

SAVING PRIVATE ATZLAN:

PRESERVING THE HISTORY OF LATINO SERVICE IN WARTIME

David A Lopez, Ph.D.
Creighton University



This article examines contributions Latinos have made as servicemen during wartime. In this discussion, the legacy of Latino servicemen and their sacrifices in combat are juxtaposed with experiences of racism. It is argued the history of Latino service in wartime needs to be preserved as part of Latino heritage. Preserving these legacies writes Latinos into history and frames Latinos as positive contributors to this nation. Recommendations are made for ways to preserve this heritage.

INTRODUCTION

I could not help noticing the glaring omissions of the Spanish-named soldiers of the United States Army. They were either left out altogether or given an insignificant role. (Morin writing in 1966 on Latinos in novels and films)

I had looked forward to seeing the film *Saving Private Ryan*. I anticipated the film for some movie critics suggested it portrayed ethnic diversity among the soldiers (Delmont 1998). However, from what I could tell, the main characters were diverse only so far as there were Non-Latino Whites, a Jew, and the requisite Italian from Brooklyn. No African Americans were portrayed (this is accurate as the Armed Forces were not desegregated until Truman's Executive Order 9981 in 1948). However, except for a grave marker shown early on in the film with the name "Mike Martinez" written on it, Latinos² apparently did not participate in World War II. It seems little has changed since Morin's observation in 1966.

Steven Spielberg should have done his homework better. If he had, he would have recognized that in World War II 500,000 soldiers³ and sailors with Latino surnames served.⁴ In combat divisions, Mexican Americans were the most represented of any ethnic group. Twelve Latinos (the most of any ethnic group) won the Medal of Honor⁵ in World War II, the highest award bestowed for bravery by the U.S. (Cole 1995). Not only were there the Sullivan brothers⁶ (on which *Private Ryan* was loosely based), but there were the Lopez brothers, Frank and Louis. Private Louis Lopez was killed January 12, 1945 in Belgium and Lieutenant Frank Lopez died January 31, 1945 in Italy (Meil 1996). No one made a movie about them.

This paper discusses the contributions Latino servicemen have made during wartime.⁷ A recognition of the contributions of Latinos during wartime is needed for they are underrepresented and ignored not only in film, but also in history. Others have

written on this history (Morin 1966; Heller 1993; Cole 1995 & 1997). In this paper, I contrast this history with the indignities of racism. In parts of this discussion, I use some family history to explore the dichotomy of the Latino soldier; one who serves bravely for a country in which he is marginalized.*

As an example of the omission of Latinos from history, a Latino psychology professor and Vietnam veteran wrote:

I began to take note that something was missing during the celebration of July Fourth. It was very evident that Hollywood's portrayal of the heroes of freedom were white European males. I was never taught that American servicemen of Mexican ancestry proudly served in our wars to defend America, in the tradition and with the dedication of their heroic ancestors (Ramirez 1998).

My intent is not to glamorize war. War is an event unparalleled in its savagery and costs. However, it is the ultimate cost of war, the loss of human life, that makes it such a telling vehicle in which to examine issues of inequality and social injustice. It is my hope that this topic will be of interest to all of those concerned with these issues, both Latino and Anglo alike.

HEROES

I would like to point out that Latinos are not the only minority group who have sacrificed on behalf of this country. To cite just a few examples, Navajo Marines were instrumental in the Pacific campaign not only as combatants, but they were able to send messages in their native language which the Japanese were unable to translate. Ironically, Japanese Americans, many while their families were interred in the U.S., fought bravely in the European Theater, their units sustaining high casualties. The Tuskegee Airmen broke color barriers as African American aviators and demonstrated skill and courage in combat.

My interest in Latinos is based not only on my own research specialty, but also because I come from a family of Latino soldiers going back to my roots in Mexico (my grandfather rode with Pancho Villa during the Mexican

Revolution). More relevant to the present discussion, an uncle was part of the assault on the beaches of Normandy in World War II, my father is a highly decorated combat veteran from the Korean War, and I have an uncle and a cousin who both saw action in Vietnam.⁹ My family's situation is common to many Latinos from all parts of the country, for the history runs deep.

Latinos have been active in U.S. armed conflict dating back to the American Revolution. Bernardo De Galvez, Spanish Governor of Louisiana, swept the British from Southern Mississippi, led Spanish soldiers that defeated the British in Florida, and provided provisions to revolutionary troops. Approximately 7,500 Latinos fought for the Union and 2,500 for the Confederacy in the Civil War (Heller 1993). Sergeant Joseph H. De Castro from Boston was awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroism fighting for the Republic in the Civil War (AztecaNet 1998). In World War I, David Bennes Barkley served in Company A, 89th Division, 356th Infantry. The son of an Anglo and a Mexican mother, Barkley wanted to serve but did not want to be relegated to menial labor tasks, which were often assigned to Latinos. Using his father's name (who had abandoned the family), Barkley enlisted and was subsequently sent to Europe. In France, he lost his life on a reconnaissance mission looking for information on the enemy. After swimming across the icy River Meuse in France and drawing maps on the position of German artillery, he was shot. He was posthumously awarded the Croix de Guerre by France, the Croce Merito de Guerra by Italy, and the Medal of Honor by the United States (Vista 1992; Heller 1993).

The most comprehensive work on Latinos during World War II is Morin's *Among the Valiant* (1966). Morin describes the exploits of Latino Medal of Honor winners and other heroes, too numerous for this short paper. The stories speak of acts of heroism and sacrifice. Beginning with the Philippines and the Bataan death march, Latinos incurred heavy casualties. The history of Company E, 141st Regiment of the 36th Division is traced. Company E was composed primarily of Mexicans from Texas, many who had known each other since childhood and served together in a National Guard Unit. Their induction into combat came with landing at Salerno and the unit fought through Europe, reportedly being the outfit that captured Herman Goering. In the Pacific,

Latinos like Arturo Gonzalez of Oxnard, California, served bravely. Gonzalez flew P-40s and P-51s in 37 missions before being shot down by the Japanese over Burma and taken prisoner, only to later escape (Cole 1997).

The Normandy Invasion is a defining moment in 20th Century history for it was the beginning of the end of Nazi Germany and molded much of the world in which we now live. Everyday *Joses* did their part to shape this history. Men like Private Louis C. Martinez from Saginaw County, Michigan, who landed at Omaha Beach and later died of his wounds (Meil 1996). First Lieutenant Oswaldo Ramirez of the 1st Infantry saved approximately 12 men from drowning during the landing and was awarded the Bronze Star for his efforts (Cole 1995). The actions of these men not only helped shape history, but often became part of their personal histories, the memories staying with them for life. After landing in Normandy, my Uncle Joe fought across France and into Germany. In the last year of his life while suffering from Alzheimer's disease, he returned to the war. He would mistake my cousin for a French Partisan delivering secret messages and would experience flashbacks where he would shout for everyone to take cover from the approaching Nazis.

Latinos also served bravely during the Korean War (1950-53). Nine Latinos received the Medal of Honor and the Puerto Rican 65th Infantry Regiment was awarded 128 medals (Vista 1987). Private First Class Edward Gomez of Omaha, Nebraska (Company E, Second Battalion, First Marines, First Marine Division), committed the ultimate altruistic act when he:

Voluntarily moved down an abandoned trench to search for a new location for the gun [a machine gun] and, when a hostile grenade landed between himself and his weapon, he shouted a warning to those around him as he grasped the activated charge in his hand. Determined to save his comrades, he unhesitatingly chose to sacrifice himself and, diving into the ditch with the deadly missile, absorbed the shattering violence of the explosion in his own body.

From the official citation for Medal of Honor (in Morin 1996:269-270)

The stories of sacrifice continue. Corporal Benito Martinez, a machine-gunner in the Army, (Company A, 27th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division) held off overwhelming numbers of North Korean troops while manning a forward listening post, stemming an attack and giving his life to save his comrades. My father, Richard Lopez, fought in Korea. While there, he was awarded two Purple Hearts, a Bronze Star, a Silver Star, and spent time as a Prisoner of War (but escaped). He served in the 2nd Division, 9th Infantry which fought at Heartbreak and Bloody Ridges. The 2nd Division lost 7,094 men killed in action with many more wounded, taken prisoner, or missing. The losses of the Division inspired the commentator Walter Winchell to have reportedly said "if you have a son in Korea, you should write to him, but if you have a son in the 2nd Infantry Division, you should pray for him" (*Purple Heart* 1996). Like so many other Latinos, my father gave to his country while being denied basic rights and dignity back home.

During the Vietnam War, the spirit of the Civil Rights movement was active. Many questioned why so many men of color, who occupied the lowest

socioeconomic strata of our society, were experiencing disproportionate casualty rates. During the war, more Latinos served than any other ethnic group and servicemen of Mexican descent had the highest death rate, twice that of Non-Latino White servicemen (*La Raza* 1968 & 1970; Guzman 1969; McGovern 1972; Figueroa 1995). Latinos accounted for 19% of the total Vietnam casualties but represented only 4.5% of the general population during the war years (Heller 1993). Even so, Latinos served with distinction.

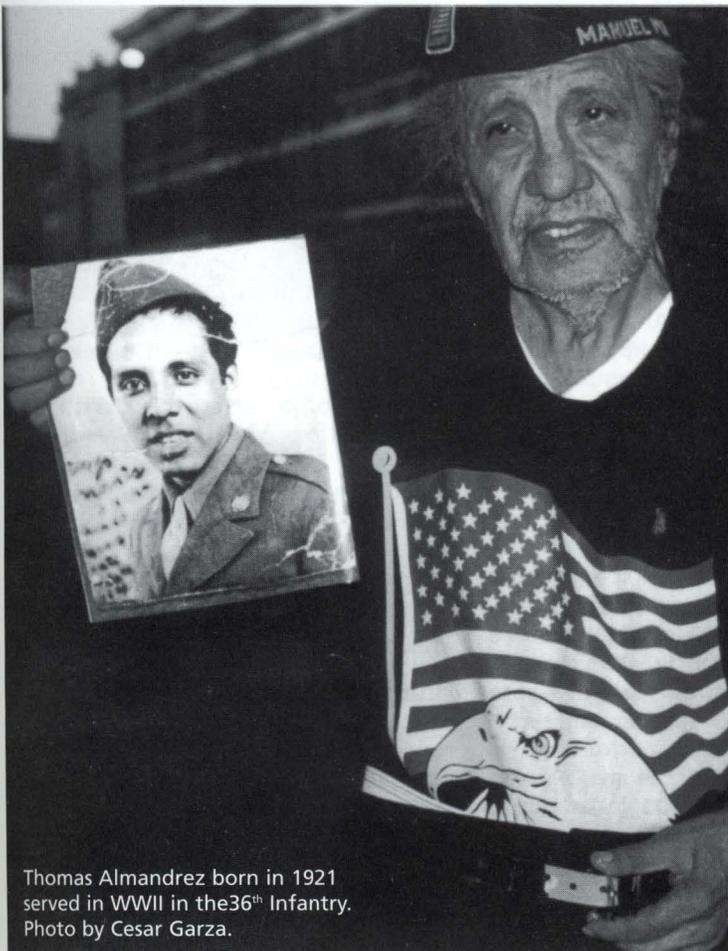
The legacy of Latinos in Vietnam is symbolized in Special Forces Sergeant First Class Issac Camacho, reported to be the first man captured in the conflict and Navy Ensign Edward Alvarez, a pilot, who was in captivity the longest of any U.S. serviceman. Coming full circle, Master Sergeant Juan Valdez was the last U.S. serviceman to leave Vietnam, shutting the embassy gates and boarding the last helicopter out of Saigon on April 20, 1975 (Heller 1993). Dr. Angel Jimenez was a combat surgeon in Vietnam who had trouble explaining why he was fighting a war for a country that wasn't his, but went nonetheless

because "'Nam wasn't about politics. It was about answering a call to duty and serving that call" (Jimenez 1987:38).

Marine Sergeant Alfredo Gonzalez (Company A, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines) from Edinburg, Texas, answered that call (Flores 1996). On February 4, 1968, Sergeant Gonzalez' platoon was ambushed near the city of Hue. He led the platoon to safety, neutralized North Vietnamese bunkers with hand grenades, then proceeded to retrieve a wounded comrade. While his platoon was pinned down, Sergeant Gonzalez moved toward the enemy and began to fire on and subsequently eliminate the hostiles. However, one last rocket came from the enemy's position and killed Gonzalez. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

Another Medal of Honor recipient was Green Beret Army Master Sergeant Roy P. Benavidez (Benavidez and Griffin 1986; Benavidez and Craig 1995). After having been wounded and being told he would never walk again, Benavidez returned to duty. While on an intelligence gathering mission in enemy territory, Benavidez' team came under attack. After sustaining several wounds,

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Thomas Almandrez born in 1921 served in WWII in the 36th Infantry. Photo by Cesar Garza.

Benavidez remained in action, saving the lives of eight soldiers and keeping intelligence documents from falling into enemy hands. Running to a helicopter after engaging in hand-to-hand fighting and carrying a mortally wounded comrade, Benavidez recalls "the last round in my stomach had exposed my intestines and I was trying to hold them in my hands" (Benavidez and Craig 1995:144). This from a man who in his childhood was denied service in a restaurant because of a sign that read "No Mexicans or Dogs Allowed" (Benavidez and Griffin 1987:77).

"WE DON'T SERVE MEXICANS" AND OTHER INDIGNITIES

Refusal of service in restaurants and other discriminatory acts related to food and dining are common themes in the history of racism in this country. Perhaps this is due to the symbolic nature of the ritual of eating (Lowenberg et al. 1968; Freedman 1977; Johnson 1987). Since eating is a shared experience, racists are inclined to separate the experiences. Also, racist stereotypes about the cleanliness of people of color is a contributing factor. This is why challenges to the system are met with such resistance as was seen in the early days of the Civil Rights movement when African American activists sat at "White" lunch counters. My father had such an experience in a restaurant after returning from Korea.

After his tour of combat duty ended, my father still had time to fulfill toward his military obligation. He spent a little while in California with his family after coming home, but then was assigned to Germany. In January of 1953, he and six privates left California on an airplane for Europe. He was a sergeant and in charge, being the ranking non-commissioned officer. All the soldiers were wearing their uniforms, my dad with his combat ribbons of valor. The flight was to New Jersey's Camp Kilner. There was a layover of the flight in Amarillo and the group went to town for lunch. He recounted the following:

We went to a restaurant to eat, we sat down and the whole thing you know, and started ordering. The waitress asked me if I was Italian. I said, "No, no I'm not, I'm Mexican." And she said, "Well I'm sorry sir, we

don't serve Mexicans." And I was in uniform, my ribbons from Korea and all that shit on me. So I just said, "Well, okay with me, well, I said a little more than that, but, here I am just coming back from Korea and the whole thing, got my ass shot for this supposed country of mine. So I said, "You don't want to feed me here, you don't want to give me anything to eat, that's fine with me." So, I got up to leave. And then the other six guys with me, they were white, and they said, "Well, if you can't eat here, we won't either." So we went down the street, some goddamned place in Amarillo there, some Mexican joint, we went in there to eat. So basically that's what happened.

The experience in Amarillo was not his first with racism, but it certainly left its ugly mark:

When we first moved into Huntington Park, where Calina [my aunt] was born, it was, at that time, Huntington Park was strictly a white neighborhood. I mean, they'd try to beat up on me and everything else you know. When I was in grade school. So I was accustomed, but not, I wasn't used to, hell, I'd gone overseas, I'd done my thing, I'm decorated and I come back and some pissy-ass waitress tells me, "Hey, well I'm sorry."

When I asked him how the experience made him feel . . .

I was kind of mad I guess. Really in a sense I felt, I guess, rejected by the United States. And it was only one little incident. But at that particular moment, I was pissed off at the whole world. I thought "What the hell did I go over and fight for?" To come here to Texas to hear, "Sorry, you can't eat here."

My father also related to me that as a child, he would hide his lunch bared under the table as to not be harassed by the Anglo children. This is similar to the story of Albert "Shorty" Padilla who had to "go beneath the bridge where the creek was and eat our tacos and tortillas. The students used to stand on top of the bank and call us 'Mexican Chile Beans'" (Padilla 1981). As further insult, Padilla was beaten by teachers for speaking Spanish in school. Yet "Shorty" served his country as a Seabee in World War II.

The juxtaposition of soldier/subordinate was made clear with the infamous "Sleepy Lagoon" trial and the so-called "Zoot Suit Riots."¹⁰ While men like Sergeant Lorenzo Gonzalez of the 39th Infantry Division, 1st Army were being tortured at the hands of German soldiers (Perez 1990) and Sergeant Sabine Ulibarri was flying missions over Europe in a B-17 (Ulibarri 1997), sailors on leave were attacking Latinos in Los Angeles for being "Un-American" (Valdez 1978; Mirande 1987; Martinez 1992; Tobar 1997). The defendants in the Sleepy Lagoon case were eventually exonerated and the "riots" were nothing more than racist hysteria. However, the case and the attacks are suggestive of the perversity of racist logic. This logic was made all too clear in the Felix Longoria incident (Green 1991).

Felix Longoria came from a small segregated Texas town named Three Rivers. Longoria was drafted in 1944 and left a wife and daughter behind while serving in the U.S. Army's 27th Infantry. On June 16th, 1945, Longoria's volunteer patrol was ambushed by the Japanese and he was killed in the fight. After the war, Longoria's wife, Beatrice, was informed that Felix's remains were to be shipped back to the U.S. In making arrangements for his funeral and his burial in the "Mexican" cemetery which was separated from the Anglos by barbed wire, she was informed by the local mortician that the services could not be held in the chapel because Whites would "resent the violation of local custom" (Green 1991:25). As a bit of sad but familiar irony, Longoria's family could not eat in a restaurant during the ordeal because it "didn't serve Mexicans" (Avila 1996). Beatrice sought help in the matter and eventually the story received international attention. With the intervention of Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, Longoria was buried in Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors on February 16, 1947. The Longoria case "provided a shining moment of unity against prejudice" and gave Latinos "leadership with ammunition in the battle for civil rights" (Green 1991:34). One of those instrumental in this process was Dr. Hector Garcia, who founded the G.I. forum in 1948.

Dr. Garcia served during World War II and became interested in veteran's affairs after the war (Cole 1995; Avila 1996). Garcia and the forum advocated for the rights of Latino veterans. It was

Garcia who Beatrice Longoria turned to for help (Green 1991). Garcia stated, "the G.I. forum was started simply to try to help veterans and their families with their problems of education, health, and welfare—not civil rights. When the Longoria case came up, then we moved into the regions of civil rights" (Avila 1996).

The Longoria incident brought to light the absurdity of first class soldiers being treated as second class citizens. Although the cost was too high, some positive outcomes did result from wartime service. Latino veterans gained some privileges that might otherwise not have been available to them. Wartime service yielded G.I. benefits which allowed some to purchase homes, attend schools, and access certain types of employment. Perhaps most importantly, Latino veterans were willing to question and confront the existing social order (Morin 1966; Heller 1993; Cole 1995; Avila 1996).



Photo provided by: Roland Roebuck

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Latinos are the most decorated ethnic group in our country's military history. However, this legacy manages to get buried. I suggest this heritage has been subverted by the majority group for it gives Latino people legitimate claim to rights that have long been denied. It also has been suppressed for a people without heroes is a people without pride. Latinos need their own heroes, persons who the youth can look to with respect and admiration. Instead of the *vato loco* or the *gangtsa'* so often portrayed in the media, why not images

of the likes of Oswaldo Ramirez, Roy Benavidez, and Richard Lopez?

I argue for the incorporation of these stories into school curriculum. Not as a celebration of warfare, but as a celebration of Latino contributions to the freedom of the United States. This is a heritage that can go a long way in promoting a positive sense of self among Latinos. However, as long as positive images are ignored in schools, and films like *Saving Private Ryan*, Latinos will left to their own devices to promote such images (a strong argument for Charter Schools).

Latinos should be proud of and familiar with their history. In addition, Non-Latinos should be familiarized with this history. If Latinos are acknowledged for their contributions to this country, this may help temper the racist rhetoric heard from anti-Affirmative Action and anti-immigration proponents. However, this history needs to be accessible. Currently, an effort is being made to build the Eugene A. Obregon monument honoring Latino Medal of Honor winners. The monument is dedicated to the memory of Marine Private First Class Obregon from East L.A. who died in Korea saving a fallen comrade and friend, an Anglo named Bert "Bobo" Johnson (AztecaNet 1998).

A positive sign of recognition was the commissioning of the *U.S.S. Gonzalez* on October 12, 1996. The warship was named after Medal of Honor recipient Alfredo Gonzalez (discussed previously). This is the first time in U.S. history that a modern destroyer has been named for a Mexican American (Flores 1996).

A golden opportunity has been created for Latinos with the recent appointment of Dr. Refugio I. Rochin as the first director of the Smithsonian Institution's new *Center for Latino Initiatives* in Washington, D.C. The Center's project's will include Latino exhibitions, programs, collections, and studies (NEXO 1998). This would be an ideal venue to house a national data base of Latino servicemen who answered the call in wartime, complementing and expanding upon existing G.I. Forum records. Exhibits can be created honoring Latino war heroes. The resource exists and now is the time to take advantage of this opportunity.

The experience of Latinos during wartime has been one of conflict—a conflict between sacrifice and

subordination. However, this history can be used to positively effect the future. Through preserving this history, we can begin to save Private Atzlan.

ENDNOTES

1. Atzlan is the mythical original home of the Aztec Indians and the name is a source of great pride among many Latinos, specifically among those of Mexican descent (Meier and Ribera 1993).
2. Latinos can be of any racial group. Latinos are comprised of several distinct ethnic groups. In the U.S., Latinos of Mexican descent comprise 63.3% of the Latino population, Puerto Ricans account for 11.0%, and Cubans make up 4.2% (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1998).
3. For simplicity, unless otherwise noted, "soldiers" encompasses those in the Army and Marine Corps (with my apologies to the Marines who are adamant about the distinction).
4. As those who conduct research on Latinos know, there is a labeling/identification problem in using sources, which do not distinguish between Latino subgroups (especially older sources). Most of the literature cited does not indicate *which* Latino subgroup a person identifies with and Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Central and South Americans are all categorized under the umbrella "Hispanic" or "Latino." Where specific subgroup ethnicity was provided, this is indicated (e.g., Mexican American death rates in Vietnam and the Puerto Rican 65th Regiment in the Korean War). Furthermore, the reader will notice that the article tends to focus on Latinos of Mexican descent. This occurs because Mexican Americans are the largest of the Latino subgroups and it is more likely that more of them would have served. Also, information on Latinos in war is scarce, and what is there tends to be on Mexican Americans.
5. Since the inception of the Medal of Honor under Abraham Lincoln's administration, 38 Latinos have received the award (see page 9).
6. In 1942, five brothers died on a Navy ship from a Japanese torpedo hit. A film about the event was made in 1944 entitled *The Sullivans* (Travers 1998).
7. At this writing, women are prevented from engaging in direct combat. As such, and with no intended

disrespect to women service personnel, all of the soldiers discussed in this paper are male and the masculine vernacular will be used throughout.

8. I was somewhat reluctant as an academician to use family history in my work. However, Mirande (1997) has demonstrated that family history can be an effective and rich source of data when used judiciously.
9. Francisco Lopez, Pancho Villa's Army of the North, Mexican Revolution (grandfather), Mark Joseph Lopez, U.S. Army, World War II (uncle), Richard Lopez, U.S. Army, Korean War father), Robbie Lopez, U.S. Army, Vietnam War (cousin), Ernie Gonzalez, U.S. Army, Vietnam War (uncle).
10. In 1942, a group of young Mexican men were accused of a murder in Montebello, California. The body of Jose Diaz was found in an irrigation ditch. Six-hundred Mexicans were arrested and eventually 24 were indicted for the murder. Randolph Hearst's *Los Angeles Examiner* sensationalized the case, dubbing the ditch "Sleepy Lagoon" and portraying the defendants as Zoot-suited, Pachuco gangsters. The defendants were referred to as "Sleepy Lagooners" later shortened to "goons." According to John Matuz, one of the defendants, "the judge didn't like us at all. He wouldn't let us cut our hair or change clothes or shave. So every day in court we would come in looking horrible" (Martinez 1992). Alice McGrath, who at the time was a young Jewish activist and organizer of the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee stated, "this case wasn't about justice. It was about punishing these kids for being Mexican and for dressing the way they did. It was racist. There's no doubt about that" (Tobar 1998). During the trial, one Sheriff's Department "expert" testified "let us view it from the biological basis... this Mexican element feels a desire to kill or at least draw blood" (Tobar 1998). Fortunately, two years later, the convictions were overturned. It was also around this time that sailors and Marines were attacking Zoot Suiters/Mexicans, fueled on racism, altercations over women, and misguided "patriotism" (see Acuña 1988; Mirande 1987; Mazon 1984).

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LATINO MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS



Civil War 1860-65

Sergeant Joseph H. De Castro (Boston, MA) 1864 U.S. Army
Regular Seaman John Ortega (Spain) 1864 U.S. Navy
Regular Seaman Philip Bazaar (Chile) 1865 U.S. Navy

Boxer Rebellion 1900-01

Private France Silva (Haywood, CA) 1901 U.S.M.C.

World War I 1914-18

First Lieutenant David Barkley (Laredo, TX) 1918 U.S. Army

World War II

Private Joe P. Martinez (Taos, NM) 1943 U.S. Army
Staff Sergeant Lucian Adams (Port Arthur, TX) 1944 U.S. Army
Sergeant Jose M. Lopez (Mission, TX) 1944 U.S. Army
Staff Sergeant Macario Garcia (Mexico) 1944 U.S. Army
Private First Class Harold Gonsalves (Alameda, CA) 1945 U.S.M.C.
Private First Class David H. Gonzales (Pacoima, CA) 1945 U.S. Army
Private First Class Silvestre S. Herrera (El Paso, TX) 1945 U.S. Army
Private First Class Manuel Perez, Jr. (Oklahoma City, OK) 1945 U.S. Army
Technical Sergeant Cleto Rodriguez (San Marcos, TX) 1945 U.S. Army
Private First Class Alejandro R. Ruiz (Loving, NM) 1945 U.S. Army
Private First Class Jose F. Valdez (Governador, NM) 1945 U.S. Army
Staff Sergeant Ysmael R. Villegas (Casa Blanca, CA) 1945 U.S. Army

Korean War 1950-53

First Lieutenant Baldermo Lopez (Tampa, FL) 1950 U.S.M.C.
Private First Class Eugene A. Obregon (Los Angeles, CA) 1950 U.S.M.C.
Private First Class Edward Gomez (Omaha, NE) 1951 U.S.M.C.
Corporal Rodolfo P. Hernandez (Colton, CA) 1951 U.S.M.C.
Sergeant Joseph C. Rodriguez (San Bernadino, CA) 1951 U.S. Army
Corporal Benito Martinez (Fort Hancock, TX) 1952 U.S. Army
Private First Class Fernando Luis Garcia (Utuaado, PR) 1952 U.S.M.C.
Staff Sergeant Ambrosio Guillen (La Junta, CO) 1953 U.S.M.C.

Vietnam War 1965-75

Specialist Fourth Class Daniel Fernandez (Albuquerque, NM) 1966 U.S. Army
Captain Euripides Rubio (Ponce, PR) 1966 U.S. Army
Private First Class Carlos James Lozada (Caguas, PR) 1967 U.S. Army
First Sergeant Maximo Yabes (Lodi, CA) 1967 U.S. Army
Major Jay R. Vargas, Jr. (Winslow, AZ) 1968 U.S.M.C.
Master Sergeant Roy P. Benavidez (El Campo, TX) 1968 U.S. Army
Sergeant Alfredo Gonzalez (Edinburg, TX) 1968 U.S.M.C.
Specialist Fourth Class Hector Santiago-Colon (Salinas, PR) 1968 U.S. Army
Lance Corporal Jose Francisco Jimenez (Mexico) 1969 U.S.M.C.
Private First Class Ralph E. Dias (Shelocia, IN) 1969 U.S.M.C.
Lance Corporal Emilio A. De La Garza, Jr. (Chicago, IL) 1970 U.S.M.C.
Lance Corporal Miguel Keith (San Antonio, TX) 1970 U.S.M.C.
Warrant Officer Louis R. Rocco (Albuquerque, NM) 1970 U.S. Army

Source: AztecaNet 1998.