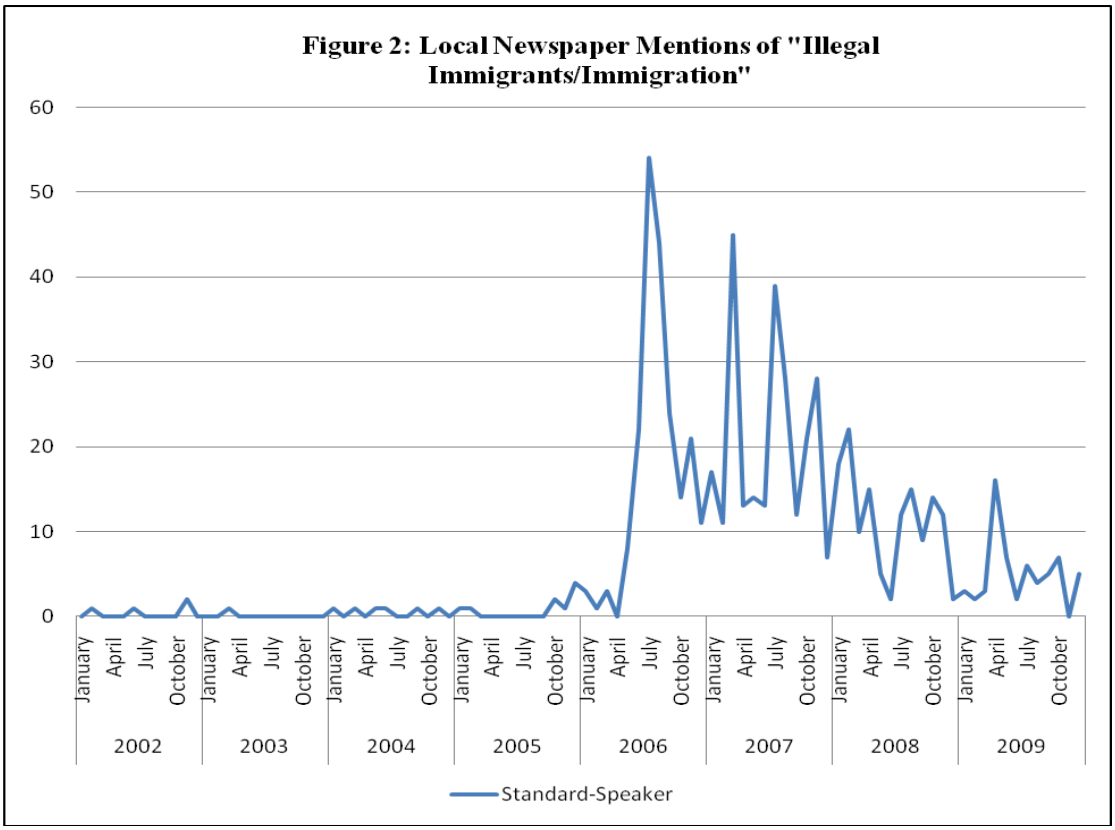

Figure 2. Local Newspaper Mentions of "Illegal Immigrants/Immigration"

Interestingly, even in the focus groups and interviews I conducted after the passage of the ordinance, ordinary residents scarcely discussed the topic of undocumented immigration. It was usually not until I brought up the ordinance at the end of the conversation that participants began using phrases like "illegal immigration." Early on in the interviews, I listened as my focus group/interview participants carefully negotiated line between acceptable and unacceptable racial discourse. When we discussed illegal immigration more specifically, however, respondents more confidently denounced "illegals."

Many of the pro-immigrant activists I spoke with confirmed that this is what they saw happening throughout post-IIRA Hazleton. City residents, they explained, came out firing after the IIRA was passed. They demonstrated much more confidence in speaking out publicly post-IIRA whereas previously their resentment was confined "backstage" (Picca and Feagin 2007).[146] One activist said the IIRA "opened the door"[147] for locals to express resentment. Another said "it gave them authorization… it was like it was official."[148] A third said matter-of-factly that the IIRA gave Hazleton residents "a license to hate."[149]

CONCLUSION

Ordinary Hazleton residents view their city in the most idealistic of terms. Hazleton was once great, they feel, but today it is riddled with unsightliness. This is not their fault, their sentiments reveal further, for their values are noble and capable of producing strong communities. They use glorified imagery of Hazleton's past as

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[146] Using the journals and diaries of white college students as data, Picca and Feagin (2007) show how while overt public displays of racism may have diminished in recent decades, racist talk remains disturbingly persistent behind the scenes—in the "backstage"—when groups of white students congregate.

[147] Personal Interview with Amilcar Arroyo; April 30, 2009.

[148] Personal Interview with Laurita Romero; July 26, 2009.

[149] Personal interview with Anna Arias; May 14, 2009.

evidence of this. For Hazleton residents, the contemporary troubles must be the product of an invading, valueless force.

Initially, this force lacked a name. CAN DO's mythical image and identification with the community made difficult the possibility of attributing the city's problems to neoliberalism or, more simply, to economic decline. When a pair of undocumented immigrants allegedly shot and killed a solitary Hazleton resident, however, Hazleton officials provided their residents with a much-needed discourse for expressing their discontent—one that aligned with their race-based imaginings of Hazleton. It did not matter that this had little or nothing to do with what was actually bringing the community down.

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter but worth reiterating here, when ordinary residents discussed the ordinance, there was often a glimmer of hope in their voices. It was as if the IIRA was their ticket back to Hazleton's fabled past. Over and over again, when I asked about the ordinance, residents told me about how the streets were filled with moving trucks the night the measure was passed, implying that undocumented immigrants were fleeing in terror. It was as though the ordinance was removing the problem from the city the way a surgical procedure removes a tumor. The IIRA was going to bring things back to the way they supposedly were. Residents truly believed that the Illegal Immigration Relief Act would deliver what it promised: *relief from the present and entrée back into their idealized racial community*.

What we have seen, however, is that the passage of the IIRA was nothing more than empty symbolism and the political posturing of an opportunistic politician. Some feel that this is because the ordinance never had the opportunity to take effect,[150] but my analysis in the last three chapters reveals that undocumented immigrants, in reality, had little or nothing to do with Hazleton's decline. Rather than providing relief, the IIRA only drove the discussion further off course.

In the next three chapters, we will see the implications of these early constructions. When citizens' and activists' imaginings of Hazleton interact with their visions of law, we find that struggles for immigrants' rights are unable to gain any traction and that responses to such claims have the effect of further embedding the racialized imaginings of Hazleton in citizen consciousness.

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[150] One resident I spoke with had the following to say about the IIRA's effect. When I asked if the ordinance did anything in the city, she responded:

> I think it did in the beginning. I think a lot of the illegals that were here kind of left temporarily to see what was going to happen. And then of course it was shot down and I think they've all come back since then. I think it made a difference actually, I really do. And people were happy because they thought: this is it, we're going to finally have some order in our city and we're not going to have to worry about these illegals. But they left temporarily but then they came back. When it was shot down they came back.

Others, however, while supportive of the ordinance, possessed a vague realization that the it was not a ticket to "recovery" and that the townspeople would have to learn to adapt to change: "they are everywhere in the country and so you are going to have to get used to it and you are going to have to learn how to get along with them—along with everybody. It's just such a varied culture out there. It's not like it was when we were kids."

Chapter 5

IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS IN THE IMAGINED COMMUNITY

As the Hazleton City Council meeting on July 13, 2006 wrapped up, Councilwoman Evelyn Graham used her last chance for comment as an opportunity to scold Dr. Agapito Lopez:

> Dr. Lopez, I have tried twice to explain to you the serious problems we face and you have dismissed these problems by insisting they are just the result of a different culture. You seem to believe that we must accept them. When I and the mayor tried to give you and Amilcar Arroyo examples of troubles in the community which we believe are caused by illegal aliens your response was to discount illegal as just a word that changes with time. You belittle any implications of criminality. You show no desire to help solve the problems and will not even discuss them. I must confess: I am dismayed by this attitude. I was hoping that you would help build the bridge we need. Based on your statements in front of City Council and those printed in the *Standard-Speaker*, I could accuse you and Anna Arias of racism. You, not the mayor or council, are the ones who are inciting segregation instead of encouraging integration. I believe it is you who are practicing divisiveness. Look into your hearts and you may find that you are advocating separatism. Did you not come to America for the purpose of integrating? If so, why do you reject our laws, our language, our customs? I believe that most of Hazleton's immigrants came here to become a part of the community and build a better life, a new life. I believe they seek unity rather than diversity. And I believe that you, the mayor, City Council, and community leaders owe it to them and future legal immigrants to get behind them and encourage their adaptation to a new life and a loyalty to America, their new home. We welcome them.

> And you do them a disservice when you deliberately misrepresent our actions for your own purposes.[151]

Hazleton's Latina/o Activists

Dr. Agapito Lopez, along with Amilicar Arroyo and Anna Arias who Graham also mentions in her tirade, comprise a small but important group of Latina/o Leaders[152] in Hazleton. Perhaps more than any other individuals or groups in the city, these activists have served as the voice of Hazleton's Latino/a community—an important task indeed considering the city's utter absence of an infrastructure to accommodate its newly burgeoning Latino/a immigrant population.

When it was passed, the leaders saw the IIRA as an "affront, not only to the undocumented immigrants, but to the whole Latino population [in Hazleton]."[153] As such, they were not shy about making their views known however locally unpopular they may have been. Feeling that the ordinance "was going to divide the community"[154] and recognizing their prerogative as leaders "to do something to have

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[151] Hazleton City Council Meeting; July 13, 2006.

[152] This group is not a formal organization but rather a collection of three local professionals who served as spokespeople for Hazleton's Latino/a population in the wake of the ordinance. They are usually referred to by name locally, not necessarily as "Latino/a Leaders." I use this phrase, which is my own, for simplicity sake and because I think it accurately describes their role.

[153] Personal interview with Dr. Agapito Lopez; May 6, 2009.

[154] Personal interview with Anna Arias; May 14, 2009.

this ordinance scratched out,"[155] they protested fervently the passage of what they considered a discriminatory local law. Facing a community whose conception of the prevailing Latino Threat was picking up steam, they first took their fight to city council where townspeople scoffed at their suggestions. Convinced that the ordinance was precisely what Hazleton needed, community members cast the Latino/a Leaders' approach as hurtful rather than helpful to the struggling community.

Unable to gain any headway locally, the Latino/a Leaders then turned outside the community seeking help. To their delight, national-level immigrant rights groups came to their aid, filing suit against the city and ultimately getting the IIRA overturned. Despite having the best of intentions, however, these efforts were also met with harsh resistance. In the end, the community cast out this group of dedicated local immigrants' rights activists by misrepresenting them as villains. The vilification of the Latino/a Leaders in this chapter illuminates the ineffectiveness of formal rights campaigns in this particular local context. To accomplish this, my analysis proceeds in three parts. First, I describe how "rights talk" on behalf of marginalized populations—in this case, Latino/a immigrants—is vulnerable, especially in a local context like this one, to a "rhetorical inversion" (Goldberg-Hiller and Milner 2003:1111) where demands for equality are recast as threats to community harmony. I then go on to describe in more detail the efforts of the Latino/a Leaders and the community's

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[155] Personal interview with Dr. Agapito Lopez; May 6, 2009.

reaction to their activism. In the third part of the chapter, I explore the leaders' attempts to look outside city limits for help following their local struggles. Here I discuss how, despite developing a legal consciousness more complex than the narrow "illegal is illegal" discourse, local conceptions of "rights" and "law" still dominated, leaving pro-immigrant efforts vulnerable to an even harsher backlash. In short, this chapter reveals how the law interacts with preconceived notions of 'community' and 'belonging' in a way that profoundly impedes on the prospects of inclusivity.

FROM ACTIVISTS TO VILLAINS

Rights on the Right

The Civil Rights Movement is an era of great progress in the United States, however, as has been often observed it did not come without often serious resistance (e.g., Klarman 1994). Political conservatives have long opposed claims for rights made on behalf of marginalized groups. What is interesting about this opposition is that despite countering a set of progressive claims—the type we typically associate with 'rights talk'—it is at its most fundamental level an embrace of *equal rights*. Because "most Americans share the values traditionally associated with rights: equality, fairness, due process and the like," conservatives have been able to reap the benefits of the cultural pervasiveness of rights by wholeheartedly adopting the rhetoric for their own purposes. Indeed, "invoking these values makes it more likely that one will make their claims intelligible to a wider audience" (Dudas 2007:156). As many have

acknowledged, rights in this way act as "double agents—amendable to serving anti-egalitarian as well as egalitarian purposes" (Scheingold 2004:xxiv). Rights are "indeterminate" to use Mark Tushnet's (1984:1371) term from his classic *An Essay on Rights*, "opposing parties can use the same language to express their positions."

While the language is the same, however, the position of conservative politicians, activists, and ordinary citizens is far different from the position taken by those advocating for progressive causes. As conservatives see it, the ideals of equality and fairness are not going to be realized at the end of a lengthy struggle but rather are *already in place* and indeed have long been (many would argue, since the founding of our nation) (e.g., Omi & Winant, 1986; Fish 1996; Rubin, 1998; Dudas, 2008). Any disruption of these values, from this orthodoxy, is not the result of a history of unfairness but rather a more recent disruption brought on by "excessive" and "irresponsible" demands made by left-wing progressives. According to this logic, activists like Hazleton's Latino/a Leaders are not seeking *equal rights*, they are seeking *special rights* (e.g., Goldberg-Hiller and Milner 2003). The road to equality for conservative activists is paved not by a series of progressive demands but rather a rejection of such demands. A conservative rights talk views equality as only possible, to summarize, if we return to our core values and stop distributing so-called "special privileges."

Rhetorical Inversion

Crucial to the success of the special rights doctrine is a *rhetorical inversion* process "in which the rights claimants become the transgressors, and everyone else becomes the victims of this violation" (Goldberg-Hiller and Milner 2003:1078). By recasting progressive civil rights activists as *threats to* as opposed to *champions of* equal rights, conservative politicians, activists, and ordinary people make themselves appear as the protectors of the coveted ideal of equality. Jonathan Goldberg-Hiller and Neal Milner's (2003:1084) example of same sex marriage in Hawai'i is instructive. They quote anti-same-sex marriage activists who portray gay rights activists as "trying to force their values down the throats of the people of Hawai'i" and portray themselves as being further victimized in that "anyone who disagrees with them is labeled a homophobe, or is labeled a gay basher." In other words, following the inversion process, "the majority is rhetorically reconstituted into a persecuted minority."

Rights in the Imagined Local Community

Rights talk is thus highly indeterminate and a powerful resource for groups on both sides of the political spectrum. Indeed, in recent decades some have observed that conservatives have been more successful than progressives in employing an effective rights discourse (Dudas 2007). Rights claims by marginalized populations continue to be discredited and accusations that such claims are unnecessary or even excessive have attained political credence and often go largely unchallenged. Such a drastic shift in the meaning of rights—the very tropes used to bring about some of the most dramatic

gains for disenfranchised minority groups in U.S. history—thus begs a deeper question: How has this rhetorical inversion process been so easily accomplished?

Paul A. Passavant's (2002:xi) important study on First Amendment rights helps us to contextualize the ascendency of 'special rights' accusations. He argues that scholarly conceptions of rights continue to lack an appropriate understanding of "how recognizing rights for subjects also requires the production of subjects for rights." That is to say, in order to understand how rights claims are successful, we need to realize first that those individuals and groups whose rights claims are heard are recognized as even having rights at all. The successful implementation of a rights claim is thus a subtle acknowledgement that one *has* rights. Conversely, the failure to implement a rights claim successfully is evidence that society does not bestow rights upon that particular group or individual. Rights and law are thus "enmeshed with culture" and "access to rights is related to whether a person behaves in accordance with cultural values" (Goldberg-Hiller and Milner 2003:1111).

Passavant (2002:8) interrogates the national context and shows how "having one's rights protected is contingent upon being recognized as an American." Rights talk, from this perspective, is thus "inextricably linked to the normalizing and exclusive patterns of national identity politics." These insights can be extended, however, and are perhaps even more relevant in the local context where having one's rights protected is contingent upon *holding a position in the imagined local community*. This is a point Greenhouse and colleagues (1994) make in their case

studies of the use of law and rights in small American towns. They show how rights claims—and use of the law more generally—made by 'outsiders' were often met with resistance while insiders' decisions to turn to the law or to claim that they had rights were not criticized and were often applauded. Engle's (1984) Sander County case study is a good example. Here it was not that insiders were critical of the law in and of itself. Nor were they critical of rights under all circumstances. To the contrary, Sander County insiders *did* use the law. They asserted their rights. The difference is that when they did so the community majority saw it as appropriate—in many cases, insiders went so far as to praise their fellow community members' use of law as valiant attempts to uphold community norms.

Through the lens of Passavant's framework, it becomes clear how insiders in these studies enjoyed success when they made claims about rights because the community saw them as *having rights*. They belonged in the imagined local community. Outsiders, on the other hand, did not belong and locals, as a result, ridiculed their attempts to make similar claims. Greenhouse and colleagues (1994:186) explain how the law thus has "bivalent connotations" that are dependent upon community perceptions of belonging:

> Unlike "community," which is invoked exclusively as a positive force in the rhetoric of everyday people in our three locales and elsewhere, the invocation of law has more bivalent connotations. Law is both a force for order and a conduit for disorder; it is a symbol of local morality *and* the penetration of the local by the state, by the "outside," and all that is locally interpreted as undermining "community." By using law, "insiders" may succeed in enforcing norms central to their way of life; by talking despairingly about law and about "all these

> people walking around with all these rights," the same insiders define their community as a domain of mutual engagement in which the concept of "rights" (and, in some sense, of law itself) is out of place.

A Defense of Hierarchy

This fluidity of rights presents a paradox. 'Rights talk' was once a rhetorical tool used by marginalized groups to challenge existing structures of power, but with the successful conservative cooptation of rights talk, perhaps ironically, only those of high social standing are able to make successful rights claims. Greenhouse and colleagues (1994:188) go on to address this paradox. They note how, by labeling 'outsiders' as greedy and self-interested, the rhetorical inversion process stigmatizes this group thereby justifying their outsider status. At the same time, when 'insider' rights claims are made and accepted, their 'insider' status is reaffirmed. 'Rights talk,' in this way, helps to further "define the boundaries of community." It fortifies rather than challenges existing power structures:

> Insiders invoke imagery that connects the claimants to a materialistic ethic that places them, "by their nature," beyond the boundaries of the community that insiders define as their own. This is a process that tends to protect and reproduce the hierarchies, in spite of a language of "rights" that would seem to preclude hierarchies.

This is troublesome for progressive activists and those on the margins of the community more generally. Not only are their rights claims vulnerable to a rhetorical inversion, but such an inversion can have the unintended consequence of strengthening the very imaginings of community that have prohibited their inclusion in the first

place. My analysis of the Latino/a Leaders activism and the larger community's reaction demonstrates how these processes play out on the ground. Preconceived notions of 'community' and belonging, we will see, allow Hazleton 'insiders' to rhetorically invert the Latino/a Leaders' claims thereby strengthening further the boundaries of the imagined community.

HAZLETON'S LATINO/A LEADERS

In the Shadow of the Civil Rights Movement

Themes of equality, justice, and rights appear again and again in the narratives and actions of Hazleton's Latina/o Leaders. Their approach to activism in the rural city draws heavily from the U.S. Civil Rights tradition. This group is fighting "against injustice, against disparity, and against lack of representation by minorities."[156] Non-violent protests, an emphasis on humanity, and the mobilization of a Latino/a base are the means by which they and other champions of progressive causes have sought and continue to seek such ends.[157]

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[156] Unless otherwise noted, quotes from the Latino/a Leaders used in this section come from my personal interviews with each of these individuals (e.g., Personal Interview with Dr. Agapito Lopez; May 6, 2009; Personal Interview with Amilicar Arroyo; April 30, 2009; Personal Interview with Anna Arias; May 14, 2009).

[157] For example, on July 12, 2006 more than 200 people gathered outside of Hazleton City Hall for a candlelight vigil in opposition to the IIRA. Lopez told those in attendance that "we are not marching; no chanting, no screaming… this is an event of solemnity and peace." (Tarone, 2007b).

For these activists, the struggle for equality has and continues to be a hard fought battle. They see their work as a continuation of efforts initiated in generations prior. Lopez, who is a retired ophthalmologist born in Puerto Rico, made this evident when he gave me a copy of a presentation he gave at a local college entitled *Intolerance*. The presentation ran the gauntlet of intolerant acts committed against less powerful groups throughout U.S. history. He spoke of slavery, the Trail of Tears, and the exploitation of Eastern European immigrants prior to getting to the crux of his presentation: Hazleton's IIRA. The ordinance to him is apparently the latest instance of the United States' long history of intolerance, and he sees his activism as a continuation of a corresponding fight for justice.

Rethinking Community

As Lopez's presentation demonstrates, one of the hallmarks of the Latina/o Leaders' approach to challenging the IIRA has been their willingness to call into question the myths that surrounded the ordinance. When we met, Lopez had statistics ready that would debunk misguided local claims. He challenged the claim that immigrants drain the welfare system; he made sure others knew that children born in the United States to undocumented immigrants were legally entitled to whatever benefits they may have received; and he questioned the validity of the common local assumption that immigrants have flooded Hazleton's emergency rooms. "All of these are myths" he said, "really, we are contributing to the economy of the state."

Anna Arias, perhaps the most passionate member of the group, challenged the assumption that immigrants are inherently crime prone during our conversation. She balances her career as a social worker with her activism and remains attentive to the problems facing the community. She rattled off a list of highly publicized local crimes reminding me that, contrary to popular belief, most of these crimes did not involve unauthorized immigrants. “I’m afraid of crime, too” she admitted, but emphasized that we must be smarter about it. There are far more cases of domestic violence in the city than there are serious crimes committed by undocumented immigrants, she pointed out as an example, but “what is [the mayor] doing about domestic violence?”

As these myths were questioned the activists made it a point to humanize undocumented immigrants thereby countering the oft-repeated local mantra of “illegal is illegal.” Reducing undocumented immigrants to mere legal objects, they argued, is a tired, useless debate that only exacerbates the hardships such immigrants have endured. They prefer instead to focus on what Arias referred to as the “human element” of the situation that recognizes the impermanence of the law and makes it secondary to real-life human suffering. “If you are a father of five or six kids that are starving and you know that by wading across a little river you could be winning about 5 or 6 times what you are earning in this country… I would cross that river and take my chances,” Lopez admitted. Arroyo, a businessperson who has lived in Hazleton for 19 years, also humanized immigrants with powerful tales of the poverty he has witnessed in his native Peru. He grew up and was educated in the South American

country before coming to the U.S. in the 1970s. He understands immigrant suffering: he too was undocumented for a short time while working as a laborer in one of Hazleton's factories before establishing Hazleton's first Hispanic newspaper. Each activist, in short, is in agreement with Arias when she says there are "human beings behind this whole thing…Undocumented people come to this country to work because they have a family to support, they have children to feed, and we are forgetting that part. An undocumented person living in the United States is human. He bleeds. He feels. He cries."

Song of the Grasshopper

To bring his case back into the local context, Lopez told me about an old Latin American folk tune called the *Song of the Grasshopper*. The song is about a father, he explained, who has no time for his son. Later in life when the son is fully-grown, the role is reversed and the son no longer has time for his dad. He brought up the song in response to a question I asked him about the apparent disconnect between Hazleton's economic necessity to attract immigrants and its simultaneous exclusion of these workers. His point was that, much like the son in the song, the "aging population in Hazleton has forgotten where they came from, has forgotten the toils and sorrows that they had when they came here as immigrants and were mistreated by others and discriminated by others."

The parallel he drew to this song is evidence of the Latina/o Leaders' willingness to challenge the prevailing nostalgic visions of the city that community

residents have been putting forth. Familiar with the arguments made in favor of the ordinance, I responded to Lopez's musical reference with the hypothetical: "the response of some to that would be: well, my ancestors came here legally. I am not against the immigrants that come here legally; I am against the undocumented immigrants." Revealing his courage to question what has emerged in the city as conventional wisdom, Lopez responded to my inquiry without hesitation: "Many of the immigrants that came here [then] came here illegally. They didn't have papers. They go to Ellis Island, their names are changed, they were signed with a stamp that says "WOP," which is what they call the Italians: "Without Papers.""

The leaders were prone to challenging other nostalgic aspects of the imagined local community as well. They were willing to acknowledge that some of the coal region's history was indeed gloomy, even tragic. "Hazleton and this area has been the center of some very sore incidents," Lopez explained. He recalled how the well-known menaces to the coal industry, the Molly Maguires, were hung in nearby Pottsville without a fair trial (see Kenny 1998). He brought up the Latimer Massacre, an incredibly tragic coal-era event where a group of Sherriff's deputies shot and killed 19 striking immigrant coal miners, most from Poland and Slovakia, and then managed escaped charges thanks to their elite status and ties to the coal industry (see Novak 1974). He likewise recalled violent acts perpetrated by organized criminals in twentieth century Hazleton. Arias and Arroyo similarly made sure it was clear to me that "this town has never been safe, truly."

The way Hazleton's Latina/o Leaders see it, the situation that confronts today's immigrants is not much different from that which confronted the coal miners of the past. If contemporary ethnic tensions are to be relieved, they see it as essential that residents recognize and acknowledge these similarities—indeed, that white native-born Hazleton residents and Latino/a immigrants both have been forced to endure often violent economic exploitation. Lopez has plans to paint a "unity mural" in downtown Hazleton to communicate such similarities. His vision includes a depiction of Hazleton's past and present tradition of immigrant labor: "the old coal workers will be displayed alongside the new crop-pickers and meat-cutters."

Attacking the IIRA "Head On"

Hazleton's Latino/a Leaders are, in short, a group dedicated to fighting for immigrants rights, even if that means challenging the local status quo. Seeing the IIRA as little more than a symbolic measure, they openly challenged myths about immigrant criminality and fiscal burdensomeness; they attacked locals' incessant reliance on the phrase "illegal"; and they portrayed a more complex version of Hazleton history that includes positives *as well as* negatives. In other words, they have sought not to climb over the proverbial *border* that local residents have built; they question whether it even exists. As Arias pointed out to me, they went after the ordinance and the discourse that accompanied it "head on." It was not inclusion in the imagined community that they sought. The hope was not to somehow whiten Latino/a identity. To the contrary, their agenda focused on casting aside the mythical community residents had constructed and

bringing cross-ethnic commonalities to the foreground. Old, tired arguments declaring, "this is my country, this is my town, this is my community" do little more than separate in the minds of this group:

> My God! This is our world. This is our country. This is our community. We are the people. We are the people! And that is the way we should be living as we are the people. Not those people or they. No!—We. We are the people. We should be together. We should work together. We should unite. We should be united, working together towards the goals that we want.

But how do residents whose sentiments are embodied in the IIRA feel about the arguments these activists have put forth? As we will see, local imaginings are especially vivid and in this particular context, one can see the particular difficultly of calling into question the dominant local narrative. I explore in the next section how politicians, activists, and ordinary residents were able to defend their imagined community from these civil rights claims. By successfully instituting a rhetorical inversion, the community reconstituted their claims as attacks. The result is a strengthening of the local sense of community and the addition of a new villain—the 'special rights' activist—who, like the undocumented immigrant, comes to embody precisely that which is perceived to have undermined Hazleton.

"Does it sound like I'm guilty of bias?"

Perceiving their community as a place that is emblematic of the American ideal of equality and fairness, local residents and officials felt the IIRA did none of the insensitive things its opponents had suggested. Councilwoman Graham and others

were under the impression that it had done just the opposite. For them, the IIRA: *it restored order to an otherwise unruly city*. For example, many emphasized that the ordinance had nothing to do with race. It was "illegal" immigration, plain and simple, which it sought to deter. Mayor Barletta made this race-neutral conception explicit at the council meetings when he said: "… this ordinance does not target any particular race. If you read it, you will not find any reference to specific races, nor will you find any reference to any language other than English."[158]

It should not come as much of a surprise, then, that Hazletonians quickly silenced the Latino/a Leaders when they first attempted to resist the ordinance. At the city council meeting, Arroyo cited the IIRA's likely economic costs and its potential halting of what had otherwise been a rapidly growing Latino/a-led economic resurgence in Hazleton. Arias, alternatively, was much more blunt. She called the ordinance "discriminatory, bigoted, and racist" and warned council "if you pass this, you will go down in history as the council that made Hazleton the first Nazi city in the country." [159] Lopez was out of town when the mayor originally introduced the ordinance, but he recalls being "outraged" when he learned about it upon his return.

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[158] Hazleton City Council Meeting; July 13, 2006.

[159] Ibid.

He too later begged and pleaded with council to have the ordinance thrown out, noting that its punitive measures were "very, very severe."[160]

These challenges angered council members and city residents alike. How could they possibly make such accusations? As the passage I opened the chapter with suggests, Graham was especially disappointed with Lopez in this regard. Before the spring of 2006, she and other elected officials had a positive relationship with all of the Latino/a Leaders,[161] especially Lopez who Mayor Barletta had previously appointed to the city's Water Authority Board of Directors. Graham, who "thought it was important to bring our new residents into the daily operation of our city and asked them to begin sharing the responsibility of our city," supported the appointment, asking puzzlingly in its wake, "Does it sound like I'm guilty of bias?"[162]

Accusations of Pettiness

Beyond an outright denial of the ordinances' discriminatory intentions, officials and residents alike were also able to silence the Latino/a Leaders on the grounds that their claims of unfairness were petty and inconsequential in comparison to the far more pressing "alien invasion" Hazleton was thought to be experiencing.

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[160] Ibid.

[161] The Latino/a Leaders confirmed that such positive relationships were reciprocal. Lopez himself recalled that after the IIRA was proposed he "was amazed that the mayor has taken such a stance because he was my friend" (Personal Interview with Dr. Agapito Lopez; May 6, 2009).

[162] Hazleton City Council Meeting; June 15, 2006.

Understanding the ordinance as a move toward the monumental task of returning Hazleton to its glory days, claims of discrimination, even if warranted, paled in comparison to the bigger problems the IIRA was designed to ameliorate.

At the council meeting, Councilman Yanuzzi asked Arias whether she thought the ordinance was divisive. Her response was "Yes, it is divisive and it is creating hatred and racism in the community. We had a family whose trash was not picked up for the mere fact that they were Latinos… don't you think that is divisive enough?"[163] Her example enraged Ed Makuta, a resident of nearby McAdoo. When MaKuta spoke, he said he was "appalled by what he saw as Nuñez's attempt to analogize a missed garbage pick-up with the May 10 murder of Derek Kichline." For him, the Kichline murder was part of a larger "alien invasion" that was keeping Hazleton from truly recognizing its potential as an "All-American City." Claims about racism were seen as petty and inconsequential, only getting in the way of the city's efforts to hinder "abundant illegal alien criminality."[164]

"They" are Unfair

The claims made by the Latino/a Leaders clashed so hard with the imagined community that the perception shifted: maybe *they* were being unfair? Could it be, for instance, that by asking for documents in Spanish, the Latino/a community was being

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[163] Ibid.

[164] Ibid.

self-centered? Were they too focused on their own needs and neglectful of the needs of other groups? Barletta demonstrated such curiosities when he responded to a request for documents to be translated into Spanish by asking: "What about those from Romania? Are they less important? It becomes when do we stop?"[165] His position was that the city did not choose English as its official language because it was trying to shortchange the new Latino/a population. Rather, it represented the most practical and therefore the fairest choice: "[English] is the language of the Constitution, it's the language of the Declaration of Independence, it's the language that the president speaks, it's the language that the Congress speaks, and it's the language that the Supreme Court hears arguments in."[166]

What appeared most outlandish to Hazletonians about claims made by the Latina/o Leaders was that they were coming at a time when council was working to get Hazleton back on its feet. If the ordinance represented a counter to that attack, how could you possibly oppose it? After all, the ordinance targeted *lawbreakers*, not *law abiders*. Opposition, in this way, was seen as *part of the problem*—an attack from another front, if you will—rather than part of the solution. Hazleton gets cast as a place that was once harmonious and indicative of the American ideal of equality, but since these 'greedy' outsiders came along, that has all changed. Consider how Mayor

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[165] Ibid.

[166] Ibid.

Barletta rhetorically minimizes any charges of discrimination. He presents his city as a welcoming place, thereby blaming the new Latino/a population for any ethnic conflict that may have transpired:

> This ordinance seeks to unify the city. Far too often, because of the language barrier that exists in this city, neighbors do not talk to each other. They do not understand each other's cultures or habits. They cannot share their concerns and work out their problems. Instead, the language barrier divides us. It splits neighborhoods along ethnic lines, much in the way it did in Hazleton's early years. The difference between then and now is that today, some choose not to even make an attempt to learn English. They willfully separate themselves from the community as a whole.[167]

The above example shows clearly how the tactics of rhetorical inversion have operated in Hazleton. The city envisions itself as a welcoming place and by demanding immigrants' rights the Latino/a Leaders are accused of getting in the way of Hazleton's attempt to solve a more pressing "problem"—or, in many cases, they are charged with making the "immigration problem" worse. To this end, the (imagined) community plays the victim. By dismissing claims that their ordinance is divisive, Graham and others are able to turn immigrant rights claims on their head. Indeed, Graham chastises Lopez and Arias because "you, not the mayor or council, are the ones who are inciting segregation instead of encouraging integration." She is "tired of being accused of racism" because as she sees it, "*We* welcome them… *you* do them a disservice."[168]

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[167] Ibid.

[168] Hazleton City Council Meeting; July 13, 2006.

"WE ARE NOT ALONE IN THIS"

Committed and savvy, the Latino/a Leaders didn't get discouraged by their inability to block the IIRA locally. Seeing as though their immigrants' rights perspective was not going to penetrate the thick wall constructed around the local community, the Latino/a Leaders needed an alternative. With few avenues for recourse available locally, they reached out to attorneys and organizations that have successfully defended immigrants' rights in the past. This time, they were successful. "We contacted people and those people contacted other people that we didn't even know and it was like a little wave and the wave got bigger, bigger." Suddenly state level organizations like the Pennsylvania State Latino Coalition, national litigating groups like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and lawyers "from California to New York" were eager to join in on the effort to defend Hazleton's Latino/a community from the IIRA.

Realizing the Potential of Law

Though the use of 'rights talk' proved futile in the local context, the Latino/a Leaders kept their faith in this tactic. By turning to law, they hoped not only to get the ordinance struck down but also to get their belief in its inherent unfairness to resonate more broadly. Equipped with substantial resources by this point, the Latino/a Leaders gathered their new supporters for a "strategic meeting." Lopez describes how at this

meeting at a since-closed Mexican restaurant in Hazleton he and others made the decision to file suit against the city:

> This strategic meeting was done with all the Latino representatives from Northeastern Pennsylvania and that included lawyers like the lawyers from the Community Justice Project in Harrisburg and of course representatives from the ACLU… So these organizations and these lawyers and people in the community that were worried about this ordinance, we got together. There were about 60 or 70 persons coming from New York, coming from Harrisburg, coming from Philadelphia and we made a strategic meeting in which we divided into groups and we searched for opinions on different topics and we wrote them on a big notebook on the wall. We wrote the suggestions of everybody… The lawyers in the group, they said we have to do something legal. We have to stop this ordinance in a legal way… They said they had to challenge this ordinance.[169]

Suddenly the legally infused mantra of 'illegal is illegal' was being countered with a similarly legal discourse. For the Latino/a Leaders, "it jumped to our senses that this was an unconstitutional ordinance. Anybody who knows anything about the constitution knows the landlords have the right to rent to anybody."[170] The law, in other words, now appeared to be on the side of Hazleton's marginalized Latino/a population:

> We knew from the beginning that what [Mayor Barletta] was doing was unfair and that he was violating people's rights—civil rights. Everyone no matter whether you are documented or undocumented you have a right to have a roof over your head… The way this thing was written that you would go to jail even if you sold a can of soda to someone.

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[169] Personal Interview with Dr. Agapito Lopez; May 6, 2009.

[170] Ibid.

> That is illegal. That is illegal right there. They say illegal is illegal. I don't know the meaning of that, but this is illegal; to deny someone a glass of water, a bottle of water. You cannot sell a bottle of water to someone because he is undocumented? He has a grey and green dollar bill and he is paying for it, so it should be legal.[171]

The support coming from outside Hazleton city limits allowed the Latino/a Leaders to breathe a sigh of relief. "We felt very good because we felt at that time that we were not alone…Remember that there is only four of us that were head of everything."[172] Not only did they have backing, but they had backing with promise in the "nationally recognized lawyers and lawyer groups that have, like the ACLU, won very difficult cases in the past."[173] To this day, the Latino/a Leaders are thankful and realize that more national-level litigating groups were the only realistic recourse they had for countering the growing anti-Latino/a sentiment in Hazleton:

> I thank God for that. I thank God everyday for that because if it was not for those attorneys and for that meeting for so many people that came to support us, this would not have happened. But we needed to do that. We needed to do that—little me here, insignificant Anna [Arias], insignificant Agapito [Lopez]. We did… we felt good. And when that happened, when that meeting happened, I saw the enthusiasm of the people that came in and the willingness to fix this head-on. My God,

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[171] Personal Interview with Anna Arias; May 14, 2009.

[172] Ibid.

[173] Personal Interview with Dr. Agapito Lopez; May 6, 2009.

> that felt good. That felt great. I said we are not alone. We are not alone in this.[174]

Lozano et al. v. City of Hazleton

On August 15, 2006, just over a month following the passage of the IIRA, the ACLU filed a complaint with the U.S. District Court and a restraining order was instituted keeping the city from enforcing the IIRA until after the legal challenge was heard. Many of the attorneys filing the suit were present at the Mexican restaurant just weeks earlier, including those from national organizations like the ACLU and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (PRLDEF). The complaint claimed that the IIRA was unconstitutional on a variety of grounds; particularly that it was a violation of the Supremacy Clause, the Due Process Clause, and the Equal Protection Clause. Pedro Lozano, a Hazleton resident who owns multiple rental units and lost tenants because of the ordinance, was selected to serve as the Plaintiff in the case. Several other Latinos with business interests in the city and a handful of undocumented immigrants—referred to as either Jane or John Doe in the proceedings—accompanied him in this regard.

Following a number of revisions to the ordinance and several legal motions, the trial began on March 12, 2007. Native Pennsylvanian Judge James M. Munley of the Middle Federal District Court presided over the case. Both sides made it clear that

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[174] Personal Interview with Anna Arias; May 14, 2009.

they would appeal his decision regardless of the result, but this did not belittle the implications of the trial. A victory would make one side the favorite as the proceedings headed to the appellate court. Not only that, but the symbolic effected garnered by a victory would be crucial.

The testimony at trial was heated and many of the conflict's prominent figures reemerged to tell their stories, this time on record. Barletta, for instance, insisted that he was merely trying to put a stop to undocumented immigrant crime. Attorneys from the ACLU used statistics to question his claims. Lopez testified as well. He told of the hardships the ordinance was brought on Hazleton's Latino population and of the community's negative reaction to his efforts to help local Latino/as. He submitted as evidence several pieces of hate mail he has received.

The Decision

"The genius of our Constitution is that it provides rights even to those who evoke the least sympathy from the general public[,]" Judge Munley wrote in his more than 200-page legal decision that declared the IIRA unconstitutional, "In that way, all in this nation can be confident of equal justice under its laws,… Hazleton in its zeal to control the presence of a group deemed undesirable, violated the rights of such people, as well as others within the community. Since the United States Constitution protects even the disfavored, the ordinances cannot be enforced" (*Lozano et al. v. City of Hazleton*:189).

News of the decision came down like a ton of bricks in Hazleton. The front page of the June 27, 2007 edition of the *Standard-Speaker* was emboldened with a capitalized declaration written in over-sized font: "STRUCK DOWN." Under the heading was a large photo of Kris Kobash, Hazleton's lead attorney, who was standing alongside Mayor Barletta during a press conference. Below them was a much smaller picture of Lopez with a smile that stretched from ear to ear. The paper quoted Barletta as saying, "This fight is far from over. Hazleton is not going to back down." Lopez told the press: "The whole town should be celebrating" (Tarone, 2007c).

The Return of the Small Town Defender

Of course, the town was not celebrating. The decision not surprisingly enraged most Hazletonians. In a formal legal sense, the law was now on the side of the Hazleton's Latino/a community. The IIRA was unconstitutional and the city could not enforce it. Despite the ruling, however, the bivalent conception of law that had penetrated local consciousness continued. Because of their 'outsider' status, the community perceived the Latino/a Leaders and litigant groups to lack the 'right' to file suit in the first place. As such, community members were unwilling to accept the decision as legitimate. During the post-decision press conference Attorney Kris Kobach demonstrated this bivalent legal consciousness when he said "it was clear we were not only battling (the plaintiffs in the case), but a hostile court as well" (Tarone, 2007c). His calling the court hostile makes clear that it doesn't represent 'true law' (i.e., law that coincides with local imaginings) but rather a version of law touted by

"activist judges" who do not represent the rights of his racially laden vision of so-called "ordinary Americans" (Tarone 2007c).

Barletta also expressed this narrow, bivalent vision of law, dismissing the formal legal ruling as a farce. He made clear that in addition to undocumented immigrants and progressive activists, powerful groups like the ACLU have come to represent yet another threat to the way of life that Hazletonians enjoy. Just as the backlash against undocumented immigrants emerged as a way to build solidarity among white residents resistant to change, the lawsuit likewise became a second opportunity for Hazletonians to reaffirm their borders. At the press conference, he thus positioned himself as a *small town defender* once again, this time defending his community from a new villain: powerful litigating groups seeking to impose upon his "All-American City." Munley's decision, to him, was indicative of the sizable challenge "a small city like Hazleton, Pennsylvania faces when it chooses to take on the powerful, special interest groups and lobbyists" (Tarone, 2007c). Vowing to appeal, Barletta promised his constituents once again that he would not back down, despite his city's clear underdog status: "The ACLU and their 25 lawyers thought that this little city would roll over and back down, but, we're not going to back down."[175]

"Did we really win?"

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[175] Mayor Barletta at Voice of the People Rally in Hazleton, Pennsylvania; June 3, 2007.

Despite the promising legal decision and the initial outburst of joy it generated among local Latino/as, many were hesitant to heed Lopez's call for celebration. It was clear that the local conception of who belongs, who has rights, and who deserves protection from the law was far from crumbling. For one, the perceived illegitimacy of the legal decision prevented it from mobilizing Latino/as and their advocates (compare McCann 1994).[176] To the contrary, it actually further enflamed local residents, as I will explore in more detail in the next chapter. The promise of an appeal also meant the IIRA would hang over the city like a dark cloud for months if not years to come. At the post-decision press conference, Arias begged and pleaded with the mayor once again. "Please stop this while you can" (Tarone, 2007c). She acknowledged that it was indeed a "beautiful day" yet, given the continued animosity towards Latino/as in Hazleton, she could not help but wonder: "Justice has spoken. But did we really win? Did we really win?" Arias looked back on her thoughts that day when we spoke:

> We felt that we had gotten somewhere. We felt that we had made history… but it was kind of a bittersweet victory because I said: okay, we won this. It is unconstitutional; we knew that a long, long time ago… But did we *really* win? There is still people being abused and discriminated against. But at the same time, yes I was relieved that yes we won. We made history and for those people that are being abused and discriminated still, we have a beginning here. We have a beginning.

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[176] In McCann's (1994) study of pay equity reformers, the legal discourse that began to surround the pay equity campaign helped to generate substantial gains for reformers despite a lack of judicial support. In this situation, however, we see that McCann's theory of legal mobilization is not applicable. Even a decidedly legal discourse was unable to alter the perceptions of a status quo who defined legality using the same racially-laden terms it used to define belonging.

> But at the same time that we had a beginning, I was afraid that people were going to be angry and that the community was definitely divided.[177]

CONCLUSION

I have shown in this chapter how Hazleton's Latino/a Leaders have attempted to challenge the ordinance by using an immigrants' rights narrative which confronted head-on the myths, misconceptions, and imaginings community members have put forth. Not only did this tactic fail, but it was also turned against them. Townspeople, like conservative activists and politicians before them, inverted the rhetoric used by these activists to make the community appear as victims of their incessant 'special rights' claims.

Resilient, the leaders solicited the help of powerful litigating groups with the hope of getting the ordinance struck down and generating support for their pro-immigrant position. Here again, such uses of the law were cast as illegitimate and community boundaries were further strengthened as politicians cast their city as being "under siege" once again, this time by a group of "self-interested" lawyers and activists.

This chapter reveals how the law, broadly conceived, interacts with preconceived notions of 'community' and 'belonging' in order to constitute relationships among groups. More specifically, it reveals that the success of a rights-

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[177] Personal Interview with Anna Arias; May 14, 2009.

based discourse is predicated upon whether or not those who employ it hold a place in the imagined community that locals construct. In a community in the midst of reidentifying itself in the wake of rapid change, notions of belonging are likely to play a vitally important role in determining who is able to make a 'rights' claim. As such, not only have the efforts of the Latino/a Leaders to fight for immigrants' rights been unsuccessful, but their activism came to represent an impediment in the reimagining process. Cast as villains rather than activists, the Latino/a Leaders' activism had little effect beyond inspiring locals to strengthen the already exclusionary boundaries around Hazleton.

In the next chapter, I show how the negative response to a progressive rights-based approach has even more devastating consequences. Just as the decision to turn to law sometimes has the effect of mobilizing progressives (e.g., McCann 1994), so to do the reaction to 'special rights' claims have the effect of mobilizing conservatives (e.g., Dudas 2008). Picking up the story post-*Lozano*, I reveal how a group of right-wing activists emerged on the scene to support the IIRA. Enflamed by the legal challenges the ordinance faced, this group's activism focused on problems much bigger than those Hazleton is experiencing and on issues extending far beyond immigration. I show, in short, how a 'special rights' narrative is capable of mobilizing conservative activists to the effect of *amplifying* local backlash and diverting attention even further from the root causes of Hazleton's troubles.

Chapter 6

AMPLIFIED BACKLASH

"The country is with you!"[178] shouted William Gheen, a member of North Carolina-based Americans for Legal Immigration Political Action Committee (ALIPAC). The crowd of more than 2,000 assembled in front of Hazleton City Hall cheered. "Thank you, Hazleton! Thank you on behalf of the United States and the majority of legal citizens!" He raised his voice: "thank you for standing up!" The crowd roared. While not from Hazleton, he identified with those in attendance: "We are all part of the "border disaster area" now because the borders have been opened—against your will!" The crowd cheered again before laughing sarcastically when he said some people have questioned whether undocumented immigrants increase crime. "Its common sense," he insisted after the laughter subsided, noting that crime rates are sure to increase "if you bring a million people from these… gang-ruled areas where there is no law." A list of the number of homicides committed in Venezuela, Columbia, and Mexico helped him prove his point. And this was just the tip of the iceberg—for Gheen, crime is one of the many problems unsecured borders have

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[178] This quote and other accounts of Gheen's speech contained in this paragraph come from his speech at the "Rally in Support of Mayor Lou Barletta"; Hazleton, PA; June 3, 2007.

"injected" into our nation. "Disease!" he exclaimed to crowd, noting another. "According to some rough math I did twenty minutes ago, we are getting four to ten TB cases rushing across our southern border every night."

Gheen was one of many speakers who rallied in support of Mayor Barletta and the IIRA in Hazleton on June 3, 2007 while the court was deciding the constitutionality of the local ordinance. Several speakers from across the country took the podium at the rally, many of whom were nationally recognizable figures. The list included, among others, Ezola Foster, Pat Buchanan's running mate in the 2000 Presidential election; Joey Vento, Owner of Philadelphia's famous *Geno's Cheesesteaks* and outspoken anti-illegal immigrant[179] activist; Hagan Smith, a prominent member the Constitution Party; and, of course, Hazleton's own Lou Barletta. Speakers discussed a variety of topics. As "Digger," an anti-illegal immigration activist and popular blogger who attended the rally explains on his website: "Ezola Foster covered the impacts of illegal immigration on the education system. Carmen Morales talked about the invasion that is occurring in this country both inside and out… Joey Vento talked about the greatness of America and the current non-assimilation of immigrants compared to those of the past" (Digger 2007).

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[179] Members of the movement I describe in this chapter frequently declare that they are not "anti-immigrant" activists but rather "anti-*illegal* immigrant" activists. I honor their requests here and refer to them by the name they prefer (see also Ginsburg 1989:xi).

Angered by Special Rights

A recently formed local activist group known as the Voice of the People, USA (VOP) hosted the rally. Subscribing to the vision of law that had developed locally—the idea that 'insiders' possess 'rights' and have the unquestioned ability to turn to the law as a means to maintain community harmony while 'outsiders' lack such privileges—this group was formed in response to the *Lozano* case. When I spoke with its founding members, they told stories about springing into action after hearing that the ACLU had taken to court a mayor who in their opinion was appropriately doing his part in upholding the rule of law. Carl Roberts explains how he became motivated:

> Well, Mayor Barletta, I saw him on TV speaking the same language I am…. Then I see where the ACLU is taking him to court. Then this is playing out in the courts, then I hear that during his trial… that the ACLU and… LaRaza and a couple other militant organizations are going to be staging a protest outside of the courthouse in Scranton on public square. So I am driving around town, I drive by and see the Fox News trucks… and I thought: oh geez, Mayor Barletta's trial is going on today. So I pull over and I go out and here is all the pro-illegal immigration activists. Not immigration activists, *illegal*…So I stuck around for an hour and I left and I said: something has to be done here. There has to be a counterdemonstration, a counter show of support for *legal* immigration and against *illegal*. So I went ahead and I made a couple of phone calls… I called talk radio and I said: look, tomorrow I am going to have a rally in support of Mayor Lou Barletta and the IIRA.[180]

Matthew Nicholas's story is quite similar:

> I'm trying to drive through Hazleton and I see the street closed down because illegals are protesting… I didn't appreciate that. But all you

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[180] Personal interview with Carl Roberts (pseudonym); June 8, 2009.

> heard was this hatred being shot at Barletta. And I was cleaning the tables [at a local restaurant], he came in with his wife and I came up to him and I told him, I made him a promise, I said: I don't know how and I don't know when and I don't know where, but I'm going to do something to support you.[181]

Note that their activism was not the result of the *passage* of the ordinance. The IIRA represented to this group a legitimate use of the law—it was an admirable attempt by the mayor to stand up for his community. There was no need to take to the streets; the IIRA would do well to bring things back to the way they were "supposed to be." It was the legal *challenge* that created the stir. Roberts went on to admit, "If there was no rally there that day and I didn't hear the misrepresentation and the lies, I probably would not have been activated, mobilized. But that is what really got me." He explains in more detail how it was not until *Lozano* that he felt compelled to get involved:

> [When the ordinance passed] I was like: okay, here is a guy that is standing up, Lou Barletta. Here is a guy that is doing something good…I never called him. I never said: hey Mayor, what's going on, I wish you luck. I just saw him in some newscast and I thought there is a guy that is doing something that needs—well, not initially, needed support. I thought he had his own council supporting him, he had the people of Hazleton supporting him. It really came to a head when I was driving just happenstance through Scranton, saw the Fox News trucks, went over and saw the people there and I listened to what they had to say and I was like: wait a minute! This viewpoint is skewed![182]

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[181] Personal interview with Michael Nicholas (pseudonym); July 11, 2009.

[182] Personal interview with Carl Roberts; June 8, 2009.

Dave Nelson gives a comparable account:

> At the time, when it was first passed, like I said, I supported it, but I was like everybody else. I supported it, but I was like: I support him, but okay. I just kind of watched it play out. I watched it play out. You know, I was watching it. And then as everything else was going on, him getting sued and everything else and all of the problems he was encountering with that. That is when we decided to give him support.[183]

Rolling, Rolling, Rolling

The founding members of VOP, angered by this so-called "inappropriate" use of the law, sought to mobilize likeminded citizens. They began by writing letters to the local newspaper and calling into local radio shows, announcing that they would be holding a rally in support of Mayor Barletta and the IIRA. From there, the idea took off. "I got like 100 e-mails from people who agreed with my letter, what I was saying that they wanted to do something," one of the group's founding members recalls. "Next day… 300 e-mails… By the end of that week, we had over 1,500 and it kind of just spun. By the time we had our first rally we had 400,000 e-mails. So it's just like this big, big thing."[184]

Heather Richardson who had been active on her own in opposition to undocumented immigration—making calls to government officials from her home in a

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[183] Personal interview with Dave Nelson (pseudonym); May 18, 2009.

[184] Personal interview with member of Voice of the People, USA. Pseudonym excluded to protect anonymity.

town not far from Hazleton and talking about the issue around the country—recalls hearing about the "article that anybody that wanted to do something about illegal immigration should meet… and that is how [she] got involved in the group."[185] Lenny Harrison who previously had not been politically active but had been watching Fox News and Lou Dobbs' CNN program heard about the rallies and got onboard. Dawn Nowaski noticed the ad in the paper, contacted a group member who was an old friend of hers, and "started researching statistics and information regarding illegal immigration and how it's affecting society and the economy."[186] Tiffany Norfold, a devote conservative who was not previously an activist but would nonetheless go on to hold a prominent position in VOP relays a similar account:

> I remember my mother reading the paper and saying: oh, there is an anti-illegal immigration rally in Scranton. And I said: Really? I said: Why don't we all go?... So I called up my friend Tasha (pseudonym) and we got together and made signs, spent an afternoon making signs. We got markers and everything. We went to the rally and I was thinking: you know—this is a lot of fun.[187]

By the time the rally came, the group had support pouring in locally, and, to their surprise, before long they garnered support that stretched across the nation. Their

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[185] Personal interview with Heather Richardson (pseudonym); June 22, 2009.

[186] Personal interview with Dawn Nowaski (pseudonym); August 10, 2009.

[187] Personal interview with Tiffany Norfold (pseudonym); June 24, 2009.

message had caught on much quicker than they expected and it spanned a much larger geographic area than they could have ever imagined. Dave Nelson explains:

> [W]e expected to get townies, but we knew it was big and we knew this was a big subject when, like I said, there was New York, Maine, Florida, and like Texas people drove up from… And on our guestbook on the website we had, you could even see that, there was people from all over the country writing things to the mayor, writing things to us, showing their support. So this was really a moment.[188]

The 2,000-plus in attendance on June 3, according to group members, marked the biggest crowd ever assembled to oppose illegal immigration. The crowd featured "some of the die-hard supporters from Hazleton"[189] as well as "a lot of people [who] were traveling from other parts of the state."[190] The success of this initial event allowed the activists to, as Carl Roberts explains, "get this thing rolling, rolling, rolling."[191] They held six additional rallies in that summer alone. Just a week later, for example, they assembled in nearby Scranton, Pennsylvania; in August, they were discussing illegal immigration with residents of neighboring Freeland; in September of that year, they were rallying on the steps of the Pennsylvania capital in Harrisburg. The rallies got even more support pouring in. Local and national news outlets sought

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[188] Personal interview with Dave Nelson; May 18, 2009.

[189] Personal interview with Carl Roberts; June 8, 2009.

[190] Personal interview with Dave Nelson; May 18, 2009.

[191] Personal interview with Carl Roberts; June 8, 2009.

interviews with VOP's founding members, similar groups in other states solicited their help in holding rallies, and local residents embraced VOP because their rallies gave folks a chance to release their anger. The group became, as Nelson likes to think of it, "the mayor's unofficial street team." [192]

A Defense of America

As the text of Gheen's speech makes clear, these activists see "illegal" immigration as a national epidemic. They are irate with undocumented immigrants' so-called failure to assimilate, their inability/unwillingness to speak English, their tendency to pick up "freebies," their lack of contribution to the U.S. economy, and, most viscerally of all, the contamination their "third world" lifestyle has brought to the United States.[193] In their minds, "illegal immigration is going to really kill this country."[194]

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[192] Personal interview with Dave Nelson; May 18, 2009.

[193] Each of these are themes that surfaced repeatedly both in my interviews with activists and in rally speeches. Notice the complaints resemble those made by ordinary citizens but appear to have a slightly harder edge. Heather Richardson's story of local immigrants' unsanitary behavior is an example: "The plumbing was backed up. So guess where they were urinating... off the porch. You can't take somebody from a third world country… and put them in the middle of a country like ours that is so far ahead. They don't know about plumbing, they don't know about hygiene, they don't know about taking showers. They don't know it" (Personal interview with Heather Richardson; June 22, 2009).

[194] Personal interview with Heather Richardson; June 22, 2009.

What is noteworthy about this group's activism is that they levy complaints about problems at the border more commonly than complaints about the problems on Hazleton's streets. They geared the majority of their statements toward defending *their country*, rather than defending Hazleton, *the community*. Now it is the nation writ large that is "going straight to hell."[195] These activists are not promoting a return to a "small town" way of life; they are demanding a more deeply rooted return to what they consider core American values. They openly expressed this at their rallies by beginning with the Pledge of Allegiance and ending with a singing God Bless America. What has happened in Hazleton has perturbed these activists, to be sure, but to them it is merely one instance of the nation's more general decline.

"And it's not just the illegals."[196] While they see undocumented immigrants as wreaking havoc, a number of other more traditional conservative foes are also the targets of VOP activism. 'Special rights' activists, the 'biased media,' abusers of the nation's welfare system, and a 'big government' are among those accused of leaving America in peril. VOP activists, in short, had concerns that stretched way beyond Hazleton's borders and that tackled issues much more far reaching than immigration.

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[195] Personal interview with Michael Nicholas; July 11, 2009.

[196] Personal interview with Heather Richardson; June 22, 2009.

VOP in Context

I use the activism of the Voice of the People, USA in this chapter to make a larger point about the tendency of 'special rights' talk to amplify local backlash. Building on the work of Jeffery Dudas (2008) who has studied the backlash against Native American treaty rights, I make three general points in this regard. First, I explore how activists' distaste with 'special rights' not only drove their activism, but it also *amplified* it. In other words, the first part of this chapter explores how a bivalent conception of law that had developed locally fueled a successful countermobilization, and how that mobilization in turn led activists to expand the debate to include bigger troubles, more enemies, and a larger geographic region. In the second part of this chapter, I focus on how VOP activism is a principled opposition. In contrast to concerns ordinary residents had with Hazleton, the community, these activists view themselves as countersubversives (Rogin 1987; Dudas 2008) whose goal it is to uphold a sacred American ideal. Finally, I explore the implications of this amplified backlash. Despite eventually losing steam, partly as a result of the inconsistency between their narrative and the community's interest, the nationalistic and ideological fervor of VOP activism, I show, has had the effect of diverting attention even further from the actual problems facing the community by keeping the focus on the so-called ills perpetrated by "illegal" immigrants and failing to address economic malice. In short, this chapter builds on my analysis in the last chapter to show further how

existing power structures are fortified in the wake of rights claims made by so-called community 'outsiders.'

INFLATED RESENTMENT

Whose Law?: The Legal Consciousness of VOP

The narratives of the VOP activists I spoke with were decidedly *legalistic*. I have already explained how a bivalent conception of law spurred their activism, but when we further explore their narratives, we find that their activism is also *driven by* such a legal consciousness. They view law as crucial to maintaining both local and national order and they frame their activism as centered around a defense of the rule of law. Carl Roberts, for example, summarized the group's general intent by noting: "we are trying to make a point here—U.S. law. That is what we are arguing, we are arguing in favor of the law."[197] Dawn Nowaski justified her support for the IIRA and her stark opposition to "illegal" immigration in similarly legalistic terms: "I felt that it's against the law so it's not okay no matter what reason you put behind it."[198] Their opposition is simple: follow the law and we are happy, fail to and we will protest.

When we dig a bit deeper, however, we discover that their conception of law is fluid and amendable. Law may be central to their approach, but they are promoting a certain kind of law. They are hesitant to acknowledge as "legal" that which fails to fit

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[197] Personal interview with Carl Roberts; June 8, 2009.

[198] Personal interview with Dawn Nowaski; August 10, 2009.

their conception of what it means to be an American (or, to a lesser extent, what it means to be a resident of Hazleton). Take Judge Munley's *Lozano* decision as an example. While it was legal in the formal sense of the term, VOP activists followed the mayor in refusing to accept it as legitimate. One man accused the judge of falling asleep during testimony at the trial; another emphasized that his decision was a case study in why term limits are important. Michael Nicholas declared that the decision handed down by Judge Munley was "legally stupid" and likewise called the restraining order filed against the city to prohibit initial enforcement of the IIRA "illegal" despite it being perfectly justified in a formal-legal sense. [199]

Others demonstrated legal bivalence by speaking about the inherent unfairness they attributed to all behaviors that contradicted their views. When talking about a high profile homicide that was committed in neighboring Shenandoah where Luis Ramirez, an undocumented immigrant, was beat to death by a group of white teenage boys, one activist accused Hazleton's Latino/a Leaders—who demanded justice in the case—of being "sneaky and underhanded" and being "all over that like… a pack of dogs on a three-legged cat."[200] Yet no one was willing to question the overreaction to the Kichline homicide and many used it as proof that the IIRA was indeed justified. Moreover, many VOP activists and those who spoke at their rallies made claims that

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[199] Personal interview with Michael Nicholas; July 11, 2009.

[200] Personal interview with Dawn Nowaski; August 10, 2009.

the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), LaRaza, and other Latino/a rights organizations lacked legal standing in the United States. Speaking of MALDEF's involvement in the Shenandoah homicide, for example, one VOP member passionately explained to me that this group lacks rights:

> It was just unbelievable, they wanted to lynch these kids—MALDEF and all of them. First of all, MALDEF has no right in our legal system. This is our country, not the Spanish country. You know what I mean? What right does MALDEF have to put their nose into *our* legal system?[201]

I observed a lot of legal bivalence in the narratives of VOP activists when they were talking about other, unrelated issues as well. They were apt to praise the law, often giving it utmost respect when talking about it in a way that conforms to their worldview. When it did not, they rescinded their praise and dismissed the law as bogus. "If we would just enforce our laws, then of course, stuff like this wouldn't be happening"[202] one activist told me. Yet, they dismiss efforts to enforce anti-discrimination law as instances of 'special rights' and, indeed, the embodiment of lawlessness:

> There is a gentleman in Mountaintop, he is a lawyer… He had a big large sign up going into Hazleton. Something to the fact that: if you don't speak English and you have a problem, it could be… discrimination. Call me. And then it had it all in Spanish… He was telling them if they committed a crime he could get them out of it. That

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[201] Personal interview with Dennis Debrowski (pseudonym); August 10, 2009.

[202] Personal interview with Tiffany Norfold; June 24, 2009.

> is basically what he was saying on the billboard. Now nobody tells me if I commit a crime they will get me out of it.[203]

At a rally, one activist offered praise for the law that was similarly conditional: "I invite you all to join me for the rule of law, because certainly that is what this rally here today is for. It is for lawfulness. It is for the Constitution. It isn't for junk legislation."[204] Watch as Carl Roberts in the following passage likewise begins by declaring his full support for the 14th Amendment *when it conforms* to a principle he supports only to pull an about-face when application of the amendment no longer fits his vision:

> So if Chinese came across the border illegally you'd be like, yeah, okay, as long as they are not Mexican. No. Principle dictates it doesn't matter who you are…. Law applies equally to everybody. That's the 14th Amendment and that's what Judge Munley ruled on, 14th Amendment. Which is wrong… Munley is totally, totally—his decision is just ludicrous. I don't agree with it at all.[205]

He did the same thing earlier in that interview as well when he spoke in favor of free speech, the beauty of democracy, and how debate can create a fair system of

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[203] Personal interview with Heather Richardson; June 22, 2009.

[204] Text from a speech given at the *Loyalty Day Rally*; Hazleton, PA; May 1, 2008. Note, in this chapter I will avoid mentioning rally speakers by name. Instead, from this point forward, I will only make reference to the rally, location, and the date. I do this to protect the anonymity of those I interviewed, as some of my participants also made speeches at some rallies.

[205] Personal interview with Carl Roberts; June 8, 2009.

rules. When it came time to apply these cherished principles to those in support of immigrants' rights, however, he quickly changed his tune, imposing limits on the free speech principle he previously claimed to hold dear:

> You want to say something? Have your own rally. Don't come to our rally and start putting on our time because we arranged it and its not totally free speech… You are not here to argue, to counter. It's not point, counterpoint.[206]

Numerous other examples abound, many of which speak to the activists' impassioned feeling that immigrants lack rights. One activist, upon seeing a group protesting the ordinance, immediately dismissed them as being "illegals." At a VOP rally another complained of the loss of rights experienced by "true Americans" at the expense of undocumented immigrants who he sees as "thieving criminal bastards [who] can hideout in our nation and somehow feel that they are entitled to rights."[207] That speaker also jokingly used the "excessive" rights allegedly awarded to immigrants to explain why the turnout for the group's *Loyalty Day* rally was so small in comparison to the pro-immigrant May Day rallies also held that day. "We don't have the rights that illegals have; we can't just take off work."[208] Another activist questioned, "How dare you come to our country as a guest—as an uninvited guest—

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[206] Ibid.

[207] Text from a speech given at the *Loyalty Day Rally*; Hazleton, PA; May 1, 2008.

[208] Ibid.

and demand anything?"[209] Finally, in responding to immigrants' rights advocates' claims that while undocumented immigrants may lack rights in the American context they still possess *human rights*, another read a long list of people who were victims of violent crimes committed by undocumented immigrants and emphasized that they are *human*, too.[210]

Widening the Net

These examples make clear that the feeling that "we" are entitled to rights and "they" are not is the driving force behind VOP activism. Here again, prevailing conceptions about community and belonging interact with and shape activists' legal consciousness. What we learn from Dudas' (2008) work on anti-Native American Treaty rights, however, is that these prevailing legal conceptions go on to have important effects. In particular, reactions to 'special rights' "inflates the resentment that activists feel" such that they perceive "their efforts as defenses not only of their own interests but also of the equal rights of all Americans." This inflated resentment, as such, has the effect of making otherwise local claims "intelligible to a wider

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[209] Text from a speech given at the Pro-America and Immigration Enforcement Rally; Shenandoah, PA; August 30, 2008.

[210] Ibid.

audience" thereby expanding "the "scope of the conflict" to include new actors" (see also Ginsburg 1989:115).[211]

In the last chapter, we saw the Latino/a Leaders' rights claims get denied because they did not hold a place in the imagined local community. This is precisely what is going on here, only now the "we" is in reference to something much larger. VOP is defending the 'community' from 'outsiders' seeking so-called 'special rights,' but the community they are defending is a much broader *American community*. As we will see, following this post-*Lozano* mobilization, the issue is no longer about who belongs *in Hazleton*—and it is certainly not about what is taking place on the ground in the city. It is now an ideological struggle over a far more abstract issue about what it means to be an American. The backlash against undocumented immigrants in Hazleton has been *amplified*.

More Enemies

> I can't let things go where everybody else can be so passive and just forget about whatever happened and whatever will be will be and just allow this. We are being destroyed at every corner. Our country is being broken down and defeated from all angles, from every aspect. Anti-illegal immigration? Yeah, it's a part of every aspect. You go from

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[211] Faye Ginsburg (1989:115) makes a similar observation in her study of an abortion conflict in Fargo, North Dakota. She describes how, following a high-profile court ruling, more moderate local-level activists who have been protesting an abortion clinics' right to exist in their city "were challenged by the emergence of a pro-life group that played by different rules." The new group "introduced a confrontational style… that revived the conflict in a new form."

> schooling to our SSI to everything and anything. Taxes? Whatever. I mean it all goes hand-in-hand.[212]

This quote comes from Michael Nicholas and it does well to summarize the more general sentiments of the Voice of the People. As Nicholas' comments attest, the VOP perceive villains who are much more threatening and capable of wreaking havoc that is far more detrimental. National-level immigrants' rights groups such as MALDEF and LaRaza are one such threat that many activists brought up. They explain how these "racist" and "anti-American" groups do things that tear at our national fabric such as "preach to school children that illegal activity should be condoned and accepted."[213]

Beyond "illegal" immigrants, this group is also out to challenge those who they perceive to be taking advantage of the United States. One activist brought up individuals who defaulted on their mortgages to illustrate her point that our country needs to return to self-sufficiency rather than becoming overly reliant on government support: "And it's not just the illegals. I don't think anybody that is able to work should be living on welfare… Do we have to help everybody? Where are we going to get this money?"[214]

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[212] Personal interview with Michael Nicholas; July 11, 2009.

[213] Personal interview with Dawn Nowaski; August 10, 2009.

[214] Personal interview with Heather Richardson; June 22, 2009.

The media is another example who has catered to special interests and portrayed so-called "real Americans" in a bad light therefore contributing to the country's demise. Many activists were critical of the media's coverage of their rallies noting how they tend to focus on petty conflicts while ignoring or misrepresenting the group's core message. They also frequently admit that they have an "ax to grind"[215] with national level media outlets who have similarly favored 'special rights' claimants and misrepresented America's core.[216]

Perhaps the biggest enemy of all for these activists is the government who they repeatedly accuse of either passing laws that do not support the needs of most Americans, failing to enforce existing law (e.g., immigration law), or neglecting pressing problems. Richardson's complaint that "one of the things wrong with the national government is that they think because someone is in this country they have to be taken care of" and her declaration that "the government doesn't care"[217] is typical. When I spoke to VOP activists and listened to what they said at their rallies I often found them calling out local and national elected officials by name and demanding improvements in their performance. Continually, they posed questions to public officials about whether they are worthy of the office they hold: "the people gave you

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[215] Text from a speech given at the *Loyalty Day Rally*; Hazleton, PA; May 1, 2008.

[216] Michael Nicholas revealed to me the group's plans to "go after" MSNBC and the New York Times (Personal interview with Michael Nicholas; July 11, 2009).

[217] Personal interview with Heather Richardson; June 22, 2009.

the power of that seat. Are you using the power of that seat for the people?"[218] These activists took pride in being a thorn in the side of politicians. Many boasted about the time "there was so many activists calling in against the… McCain-Kennedy amnesty bill they shut down the Capitol switchboard."[219] One rally ended with the emcee placing a taunting phone call to Pennsylvania Representative Paul Kanjorski, for example, where all those in attendance participated in yelling into his voice mail: "Close the borders, no amnesty."[220]

Their relentless attack on elected officials was conditional, however. They did applaud the work done by a select few. Their allies include officials who have worked to uphold *their* conception of the rule of law and those who have "tried to make America strong."[221] In other words, they preached whole-hearted support for those leaders who sympathized with what they were trying to accomplish and who conformed to their vision of America that is clearly exclusionary. Mayor Lou Barletta was one such leader. They praised his passage of the ordinance and determination to stick to his guns despite the legal challenge. Many also spoke fondly of a police officer

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[218] Personal interview with Carl Roberts; June 8, 2009.

[219] Personal interview with Dawn Nowaski; August 10, 2009.

[220] Text from a video of the *Loyalty Day Rally*; Hazleton, PA; May 1, 2008.

[221] Personal interview with Michael Nicholas; July 11, 2009.

in a nearby community who has a strong reputation for stopping undocumented immigrants and promoting their deportation.

Broader Troubles

In addition to adding to the list of villains, the right-wing mobilization that followed *Lozano* also expanded the geography of the debate, attracted a wider audience, and linked immigration to a number of other far-reaching problems. Nicholas' nihilistic claim that the country is "being destroyed at every corner" is not unique among VOP activists. The problems perceived by most members of this group are pressing and extend far beyond Hazleton city limits. With this widened narrative, it is no wonder activists like Gheen came all the way of North Carolina to get involved. VOP's far-reaching message attracted activists only peripherally concerned with Hazleton, the community. In fact, members of VOP themselves, with only a few exceptions, did not hold residence in Hazleton proper. I found myself driving much longer distances from Hazleton to meet with members of this group.

Their take on immigration issues is a fine example of how their narrative came to encompass the U.S. more broadly. Undocumented immigrants, VOP perceive, are

> …taking advantage of our system, depriving our veterans, depriving our elderly, depriving the other millions of legal immigrants that built this country; that made this country what it is. They are tarnishing a name, they are tarnishing the reputation, they are tarnishing a legacy.

Most of the problems these activists associated with "illegal" immigration were not surprisingly national in scope or occurring near the U.S.-Mexico border—some

2,000 miles beyond Hazleton city limits. Stories they told me included the violent acts perpetrated by "coyotes" that helped undocumented immigrants come into the United States without authorization.[222] Others were about the perceived threat of reconquista. When I asked Dawn Nowaski a question about the IIRA, she connected the ordinance to the…

> …things going on in the country… like out in Maywood, California in May of 2006 there was an illegal alien protest on May Day that year and they were marching through the streets screaming in Spanish, screaming about reconquista… they are going to take over the Southwest United States. Whatever. They took down an American flag from an American post office and raised the Mexican flag instead which in my book is an act of war. It's an act of war.[223]

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[222] Heather Richardson spoke a lot about "coyotes" at the border when we met. Here is her detailed description of what coyotes do:

> The coyotes are the people, and they are usually Mexicans, that smuggle the illegals across. They will charge them anywhere from 2-4 thousand dollars per person. They will put them inside of cars, they will take the seats out of cars, put them down there, put the seat back on. They smuggle them across. Then when they get them across, that is it. They have to get out of the car or the van or whatever they are smuggling in and they drop them right there. They drop them. So the illegals they are being victims of the coyotes, they are victims of the country that they live in, then they come into my country and they make us the victims of them. And I am sick of it. We have imported the Latin American poor, the Latin American's drugs, and the Latin American criminals and that is exactly what this country has done. And they haven't done a thing to stop it. And they are not going to (Personal interview with Heather Richardson; June 22, 2009).

[223] Personal interview with Dawn Nowaski; August 10, 2009.

Most were in firm agreement that "this is an invasion!"[224] Beyond tarnishing the American way of life or degrading its symbols, these activists saw undocumented immigration as threatening the health and safety of American citizens. Some followed William Gheen's lead in accusing immigrants of bringing tuberculosis to the U.S.; others made the link between immigrants and the recent outbreak of H1N1, or "Swine Flu" ("Mexican Pig Flu" was one activists' exact designation of the alignment). Regardless of what they linked it to, however, the general message was that the destruction of the United States was inevitable. Carl Roberts describes how the out-of-control situation is causing the slow decay of the nation:

> It is creeping. In 1986 is should have been stopped. In 2007 it wasn't stopped. It's getting worse. It's 22 million [undocumented immigrants in the country] now. What are we going to wait until its 40 million? Until the fifth column and then they start deciding elections because they don't understand, but they are just going to be voting for the guy who says we are going to give you free health care? You know where that ends. That ends up in serfdom. You cannot vote largesse—Abraham Lincoln. You cannot vote largesse. And he also said the decay of the United States will come from within. No foreign power will ever drink from our water. That's what it is![225]

It is important to keep in mind, though, that in the amplified narrative, undocumented immigration issue is just one—albeit an important—example of a decline which is allegedly bred by our tendency to give entitlements, special

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[224] Personal interview with Heather Richardson; June 22, 2009.

[225] Personal interview with Carl Roberts; June 8, 2009.

privileges, and government support. Many had well-thought-out conspiracy theories that explained how the government has been quietly harming ordinary Americans. Dawn Nowaski explained to me how American's rights have…

> …been flying out the window one after another really, really quickly and people need to pay attention to what's going on because if they don't before they know it they are going to wake up one day and all their rights are going to be gone and they are going to be a slave and wonder what happened.[226]

Other bounced from topic to topic assuring me that "this all goes together." [227] As Explained at a rally, the immigration crisis is but one of many problems an ineffective government has allowed to fester:

> In 1986, 85% of the border crossings were legal. In 2008, 85% of the border crossings were illegal. What has happened? I will tell you what has happened: the same thing that is happening to energy, and fuel, and gasoline, the same thing that anything we entrust this government with and that is definitely a situation run amok.[228]

With such dire consequences on the horizon, who will step up? In the next section, I examine how this group of activists is embraces their own tenacity as they take on a countersubversive identity (Rogin 1987).

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[226] Personal interview with Dawn Nowaski; August 10, 2009.

[227] Personal interview with Michael Nicholas; July 11, 2009.

[228] Text from a speech given at the *Loyalty Day Rally*; Hazleton, PA; May 1, 2008.

A PRINCIPLED OPPOSITION

Drawing on the work of political scientist Michael Rogin (1987), Dudas (2008:10) makes a second important point about anti-'special rights' activism. Beyond widening the scope, such activism also "constructs the identities of those who employ it." In other words, VOP-style activism "propels and transforms resentment, casting it in a distinctly nationalistic form that ultimately encourages activists to envision themselves as *countersubversives*." In Rogin's (1987:xiii) conception, the countersubversive builds on a tradition of American demonology by

> … [splitting] the world into two, attributing magical, pervasive power to a conspiratorial center of evil. Fearing chaos and secret penetration, the countersubversive interprets local initiatives as signs of alien power. Discrete individuals and groups become, in the countersubversive imagination, members of a single political body discredited by its head. The countersubversive needs monsters to give shape to his anxieties and to permit him to indulge his forbidden desires. Demonization allows the countersubversive, in the same battling of the subversive, to imitate his enemy.

I have already reviewed how conservative activists have co-opted a more progressive vision of rights, molding the concept to suit their own ends. Here we see that they also take to imitating the very behaviors they condemn, taking on a persona similar to that of a passionate civil rights activist committed to beheading the monster of injustice, while at the same time, ironically, levying fierce resistance to the very reforms such activists have pursued. Not only are rights up for interpretation, then, but this identity construction reveals that passionate devotion to a "just" cause is also intimately tied to prevailing conceptions of belonging.

Empowering the Public

As they seek a return to the "rule of law" in the supposed twilight of the nation, VOP face a difficult challenge: a complacent public. "Why is there such a lack of caring in this nation?" Nicholas questioned, addressing this complacency, "I refuse to accept that our veterans fight, have fought, and continue to give their lives for this country and that it doesn't matter." [229] Tiffany Norfold added, "We are just letting our country slowly, slowly be destroyed and everybody's too busy worried about the next episode of American Idol."[230]

This is not to say that the activists have no faith in the people. As the name of their organization suggests, they envision the solution to many of these widespread problems to come from an empowered populace. Nicholas elaborates:

> The people want to feel like they matter. They want to feel like they have a voice… That's what we need in this country, you know? We can't be a mute entity. We can't be the silent majority. You have to get out there to show these bastards in office that are betraying us that what we say does matter… They don't feel like their voice, their vote, anything counts. And the reality is: they really don't have a reason to feel like it doesn't because it doesn't. And how do you take that back? You take that back by reaching out, making them feel like they matter, giving them a stage to stand on.[231]

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[229] Personal interview with Michael Nicholas; July 11, 2009.

[230] Personal interview with Tiffany Norfold; June 24, 2009.

[231] Personal interview with Michael Nicholas; July 11, 2009.

Other activists echoed these remarks. Nowaski thought the group's rallies were a big success because "more people found out what was going on and got informed… there were people who stopped to see what we had to say and why we were doing what we were doing. I definitely think it was the way to go." "Awareness" she said later in the interview when I asked her what she ultimately wanted her activism to accomplish, "We wanted people to know what was really going on."[232]

To be sure, while they were critical of the public's complacency, many VOP activists did not blame the public themselves for their silence. 'Special rights' activists were to blame for this, too. As they see it, people are not speaking up because they are fearful of the accusations that may follow. For example, excessive claims of racism according to VOP have kept people quiet to the detriment of America more broadly. Many were often quick to note how "racist groups… such as LaRaza and MALDEF… try to be very intimidating."[233] Richardson told me that one of the biggest reasons for the country's downfall is "because people are afraid to speak out." When I asked her why they were so passive, she told me it is because "nobody wants to be called a racist, and that is what I think it all comes down to."[234]

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[232] Personal interview with Dawn Nowaski; August 10, 2009.

[233] Ibid.

[234] Personal interview with Heather Richardson; June 22, 2009.

"I will fight it 'til the day I die": Countersubversives In-Action

Facing the ever-threatening special rights activists who supposedly not only threaten to undermine the nation but also to silence a now marginalized populace, VOP activists see themselves as a group who has stepped forward with a profound willingness to challenge a number of problems caused by their "un-American" adversaries. "I just don't get intimidated,"[235] Nowaski boldly declared, hinting at her countersubversive identity. A similar identity was projected unto those who attended one VOP rally: "for all of you here today I love each and every one of you because you overcame fear. You overcame condemnation. You are standing up for your town, for your state, for your country and for yourselves."[236]

Empowerment is an important theme in this discourse because these activists do not consider this debate to be about them. These countersubversives consider what they are taking part in to be much deeper seated—a truly *principled* opposition. It is bigger than political party is. It extends beyond "this side" versus "that side." Such pettiness is inconsequential to the members of this group. In their minds, "it's bigger than that… It all comes down to the root, the cause."[237]

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[235] Personal interview with Dawn Nowaski; August 10, 2009.

[236] Text from a speech given at the Pro-America and Immigration Enforcement Rally; Shenandoah, PA; August 30, 2008.

[237] Personal interview with Michael Nicholas; July 11, 2009.

While they may support politicians like Barletta for the work that they have done, VOP activists emphasize that even he is vulnerable to losing their support if he fails to get the job done: "you hear me say it. I don't care who you are because in the end, I pay for it. If you are a good Democrat, I am for you. If you are a good Republican, I am for you. If you are not, sorry."[238] As the rules go for politics, so too do they apply to crime and injustice. These people do not consider themselves to be unfairly singling out undocumented immigrants. In Michael Nicholas' words: "I am against illegal activity altogether. I am against wrongdoing. I am against oppression of any type, form, and level."[239] Many of the activists emphasized that they are not afraid to call out members of their own party who do not conform. Even members of their own anti-illegal immigration movement are vulnerable to criticism if it becomes evident that they are in it for themselves. Anti-illegal immigrant activist Dan Amato perhaps revealed the principled nature of this activism best when he concluded a rally speech yelling at the top of his lungs: "We are in the right on this issue and don't let anybody else tell you otherwise!"[240] For this group "it comes down to right or wrong"[241] and they are determined to fight tooth and nail for what they see as right. "I

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[238] Personal interview with Carol Roberts; June 8, 2009.

[239] Personal interview with Michael Nicholas; July 11, 2009.

[240] Text from a speech given at the *Save America, Save Hazleton* rally; Harrisburg, PA; September 1, 2007.

[241] Personal interview with Michael Nicholas; July 11, 2009.

will fight it to the day I die and I will," Richardson pledged in a character reminiscent of a tenacious civil rights leader, "I will fight it 'til the day I die."

Guided by principle, VOP activists want to get the people empowered without seeking credit. They are not in this for fame or fortune—"you don't have to sit there and tell me how great my stuff is, Nicholas confided, "I don't care about that."[242] Instead, he and others embrace a more selfless identity: "I am just a catalyst. I am an impetus. I am a vehicle."[243] The true heroes, in the minds of these countersubversives, are the people who have overcome the fears perpetuated by 'special rights' activists to speak up for the American way: "We didn't do nothing, they were the true patriots. Those, all those people, everybody here today, everybody who we've seen every single place we've gone, they are my heroes because they are not afraid to stand up. We are nothing more than a catalyst…. We try to provide a stage for everybody else to stand on."[244]

"This is what America is about"

The activist's idealistic image of America embodies most fully the principle for which they are fighting. To that end, their activism boils down to an unending desire to return America to its core. In their estimation, this once-great country is on the verge

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[242] Ibid.

[243] Personal interview with Carl Roberts; June 8, 2009.

[244] Text from a speech given at the *Loyalty Day Rally*; Hazleton, PA; May 1, 2008.

of destruction at the hands of those seeking to take advantage of all it has to offer. In response, they envision themselves as patriots fighting to take back what was been lost.

Most of the activists I spoke with expressed to me, in one way or another, that "America is losing its fighting spirit."[245] "Our forefathers fought for this country and we're giving it away and it has to stop,"[246] declared VOP activist Dennis Debrowski. At one point, "we made this country better by fighting—the Revolutionary War—we fought to make this country better," but now, "it seems like they just want to come where it is already better"[247] Richardson complained. Nowaski expresses this sentiment this way:

> I shouldn't have to address someone in their native tongue in *our* country… As far as I'm concerned, that is showing the weakness of America. That is showing that our constant giving away and handouts and catering is what's going to lead to the downfall of this country because we are a nation that we are just opening up ourselves to every type of attack from every angle because we are no longer a strong foundation. We are no longer a strong country because we have just basically spread eagle for the whole world. Come use us, abuse us.[248]

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[245] Personal interview with Tiffany Norfold; June 24, 2009.

[246] Personal interview with Dennis Debrowski; August 10, 2009.

[247] Personal interview with Heather Richardson; June 22, 2009.

[248] Personal interview with Dawn Nowaski; August 10, 2009.

Undocumented immigrants and others have sought, according to this narrative, to reap as many benefits as they can from America while remaining unappreciative and disrespectful. An incident where counter-protestors were disrespecting the national anthem at one of the VOP rallies especially angered activists. Others spoke of immigrants who remain disrespectful after coming to America "looking for the easy way" (e.g., "they came to this country but then they knocked it"[249]). Richardson's narrative about a vacation trip is perhaps most telling for it reveals both her strong perception that America was built on hard work and that those from less fortunate nations are hankering to reap the benefits of this work without making a contribution:

> I had a lady in the Bahamas following me around, wanted me to take her to the United States. She was begging me, she was crying. You take me United States! You take me United States! I said: it's against the law! They don't have a clue about the law, she just wanted to get into the United States. And what was she going to do when she got here? See, they have this vision. They see us in these other countries, Mexico included, they see us on vacation, and they really think that you just step inside the borders and that all happens.[250]

In defense of this looming threat posed upon the United States, anti-illegal immigrant activists take steps to display their patriotism at all costs, cloaking their activism in Americana. "We combat anything and everything that is anti-United States

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[249] Personal interview with Heather Richardson; June 22, 2009.

[250] Ibid.

of America,"[251] declared a speaker at one of their rallies. The group's *Loyalty Day Rally* featured young girls standing next to the podium holding flags and signs draped in red, white, and blue lettering. "With the youngest of our generation holding the flag in front of us, I ask that you join in the Pledge of Allegiance,"[252] began the emcee. The "USA" tacked onto the end of the organization's name, the names of rallies (i.e., "Pro-America and Immigration Enforcement") and their frequent references to America's founding all speak to this group's embrace of a return to what they consider *true Americanism*. They frequently talk about soldiers and veterans to make the point that their activism is "a worthy cause… that people are dying for."[253] As Debrowski sees it, his activism *is his service to his country*: "I was never in the service and I figure: well, if I can't serve my country that way I will do it this way."[254] A display of Americanism even guided the very decision to hold rallies. When I asked Carl Roberts why rallies, he responded: "It's all-American, that's why. It's free speech."[255] "We are just patriots trying to do what's right; trying to preserve this country for our

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[251] Text from a speech given at the Pro-America and Immigration Enforcement Rally; Shenandoah, PA; August 30, 2008.

[252] Text from a video of the *Loyalty Day Rally*; Hazleton, PA; May 1, 2008.

[253] Text from a speech given at the *Loyalty Day Rally*; Hazleton, PA; May 1, 2008.

[254] Personal interview with Dennis Debrowski; August 10, 2009.

[255] Personal interview with Carl Roberts; June 8, 2009.

children and our grandchildren," Nowaski told me, "letting them know that they can stand up for themselves, they don't have to be afraid."[256] "This is my country and I love my country," echoed Richardson before softening her tone and uttering the words "God. Country. Family."[257]

VOP IN THE IMAGINED COMMUNITY

Voice of the People?

Given that VOP activists amplified the local narrative as such and characterized their activism as a defense of core American values, it should not come as much of a surprise that their movement attracted people who had little concern with Hazleton, the community. Activists had pointed out that they received 400,000 emails—a number that is *more than ten times* the total population of Hazleton. Leaders of the movement even admit, "You won't find very many people in Hazleton who are active."[258] Indeed, VOP had "more supporters in Boise, Idaho than… in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, where it started."[259] Not only that, but the VOP movement attracted those who are far more abrasive when it comes to discussing issues of race and

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[256] Personal interview with Dawn Nowaski; August 10, 2009.

[257] Personal interview with Heather Richarson; June 22, 2009.

[258] Personal interview with Dawn Nowaski; August 10, 2009.

[259] Personal interview with Dave Nelson; May 18, 2009.

immigration. Members of white supremacist groups, for example, began attending VOP rallies, and there is no denying that this added a racist flare. One rally attendee, for example, shouted, "He got what was coming to him!" when a speaker brought up the beating death of Luis Ramirez.[260]

Some activists I spoke with detested the presence of such openly racist individuals at their rallies.[261] Others were less bothered, however; as they saw it, this was about illegal immigration, and if members of a white supremacist organization happen to have the same position on the issue, so be it.[262] After all, VOP activists

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[260] Notes from my analysis of *Pro-America and Immigration Enforcement Rally*; Shenandoah, PA; August 30, 2008.

[261] Blatant racism at VOP rallies bothered Michael Nicholas, for example. When asked how he handles overt expressions of hate, he said, "You have to correct it when you hear it" (Personal interview with Michael Nicholas; July 11, 2009).

[262] Norfold went so far as to dismiss the criticisms of the appearance of hate groups as part of the bigger problem of special rights. In her words:

> I mean granted there are racists who come to our rallies. What are we supposed to do? Ban them? We can't ban people from coming to a public function. And I said it before and I'll say it again: I'm sure the MS-13 gang is sympathizing with the pro-illegal-immigration people. Or the 9/11 terrorists are overstayed their visas would definitely side with the pro-illegal immigrant groups. So they point fingers at us but I don't think our side does enough to point fingers at them. We are always constantly on the defensive and, quite frankly, I think that conservatives need to start getting on the offensive (Personal interview with Tiffany Norfold; June 24, 2009).

Others, however, were more passive, seeing the presence of such individuals as acceptable so long as they do not get out of hand. Nelson said "… they are coming either way. You really couldn't stop it, so you just asked: okay, please, just don't come with any kind of crazy signs or make any kind of disturbance" (Personal interview

were counting on their activism generating widespread support. When I spoke with these activists, they were clear about their desire to proliferate their message as such. Roberts explains, "Our vision was to have like a Tea Party—rallies across the United States for legal immigration. That was our goal, to have multi-state rallies…that this was a national movement… That was the ultimate goal." Obviously, these desires are far different from those expressed by ordinary residents, and, not coincidentally, soon after they garnered momentum in Hazleton in the summer of 2007, the influence of VOP began to wane. "Rallies started to get smaller,"[263] "the website went down,"[264] and few Hazletonians remain aware of the group. At its core, the battle VOP was fighting was not the battle residents had in mind. They wanted their city back—nothing more. They were talking about undocumented immigrants because they were convinced that this was the source of Hazleton's problems, not because they perceived the country more generally to be in a state of disarray. Hazleton residents repeatedly told stories about moving trucks filling the street the night the ordinance was proposed because it symbolized the "problem" moving out of their town. VOP activists, in sharp contrast, repeatedly told stories about the time they fried the Capitol switchboard. This

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with Dave Nelson; May 18, 2009). Carl Roberts, along the same lines, describes the white supremacists his rallies attracted in these terms: "[They were] quiet, stood off to the side, weren't yelling, screaming, cursing, no racial epithets, just guys that were there saying: okay, this is why you want to support this" (Personal interview with Carl Roberts; June 8, 2009).

[263] Personal interview with Tiffany Norfold; June 24, 2009.

symbolized to them their countersubversive mentality—indeed, their willingness to stand up in opposition to "the continued injustice we are forced to accept."[265]

The disjuncture between what residents were feeling and what these activists spoke about is perhaps most apparent in Mayor Barletta's decision to eventually distance himself from the group. Dave Nelson reflected on their loss of support from the mayor who, as I have shown, seems to have a firm grip on the sentiments of his constituents:

> [At most of the rallies] there would be like a sign for support Barletta or the IIRA. There would always be signs and stuff like that in the background. A lot of Barletta supporters came to our events, obviously. And that was when his congressional bid was going on and the manager called me and was like: well… now… we know you go out there and you say nice things and we know what you are about, but could you not have any signs up and could you take the pins off and not have anything about the mayor out there. Which was kind of a slap, you know… like we were the unofficial street team for the mayor and all we did was do kind for him. All we did was promote what he wanted in a positive light. Like every other word out of our mouth was supporting him. And it was kind of a slap to get that.[266]

Lasting Effects

Although their influence eventually waned, there is no denying that VOP's activism had some lasting effects. Most notable, in my estimation, is that this countermovement knocked the debate even further off track. I have already argued that

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[264] Personal interview with Carl Roberts; June 8, 2009.

[265] Text from a speech given at the *Freeland Rally*; Freeland, PA; August 26, 2007.

[266] Personal interview with Dave Nelson; May 18, 2009.

passage and support of the IIRA was a *misdirected backlash*—it demonized immigrants while neglecting, ignoring, or failing to realize the extent of the damage caused by broader economic shifts. Here, as a battle over 'rights' ensues, economic realities are now completely out of the picture. Rather than focusing on concrete issues facing the city of Hazleton, immigrants' rights activism and the corresponding amplified backlash they inspired turned this into a far more abstract and ideological debate about belonging in the imagined American community.

This is particularly troubling considering that when I asked these activists questions about CAN DO, Cargill, and KOZ, for example, many were familiar with the situation—some went so far as to admit that CAN DO are the "ones responsible for letting [Hazleton's problems] get worse and worse."[267] Yet this was not part of their activism—their politics were "directed at illegals themselves, not at places of employment."[268] Consistent with anti-special rights activism in other contexts, these activists thus "exonerate the impersonal, long-term economic and political processes… that are more damaging to their interests" as they thereby silence "potential challenges to the actual causes of activists' resentment" (Dudas 2008:3-4). The result is that even those residents who did not fully agree with VOP were reminded again and again by this group of the alleged harms caused by "illegals" while concerns about broader

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[267] Personal interview with Michael Nicholas; July 11, 2009.

[268] Personal interview with Lenny Harrison (pseudonym); July 26, 2009.

structural changes and the local actors who enable them were forced even further below the surface.

VOP also played a key role locally in turning the anti-‘special rights’ narrative into a local common sense. From here on out any claims made in the community on behalf of marginalized populations will be interpreted—even by those who are in opposition to the IIRA, as we soon will learn—as narcissistic and unfair. VOP may have overestimated the public’s concern, but their rhetoric nevertheless successfully completed the rhetorical inversion and co-opted the classically American focus on ‘rights’ and ‘fairness.’ Now more than ever, claimsmaking on behalf of a particular racial or ethnic group is going to be perceived as an intolerable, “un-American” act.

CONCLUSION

I have explored the motivations, attitudes, and activism of the Voice of the People in this chapter and explained how their bivalent view of law and their despising of ‘special rights’ motivated them to support Hazleton in its defense of the IIRA. Holding rallies across the state and attracting activists from all over the country, this group’s activism effectively amplified the local backlash by making it about more than immigration and about more than lowly Hazleton. The initial success of this group teaches us an important lesson about rights in this context: that claims to rights made on behalf of marginalized groups are susceptible to an even more relentless, amplified backlash where a group of countersubversives strives to project their own image of the “true American way.”

I have also shown that because this group's sentiments do not necessarily align with those of community members, the group's influence eventually waned. I caution, however, that their waning influence did not necessarily belittle their impact. To the contrary, VOP played an important role in keeping the focus on undocumented immigrants and off economic decline. They also helped solidify the dominant conception of 'rights' thereby further fortifying existing local hierarchies.

My focus in the next chapter on the second wave of pro-immigrant activism—the emergence of group known as the Concerned Parents of the Hazleton Area (CPH)—in Hazleton will make clear VOP's lasting effect. As I examine the goals, strategies, and discourse used by this local group, we will see that, in light of the new conceptions about 'community' and 'rights' that have taken hold in Hazleton, CPH are left with little choice but to conform to community hegemony as they seek to work on behalf of immigrants. Despite their benevolence, I describe how CPH implements a style of activism is that is, out of necessity, watered down and unlikely to generate any real change for Hazleton's new Latino/a population.

Chapter 7

CONCERNED PARENTS, IMPENETRABLE COMMUNITY

Sergio,[269] Juan,[270] and I peered up at the banner we had just finished taping to the coarse cement wall in the basement of Trinity Lutheran Church. "It looks straight," I remarked to the agreement of Juan. "No, no; I think that side is still a little lower," Sergio declared as he pointed to the wall prompting Juan and I to climb back up onto the metal folding chairs to readjust the large white banner. I think Juan and I both knew that it was indeed slightly crooked, but we were satisfied with our last round of adjustments. After all, there was still a lot of preparation work that needed to be done this morning, not to mention we had climbed up and down those chairs a half dozen times by this point. "Would anybody *really* be looking that closely," I think we both silently wondered. Nevertheless, we obeyed Sergio's orders and scaled the event furniture once more. This time, to Sergio's delight, we were able to level the banner with precision. The name of the organization now proudly revealed itself on the wall in English and Spanish: "Concerned Parents of the Hazleton Area; Padres Preocupados

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[269] Pseudonym.

[270] Pseudonym.

del Area de Hazleton." "Perfect!" Sergio yelled from below, revealing his thick accent and determination to have everything just right for this afternoon's event.[271]

The Concerned Parents of the Hazleton Area

Under normal circumstances, I might have considered Sergio a bit obsessive, but the day before I had learned just how important this first anniversary celebration was to the members of the Concerned Parents of the Hazleton Area (CPH). As I sat and listened in the back of their humble office under glowing florescent lights, members of the group reviewed for the final time plans they had been making for months. With keen accuracy seldom seen in organizational contexts, group members reviewed details about the event making it obvious they had indeed planned carefully. Renee, one of a handful of white, native-born Hazleton residents involved in this white/Latino/a coalition of concerned citizens, reviewed a list of people who CPH planned to thank and acknowledge at the start of the formal ceremony. "We want to make sure we don't miss any of the 'special' people" she remarked with an equal blend of seriousness and humor. I smiled from my seat in a plastic lawn chair that was being used to accommodate the abnormally large group. The chair was one of many such unconventional office supplies that filled an atmosphere that was at once makeshift and professional. All members were volunteers and all items—including the chairs—were donations. The group functions on a budget of practically zero.

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[271] Ethnographic field notes; July 7, 2009.

To my right were two posters propped upright that prominently featured some of the appearances CPH had made in the local press since their founding in 2008. These posters, normally displayed at the office's entrance, were ready for transport to the celebration where they would show attendees what the group had accomplished. A photo of the group doing volunteer work accompanied one of the articles. Another depicted group members discussing ways to curb violence in the city. A third was a hot-off-the-presses article announcing tomorrow's event and featuring a photo of the group's president busy at work.

In addition to thanking local elites and volunteers during a formal ceremony, the first anniversary event—the group's fifth such public meeting—was to feature a number of information tables where attendees could learn about and meet with representatives from colleges, museums, libraries, and the like. The entire community was invited, and CPH members hoped those in attendance would indeed be representative of Hazleton at large. They envisioned new Latino/a families mingling with longtime residents as all enjoyed the program that the volunteers had put together. The empanadas at one end of the refreshment table and Senape's Pitza, an old local staple, at the other revealed their intention of this being a cosmopolitan event. An FBI agent was to give the keynote address, discussing topics of crime prevention and rights violations. All presentations were in English and Spanish.

Every detail of the first anniversary celebration conformed to the mission the Concerned Parents had operated under for the past year: to "build a bridge" between

established local institutions and residents and the city's new immigrants. Just as they had in preparation for this meeting, volunteers worked tirelessly in the community for the past twelve months. They volunteered in schools making sure that teachers ran their English as a Second Language (ESL) appropriately. They monitored students as they walked home to make sure there were no fights. They also served as student advocates, successfully lobbying to get a traffic light installed at a busy intersection and convincing city officials to provide students with discounts on public buses. Adults have reaped the benefits of their work as well. Several community members have taken the computer literacy courses held in the group's office, and the translating service CPH provides has perhaps been the most in-demand. Volunteers even accompany non-English speakers to the hospital or to the police station as needed.

The idea for this group emerged a year earlier, in the summer of 2008, following a discussion between members of the Latino community and a school board member. Both had been searching for ways to solve some of the problems facing Hazleton's immigrant community and both agreed that a liaison of sorts was a necessity. "We seen that there was a need that there was nobody, no organization, to advocate for people who are looking for a place, at least to find direction,"[272] one of the group's founders told me. Originally, the focus was to be on the schools. In fact, the group originally formed under the auspice of the Latin Parents Association.

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[272] Personal interview with Sergio Gonzalez; May 13, 2009.

Language barriers that kept parents uninformed of their children's educational progress and an utter lack of resources were some early issues to be dealt with, but it quickly became apparent that "there was more needs than the ones that was presented at the beginning that needed to be taken care of first."[273] The CPH thus quickly found themselves handling a number of social service tasks in the community. As they like to describe it, their office has become a "headquarters" where those with problems report, a solution is devised, and a volunteer is sent into the community to work the problem out. "Our magic word" Sergio told me "is how can we help?"[274]

Concerned Parents in Context

The Concerned Parents have thus taken on a persona that is far different from what we saw from the Latino/a Leaders. Their focus is on tangible, on-the-ground issues rather than political discourse and rights talk. This is no accident. While members of CPH admit that when it comes to the IIRA, "we all disagree, all of us,"[275] their public approach is to avoid mixing politics with volunteer work.

But while their general orientation is apolitical, the time I spent with the organization and the in-depth interviews I conducted with its members have led me to view them less as a mere social service providing volunteer organization or as an

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[273] Ibid.

[274] Ibid.

[275] Personal interview with Laurita Romero; July 26, 2009.

active parent-teacher group—although they certainly are these things, too—and more as a second wave of pro-immigrant activism in Hazleton. In other words, when we come to understand the Concerned Parents in their broader community context, what we find is that such an organization appears to be a natural outgrowth of the local politics that had preceded its formation.

In light of the dominant community narrative that emerged alongside Hazleton's IIRA, I argue here that the CPH are doing all they can to not upset or contradict local constructions of 'community' and 'rights.' Given that the Latino/a Leaders directly challenged the dominant community narrative and, in the words of one member of CPH, "they got crucified,"[276] subsequent activists were left with little choice but to adopt an approach that conformed to rather than rejected pleas from the community and its leaders. In other words, given the context, CPH decided to do exactly what the community had been demanding of them in a last-ditch effort to integrate the new Latino/as population. The beginning of this chapter demonstrates such conformity by reviewing CPH's general approach to pro-immigrant activism, focusing on how it coincides with the dominant and racialized constructions of 'community' and 'rights' that I have already discussed.

Their conformity raises an interesting question that I take on in the second part of this chapter. I have been discussing how much of the backlash against Latino/as in

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[276] Personal interview with Helen Nance; May 6, 2009.

Hazleton has been justified as a defense of many things: community, law, nation, and the like. I have also demonstrated the power of these imaginings. When called into question, the community majority vilified resisters. But what happens when local imaginings are accepted rather than challenged by a group of newcomers? In other words, how will the community react to a group of predominately Latino/a, pro-immigrant activists who have made it a point to conform to local demands? What I find is that *despite their conformity* to it, the community remains impenetrable for CPH. Even by working on behalf of Hazleton's newcomers in a way that did exactly what the exclusionary rhetoric surrounding the IIRA had demanded, I demonstrate in the second part of this chapter how CPH and their allies remain on the margins of the community. Their continued marginality, I argue, pulls back the curtain on local imaginings, revealing them to be little more than color-blind defenses of local social hierarchies. In light of this, I conclude that such an approach, though benevolent and accomplishing much-needed social justice work enables the continued neglect of core problems while effectively silencing all possibilities of meaningful resistance.

THE "SECOND WAVE" OF POST-IIRA PRO-IMMIGRANT ACTIVISM

I parted with Sergio and Juan soon after hanging the banner and we agreed to reconvene at one o'clock following lunch. The anniversary celebration was to begin at three. All was mostly in order by this point; we just needed to tie up a few loose ends in the hours before the event kicked off.

I was the first of our small group to return to the church that afternoon and I mingled a while with the church's pastor and some other volunteers who lined a metal table in the kitchen of the church basement preparing the event's food. I wondered silently what was keeping Sergio and the others.

In due time they arrived and the answer to my wondering became apparent. Each had traveled home to clean up, replacing the polo shirts and khaki pants they wore in the morning—attire that, in my judgment, seemed perfectly suitable for the day's festivities—with dapper black suits and ties. The modest church basement with its low ceilings, dusty tile floors, and dim lighting seemed unworthy to accommodate such dress. Though when more and more group members arrived similarly dressed to impress, I felt the effect. Now it was especially clear to me: image control is a vital part of the Concerned Parents' philosophy.

Subscribing to Local Imaginings

As part of a larger study on 'special rights,' Goldberg-Hiller and Milner (2003) described a conflict spurred by a Honolulu City Council ruling that those who owned land under condominiums owned by other parties were required to sell that land to the condominium owners. The landowners were furious over the decision and in most cases unwilling to give up their land. In an attempt to avoid this undesirable fate, many increased rents on their land to amounts unaffordable for the condo owners with the hope that they would evacuate. Fearing the loss of their homes, the condo owners sought redress.

The authors chronicle the debate that ensued and find an interesting aspect of the politics of 'special rights' that is relevant to my study of the Concerned Parents. Unlike most accusations against 'special rights' which evoke what I have been referring to as a bivalent legal consciousness and what these authors refer to as a distinction between "universals" and "exceptions"— that is, "universal access to some legal claims and legal practices become synonymous with fairness and community at the same time that other legal norms and practices [(e.g., "exceptions")] are disparaged as selfish" (1080)—the condo-owner case presented a situation where the otherwise sharp distinction between universals and exceptions was blurred.

The testimony from those on both sides of the debate was explicitly moral. The landowners emphasized the importance of hard work, resourcefulness, and settling down in order to reassert the moral authority that property owners have over renters in American society. Condominium owners, interestingly, responded not by questioning the landowners' assertion of moral authority but rather by embracing it. As they saw it, landowners were indeed morally superior, especially in comparison to renters, but, in their opinion, because of their status as "owners" they too were worthy of belonging in such an elevated class. Thus, "the testimony on both sides is not about universality. It is about character. In an important sense, both sides saw themselves as having the special character that ought to be supported by law" (1096). The condo owners strongly believed that they "deserved better" (1096) and that their insistence on being elevated to an equal position on the status hierarchy as landowners was "anything but

special interest" (1096).

In the other cases the authors reviewed, such as the same-sex marriage debate I referenced earlier, the bivalent conception of law won out. Insiders blended law and morality to reinforce community boundaries, explicitly keeping on the margins those not perceived to belong. Here, however, the distinction between universals and exceptions was blurred and, as the authors note, the controversy became "not about reimagining the nature of community as much as it was about reinforcing community" (1098). To be sure, "the sides differed over whether the condo owners fit with the social boundaries," but the central aspect of the debate was that "both sides agreed on what the proper social and physical boundaries were" (1098).

Just as ownership as a fundamental value went unquestioned in the land acquisition debate, so too, we will see, was 'community' as an ideal moral category unchallenged in this case. CPH accept it as such. Whereas the Latina/o Leaders challenged it with statements like this hypothetical one: "your definitions of community are racialized and largely fabricated and therefore represent an unjustifiable means by which we should determine belonging," the Concerned Parents general case can be summarized much differently: "we accept your definition of community and want to be a part of it." It is thus not a question of whether the 'community' that the local majority constructed is appropriate but rather a question of if Hazleton's Latino/a population belongs. I explore this notion in more detail in the rest of this section before going on to build on Goldberg-Hiller and Milner's

(2003:1094) analysis by discussing in more detail the implications of "blurring the difference between universal equality and special rights."

"We are a Respectable Bunch": Conforming to Community Imaginings

Most every action CPH took in preparation for the big event was an effort, as was pointed out in the meeting the day before, "to show that we are becoming a prominent, respected organization."[277] Members dressed well and invited guests with high local profiles because they "care about… influencing people in town so that they can be more welcoming of people no matter what."[278] CPH philosophy is, said differently, inspired by "the idea of us having to make sure that people have a good image of us."[279]

The "us" here is not just members of the group. Rather, CPH have been working to improve the image of "the immigrant community in general. Because if they don't have a good image then it is easier for them to think you are bad."[280] One member told me how he often coaches the city's immigrant with the hopes of

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[277] Ethnographic field notes; June 6, 2009.

[278] Personal interview with Luis Lira; May 13, 2009.

[279] Ibid.

[280] Ibid.

improving their local image: "I tell them, all we can do is keep working hard showing them that we are a respectable bunch."[281] Laurita Romero perhaps said it best:

> … the Hispanic community has to learn that we are here and this is not our house. We have to learn to accept this country; accept this language; accept its customs. If we help these Hispanic people learn about what is the rule—not in the Hispanic community, what is the rule in the Hazleton community—all the community is going to benefit.[282]

To that end, many of the social service tasks CPH perform are geared toward satisfying the demands implicitly made when the community lashed out against undocumented immigrants. Indeed, absent the nostalgia, member narratives reflect a colorblind idealization of small town life not unlike that which the community majority has constructed. Many repeatedly depicted their vision of a situation where people were working together, regardless of color or creed, to promote stronger communal ties. For instance, these activists have made teaching English to Spanish-speakers one of their highest priorities. "CPH also wants to stop the crime." In addition to monitoring students who walk home from school to prevent fights, they have also helped bring a chapter of the Guardian Angels to a city that, in all

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[281] Ethnographic field notes; December 8, 2009.

[282] Personal interview with Laurita Romero July 26, 2009.

truthfulness, is relatively safe.[283] Many members admit that, in this sense, "they want exactly what Lou Barletta wants."

"They are more militant than we are"

It is clear from my interviews that these "second wave" activists were fully aware of the conflict that had preceded their formation and they seem to have reacted accordingly. Their devotion to an idealized imagined community is evidence of this, as is their openness to contrast their approach to the efforts of Arias, Lopez, and Arroyo. While they did not question the motives of their predecessors—indeed, all seem to agree on many issues and they do work together at times—what they did question was their strategies. Renee referred to the Latino/a Leaders as "more militant than we are."[284] Another made distinctions between the Latino/a Leaders and CPH like this: "we want to be the people who bridge the gap, where like Anna Arias and Dr. Lopez I think they look more at the Hispanics… They were the Hispanic leaders in the community so they were going to be looked at as the problem when they came to the table."[285] The overtly pro-Latino/a approach of the Latina/o Leaders, in other words,

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[283] As I traveled through Hazleton with members of the organization, it is clear that their personal perception is not that crime is widespread. One activist, for instance, did not lock his door as he parked on the city's downtown street.

[284] Personal interview with Renee Lang; May 8, 2009.

[285] Personal interview with Helen Nance; May 6, 2009.

was interpreted by members of CPH as part of the reason for their failures and thus worthy of reconsideration.

More efficacious to CPH was an approach that was void of a Latino/a-rights discourse. It is actions, not words, which are the basis of their newfound philosophy. When I first interviewed Sergio, he said the best way to help immigrants incorporate into the community is "not my mouth."[286] Early on, he saw that "many people was talking about the ordinance… but you never saw some of them doing something different."[287] Accordingly, he is always encouraging community members and fellow Concerned Parents "to be more in action, to be more involved. Instead of talking behind a wall, break the wall and be part [of the community]."[288] He gave examples of how he implements this approach. He described for me how the group is always careful to thank folks who help them and who devote their time (hence the calculated effort the group put forth to impress those elite members of the community). Along these some lines, he told me how CPH avoids conflict at all cost. Sergio and other members rarely wanted to discuss the IIRA for these reasons. Only once in a rare show of opinion did I learn how he feels about the local measure and how CPH's activism appears to be a new way to resist the IIRA: "When the mayor sees we are making

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[286] Personal interview with Sergio Gonzalez; May 13, 2009.

[287] Ibid.

[288] Ibid.

progress, he will probably change his mind and take out the immigration act. Let's show him we are better."[289]

"We are not looking for special privileges": A Narrow Conception of Rights

The backlash-inspiring efforts made on behalf of immigrants in the early stages of the local immigration conflict thus inspired CPH to rethink their strategies. Actions, they feel, speak louder than words and therefore any form of pro-immigrant rights talk was not going to get them very far. Beyond representing a divergence from the approach taken by the Latino/a Leaders, we can also read the CPH's activism as a response to the anti-'special rights' narrative I described in the last chapter. Though VOP's influence eventually waned, CPH's narrative suggests that an opposition to 'special rights' has indeed become taken-for-granted in the community. In other words, they understand the distinction between universals and exceptions.

My interviews with members of CPH reveal an almost across-the-board opposition to 'special rights' and a tendency of members to carefully distinguish their activism from that of 'special rights' claimants. When I sat down with Tavio, one of the prominent members of the group, he took steps from the very beginning of our conversation to make his intentions clear: he is involved because he cares about what is good "not just for the Latino community, but for the whole community."[290] To that

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[289] Ibid.

[290] Personal interview with Tavio Garza; July 31, 2009.

end, he questioned, "If we not open the door for the whole community, why would we expect the whole community to open the door for us."[291]

Several other group members echoed this race-neutral sentiment. Sergio emphasized, "CPH is a mixed group, not just Latino"[292] and said when people are discussing with CPH the problems facing the city, "we want to listen as a group, not as a Latino."[293] This is why CPH's policy is that "*anyone* can come, bring their concern, and we can work together."[294] When Renee and I discussed the origins of the group, she explained the rationale that went into their becoming the Concerned Parents as opposed to the Latin Parents Association: "oh my goodness, we don't want to separate."[295] Their feeling is that "if it was only for Latinos it wouldn't be fair; then the Concerned Parents discriminates against white people."[296] Most group members, in short, bought into the sentiment that an abundance of 'special rights' claims are part of the problem. Renee went on to tell me, "our group says all the time is we don't want

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[291] Ibid.

[292] Personal interview with Sergio Gonzalez; May 13, 2009.

[293] Ibid.

[294] Ibid.

[295] Personal interview with Renee Lang; May 8, 2009.

[296] Personal interview with Lucia Rivera; July 11, 2009.

special attention, we don't want special consideration."[297] Sergio agreed: "we are not looking for special privileges; we are looking for what is fair."[298]

Scratching the Surface

It should be clear by now that CPH accept the imaginings of the local community. The claim is not that the status quo is somehow misguided but rather that they too should be considered 'insiders.' In the minds of CPH members, what is wrong with the prevailing conception of 'community' is not that it is fictitious, racialized, or exclusionary as others have charged, but rather that it inappropriately fails to recognize that Latinos are worthy of inclusion.

In theory, CPH's approach is on point. The community majority has demanded that Latinos stop committing crime, start speaking English, and quit seeking special privileges. This is precisely what they have done. As previous chapters reveal, however, these more simplistic demands were little more than covers for local sentiments that were far more profound. As I have shown, the local construction of community in Hazleton is driven by economic uncertainty and it is highly racialized. In covering the surface-level assertions made by community members, CPH sought belonging. What their approach failed to do, however, is take into account the deeper passions underlying the local debate. As I explore the community's response to CPH's

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[297] Personal interview with Renee Lang; May 8, 2009.

[298] Personal interview with Sergio Gonzalez; May 13, 2009.

conformity, these deeper sentiments begin to surface. While CPH may have effectively blurred the distinction between universals and exceptions, we find that, when it boils down, the community majority will still seek to draw the distinctions that will keep native-born whites on the top of the local hierarchy.

THE IMPENETRABLE COMMUNITY

Three o'clock came rather quickly, and before long, several people began to flock into the anniversary celebration. At the time, the big question on the minds of the Concerned Parents was whether Mayor Barletta would accept their invitation to attend the event. He was, not coincidentally, one of the many names Renee had read off her list the day before. It was interesting to me at the time that while none of the members of the group were quite sure of whether or not he would attend, detailed plans to accommodate him were made just in case. To their delight—and probably to their surprise—the mayor arrived in the church basement shortly after three.

The Political Response to CPH

As I observed the mayor's behavior that day, his clothes were the first of many indicators that suggested this was a politically insignificant appearance for him. In comparison to the well-dressed Concerned Parents, the mayor was rather underdressed, donning a polo shirt, khaki shorts, and a pair of loafers rather than his usual political attire. Someone whispered to me at the meeting: "he must be going to

the golf course after this."[299] Some members of the press were present but to my knowledge, he did no interviews nor did he use the event as a photo opportunity.

While it may have been insignificant for him, however, his appearance at the meeting was a huge milestone for CPH. They graciously thanked him during the formal ceremony and in what resembled an act of reconciliation—a symbolic way to say we will do what you say, now let us get along and build this community together—they offered him the microphone to make a speech. It was at this moment when it became clear to all in attendance that the sort of on-the-ground work CPH had been engaging in was not high on his political agenda. He had no speech prepared, and when it came time for the formal presentation he was not even sitting near the podium—he was in the back of the crowd, blending in. When offered the microphone, he looked rather startled. But he was in no position to turn down the offer so he approached the podium to say a few words. His speech lasted only about one minute. His comments were limited to a few generic statements about the great work CPH had done. Never once did he put their work in context of the larger problems facing the city, nor did he remark on the IIRA.

Others agreed with my assessment that the mayor was taken off guard and likely unprepared for the reception he received. When I attended the next Concerned Parents meeting, the buzz about the event seemed to be on the mayor's actions, and all

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[299] Ethnographic field notes; July 7, 2009.

the talk was consistent with the analysis I am offering here. “He looked uncomfortable,” I overheard Luis saying to Renee.[300] Inviting the Mayor was a political statement that CPH tried to make and his lack of enthusiasm about their big event belittled their efforts.

To be fair, the mayor did attend the event. But to offer at least some support to the Concerned Parents, an all-volunteer organization who is devoted to making the city a better place for children, is a political no-brainer. What is interesting when it comes to local politics is how little officials are willing to support a group like this publicly. Though they embrace many of the elements of the imagined community, as I have shown, the reality is that the Concerned Parents are still a primarily Latino/a group. This makes their presence in a homogenous community that effectively whitened its identity in the face of change a tenuous one indeed.

In addition to Mayor Barletta, other officials have similarly failed to embrace CPH’s social justice work. One of CPH’s very successful projects in the community had been getting upwards of 50 children together to paint playground murals. Not long after this activity, Councilwoman Graham proposed that the city charge a fee to anyone who paints murals in Hazleton. In her mind, such work amounts to mere “graffiti” (Galski 2010b). Members of CPH have told me similar stories of other local officials they have approached asking for assistance. They discussed how officials

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[300] Ethnographic field notes; June 20, 2009.

were always kind with them and did what they could to help, but few were willing to do so publicly. After taking Tavio, a Latino man who recently relocated to Hazleton, with her to talk to a local official for the first time, Renee recalled for me how Tavio was ecstatic. “He supports us!” Tavio declared. Renee, savvy at local politics by this point, was quick to cool him down: “he supports us in the closet,” she said.[301]

Even leaders in the school district, the local institution that CPH has worked most closely with, have been unwilling to enact visible, meaningful change. Instead, they too have latched on to the public’s exclusionary sentiment. For some time there was talk of building a charter school in one of Hazleton’s neighboring communities—a proposal that would have, in effect, segregated the city’s educational system (see Galski 2009). Moreover, despite CPH’s efforts to get Latino/a parents more involved and to help Latino/a students succeed, the school district has yet to act reciprocally. As of 2010, despite 41 recent new hires (Light 2010), the Hazleton Area School District has zero people of color staffed as teachers.[302] To add insult to injury, just as it appeared that the dust from the IIRA was settling, the school district initiated an IIRA-like proposal of their own in 2010 that would require new students “to furnish four proofs of residency while requiring property owners and tenants complete forms that

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[301] Personal interview with Renee Lang; May 8, 2009.

[302] A district administrator provided me with this information while I was in the field.

would affirm tenants are full-time residents"—a proposal that was unprecedented in the state (see Galski 2010a).

The Community Response to CPH

This behavior is not just limited to politicians and community leaders. There were numerous other examples I found during the course of my research which suggest a lack of embrace for what CPH were trying to accomplish, particularly from the very people who were demanding the type of change in the Latino/a community that the CPH offered to satisfy. Helen, a white native-born Hazletonian and CPH member, told me a story about a close friend whose daughter teaches in Hazleton. The teacher was unhappy with her job, complaining, "Hispanics are so much trouble." Helen graciously suggested to her friend that her daughter contact Concerned Parents. She told her that such problems are precisely what CPH seek to ameliorate. "Here, here's the phone number of these guys they have access to the classrooms, they will come in, and they will talk to [the students]" Helen explained to her friend. The parents delivered the message to their daughter, the teacher, to which she simply replied: "no, no I don't want to do that."

Not only was this request and others turned down, but Helen mentioned that she is often stigmatized in the community for her work with what is construed as a primarily Latino/a group. "I mean it's hard to come out because you say [that you are a member of CPH] to some people and they look at you like you're the most awfulest

(sic) person in the world" she told me. "[They say], why do you do this? Look at what you are bringing into this community."[303]

Pro-IIRA Activist's Response to CPH

When I asked activists who got behind the passage of IIRA about CPH, they too seemed unwilling to drop their exclusionary narrative. Even when the topic of conversation was a group who has not challenged but adhered to the community's demands, many of these activists still dwelled on the problems that "illegals" had allegedly brought into the country. This is especially disturbing considering the utter irrelevance of this narrative in a context like this. It no longer works to say, "I am not against Latino/as, I am only arguing in favor of U.S. law." All members of CPH are documented, law-abiding citizens. Nor is it acceptable to say that the community needs protection from crime and therefore your backlash is justified. CPH have taken a similar stance as the mayor when it comes to crime. Even so, these activists continue to grasp for this rhetoric despite its inappropriateness. Consider what conservative activist Dennis Debrowski had to say about CPH. I asked him whether he was familiar with the Concerned Parents group whose mission it is to "bridge the gap" in the city, and he responded:

> … if you are illegal there is no gap, you don't belong in this country, period. What gap is there? If you are a legal citizen, no problem. First of all our schools are overrun, our kids don't get the right education because of it, the PSSA scores are so low that the state might step in

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[303] Personal interview with Helen Nance; May 6, 2009.

> next year and take over the school. Well that wasn't like that when I went to school. Yeah you had maybe a Latino, A Hispanic. So what one or two, but you did have the school overrun.

Notice how Dennis begins with the 'illegal' tagline despite it being irrelevant. Even though he justifies this quickly with the usual colorblind line "if you are a legal citizen, fine" he never even considers the possibility that all the members of CPH *are in fact* legal residents of United States. Instead, for him, it seems as though *being Latina/o in and of itself* is against the law. Minor transgressions of this law, in his mind (i.e., "you had maybe a Latino, a Hispanic") are tolerable, but more numerous instances amount to an invasion (i.e., the schools being "overrun"). This is not to even mention that he shows absolutely no willingness even to acknowledge what CPH are doing. They are devoted to *improving* the schools, not *destroying* them.

Debrowski goes on to further associate CPH's efforts with the much larger decline that he sees American society undergoing:

> You can't put a Band-Aid on a problem that needs stitches if you know what I'm saying. If these people are illegal, there is no gap. You want to come to the United States of America? You want to be part of our society? You need to adapt to our society, not us to your society. End of story…They are not even illegal, they are invaders. They are invading our country; they have no right here, they need to get out. You will see our economy pick back up because we ain't spending trillions and trillions and trillions of dollars on them. It will be spent on the American people and the American people will go back and start buying again.

Here we have an organization in the Concerned Parents who is, in effect, doing everything in their power to adapt to "his" society and who is making absolutely no demands that he adapts to "theirs." Yet he remains completely unwilling to grant them a seat at the table. As his statements testify, it is only their "otherness" which seems to preclude them from ever becoming members of "his" community. Not only that, but his obvious distaste with the bad economy is likewise attributed to Latinos generally and CPH by proxy. CPH may have satisfied the community's surface-level demands, but it is clear that no amount of social justice work or conformity will allow CPH to penetrate a community whose fear losing their city to a group of racialized "others" runs deep.

Pulling Back the Curtain

I will admit that Dennis may be an extreme case but his example is illustrative of a pattern I have seen more subtly demonstrated community-wide. Taken together, the political, community, and activist response to CPH help us pull back the curtain on Hazleton's anti-immigrant backlash, revealing that it is indeed driven by an entrenched racial resentment and, as I have been describing, a deep mourning Hazleton residents have for the "loss of their city." It is not that residents want to make this work and can't; it is that they don't want this to happen.

In short, my analysis of the community response to CPH suggests that the collective response to demographic change in Hazleton was not a cry to have Latinos incorporate and live in harmony with native Hazletonians. That would have been a

demand that the CPH were able to satisfy. Rather, the collective response was an effort for white working class local residents to turn back the clock to a more prosperous time when they lived among themselves. Unfortunately for them, this is a demand that nobody, not even the well-intentioned activists from CPH, can satisfy.

CONCLUSION

The wok CPH has done is admirable. They have provided much-needed services to a struggling Latino/a community on a budget of practically zero. Representing the second wave of post-IIRA pro-immigrant activists, however, my analysis reveals that their approach, while useful to a number of individuals who take advantage of the services they offer, is unlikely to spur any meaningful change in the city of Hazleton. By conforming to rather than challenging a construction of community that was at once imaginary, exclusionary, and racialized, CPH, in effect, have *reinforced* the dominant community narrative that was constructed in neoliberalism's wake.

The community majority has constructed the backlash against undocumented immigrants as many things—a defense of their "safe" community, a return to their core local values, a defense of the rule of law, and a moratorium on special privileges. At its core, though, what we see here is that the backlash was little more than a defense of hierarchy. Even when all of the demands were met, the community remains unwilling to give the city's Latino/a population any ground.

The results of this chapter confirm that 'rights' are indeed paradoxical for marginalized groups in this context. Demand them, on one hand, and get vilified; deny them, on the other, and remain in your current social position. CPH may have avoided the harsh public backlash that their predecessors faced, but the reality is that, after reaffirming local imaginings, this group has failed to make any meaningful progress and, in the eyes of the community majority, they now can do harm. As Greenhouse and colleagues affirm (1994:132), "for those who occupy the lowest position in the social hierarchy the decision to avoid conflict and accept the status quo is more likely to perpetuate their problems rather than solve them."

And, consistent with the argument I have been making throughout, the acceptance of the economically-blind local construction once again further embeds the processes that are at the core of all this. Indeed, CPH in their role as service providers are well-aware of many of the troubles Hazleton's exploited Latino/a workforce faces—long hours, difficult conditions, and so on—but they too have opted to allow this to take place, focusing instead on a mythical vision of community. When I asked Tavio whether the group had considered organizing workers he took a position not unlike that which many Hazletonians have—that this is a fight not worth fighting, that its more useful gain acceptance in the community than it is to critique broader economic trends—when he responded "Why would you have a union when you could have a job?"

I have at this point marched through each stage of the process of redefining community in Hazleton and we see that, given the approaches activists have taken, the tropes politicians have used, and the memories ordinary citizens have chosen to invoke, very little has changed. Neoliberalism continues to alter the social landscape, white working class residents remain uncertain of their material futures, and recent Latino/a immigrant workers remain on the margins of a dying community. After reviewing my primary findings in the conclusion, I take the lessons learned here and explore alternatives that may be more meaningful—alternatives that, unlike those we have seen play out on the ground, take into account the best interests of all workers trying to negotiate the uncertainties of an increasingly perilous future.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSION

Defending the IIRA is going to cost the already cash-strapped city of Hazleton upwards of 5 million dollars[304]—a figure that represents more than half of the city's yearly budget.[305] As I write, the city continues to appeal Judge Munley's initial ruling, and legal fees continue to mount. In spite of this, city leaders remain persistent and the public continues to have their back. "This is a slip and not a fall," (Poi123148 2007) Barletta—who now serves as a United States Congressman thanks to the

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[304] Recent reports have the estimated legal fees Hazleton will have to pay at 2.4 million dollars. Mayor Barletta has provided a much smaller estimate of just 500,000 dollars, although his estimate includes only legal fees for covering the city's attorneys (Morgan-Besecker 2010). The 2.4 million figure more accurately takes into account attorney fees on the plaintiff's side as well. This number is also likely to increase as it only accounts for fees associated with the initial case. If the ruling withstands appeals, Hazleton will also have to foot the bill for appeals as well, bringing the total to around 5 million dollars, if not more (e.g., Fernández 2011). A defense fund has been set up by the mayor and it allegedly contains a enough money to cover all costs, although recent reports have been unable to discern just how much money the pool contains (Morgan-Besecker 2010). Despite the defense fund, however, the city of Hazleton has sought to bill its insurance company for the legal fees, although a court has ruled that the insurance company would not be responsible. It is thus not entirely clear at the time of this writing kind of financial burden the city of Hazleton will face as a result of the IIRA, but it appears as though the ordinance will indeed add to the city's economic woes and taxpayers—30% of whom are now Latino/a—will more than likely play a significant role in covering its costs.

[305] In 2010, the city's budget was 8.6 million dollars (Christman 2010).

political uplift he received from the IIRA—told CNN after the Third Circuit affirmed the lower court's ruling that the IIRA was unconstitutional. He has vowed to take the case all the way to the Supreme Court if need be.

Centered around the passage of the IIRA, my dissertation investigated the curious paradox embodied in the public's support for Barletta's persistence: why have the people who call this crumbling city home gotten behind this law? It is clear as mounting legal fees testify that the real economic problems the city faces are only becoming worse. Yet, all told, what we have seen is that harsh economic realities were almost entirely absent from this debate.

What I found instead is that the IIRA and the rhetoric that surrounded it was shrouded in symbolism—symbolism that, though at least partly egged on by economic decline, made no allusion to it and instead hyper-focused on an idealized, racialized version of Hazleton that was antithetical to the depiction of the Latino/a "Other" that had developed locally. Not only did this symbolism—this *imagined local community*—allow economic problems to fester, but it also had devastating effects in its role of determining how the conflict would play out. Racialized notions of 'community' went on to shape notions of belonging which, in turn, went on to determine who was able mobilize around the law, who was deemed worthy of seeking legal recourse, and what forms pro-Latino/a social justice work would take.

In her article *Justice as Told by Judges*, Doris Marie Provine (2009:242) provides a compelling and instructive account of the *Lozano* decision. She rightly

points out that “Judge Munley’s opinion entirely avoids the dilemmas that face small communities in adjusting to large numbers of new residents” and therefore “will not settle the issues at stake, nor will the appeal, whatever its outcome[,]” because “legal decisions frame disputes too narrowly to satisfy the yearning for justice that moves people who believe they have suffered serious harm.” My ethnographic work attests to this and takes a similar line of reasoning a step further: not only was the narrowly framed *Lozano* case unable to fully grasp the realities of the social conflict, but so too has the entire ruthless, ugly, and highly racialized debate that has played out on the ground. Structured around symbolism, falsities, and abstractions that make real problems even more elusive, I have demonstrated here that, beyond missing the mark, this entire debate only makes matters worse for recently arrived immigrants and working class residents alike as they seek to find their way in these difficult times.

I want to conclude this dissertation on the premise that there has to be a better way. Beyond aiding opportunistic politicians and giving residents a fleeting sense of hope, the ordinance was devastating for Latino/as and native-born whites alike. As I recap my findings and review my dissertation’s broader contributions, I draw attention to the perils the IIRA has brought the already paralyzed city, and tease out some more productive avenues for recourse-seeking residents—avenues that are more tangible and inclusive.

I proceed in this concluding chapter as follows. In the first section, I review each aspect of the debate over the IIRA and explore specifically how ‘community’ and

‘rights’ may serve important symbolic ends yet each lack substance. Next, I build on these insights by arguing in favor of a *pro-immigrant populism* (Schlesinger 2007) that casts aside fictitious imaginings and focuses instead on the local-level, real-life challenges to the benefit of all parties involved.

THE PERILS OF COMMUNITY AND RIGHTS

Recap of Part 1: The Construction of Community in the Neoliberal Era

I began my dissertation with an analysis of neoliberalism’s effect on small locales generally and Hazleton specifically. Faced with dwindling government support and a looming economic war, I have shown how an otherwise community-based organization adapted to neoliberal challenges by taking on a neoliberal persona. My focus on Hazleton’s primary economic development group, CAN DO, thus exposed the enormous risks such organizations are willing to take with the hope of weathering the current economic storm.

My focus on CAN DO also revealed how such organizations are able to marshal support for their neoliberal initiatives that otherwise are not in the best interest of the community. I have shown that by making use of nostalgic images from their mythical past—images that coincide with Hazleton’s imagining of itself not as a downtrodden town but rather as a resilient and resourceful community—and by employing a race-neutral rhetoric that denies the social significance of their

development prerogatives, CAN DO has been able to carry forward their new neoliberal agenda with minimal resistance.

Although the public failed to resist CAN DO policies, this is not to say that residents were not feeling the economic crunch. Downtown is a line of empty storefronts. Manufacturing jobs in Hazleton continue to decline, unemployment rates climb, and temporary positions that offer lower salaries, less security, and often-poorer working conditions are replacing formerly stable, well-paying jobs. One man I spoke with complained that he had been laid off from three consecutive jobs in less than one year.[306] In short, the possibility of living a stable working class life in Hazleton is fleeting as decent paying work and vibrant community life is becoming harder and harder to find.

Rightfully so, the distraught residents of this former coal town have responded. They don't want this place to die. This is where they have spent their entire lives—in many cases, it is where their families have lived for three, four, and in some cases five generations. Their response made up the bulk of the first part of this dissertation: I explored how Hazletonians experienced the city's widespread decline and the corresponding arrival of the immigrant population. How did they make sense of it all?

I began with the official response. Focusing on the elite-led reaction to a homicide allegedly committed by two undocumented immigrants against a white, life-

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[306] Ethnographic field notes; July 2010.

long Hazleton resident, I demonstrated how officials were able to recast Hazleton's decline as an "alien invasion." Just as CAN DO drew from the mythical images of their fabled past, politicians led their increasingly nostalgic constituents into believing that the decline they had been witnessing was not their fault. Rather than depicting Hazleton as a unified working class community disaffected by economic conditions, they opted instead to cast Hazleton in more racially divisive terms. Hazleton was portrayed as an "All-American City" that was now "under siege;" their "small town" lifestyle was made to appear threatened by a group of supposedly crime-prone undocumented immigrant "invaders." Despite no evidence that undocumented immigrants were actually committing crime at the rates officials had suggested, this imagery nevertheless led to the swift passage and widespread support of the IIRA.

When I turned my inquiry to ordinary residents, we saw more of the same. Sentiments coming from the ground, that is, make even clearer why the focus was on undocumented immigrants and not failed economic policy. By nostalgically reflecting on an idealized vision of the city's past and dwelling on particular negative aspects of the present, residents were able to remind themselves that "we" are not one of "them." As such, a race-based identity became further engrained in the city's collective imagining and the prevailing sentiment was that there was no way "we" could have brought this upon ourselves.

Seen in this light, the widespread acceptance of the ordinance begins to make sense. As I argue, the ordinance itself usefully embodies citizen's moral, material, and

nativist concerns. Not only does it help them differentiate, but also the backlash's emphasis on newcomers' illegality gives them leverage in doing so. Additionally, the rhetoric surrounding the ordinance provides an excuse for the city's economic decline that does not contradict residents' increasingly neoliberal consciousness. Protesting CAN DO and their 'pro-growth' agenda would have contradicted what has developed as a market-first common sense. Accusing Latinos of unjustifiably draining city resources, however, provides a compelling reason for why the city suffers while at the same time it affirms residents' worldviews. Finally, the ordinance provided residents with a discourse that would allow them to color-blind their resentment for the city's new Latinos. As a result, what were previously whispers quickly became shouts and the "illegal immigrant" emerged as an ideal scapegoat for Hazleton's contemporary troubles.

Contributions from Part 1: The Paradox of Community

> We miss community because we miss security, a quality crucial to a happy life, but one which the world we inhabit is ever less able to offer and ever more reluctant to promise. But community remains stubbornly missing, eludes our grasp or keep falling apart, because the way in which this world prompts us to go about fulfilling our dreams of a secure life does not bring us closer to their fulfillment; instead of being mitigated, our insecurity grows as we do, and so we go on dreaming, trying, and failing (Bauman 2001:144).

The first part of my dissertation reveals a difficult *paradox of community* (Greenhouse et al. 1994:172) that coincides with the rise of neoliberalism generally and the new politics of immigration more specifically. On one hand, working class

residents are in a tenuous position where their economic futures are increasingly uncertain. Such uncertainty produces a "chaos of identity"[307] (Young 2003:399; see also Calavita 2005:162), and, as Zygmunt Bauman reminds us in the passage above, these conditions create a craving—a craving for all that the concept of community promises: security, stability, certainty. On the other hand, the idealized community actually provides little more than a false promise. The result is a recreation of existing conditions. Nostalgia for the "way we never were" (Coontz 1992) may create a "temporary refuge" or provide local residents with a "sanctuary of meaning… where they feel safe from oppressive cultural conditions" but it also "perpetuates the hegemonic forces from which individuals seek escape" by blurring the realities of the situation (Aden 1995:35-36). As Fabio Dasilva and Jim Faught (1982:49) write: "Nostalgia becomes, ironically, an ahistorical defense of the status quo. In effect it resembles a collective dream that facilitates a primitive exchange of sentiments, while inhibiting a realistic appraisal of contemporary social relations." In this sense, community in the neoliberal era is a "trap door" (Herbert 2005).

More than that, community, contrary to the inviting feeling the term evokes, serves as an exclusionary device. In order to construct an imagined local community by which distraught residents define themselves in confusing times, they must also

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[307] Young (2003:389) writes, consistent with what I have argued here: "Globalization exacerbates both relative deprivation and crises of identity: such a combination is experienced as unfair, humiliating and threatening and results in behaviour which is transgressive rather than instrumental."

identify ‘outsiders’ against whom this vision is contrasted. ‘Community’ is thus also a highly racialized construct that not only keeps white working class residents from realizing the source of their plight (e.g., Frank 2004) but also keeps racialized “Others” marginalized.

I have described how, throughout this local-level debate over immigration, ‘community’ imagery has reigned supreme. When officials (e.g., developers and politicians) depicted their town as a resourceful, crime-free, family-oriented place, residents seemed to get on board every time. This *Gospel of Community*, in short, was exactly what distraught residents wanted—indeed, *needed*—to hear. But, while playing to their constituents’ desires, this racialized community mantra at the same time prevented a more realistic understanding of what the city was experiencing; leading citizens to, ironically, allow the forces that diminished their sense of security in the first place to continue unscathed. What is more, while missing what was at the core of their troubles, residents used the same community rhetoric to construct an alternative foe in the newly arrived Latino/a immigrant—a foe who, not coincidentally, has likewise experienced hardship as a result of current structural arrangements (e.g., economic exploitation).

This paradox calls our attention to the importance of recognizing community as a “political construct” (Collins 2010:7) and it encourages us to remain attentive to the *local* as a key site for the recreation of the new political economy of immigration. In sharp contrast to communitarian scholars like Amitai Etzioni (1993), my research

problematizes the concept of community by demonstrating that it is little more than a social construction, concocted by the majority, that has the effect of reproducing inequalities and enabling exclusion. As Bauman (2001:148) concludes in agreement, "the community of the communitarian project may only exacerbate the condition it promises to rectify. And it will do so through injecting more potency into the atomizing pressures that were, and continue to be, insecurity's most abundant source." In this way, local politicians preaching the Gospel of Community are doing little more than "exploiting the crisis" thereby enabling the continuation of the neoliberal project (e.g., Klein 2007:7).

From this perspective, the fact that anti-immigrant sentiment has localized should come as less of a surprise. Scholars rightly point to anti-immigrant attitudes as responsible for stirring the harsh local-level responses we have seen (e.g., Seif 2010), but my analysis here reveals a more complicated and nuanced story. Anti-immigrant attitudes are important, as is social and economic change, but my work suggests the two have a relationship that coincides in important and impactful ways. As neoliberalism creates a situation where locales compete more fiercely than ever for scarce resources, there are undoubtedly going to be winners, losers, and those who take change-inducing risks. Indeed, "the rollback/destruction of Keynesian interventions and the roll-out/creation of more proactively neoliberal policies are thus highly contingent, incremental, uneven, and largely incomplete" (Hackworth 2007:12). Unaccustomed to such conditions, locales who alter their social and demographic

landscapes for economic survival or those who sink into economic oblivion are likely to crave the best of times in the worst of times, construct idealized communities, and scapegoat racialized immigrants all while ignoring or failing to notice the political-economic change that is the source of their discontent. In short, in order to understand the localization of anti-immigrant backlash in the United States in recent years, we need to be more attentive to the economic conditions that help drive the passage of discriminatory laws and the unique way in which these conditions are experienced on the ground.

Recap of Part 2: The Battle Over Rights and the Maintenance of Local Hierarchies

The community constructed in the wake of decline presents an important backdrop for my study of post-IIRA mobilizations in Part 2. I begin by studying the efforts of a small group of Latino/a Leaders to resist the IIRA. Seeing the local measure as unjust and privy to the fact that locals constructed their community in the most idealistic of terms, leaders of the Latino/a community came forward in protest of the law. They did so in the tradition of the civil rights movement: humanizing immigrants, attempting to mobilize a Latino/a base, and demanding equality. But because rights are *indeterminate* (Tushnet 1984) tools available to those on either side of a debate, a more conservative vision of rights that gelled with the dominant racialized conception of community won out in Hazleton. The feeling was that equality is not something attained by a long and hard fought struggle but rather something that used to exist before activists began seeking 'special privileges.' Rather

than successfully resisting the ordinance, then, the community majority vilified local immigrants' rights activists, accusing them of seeking 'special' rather than 'equal' rights.

I went on to explain how the Latino/a Leaders persisted and sought the help of national-level litigant groups who would eventually get the ordinance struck down. Though noble, this also backfired. The community again was cast as being "under siege"—this time by big, powerful 'special interest' groups. My analysis of the Voice of the People's activism makes this especially evident. Employing a legal consciousness which views 'insiders' as entitled to rights and reprimands 'outsiders' for making similar claims, this group brought to Hazleton an amplified narrative that targeted more enemies, lumped together additional problems, and expanded the geography of the debate. With that, the local conflict quickly became an ideological struggle about what it means to be an American rather than a more practical inquiry into how Hazleton can emerge from its economic rut.

There is no denying the power of this narrative. As I revealed through my case study of the Concerned Parents, both the dominant local conceptions of 'community' and 'rights' limited the options available to this coalition of white and Latino/a activists. Although they have been able to contribute much-needed social justice work to Hazleton's Latino/a population, my analysis reveals that CPH's approach was ultimately watered down to the point where Latino/a rights-seekers no longer pose a

threat. Inevitably, the story ends with economic processes moving along unencumbered and local hierarchies maintained.

Contributions from Part 2: The Limits of 'Rights'

Important sociolegal research in recent years has pointed to the constitutive power of law—the law's tendency to matter in day-to-day relationships and to serve as a reference point for those trying to make sense of events and vying for positions on the social hierarchy (e.g., Fleury-Steiner and Nielsen 2006). My research follows this tradition and builds on prior work that has emphasized the importance of context. Just as prior research has situated legal consciousness on the street (Nielsen 2000), at work (Marshal 2003), or in jury deliberations (Fleury-Steiner 2004), my dissertation makes a case for understanding the constitutive influence of law in a place where the economy is fickle and the demographics are rapidly changing.

What I find is that the preconceived notions about race used by community members to reimagine their community interacted with citizen and activist legal consciousness thereby producing many of the same counterproductive effects we saw in Part 1. Namely, my study reveals that the local majority was able to use the imagined community to determine the meaning of 'rights' and to set the parameters around when it is acceptable to turn to law. These legal meanings, in turn, did boundary-making work of their own as struggles over the meaning of rights often led to new declarations about what it means to be a resident of Hazleton specifically or of the U.S. more generally. Finally, as activists became immersed in these struggles and

devoted their energies to abstract notions of belonging, they too lost site of the structural forces that originally set all of this in motion. In short, just as my work reveals that community is little more than the "rhetorical management of change," (Greenhouse et al. 1994:191) it also suggests that debates over the concept of 'rights' need not dwell on whether we have too many rights and too few responsibilities (e.g., Glendon 1991). Rather, it is important to acknowledge that conceptions of 'rights,' like imaginings of community, are little more than social constructions defined by the community majority in moments of uncertainty that are useful only to those already deemed to belong (e.g., Passavant 2002).

Most studies in the legal mobilization tradition are national in scope (e.g., McCann 1994; Silverstein 1996), and few are attentive to the political-economic context in which a legal discourse proliferates to inspire social change (but see Sarat and Scheingold 2001). But, as I have shown here, the decidedly *local* back-story of economic decline and the reimagining of community along racial rather than class lines is essential to understanding the extent to which local-level activists are able to use the law as a tool to prompt the type of social change they desire. Just as in prior studies which have found individual law-use to serve as a means by which distraught residents can voice their concerns (e.g., Engel 1984; Greenhouse et al. 1994), my study suggests that mobilization is limited in the local context precisely because the community majority is especially unwilling to relinquish control. Beyond focusing exclusively on courts and more formal legal institutions, then, my study suggests that

legal mobilization studies need to be more contextualized, paying particular attention to how rights and legal consciousness are interacting with prevailing notions of belonging in an imagined community.

My dissertation, in short, reveals that in times of great change, community residents reconstruct their own identity. In this way, we can indeed read Hazleton's passage of the IIRA as a critique of neoliberalism (e.g., Varsanyi 2010b). Paradoxically, though, as residents exert their energy redefining community boundaries, the very neoliberal processes that they are indirectly challenging are allowed to continue. The result is that the backlash solves nothing: material uncertainty for native-born whites persists, immigrants remain at the margins more criminalized and racialized than before, and pro-corporate initiatives continue unscathed. In light of this disturbing conclusion, I end by reflecting on some alternative possibilities to resist neoliberalism in more effective and inclusive ways.

IMPLICATIONS: TOWARD A PRO-IMMIGRANT POPULISM

The implications I offer based on my research findings are broken down into three areas: reclaiming collective identity, exiting the state of denial, and fighting for inclusive economic justice. While I focus on Hazleton, these findings, like the rest of my dissertation, can be generalized to other similarly situated small cities and towns who have been paralyzed by the paradox of community as they seek to cope with the changes brought on by the new political-economic order.

Reclaiming Collective Identity

Kevin Koegan's (2002) comparison of immigration politics in California and New York is instructive for understanding the importance of collective identity construction and anti-immigrant backlash. And, indeed, we can read his work as a lesson in easing ethnic tension. He describes how in California, immigrants are viewed as threats in the state's collective consciousness, while in New York an "immigrant as us" (228) identity is most common. The result is vastly different responses to immigration in each state. As he writes, "symbolic contexts significantly influence immigrant politics by providing cultural resources for the construction of collective identity" (225).

Symbolic contexts, he goes on to point out can include acts as simple as place naming and monument making. New York embraces its immigrant culture in this way with imagery such as Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty, and ethnic festivals. California, in sharp contrast, has been "relatively void of positive spatial symbols of immigrants, and the role immigrants played in the construction of the region goes largely unrecognized." Instead, "the contemporary meaning of the term "immigrant" takes on much more negative connotations among the Anglo population of Southern California" (230).

In my pursuit of understanding the construction of Hazleton's collective identity, I paid particular attention to whether the types of symbols Koegan describes exist in Hazleton. What I found is that despite the city's rich history of exploitation,

persistence, and willingness to organize and stand up against economic injustice (e.g., Novak 1978), very little of that information is accessible in Hazleton. The Hazleton Historical Society maintains a humble museum in an old firehouse situated in what is now the predominately Latino/a section of the city. Upon touring that museum, one is inundated with artifacts from the 1930s, 40s, and 50s while very little from earlier eras is on display. To learn about the exploitation associated with the coal industry, you need to venture past recreations of mid-twentieth century businesses and schools into a small backroom on the second story of the old building. In contrast to other towns in the Anthracite Region, Hazleton is also void of a statue or marking embracing its earlier immigrant heritage. Strangely, a statue of Christopher Columbus stands proudly in a park in the center of town. Even the tragic Lattimer Massacre is commemorated with only a small stone.

In order to more fully realize the similarities that today's immigrants have with the ancestors of Hazleton residents—indeed, how the experience of the meatpackers of today is remarkably similar to that of the coal miners of yesterday—it is important that reminders of these similarities are made apparent. That is to say, efforts need to be made to increase the class-consciousness of Hazleton residents thereby emphasizing *similarity* with new Latino/a immigrants. As I have shown, the tendency of residents in this context is to emphasize difference, but collective identity markers such as the "Unity Mural" Agapito Lopez has suggested would help draw attention to just how much folks who are now living side-by-side actually have in common.

Public education campaigns that teach youth and adults alike about the city's *complicated and at times tenuous* history might have a similar positive effect. Ruth M. Mann (2000:207), in her study of the construction of the domestic violence problem in a similar local context agrees, noting, "the solution is social awareness" rather than allowing the construction of problems to be "rooted in bad faith attempts to control rather than responsibly confront the reality of the situation." We saw strands of this in Hazleton following the Cabrera murder when local residents opened up about their fears and local professors discussed with the community the dangers of relying on stereotypes as was done in generations back. This sort of talk is crucial, and needs to arise not just when coping with tragedy.

Exiting the State of Denial

Through the course of my research, I found few people who were willing to admit that Hazleton was in a state of decline. Most, instead, latched on to the mirage that Hazleton remains an "All-American City." Because my findings suggest that this state of denial only makes things worse, I propose that residents more frequently discuss with honesty and openness the challenges the city faces. As I see it, this is a necessary precursor to working through these challenges.

As it stands now, Hazleton leaders and residents alike seem unwilling to engage in any dialogue that requires them to admit the city's shortcomings. A community report authored by Zogby International (Zogby 2007:10-12), for example, detailed some of the issues facing Hazleton and it provided a list of research-based

recommendations for what the city might do: “encourage a small city atheistic,” “take advantage of key community assets and build civic amenities,” “create and nurture historic districts,” and “develop local parks” were among the suggestions. The report was thorough and indeed could have been a step in the right direction. Yet, after its publication, the Zogby study was dismissed as a “political manifesto” that “left a bad taste in everyone’s mouth” (Standard-Speaker 2007). Barletta, upset about the report’s finding that racism was widespread in the city and that a mayoral challenger should step up, likewise dismissed the report, noting that “there wasn’t really much in that study worth looking at” and complaining that “he never interviewed me” (Young 2007).

The city levied a similar reaction against a Temple University professor who based an entire course around Hazleton. The idea was that the “War in Hazleton” would serve as a useful outlet for discussing many pressing contemporary issues. When news of the course leaked, however, Mayor Barletta quickly challenged the professor by again projecting his exclusionary perspective as the one-right-way to view what is going on in the city: "I'm surprised and bewildered how a taxpayer-funded school could offer a course without interviewing one of the main principals that the course deals with," he said. "There's no way that this course is not being slanted in one direction, which is unfortunate for the students, if that's the case” (Associated Press 2010).

My own research likewise faced such criticism. I presented my content analysis of the media's coverage of the two homicides (i.e., Chapter 3) at the *Immigration Matters* forum at nearby Bloomsburg University in April of 2009. The local press covered my talk on the front page and took commentary from the mayor who dismissed my accusations of differential media coverage by declaring simply that the newspaper reported factually. He also avoided a critical discussion and instead reinforced the necessity to "protect" his citizens from the "threat" he helped manufacture: "Obviously we were having an illegal immigration problem," he said "Enough was finally enough" (Light 2009). Subsequent letters to the editor similarly proved unwilling to engage in thoughtful discussion, accusing me of failing to talk to the mayor on the issue.

Of course, we would expect this negative reaction to research given what I outlined here. These findings contradict community identity, and as we have learned, the moment that identity is questioned it is defended. Accounts from the village of Springdale, the subject of Vidich and Bensman's (1958/2000) *Small Town in Mass Society* reveal equally harsh reactions in other contexts:

> The featured float of the annual Fourth of July parade today followed an authentic copy of the jacket of the book Small Town in Mass Society, done large scale… Following the book cover came residents of [Springdale], riding masked in cars with the fictitious names given them in the book. But the pay-off was the final scene, a manure-spreader filled with very rich barnyard fertilizer, over which was bending an effigy of "The Author."

I realize that this may very well be my fate as well, but it is a worthwhile risk to develop more fully an understanding of what is going on in contexts like this. The reality is that if the proper medicine that will alleviate current hardships is to be found, such unwillingness to openly discuss issues needs to end. Community leaders can learn from examples in places like Braddock, Pennsylvania where Mayor John Fetterman has been open about the difficulties and challenges that he faces in trying to rebuild an old steel town. Rather than clinging to a nostalgic image of the city's past, Fetterman has opened up a dialogue about social and economic justice while exploring alternative means to getting the city back on its feet (Streitfeld 2009). In short, rather than finding commonalities with other cities that have been unwelcoming to new immigrants, Hazleton needs to learn from and work with similar communities who have been confronting economic challenges head-on.

Fighting for Inclusive Economic Justice

These suggestions point to the need for an inclusive economic justice approach in Hazleton. Such an approach would cast aside overly nostalgic and exclusionary rhetoric and take into account the real-life needs of *all* workers—native-born and immigrant alike. In a compelling article printed in *The Nation* at the peak of the recent restrictionist wave, Andrea Batista Schlesinger (2007:6) makes a call for us to move toward what she calls a "pro-immigrant populism." She is disturbed by how the so-called "new-populists" on both the right and the left have "opted for a fiery protectionist rhetoric instead of appealing both to Americans and immigrants as

workers with common interests." "They opted for fences," she writes, "instead of proposals that would align immigration policy with the real needs of the economy." This is not unlike what I have described here. Community members, guided by local politicians and economic leaders, have hid behind a nostalgic rhetoric rather than forming alliances with immigrant workers who have arrived in Hazleton as a result of the very globalizing processes which have white working class Americans at odds. "That's a shame," Schlesinger (2007:7) rightly points out "because out of this debate can come a coalition of workers— native and immigrant—ready to tackle the fierce stranglehold of the big-business lobby on our government."

Batista acknowledges, I have here, that the economic realities working class Americans face are indeed difficult. "That *is* threatening!" she admits. But the reality is that "12 million unauthorized immigrants are here today aren't going anywhere, and we have to make sure they're incorporated into our economy in a way that doesn't undermine US workers." How do we do that? She writes:

> [I]f we want to avoid a race to the bottom between native and immigrant workers, we must create a policy that strengthens the workplace rights of immigrant workers. Simply put, when some workers labor without protected rights, the protected rights of all workers are jeopardized. After all, for most employers faced with a choice between a legal worker with rights and recourse, and one they can exploit with impunity, the choice is all too obvious.

But just as the current debate ignores class-based concerns, an economic justice approach must be careful not to obfuscate the intersecting inequalities of race and class (and gender). Fran Ansley (2001:400, 397), reflecting on her ethnographic work with

the plant closings movement, makes this clear. She discusses how early economic justice frames in the movement focused narrowly on giving local communities sufficient legal power to reign in otherwise footloose corporations. She realized later, however, that this narrative failed to take into account the distinct needs of the Latino/a immigrants who were being affected by the same processes. In the wake of globalization, she thus warns of the exclusionary potential of strictly class-based movements (see also Frankenberg 1993; Ernst 2010). Lawyers and activists alike need to focus instead on the "possibilities for cross-race movement-building and solidarity."[308]

A model organization for this type of movement exists in Mississippi. The Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance (MIRA) embodies an approach that is attentive to both race- and class-based concerns. MIRA "works across the state to reach out to immigrants and allies, support communities working for justice and tolerance, and educate Mississippians about the contributions and struggles of immigrants in our state."[309]

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[308] The same suggestion can apply to litigant groups. As I have shown, the ACLU's decision to file a narrow based-based approach neglected the economic hardships faced by all involved and therefore likely limited the judicial impact the Lozano decision (e.g., Longazel and Fleury-Steiner in press). A more encompassing litigation strategy might have had more positive effects (see also Goluboff 2007).

[309] See http://www.yourmira.org/about/organizing-outreach/ (accessed March 4, 2011).

As we have seen, nearly all actors in this drama have failed to evoke issues of economic justice in their narratives. This is unfortunate given that almost across-the-board the actors I have met with have a stake in these issues. Ordinary residents, despite feelingly economically squeezed, focused primarily on reasserting their identity in race-based terms; CPH, though aware of the issues many immigrant laborers face, focused on conforming to the whitened identity that the majority constructed; and VOP members, though admitting to discussing CAN DO "here and there… but not a whole lot"[310] likewise resorted to an exclusionary narrative about what it means to be an American. Given that the same economic processes are disaffecting groups on both sides of the so-called "immigration" debate, there is certainly promise for the building of solidarity in an inclusive economic justice approach. The challenge is bringing these debates to the surface.

It is understandable that many may be reluctant to embrace such an approach. The elephant in the room may very well be that if we dismantle the few economic development projects that are working, we may experience utter failure. Would the city go under without CAN DO? One man expressed these sentiments best when he referred to CAN DO as a "necessary evil."[311] They may bring in undesirable industry, but at least they are bringing *some sort of industry*. I would acknowledge that this may

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[310] Personal interview with Dawn Nowaski; August 10, 2009.

[311] Mini Focus Group participant; December 7, 2009.

be party true, but there is no reason to throw the baby out with the bathwater. An important economic development group like CAN DO can exist while at the same time economic development alternatives are explored.

Plenty of evidence suggests that alternatives to development are feasible, and that, faced with pressure from the community, the CAN DO group might be willing to experiment with some of these. For instance, CAN DO might reconsider engaging Hazleton's growing population of Latino/a entrepreneurs, especially if there was cross-race pressure from the community to do so. The organization or whatever development entity might emerge in their place might also consider heightening their attention to locally-owned investment alternatives which would have "the effect of pumping money into a local economy, in contrast to the extraction of capital to corporate headquarters elsewhere" (Bookser-Feister and Wise 1990:106). Indeed, many local workers such as Norm—the man I quoted in the introduction who is highly skilled but now merely loads a furniture truck—have valuable skills that can be harnessed for local-level projects that too often are contracted out to extra-local firms. Regardless of the approach, what is most important is that the needs of the entire community are taken into consideration. That is to say, "to stop the abuse and injury that is occurring daily, the state's citizens must become actors in the economic development debate,

from the county courthouse to the statehouse" (Bookser-Feister and Wise 1990:106).[312]

In the neoliberal era, Hazleton residents may have indeed "lost their city." But clinging to racialized idealizations will only makes things worse. To take our city back, a concerted effort must be made to reorient our values, to more practically and honestly think through the challenges we face, and to work *inclusively* for economic justice.

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[312] An organization out of North Carolina known as Southerners for Economic Justice (SEJ) embodies the sort of organization that may benefit Hazleton. Opposing economic *and* racial injustice, this organization has fought against the very sort of *anti-community* development initiatives that have plagued the former coal town.

APPENDIX A

DATA AND METHODS

In a sense, the title of my dissertation has a double meaning: this is *my* city, too. Hazleton, Pennsylvania is where I was born and raised and I still have many friends and family who live in the area. I chose to conduct a case study of the IIRA for my dissertation research in November of 2006 after realizing that the case had generated national attention. I had heard about the ordinance prior to that from folks back home keeping me abreast on local happenings, but it was not until this point that I realized this was not just a case of ugly small town politics but rather a situation that warranted thorough sociological examination. Given my familiarity with the city and the incredible access I would have as a former resident, I was uniquely qualified to conduct such research.

In this appendix, I describe first how my thinking came together for this project. While only a case study, it was not long until I realized that the events that transpired in Hazleton demanded multiple levels of analysis and jumped across loosely related or even seemingly disparate topics. To study the political, economic, and legal factors surrounding the passage of the IIRA I would have to entertain, at once, individual, organizational, community, state, national, and global concerns which relate equally to issues of immigration, economic decline, legal mobilization, and

criminalization. Following Michael Burawoy's (1998:5) conception of the extended case method—an approach that "applies reflexive science to ethnography in order to extract the general from the unique, to move the 'micro' to the 'macro,' and to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on preexisting theory"—I describe in the following pages how my problem-driven research involved following leads, exploring new angles of inquiry, revisiting initial ideas, and moving back and forth from broader considerations (i.e., globalization and the rise of neoliberalism) to more specific ones (i.e., ordinary citizens' attitudes toward newcomers). I then make a few reflexive comments about "studying home" before providing a detailed chapter-by-chapter breakdown of the data I acquired and the methodologies I employed.

In The Field

After deciding on Hazleton's IIRA as a topic of inquiry, I began poking and prodding at various sources and talking with as many people as possible about the case. Crime was theme that resurfaced quite often in these initial contacts—the Kichline killing specifically and a perceived rise in violent crime more generally. I thus began my inquiry by investigating in more detail the events leading up to the passage of the ordinance. I did this by studying in-depth local newspaper coverage of the homicide. Here I noticed quite quickly that the media were delivering a racialized narrative that depicted the previously homogeneous city of Hazleton as being "invaded" by a group of hapless "illegal" immigrant "thugs." When I compared this to

the media coverage of a homicide that was committed just months in which a Latino man was the victim, these suspicions were confirmed as I noticed stark differences between the media's response to each case. It was clear at this point that Hazleton's ordinance was a local example of the trend toward criminalizing immigrants that others have pointed to in more national contexts (e.g., Nevis 2010).

My early focus, then, was on the politics of exclusion—I explored the criminalization of racialized immigrants in Hazleton. This was an interesting and important inquiry to be sure, but it did not help me get at what was unique about this case. Why Hazleton? Why a local ordinance? And what factors have attracted immigrants into Hazleton in the first place? My next step, then, was to examine the economic history of the city of Hazleton, exploring the historical trajectory that produced the current conditions of both widespread economic change and anti-immigrant backlash.

This inquiry led me to a wonderful book on the history of Hazleton and the surrounding Anthracite Coal Region by Tomas Dublin and Walter Licht (2005) entitled *The Face of Decline*. It was here that I learned about the fall of the coal industry and the attempts made by local groups like CAN DO to bring the city of Hazleton and surrounding areas back to economic fruition. I also learned from this book about an important data source, the CAN DO archive, which proved vitally important in helping me uncover the links between CAN DO, *Cargill*, KOZ, and Hazleton's more general economic history—issues I had just begun engaging with

around the same time. The authors had studied the archive and provided a compelling account of CAN DO's early days, but their historical work did not take into consideration the recent changes the organization had undergone. At that, I contacted the authors and CAN DO and was granted access to the archive.

It has been said that the longitudinal nature of archival data helps to shed light on historical progressions and changes (Welch 2000). Undoubtedly, the shifting organizational prerogatives of CAN DO specifically and the economic changes experienced by Hazleton more generally over time became clear to me because of this analysis (see Fleury-Steiner and Longazel 2010). In between visits to the archive, I took steps to make connections between transformations I noticed in CAN DO's organizational activities and broader economic shifts, and I identified and investigated further several critical junctures (e.g., Gal and Bargal 2002) where CAN DO appeared to rethink its mission in light of broader processes. In short, my study of CAN DO was consistent with Burowoy's (1998:5) call to "connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on preexisting theory."

The archival analysis and the subsequent conversations with relevant local actors that followed thus allowed me to draw parallels between what was going on in Hazleton and what was going on in immigration politics throughout the globalizing world. In fact, that analysis led to the publication of a piece entitled *Neoliberalism, Community Development, and Anti-Immigrant Backlash in Hazleton, Pennsylvania*

which applied Calavita's (2005) conception of immigrants as "useful invaders" to a more local context in the United States (Fleury-Steiner and Longazel 2010).

The Hazleton case thus began to emerge as a local example of the national—and, indeed, global—immigration politics we have seen in recent decades: inclusion for economic survival on one hand and an ugly politics of exclusion on the other. With that in place, I began to wonder: How do people on the ground experience these politics? Having great access to the city of Hazleton and a unique first-person understanding of local culture, I wanted to learn how local people had made sense of what was going on. CAN DO and its support for neoliberal legislation like KOZ, I learned, were the reason immigrants arrived in Hazleton. Why is not anybody talking about *that*? Why the focus on what I found by this point to be a largely fabricated story about the social ills and harms that undocumented immigrants have brought to this once-prosperous coal town? Around the same time, I was also becoming interested in the law's ability to settle the turmoil in the city. Seeing as though the *Lozano* decision overturned the ordinance, I wanted to find out whether it had any real effects.

To investigate these questions, following others who have studied law's role in fostering or impeding social change (e.g., McCann 1994; Silverstein 1996; Kostiner 2003; Dudas 2008), I turned to activists, a group who, as Luker (1984:250) points out, represent the "purest" cases. Whereas before I relied primarily on print sources, this stage of the research allowed me to talk with the actual actors for whom "the issue was

so salient that they felt they had to take action on it… they are not only the ones who shape the movement; they are the ones for whom the issue is most salient."

These interviews added much nuance to my understanding of the Hazleton case and revealed a great deal about how the early narratives emerging out of Hazleton (i.e., politician's criminalization narrative; CAN DO's hegemonic, pro-growth narrative) ended up shaping the conflict on the ground. I soon began to realize, in other words, that within the emerging neoliberal climate, efforts to mobilize are in large part constrained by the context in which they take place. In Hazleton, it appeared as though the taken-for-grantedness of neoliberalism and the power of the law and order discourse used by officials fundamentally shaped the debate going forward in ways that were detrimental to immigrants and their advocates.

Even with this new layer of complexity, however, I still had a missing link. I was finding that neoliberalism is hegemonic and that residents were essentially duped into believing that it was a barrage of undocumented immigrants and not a series of decisions made by developers (or, for that matter, broader political-economic shifts) that caused the city to change. Yet, it was hard to believe that residents were so naïve. Could it be that they were blind to the economic realities that the city had been experiencing? Doubtful. The empty storefronts and cracked sidewalks are hard to miss. In the final stage of my fieldwork, I thus tried to tie things together by talking with ordinary residents. My hope was to get a sense of how they experienced and made sense of the economic change Hazleton had undergone. It was here when I stumbled

upon the important insight that in the face of change people reassert their identity and reimagine their community in the most idealistic of terms. Hazleton residents were not blind to the changes the city was experiencing. To the contrary, they were unwilling to see problems as having emerged from within their own city's walls. They craved, in other words, an outside scapegoat upon which they would pin their concerns. This is why the fantastical narratives of the Mayor and the decisions made by CAN DO were accepted so graciously. And this is why efforts at mobilizing were so constrained. In short, this discovery allowed me to make important connections between the global and the local as I sought to expand upon theories of law and social change.

Studying Home: Some Notes on Reflexivity

While conducting fieldwork, I remained attentive to how my role as a former area resident was affecting the data I was gathering. After much reflection, I emerged convinced that my dual position as a sociologist and former resident provided me unique access and helped me collect data I may not have been able to obtain had my own social position been different. Others who have conducted ethnographic research in small, socially turbulent communities (e.g., Ginsburg 1984; Stein 2001) admit having to hide, negotiate, or justify their identities, but this was not the case for me. I know the ways of the region. There is a system of values and communication that I am familiar with and know how to operate in. I think residents sensed this. When we spoke, it was like a conversation between old friends rather than a researcher prying at a reluctant subject. Hazleton people, it seemed, knew I was "one of them," and, as a

result, they seemed especially willing to open up. I rarely got the sense that people were trying to sugarcoat the answers they gave me. Their responses, even about controversial topics like race, economy, and immigration, sounded a lot like the local talk I had grown accustomed to hearing from these folks in previous years.

Being a native-born resident of the city thus had its benefits. But were there any drawbacks? I was able to notice only one. At times, I felt locals were not as thorough in their explanations as they otherwise might have been because they felt that, as a local, I was already "in the know" and elaboration was therefore unnecessary. When I told one man I was interested in learning about how the city has changed, he replied, "I don't have to tell you that, you are from here, you know how it's changed." I overcame this by explaining to respondents that it is important that I document their thoughts, and I encouraged them, at times, to speak to the tape recorder, rather than to me. Although it was at times a bit discouraging, however, I do not think this burden significantly altered by interview data. Most respondents, in time, did elaborate their position quite thoroughly.

Luckily, the benefits of being an 'insider' awarded me did not come with a set of major corresponding drawbacks. To the contrary, activists on both sides of the local conflict were willing to open up. Indeed, just as locals viewed me as one of their own, so too did opponents of the IIRA view me as an ally—as someone who, like them, was working toward easing the tensions that have emerged in the city. This was something I am not surprised by, however, because the feeling is mutual. I also self-identify as a

member of each of these groups. I may be critical of them at times in this dissertation, but my motivation for undertaking this project in the first place was that I sympathize deeply with folks on both sides of this so-called debate. Hazleton is dying and that troubles me greatly. At the same time, Latino/a immigrants are facing a wave of backlash and that also has me deeply disturbed. Thus while passionate about the topic, my sympathy for "both sides" has allowed me, in my estimation, to remain objective to and study the case as it unfolded before me. I do not see "good guys" and "bad guys" in this story, but rather people reacting to a situation in the ways our culture has taught them to and using the resources that our social system has made available to them to try to make the best of the current conditions.

DATA AND METHODS BY CHAPTER

Chapter 2: CAN DO and Hazleton's Economy

The data from Chapter 2 come primarily from my in-depth analysis of CAN DO's archives. In their downtown Hazleton offices, CAN DO houses a massive scrapbook-style collection of material pertaining to the organization from their founding in 1956 until the present day. The archive contains mostly newspaper clippings although other materials such as pamphlets, photographs, and award documentations are also included. In all, the archive consisted of 22 temporally ordered "books" when I studied it. Each book contained about 100 items pertaining to a period ranging from one to several years. According to CAN DO staff, the archive

was originally maintained in-house, but the task has since been relegated to a public relations firm. Prior historical research on the region has utilized this valuable source and confirmed that is both expansive and up-to-date (e.g., Dublin & Licht, 2005). In fact, I determined that the CAN DO collection contains many news articles reporting on Hazleton's economy that are unavailable elsewhere (e.g., local public libraries). I got access to this archive initially in December of 2007 and again in July of 2008. On both occasions, I spent several days at the site reading and taking copious notes.

After identifying several critical junctures of CAN DO's organizational life to investigate further (see above), I extended my archival analysis to a number of different realms. For instance, I approached each of the boards CAN DO "sold" the KOZ initiative to and obtained meeting minutes. I also contacted a number of local activists who have spoken out against CAN DO after reading about them in the archive (see Table 2). The archive also led me to the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development in Harrisburg where I was given access in December of 2009 to CAN DO's application for KOZ status.

A number of other materials were also instrumental in my efforts to learn more about Hazleton's economic past and present. I relied heavily, for example, on two self-published histories of the CAN DO organization (CAN DO 1974; CAN DO 1991), information posted on CAN DO's website (www.hazletoncando.com), community newsletters and pamphlets that were not included in the archive (e.g., CAN DO 2007), and a 50th anniversary DVD given to me by the organization. I also spoke formally and

informally with a number of individuals who have extensive knowledge about Hazleton's economy. Early on, I spoke with a state legislator, David Argall, who is very knowledgeable about the politics of KOZ (see also Argall 2006), and he provided me with important background information. I also spoke with a prominent member of Hazleton's Latino/a business community to understand further the Latino/a community's relationship to CAN DO. A member of one of the local boards that approved KOZ graciously took the time to sit down with me, as did two active residents who are very involved with and knowledgeable of city politics. At the conclusion of my field research (e.g., December 2009), I interviewed the organization's current president and long time executive, W. Kevin O'Donnell asking him questions pertaining directly to some of my earlier findings regarding the life of the organization. Table 2 provides details on each of these interviews. [313]

[313] With the exception of the two public officials—Argall and O'Donnell—all names listed on this table are pseudonyms.

Table 2. Economic Leaders and Active Residents

Name	Role	Interview Date
David Argall	State Representative	1/11/2008
Eduardo Rodriguez	Latino Business Owner	4/30/08
Harold Bates	Local Board Member	12/2/09
Charlie Dagos	Active Resident	12/2/09
Helen Nance[314]	Active Resident	12/3/09
W. Kevin O'Donnell	CAN DO President	12/3/09
Pauleen Jasper	Active Resident	12/9/09
Kelly Eli	Active Resident	12/9/09
Frank Halliday	Active Resident	12/9/09

Chapter 3: The Events Leading up to the IIRA

I used two primary sources of data in Chapter 3: a content analysis of the local media's coverage of the murders of Derek Kichline and Julio Calderon, and an analysis of public officials' discourse at two Hazleton City Council meetings. With few outside news outlets reporting on the local homicides, my media analysis was limited to articles appearing in Hazleton's primary newspaper, the *Standard-*

[314] Nance was a Concerned Parents activist as well as a resident who was active in economic issues. I met with her on two occasions to discuss these issues separately.

Speaker.[315] Using that newspaper's on-line database and eliminating articles that discussed the events in little detail,[316] I was able to gather a small but rich sample of media reporting on each case. Closer inspection revealed three temporal patterns of reporting on each case: when the suspects were first identified (i.e., *reaction*), when officials responded publicly to the homicide (i.e., *response*) and when journalists looked back on the case and provided it with a legacy (i.e., *reflection*). In all, I studied 6 articles covering the Kichline case (e.g., Jackson 2006a; Jackson 2006b; Jackson 2006c; Gregory 2006; Jackson and Gregory 2006; Kelly 2006) and 5 articles covering Calderon's murder (Ragan 2005; Gregory 2005; Monitz 2005; Jackson 2005; Gregory 2005).

I also obtained audio tapes of Hazelton City Council meetings. I chose to focus on the meetings where the ordinance was the primary agenda item: on June 15, 2006 it was proposed and on July 13, 2006 it passed. I transcribed and analyzed more than five hours of tape from these two meetings.

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[315] I refer to the *Standard-Speaker* as Hazleton's primary newspaper because it is the only paper published daily in Hazleton. Additionally, it covers Hazleton events more extensively than other papers published in Northeast Pennsylvania. According to staff, the *Standard-Speaker* is read by approximately 24,000 people each day, primarily those living in and around Hazleton. Founded in 1866, this newspaper has served the role of the city's primary printed news source for decades. It is worth noting that a Spanish newspaper, *El Mejensaro*, has been growing rapidly in recent years, although in 2006 it was a monthly paper and it did not cover either of the events I was interested in studying in any detail.

[316] Articles that focused on court cases, for example, emphasized the courtroom drama and lacked any real discussion about the events or the actors involved.

Chapter 4: Ordinary Residents

To get a sense of how community members were talking about relevant issues "on the ground" I attempted to speak with as many "ordinary" (i.e., residents who are not legal actors, public officials, nor activists) Hazleton residents as possible. I conducted both formal and informal interviews with many residents. In the formal interviews, I used one of three formats: most (8) participated in a peer group (e.g., Sasson 1995); some (2) participated in a mini-focus group[317]; and one (1) participated in a one-on-one interview. Particular residents participated in particular methods based on their preference or convenience.

I obtained my sample of ordinary residents using three data collection strategies. First, I telephoned residents by randomly drawing numbers out of the phone book. This effort was largely unsuccessful, producing just one participant out of hundreds of calls. Interestingly, many were reluctant to express their views about the ethnic conflict that had been taking place in the city. Some said their reluctance was due to their extreme views on the subject (i.e., one potential respondent said, "I'm kind

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[317] Many have noted that focus groups should contain at least four members (e.g., Morgan 1997). I recruited six participants for a group scheduled to meet on December 7, 2009 but, unfortunately, only two arrived at our scheduled time. Despite not reaching the four-person standard, I refer to this interview as a "mini focus group" because the participants entered the setting expecting to participate in a focus group, they did not know one another, and I took steps to treat the interview in the same manner that I conducted the larger focus group interview. Nevertheless, I am aware that the dynamics of this interview may have been significantly differed had more people participated.

of racist, you don't want me to participate") while others held back because they saw the issue as too clear-cut to discuss further (i.e., "the city has changed, we'll leave it at that"). I also solicited participants in public places (i.e., downtown, the local mall), asked local community organizations (i.e., a group that caters to senior citizens, social clubs, service organizations) to spread the word about my hunt for participants to their clients and members, and placed advertisements in the local newspaper and on local television. This effort was slightly more successful, producing two participants, although many of the same challenges I faced in the calling stage of recruiting resurfaced (i.e., a reluctance of residents to express their views in a semi-public forum or to elaborate upon their views at all). My final strategy was to create a snowball sample from those who already agreed to participate. This sampling method produced most of my participants. In fact, the eight participants in the December 2, 2009 focus group were peers recruited this way. I should note that I also made efforts to conduct focus groups with some of Hazleton ordinary Latino/a residents although these efforts proved largely unsuccessful.[318]

I have listed the demographics of the ordinary residents I interviewed formally in Table 3. The median age of my sample was 51 (average = 48.8), slightly higher than a median average age of the population of Hazleton at the time of the 2000 census

[318] While recruiting in public places, I did have six people agree to participate in a focus group, though when the time came to hold the session, no one showed.

(i.e., 41).[319] Of the 11 residents I spoke with, six were female and five were male. Four of the residents had high school educations, two attended some college, and four were college graduates. The respondents came from a variety of occupations, and some were either retired or unemployed.

The interview guide used in focus groups and interviews with ordinary residents is included in Appendix B. Notice that questions were purposively general. My goal, following Catherine Kohler Riessman (1993), was to keep questions as open-ended as possible in order to allow citizen's narratives to emerge on their own.

[319] Since I restricted my sample to residents over the age of 18, these slightly higher figures are to be expected.

Table 3. Ordinary Residents

Name (Pseudonym)	Date Interviewed	Gender	Age	Occupation	Education	Years lived in Hazleton
Betty Belatina	12/2/09	F	51	Pharmacy Technician	high school	51
Fran Binder	12/2/09	F	42	School Administration	college grad	42
Ron Davidson	12/7/09	M	71	Retired	college grad	50
Eddie Dolski	12/2/09	M	54	Carpenter	high school	54
Elaine Morello	12/2/09	F	51	n/a	high school	51
Lisa Museli	12/2/09	F	26	Speech Therapist	college grad	21
Paula Nolatano	12/7/09	F	n/a	Unemployed	n/a	n/a
Kevin Patterson	12/2/09	M	54	Unemployed	some college	29
Carol Salta	12/2/09	F	47	Secretary	high school	47
Larry Stevens	12/2/09	M	28	Teacher	college grad	25
Robert Thompson	12/7/09	M	64	Retired	some college	64

Despite these methods yielding only a small sample of respondents, my lengthy and relentless hunt for participants allowed me to chat informally with hundreds of Hazleton residents thereby increasing my knowledge of the folk understandings of Hazleton's immigration debate. Residents I made cold-calls to, for example, were often willing to talk with me, even if only for a few minutes, about their perceptions of

what was happening in the city. As I spent hours walking around downtown and in the local mall, I likewise found myself in a number of informal conversations. Many of these residents were unwilling to devote the substantial amount of time that an interview may have required but they happily gave me a short version of their attitudes while we sat on public benches or walked through the mall. I also took extensive field notes on small talk I overheard public places and on conversations I had in places like pubs or grocery stores. My continued personal connection to the city of Hazleton provided me with a great deal of data as well. Whenever I visited the area on non-research related trips (i.e., holidays) or spoke with a friend over the phone in the past four years, I remained attentive to how people talk about and make sense of the changes their city has been experiencing.

Last but not least, because I entered the field months after the IIRA had been passed, I also used letters to the editor written by Hazleton residents before and after the passage of the ordinance in order to gauge community sentiments over time. In other contexts, it has been determined that letters to the editor indeed serve the valuable purpose of demonstrating community sentiment (Smith, McLeod, and Wakefield 2005). I reviewed letters written from 2000 until 2009 containing relevant keywords (e.g., immigration, immigrants) that were available on the *Standard-Speaker's* online database.

Interviewing Activists

The interviews I conducted with activists make up the bulk of the data I use in the final three substantive chapters of this dissertation. My definition of activist includes anyone who is/was either an active member of an organization that emerged out of the local conflict over the IIRA or anyone who has engaged in a public activity (i.e., delivered a speech, joined an organization, organized a rally, etc.) independent of such organizations. Like other scholars who have studied activists in a sociolegal context (e.g., Luker 1986; Kostiner 2003), I used a snowball sample to identify activists, beginning with the names of those who appeared in sources I was reading about the topic (i.e., newspapers, blogs, etc.).

The questions that I used to guide my semi-structured interviews with activists are listed in Appendix C. These interviews were useful in two respects. First, many parts of the story I tell in this dissertation were unclear to me at the time I conducted my interviews and so the activists I spoke with played an important role in helping me to understand what happened, to whom, and why. Of course, interviews are less useful for gathering facts than they are for helping the researcher understand what interviewees "think with" (Swidler 2001:221). As such, I was particularly interested in the narratives activists used to describe these events. Here again my approach followed Riessman (1993) in that I intentionally set up my questionnaire in a way that allowed activists to go off on tangents that would reveal to me, through narrative, how they

made sense of the events which they describe.[320] Along the same lines, I hesitated to ask activists about their attitudes toward law, allowing legality to emerge organically as previous scholars of legal consciousness have done (Ewick and Silbey 1998).

As my interviews progressed and it became clear what role various individuals and groups were playing in the conflict, I decided to narrow my focus to three particular "waves" of activism. I focused on the following groups who mobilized in Hazleton following the passage of the IIRA: the Latino/a Leaders, the Voice of the People, USA, and the Concerned Parents of Hazleton. As explained, I also took steps to supplement these interviews with other data-collection strategies (e.g., participant observation, video analysis). A list of all activist participants and their characteristics follows my chapter-by-chapter breakdown (e.g., Table 5).

Chapter 5: The Latino/a Leaders

At the core of my study of the first wave of activism in Hazleton—the resistance efforts of the Latina/o Leaders—were the interviews I conducted with the three individuals who were outspoken in Hazleton after the ordinance was passed. When it became clear later, however, that these activists were vilified locally, I began seeking sources that would tell the story about the difficulties this wave of activism

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[320] I should note that I did, at times, temper respondent's answers a bit if I thought they were going too far astray. I also altered my questions a bit as I became increasingly aware of the events that had transpired and of what was emerging as important for the purposes of my research. As such, the interview guide in Appendix

faced. To that end, I relied on the city council tapes that I have already mentioned. I also drew from my interviews with anti-illegal immigration activists who made comments about the Latino/a Leaders in order to get a better sense of the particular discourse which was used to strike down this first attempt to resist the ordinance in Hazleton.

Chapter 6: The Voice of the People, USA

Twelve of the activists I interviewed report either playing a significant role in the creation of the Voice of the People, USA, being a member of the group for at least a short period of time, or having attended a number of the group's rallies. I supplemented these interviews with a participatory element. The Voice of the People, USA held seven public rallies from June 2007 until September of that year. They videotaped and made available on the Internet (e.g., on youtube.com or on sites maintained by activists such as diggersrealm.com) a number of speeches from five of these rallies. Thus while I was not in the field when this group was most active, these videos gave me the opportunity to conduct what might best be called a *virtual non-participant observation* of the group's efforts. I downloaded and watched each of the videos, transcribed the text of all speeches, and took extensive notes on elements of the rally made visible on the video such as the content of signs and audience responses.

C, in addition to being semi-structured, was also somewhat fluid and flexible while I was in the field.

I should note that activists did not record and post every speech nor was every rally accounted for in my data set. I should also note that the videos I have watched and downloaded do contain some editing (i.e., music added, etc). I have no reason to believe, however, that either of these shortcomings substantially limits the utility of this data source. The majority of speeches are included in my data set, providing me with an informative sample of what these events were like. In all, I downloaded more than six hours of video, studied more than 50 videos,[321] and analyzed text of about 38 pro-IIRA speeches given by activists. Table 4 lists details of those videos in my data set.[322]

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[321] Table 4 lists 48 total videos. I also watched videos not listed which featured press conferences held by the group and staged protests the group preformed.

[322] Again, it should be emphasized that this list is not exhaustive. Other rallies were held by this and other groups and others speakers appeared at each of these rallies. My listing on this table is only a reflection of the speeches I downloaded and transcribed.

Table 4. Pro-IIRA Rally Videos

Rally Title and Location	Date	Number of Videos /Speakers	Organizations Represented: VOP/Other Groups[323]	Total Duration
Rally In Support of Mayor Lou Barletta; Hazleton, PA	6/3/07	2 / 2	0 / 2	15 min 5 sec
Title N/A; Freeland, PA	8/26/07	11 / 10	6 / 4	1 hr 41 min 48 sec
Save America, Save Hazleton; Harrisburg, PA	9/1/07	13	2 / 11	1 hr 53 min 30 sec
Loyalty Day Rally; Hazleton, PA	5/1/08	14 / 8	4 / 4	1 hr 21 min 55 sec
Pro-America and Immigration Enforcement Rally; Shenandoah, PA	8/30/08	8 /5	2 / 2	56 min 42 sec

Chapter 7: The Concerned Parents of the Hazleton Area

Out of the sample of activists I interviewed who were in opposition to the IIRA, about nine were members of the Concerned Parents of the Hazleton Area (CPH). As was the case with the VOP activists, I relied on my interview data here as well as on a participatory element. Because this group was very active while I was in the field,

[323] Other groups represented at downloaded VOP rallies include: ALIPAC, the City of Hazleton, diggersrealm.com, illegalprotest.com, New Jersey Citizens for Immigration Control, Americans for Immigration Control, 9/11 Families for a Secure America, Pennsylvania House of Representatives, Latino Americans for Immigration Reform, You Don't Speak for Me. Individuals unaffiliated with any particular group also spoke.

I spent a great deal of time between April and June of 2009 observing their activity as a participant and as a non-participant observer. I attended a number of their meetings, volunteered at one of their events, and spent time in the group's office observing their functioning.

Table 5. Participant Characteristics, Activists

Name[324]	Interview Date	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Organization
Anna Arias	5/14/09	F	Latina	Latino/a Leader
Amilcar Arroyo	4/30/09	M	Latino	Latino/a Leader
Larry Boman	5/20/09	M	White	CPH
Dennis Debrowski	8/10/09	M	White	VOP
Charles Gaddy	6/9/09	M	White	Community Leader
Tavio Garza	7/31/09	M	Latino	CPH
Sergio Gonzalez	5/13/09	M	Latino	CPH
Lenny Harrison	7/26/09	M	White	VOP
Renee Lang	5/8/09	F	White	CPH
Agapito Lopez	5/6/09	M	Latino	Latino/a Leader
Daniela Lineras	6/18/09	F	Latina	VOP, CPH
Luis Lira	5/13/09	M	Latino	CPH
Helen Nance	5/6/09	F	White	CPH
Dave Nelson	5/18/09	M	White	VOP
Matthew Nicholas	7/11/09	M	White	VOP
Tiffany Norfold	6/24/09	F	White	VOP
Dawn Nowaski	8/10/09	F	White	VOP
Heather Richardson	6/22/09	F	White	VOP
Dan Riley	6/18/09	M	White	VOP, CPH
Lucia Rivera	7/11/09	F	Latina	CPH
Chuck Rizzo	7/29/09	M	White	VOP
Carl Roberts	6/8/09	M	White	VOP
Laurita Romero	7/26/09	F	Latina	CPH
Norm Vincent	8/1/09	M	White	VOP

[324] With the exception of two of the "Latino/a Leaders" who consented to having their real names used, all names on this list are pseudonyms.

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE: ORDINARY RESIDENTS

Section 1: Change and Everyday Life in Hazleton

Tell me about what has been happening in Hazleton over the last five years or so.

Describe for me what everyday life was like in the city of Hazleton in the past.

Describe for me what everyday life is like in the city of Hazleton now.

What kind of city do you remember Hazleton being in the past? What kind of city is Hazleton today?

Are you optimistic about or concerned about the city's future? Describe for me some of the reasons for your optimism or your concern.

Section 2: Immigration Issues

In recent years, many new immigrants have arrived in Hazleton. Tell me about what your interactions with these newcomers have been like? Where and when do you cross paths? Are these interactions positive or negative?

Do you think that it is possible for the new immigrants to assimilate into Hazleton's culture? How do you think this can be achieved or why do you think this cannot be achieved?

In your opinion, would assimilation be good or bad for the community?

How do you feel about the Illegal Immigration Relief Act (IIRA) proposed in Hazleton in 2006?

What kind of effect do you think the IIRA has had on the city of Hazleton?

Do you think the IIRA was an effective way to solve some of the problems that the city of Hazleton had been facing?

Section 3: The Economy

What are some of the biggest economic obstacles that residents of Hazleton are facing today?

How are the economic obstacles that the city faces today similar to or different from the economic obstacles you remember people facing in the past?

How satisfied are you with the jobs that are available in Hazleton?

In your opinion, what steps should leaders in the city take to assure a bright future for Hazleton?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE: ACTIVISTS

Demographic and Background Questions

How long have you been living in the city of Hazleton?

What is your age?

What is your race or ethnicity?

What is your occupation?

What activist organizations are you or have you been involved with?

How active would you say you have been in supporting/opposing the IIRA in the city of Hazleton?

About how many hours per week would you say you devote to issues related to the conflict in the city of Hazleton?

Has the amount of time you spent being active in the city increased or decreased?

General Attitudes and Opinions Regarding the Ordinance and the Legal Case

Tell me about where you stand regarding the City of Hazleton's proposal of the Illegal Immigration Relief Act (IIRA).

> Probe: Any invocations regarding legality

Why do you think the IIRA was proposed?

> Probe: legality

What are the primary reasons for your support/opposition to the IIRA?

Probe: Any invocations of legality

Develop a list and ask the respondent to elaborate on each reason.

What types of arguments do those who agree with you make to justify their support/opposition to the ordinance?

Probe: Any invocations of legality

Develop a list and ask the respondent to elaborate on each argument. I should pay close attention to those arguments that were not mentioned when he/she gave their reasons for supporting/opposing the ordinance. Ask why these inconsistencies exist.
What types of arguments do those who disagree with you make to justify their support/opposition to the ordinance?

Probe: Any invocations of legality.
Develop a list and ask the respondent to elaborate on each argument.

What are some of the problems that you have with the other side's arguments?

Probe: Any invocations of legality.

Develop a list and ask the respondent to elaborate on each problem.

If the IIRA was enforced, what types of effects do you think it would have had in the city of Hazleton?

Even though the IIRA was never enforced, do you see the proposal of the ordinance as having any significant effects in the city?

Do you think a local ordinance was an appropriate way to deal with some of the problems that they city of Hazleton has been experiencing?

What role do you see the IIRA as having in the broader, national debate over undocumented immigration?

Probe: legality, local-national dialectic

Other than undocumented immigration, what other issues do you think the debate over the IIRA has brought up?

> Probe: What role does the IIRA play in the national debate regarding those issues?

Are there any issues that are related to the IIRA and that are an important part of the debate that have been left out of discussions regarding the IIRA?

> Probe: Why do you think these issues have been neglected?

What do you think about Judge Munley's decision in *Lozano v. Hazleton*?

Do you think a legal case such as this was an appropriate venue for the conflict to be resolved in?

Activism and Social Change in Hazleton

What were relations like between long-time residents and recent immigrants in the city of Hazleton prior to the proposal of the ordinance?

> Note: If the respondent mentioned that he/she did not live in Hazleton prior to the ordinance, ask anyway, encouraging the respondent to use anecdotal evidence (i.e., what have those who have been here told you about what life was like?)

What are relations like between long-time residents and recent immigrants immediately after the ordinance was proposed?

> Probe: Re-ask in relation to respondents answer to previous question. The goal here is to assess how relationships among groups changed with the proposal of the ordinance.

What have relations between long-time residents and recent immigrants been like recently in Hazleton?

> Probe: Re-ask in relation to respondents answer to previous question(s). The goal here is to assess how relationships among groups changed with the proposal of the ordinance.

Do you think the decision in the legal case challenging the ordinance (i.e., *Lozano v. Hazleton*) did anything to improve/worsen the relations among conflicting groups in the city?

Probe: Invocations of legality or about the effect of legal mobilization more generally.

Probe: Make sure the response is geared toward their prior discussion of how things have changed in the city of Hazleton.

What type of tactics have those on your side of the debate used to advance their cause?

Which tactics do you see as being the most effective?

Probe: Try to encourage a discussion of the effectiveness of litigation from the anti-IIRA groups.

Probe: Try to relate the answers here to their discussions of social change in previous questions. That is, does the respondent see these effective tactics as responsible for the social change that occurred?

What tactics do you see as being the least effective?

Note: If the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of litigation/policy activism was not mentioned, ask how it compares to other tactics.

What type of tactics have those on the other side of the debate used to advance their cause?

Probe: Try to relate the answers here to their discussions of social change in previous questions. That is, does the respondent see these effective tactics as responsible for the social change that occurred?

Which of their tactics do you see as being the most effective?
The least effective?

Note: If the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of litigation/policy activism was not mentioned, ask how it compares to other tactics.

What have been some of the major limitations or setbacks to your efforts in supporting/opposing the IIRA?

Based on what you learned in your experience as an activist in Hazleton, what types of advice would you give to activists in other small cities promoting causes that are similar to yours?

Questions Specific to the Organization and the Activist

Tell me a bit about the group(s)/organization(s) that you are involved with.

> Probe: What are the group's goals?
>
> Probe: What approach has your group taken to achieve these goals?
>
> Probe: How did the group form?
>
> Note: If respondent is involved with more than one group, be sure to ask these questions as they pertain to each group he/she is involved with.
>
> Note: this question may be inappropriate if the respondent is involved with a longstanding group such as the ACLU.

How long have you been involved with this group?

Are there inconsistencies between general involvement and group involvement?

> Probe to see why this is the case.

Were you politically active prior to your involvement in the pro-/anti- IIRA movement?

What motivated you to get involved in the conflict surrounding the IIRA?

What groups do you see as being the most influential in promoting the types of changes that you have hoped to see in Hazleton? Why have these groups been effective?

What groups do you see as being the most influential in standing in the way of the types of changes that you have hoped to see in Hazleton? Why have these groups effectively limited your activism?

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