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'Anchor/Terror Babies' and Latina Bodies: Immigration Rhetoric in the 21st Century and the Feminization of Terrorism

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Contexts shape the meanings of identity assignments and assertions

Rubén Rumbaut (2009).

In the final analysis, the discourse surrounding Latina fertility
and reproduction is actually about more than reproduction

Leo Chávez (2008).

In this paper, we argue that within the twenty-first century United States, a multifaceted sociopolitical project has developed involving the management and containment of threats--articulated as terrorism--with conceptions of U.S. citizenship and immigration as its cornerstone. Elsewhere, we refer to this sociopolitical project as the *9/11 project* (Bloodsworth-Lugo and Lugo-Lugo 2014). Here, we maintain that specific components of the *9/11 project* have constructed immigrant women, and specifically Latinas, their bodies, and their babies as immediate threats to the security and stability of the country. This fact is especially noteworthy since historically immigration rhetoric has been rendered genderless, while discourse about terrorism has been highly gendered (that is, terrorists are considered to be men). Thus, the case of "anchor/terror babies," as involving a conceived threat via Latina immigration, provides an example of immigration rhetoric becoming gendered via the *9/11 project*, and the threat of terrorism--typically gendered as masculine--becoming feminized through Latina bodies/babies.

We focus on the notions of "anchor babies" and "terror babies" herein, as these notions have been circulating within U.S. discourse vis-à-vis immigrant women's bodies in a 9/11 era. We keep these terms in quotes throughout our discussion, since these are not terms we would endorse given their dehumanizing and brutal quality, but we do use these terms given their employment in the public discourse at hand. We focus on *discourse* surrounding these notions to illustrate how rhetorical constructions of immigrant (Latina) women have been articulated as akin to terrorist threats, including threats to Americanness, after the events of September 11, 2001. Of course, as Leo Chávez posits, ideas about Latinas today, and specifically Latina immigrants, have "antecedents in U.S. history" (2008). That is to say, although we are addressing twenty-first century articulations, perceptions, and treatment of Latinas and Latina

bodies in the United States, it would be inaccurate to suggest that these recent/ongoing efforts are not tied to previous/historical understandings about immigrants and Latinos/as.

Within our discussion, we recognize that the history of perceptions about Latinos/as includes, as Rachel I. Buff conveys, "[t]he history of deportations in the twentieth century" (2008, 537). We likewise appreciate the "connections between economic restrictions, political repression, and racialized nativism" that have accompanied that history (Ibid). In fact, nativist sentiment, of which the United States has had a long history, has not been directed at one racial/ethnic group only, as at various points in U.S. history, different racial and ethnic groups have been targeted and received the brunt of nativist sentiment. However, we maintain that in the historical moment that has followed the events of September 11, 2001 in the United States, Latinas have been a clear target of neo-Nativist ideologies. This may partly result from a combination of historical anti-immigrant sentiments, but it more clearly relates to the *9/11 project* as we articulate it below. Within this project, Latina bodies are not simply conceived as a threat, they are also perceived as a *terrorist* threat, which is to say, a threat with the potential to undermine the very security of the country.

Articulating the *9/11 Project*

When we refer to the *9/11 project*, we are referencing the institutionalized ideological, philosophical, and sociopolitical construct encompassing more than a day and its particular events and consisting of the following efforts: (1) The creation of key governmental institutions and policies, such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the USA Patriot Act; (2) Three war efforts, one being amorphous in scope (the War on Terror) and the other two being localized (the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan); (3) Specific militarized sites in the United States and around the globe associated with the housing and management of terrorist and/or threatening bodies, such as the Guantanamo Bay detention camp, the Abu Ghraib prison, and ICE detention centers; (4) Renewed nativist efforts at the federal and state levels seeking to keep those deemed "un-American" from entering U.S. borders, such as the construction of a fence separating the United States-Mexico international border and the deployment of military personnel to that border, and Arizona's SB 1070 and similar initiatives at the state level; (5) A paradigm shift in air travel that includes a revamping of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and its

placement under the DHS, screening techniques at airports, and changes in what can be carried onto airplanes by passengers; and (6) A consistent governmental and popular rhetoric justifying items #1-5 on this list and creating an ideology about threats to the security of the country.

The first five features constitute the political infrastructure of the *9/11 project*, designed with a global reach ostensibly to safeguard the local American population, while the sixth feature ascertains its socio-cultural component. Together, they have become an omnipresent entity in U.S. society after the events of September 11, 2001. As an aspect of the sixth feature, the *9/11 project* has included the development of ideologies, fears, anxieties, and perceptions about the world—what Jeffrey Melnick (2009) has termed a “9/11 sensibility.” In our understanding of this sixth feature, we make use of Joe Feagin's notion of the *white racial frame*, which he describes as a dominant frame with “an overarching white worldview that encompasses a broad and persisting set of racial stereotypes, prejudices, ideologies, images, interpretations and narratives, emotions, and reactions to language accents, as well as racialized inclinations to discriminate” (2010, 3). Feagin is clear that the *white racial frame* has global implications for our contemporary world racial order, a very important point, given the global reach of the *9/11 project*. We also find useful Adia Harvey Wingfield's concept of *systemic gendered racism*, which she describes as producing different outcomes for men and women of color, even if not all manifestations of racism are necessarily gendered (2009, 7). In Wingfield's words, “inasmuch as racial oppression is continuing and fundamental in U.S. society, the ‘racial dimensions’ like racist ideology, racist imagery, and racist institutions that allow systemic racism to flourish are gendered” (Ibid). We note that certain historical events, such as the events of September 11, 2001, are so powerful in their impact that they also mediate, if for a specific time, the racial and gendered dimensions allowing systemic racism to flourish.

We argue that with impactful events such as those on September 11, 2001, the *white racial frame* retains its main characteristics while acquiring specific inflections, especially when the event is transformed into a social project. We claim that this is the case with 9/11, through which systemic and gendered racism have acquired particular emphases. Thus, the features identified by Feagin as belonging to the *white racial frame* can be modified to identify the 9/11 inflections to expressions of *systemic gendered racism*. We offer the following: (1) *Non-white bodies as terrorist threats*. After September 11, 2001, non-white groups in general and specific racialized groups, such as Middle Easterners and Latinos, have been depicted as suspicious and

threatening to Americanness, which is rendered white. Members of these groups have been considered destroyers of civilization and democracy; (2) *Consistent racial narratives about terrorism and terrorist bodies*. Terrorists have been said to “lurk in shadows” and “cross unprotected borders.” Such narratives serve to justify the specific racialization of groups as threatening and even backward or animal-like; (3) *Images and accents about racialized and threatening bodies as terrorist bodies*. These include photos released from Abu Ghraib, images from prisoners in Guantanamo Bay, and language such as “enemy combatant” and “illegal immigrant.” Images and accents help to create a specific discourse, reinforcing ideas about particular groups as threatening while reifying the whiteness of the category “American” in the process; (4) *Emotions and feelings toward brown bodies*. This point is best illustrated by language of pundits and social commentators in relation to perceived terrorist, non-white, and/or immigrant bodies. This language creates emotional reactions to certain groups while reinforcing ideas developed by the previous features. In this process, singled-out groups are given a specific tone of threatening otherness by discourse and ideology. We discuss elsewhere how this process “has capitalized on United States fears and anxieties about public and national safety. Those located outside of United States’ borders of security and comfort have been ‘browned,’ reinforcing fears and insecurities around them” (Bloodsworth-Lugo and Lugo-Lugo 2010, 73); (5) *Inclinations to discriminatory actions by individuals and institutions*. These include the desecration of mosques, beatings and harassment of suspected Middle Eastern men and women, the targeted suspension of civil liberties by the USA Patriot Act, the actions of the Minutemen Project, and the “reasonable suspicion” clause in Arizona’s SB 1070. These actions are justified, and sometimes even demanded, by the ideologies created via this process; and (6) while implied within Feagin’s framework but not explicitly stated, we add, *The conflation of white and American*. Although not a new conflation, within U.S. society after September 11, 2001, a terrorist threat to Americanness is a terrorist threat to whiteness. This conflation makes it easier to establish and justify an “us versus them” rhetorical strategy and to distinguish between “browned” bodies and “Americans,” reinforcing a white-brown dichotomy.

Immigration, we maintain, has become the quintessential vehicle through which the white-brown dichotomy has operated. And we argue that it abides by most elements of the *white racial frame* and *systemic gendered racism*. Nathalie Peutz and Nicolás De Genova’s (2010) conception of “migrant illegality” and Ronald Sundstrom’s (2013) notion of “sheltered

xenophobia” provide illustrations of this connection. Peutz and De Genova convey that the regime of deportations currently underway in the United States “maintains migrant ‘illegality’ as not merely an anomalous judicial status but also a practical, materially consequential, and deeply interiorized mode of being—and of being put in place” (2010, 14). Putting the immigrant “in place” assumes various shapes, from institutional efforts such as the “deportation regime” addressed by De Genova to rhetorical ones that render immigrants as potential terrorist threats to political and economic stability such as those we address in this paper. Sundstrom discusses the immigrant as an abject body in relation to “the inhospitable” subject, who uses “the same holy and constitutional texts, [and] glory in denying sanctuary” to the abject. He continues, “[The inhospitable] cry out in fear and worry that their country is being overrun, that it is under siege, and that denying hospitality to threatening foreigners is right and good. Foreigner hatred is justified and foreigner fear is embraced” (2013, 69). Sundstrom argues that this marks a sheltered xenophobia justified as non-racist, although, as he explains, it is actually based on a fundamental form of racism. This foreigner fear falls within the features of the *9/11 project*, including our employment of Feagin's *white racial frame* and Wingfield's *gendered systemic racism*.

Immigration and Terrorism in Contemporary Political Discourse

Immigration as Terrorism

A paradoxical component of narratives about immigrants is the fact that they tend to be gender neutral in formulation while operating within the parameters of *gendered systemic racism*. While factually 60% of immigrants are men (Golash-Boza 2012), and there is an increasing feminization of immigrant labor (Parreñas 2000; Chang 2000; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez 2010; Flores-González, et.al. 2013), news outlets and social media sites use well-rehearsed myths that address immigrants and immigration in more genderless terms. For example, “immigrants enter the country illegally,” “take American jobs,” and “bring diseases.” However, the *9/11 project* has created a new predicament primarily for Mexican immigrant men who, as Kathleen Arnold maintains, “have been increasingly constructed as threats to American national sovereignty and thus as terrorists,” leading to the perception “that illegal entry is akin to an act of terrorism” (2007, 1). Equating illegal entry with an act of terrorism will become relevant for our

analysis of immigrant Latina bodies later, for it ultimately suggests a specific kind of misogynistic racism targeting a particular group of people.

As discussed above, ideology about threats is an important component of the *9/11 project* and includes the conflation of white and American. This conflation also suggests a more poignant conflation between the categories non-white and non-American, with "immigration as terrorism" providing an instantiation of this merger. We offer the following news headlines as recent examples of immigration as terrorism: "No Supreme Court Review for Local Laws against Harboring Illegal Immigrants," by *The Christian Science Monitor* (Richey 2014); "Foes and Friends of Bill that Would Allow Undocumented Immigrants to Obtain Massachusetts Driver's License Tout Safety," by *House News Service* (Metzger 2014); and "Judges: Jails Not Required to Hold Suspected Illegal Immigrants," by *The Morning Call* (Hall 2014). These headlines, though not specifically referencing terrorism, nonetheless include language recently used by the media and public to refer to it. For instance, "Harboring illegal immigrants" is akin to language used by President G.W. Bush regarding "harboring terrorists," as in his 2002 State of the Union Address remark, "So long as training camps operate, so long as nations harbor terrorists, freedom is at risk" (Bush 2002a). Similarly, the conjoining of the words "foes" and "safety" in the second headline is reminiscent of the numerous times President Bush described Americans' precarious position in relation to terrorists, beginning with his signing of the Homeland Security Act in 2002, when he stated, "The Department of Homeland Security will focus the full resources of the American government on the safety of the American people... and "[it] will enhance the safety of our people in very practical ways" (Bush 2002b). Moreover, allusions to "holding suspected illegal immigrants" in the third headline recalls 9/11 language deployed to reference terrorists. An example of this language appears in the following statement from the Associated Press in 2011: "Senate Approves Holding Suspected Terrorists in U.S. Indefinitely" (Associated Press 2011). In fact, an advanced Google search produces 164,000 results for the exact phrase "holding suspected terrorists," showing that this phrase has become part of the lexicon in certain sectors of the U.S. public and reporting press since September 11, 2001.

In addition to media sources, we can note that the hyper-militarization of the border under President Obama has likewise contributed to the merger of undocumented immigrants and

terrorists in the public discourse and imagination. The following excerpt from a speech delivered by President Obama in El Paso, Texas in 2011 provides a clear example:

[W]e have strengthened border security beyond what many believed was possible. They wanted more agents on the border. Well, we now have more boots on the ground on the Southwest border than at any time in our history. The Border Patrol has 20,000 agents--more than twice as many as there were in 2004, a buildup that began under President Bush and that we have continued. They wanted a fence. Well, that fence is now basically complete. And we've gone further... (Obama 2011).

The rapid expansion of detention centers for deportable immigrants around the country, which closely resemble detention centers for terrorists, has also contributed to the idea that undocumented immigrants are akin to terrorists. In fact, elucidating her concept of "deportation terror," Buff conveys that the ICE Detention and Removal Office released a "multiyear strategic enforcement plan" and the "detained population included illegal economic migrants, aliens who have committed criminal acts, asylum seekers, or potential terrorists" (2008, 541-542). De Genova sheds light on this point as well, stating that "[u]nder the USA Patriot Act, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 was amended to expand the power of the federal government to detain and deport aliens," including "title IV, section 411, [stating that] a noncitizen may now be deported as a terrorist for merely committing a crime using 'a weapon or dangerous device' or for having provided support to an organization even before it was officially alleged to be a terrorist organization" (2010, 27 cf1). The connection between immigrant bodies and terrorist bodies is perpetuated by both institutional rhetoric and policy, including that of government officials and politicians.

Social critics and conservative political pundits have also made these links, articulating immigrants as a particular kind of terrorist; namely, one that crosses the border illegally. Glenn Beck serves as an example, when he stated in 2006 that there are three reasons prompting illegal immigrants "to come across the border in the middle of the night: One, they're terrorists; two, they're escaping the law; or three, they're hungry [because] they can't make a living in their own dirtbag country" (Beck 2006). With this statement, the straightforward connection between terrorists and immigrants is clear and concise, and it has particularly pressing undertones given

that Beck offers, “they’re terrorists,” as the first reason for immigrants to be in the country “illegally.”

The connection between immigration and terrorism becomes more complicated when we consider that in the American collective consciousness, "immigrant," especially "illegal immigrant" equals Mexican. Discussions of "illegal immigrants" will always involve particular tropes or signals that point to "Mexican." Thus, in the "immigration as terrorism" construction, "immigrant" becomes "Mexican" and Mexican immigration becomes a threat to U.S. security. For instance, we can consider a question asked by Gallup from 2006 to 2011: “How important is it to you [Americans] that the government halts the flow of illegal immigrants at the U.S. border?” In 2011, 53% of respondents considered this to be extremely important. Significant, as well, is the wording of the question, for it asks about "the U.S. border." Given that the United States has more than one border, the question's reference to "the U.S. border" links to the problematic phrase “flow of illegal immigrants” bringing to Americans' minds the United States-Mexico International border. Moreover, a poll conducted by the Pew Research Center found that 28% of Americans thought that the percentage of people in America born outside of the United States is higher than 25%, and 44% thought that “most immigrants now living in the U.S. are here illegally” (Kohut, et.al. 2006). The perception of rampant illegality is part of Sundstrom's point about the inhospitable aspects of contemporary xenophobia, which is justified as mere adherence to the law.

Terrorism as Masculine

While Muslims have clearly been targets of the hatred and fear of immigrants discourse after September 11, 2001, it has not been in relation to illegality. Rather, concern with Muslims has involved religion; namely, Islam. To illustrate, in 2009, Gallup released a study on attitudes regarding various religions and reported that of all religions about which Americans were asked, “Islam elicits the most negative views” (Gallup 2009, 4). In this study, 53% of Americans said their views of Islam are either “not too favorable” or “not favorable at all” (Ibid). In addition, 43% of respondents admitted to "feeling at least a little prejudice toward Muslims," and 9% said they “feel a great deal of prejudice” (Ibid). We can only assume that the negative views and feelings of prejudice that Americans experience in relation to Muslims have to do with the fact that they associate Muslims with terrorism in general and the events of September 11, 2001 in

specific. The fact that Muslims are associated with terrorism, but not necessarily with illegality, places them in a position different from that of Mexicans/Latinos who are associated with terrorism through “illegality.”

Perceptions about Muslims and terrorism are compounded by the reality of terrorists as men. According to most available research and data, a majority of terrorists, whether domestic or international, are men (Blazack 2008; Flood et.al. 2007). The combination of perception and reality in this case has produced a heavily gendered discourse (mostly related to men) about terrorists and terrorism, in which men are typically identified in headlines addressing terrorism. The following three headlines, which appeared within a two-month period in 2014, serve as illustrations: "Man Arrested for Boston Marathon Bomb Hoax," *Al Jazeera* (Associated Press 2014); "Man Charged with Obstructing Bombing Probe," *Boston Globe* (Valencia 2014); and "Texas Men Charged with Providing Support to Potential Terrorists," *NBC News* (Arkin 2014). While these are just three headlines occurring during a short period of time in one year, the gendered language employed--reflecting the reality of the situations--is familiar to Americans as ways terrorists are discussed and how terrorism is reported.

In fact, the understanding of men as terrorists, while always "lurking in shadows," tends to get activated and moved to the forefront in moments of national crisis. The 2013 Boston Marathon bombing attack provides a recent example, since from the moment of its occurrence, the language about the bombing was focused on men. This was the case even though authorities had not identified the alleged perpetrator(s), and even liberal commentators spoke with a seeming understanding that terrorism was a masculine endeavor. An instance of this commentary is David Sirota's piece for *Salon*, published a day after the bombings, in which he stated:

As we now move into the official political aftermath period of the Boston bombing... the dynamics of privilege will undoubtedly influence the nation's collective reaction to the attacks. That's because privilege tends to determine... which groups are — and are not — collectively denigrated or targeted for the unlawful actions of individuals.... This has been most obvious in the context of recent mass shootings, [in which] white male privilege means white men are not collectively denigrated/targeted for those shootings — even though most come at the hands of white dudes.

Sirota's allusion to white male privilege, white men, and white dudes is telling, for it both points to acts of (mass) violence as being typically committed by men, while it responds to the constant blaming of terrorism and terrorist acts on men of color (specifically, Muslim men). Neither the quote nor the essay suggest anything about women, highlighting issues to be raised in the Boston marathon bombing, and perhaps similar cases, as more a matter of race/ethnicity in relation to gender than gender per se. The gender of the attacker is basically assumed.

Latina Bodies, "Anchor/Terror Babies," and the Feminization of Terrorism

The Female Body

While we have briefly discussed masculine constructions of terrorism above, pointing out discourse and perceptions about terrorism as invoking men, here, we make a case for and elaborate on the most prominent exception to the "terrorists as men" construct that the *9/11 project* has produced thus far: (Latina) female bodies as perpetrators of terrorism. That is to say, discourse about immigrants, terrorists, and "immigrants *as* terrorists" has assumed a particular feminization in the last few years. We are aware that there is a lack of equivalency between "men" and "female bodies," given that one references gender and the other references sex; however, the circumstances warrant this difference since in the emerging discourse, it is female *bodies* that have become targets of conservative and popular rhetoric. In a 9/11 incarnation of the mind/body split, when discussing (men and) terrorism, contemporary political discourse has referred to "terrorist plots," "terrorist conspiracies," and "terrorist actions," as opposed to discussions about female bodies which "drop babies" in the United States. When we discuss Latinas as bodies or objects, it is not because we aim to deny Latina subjectivity but because we aim to document ways in which contemporary discourse has constructed specific female bodies as threats to national security (and even as systems of weapon-delivery).

The female contour of terrorism has emerged through politicians and political pundits who have been furiously debating border security, citizenship rights, and the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Specifically, conservative commentators and politicians have connected citizenship, immigration, and terrorism in these debates, giving them, as *Huffington Post's* Michelle Chen states, "a woman's touch" (Chen 2010). Chen continues, "Terms like 'anchor baby' and 'drop and leave' reduce Latina immigrants to the status of breeders and criminals,

negating not only their humanity but their right to motherhood as well” (Ibid). Furthermore, she insists, “the underlying objective behind the dehumanization of Latina mothers in the political arena” is “to obliterate the concept of the immigrant family in the public consciousness” (Ibid). And she concludes, “there [is] a sinister logic to [this objective]: Latina women aren’t mothers; they drop babies” (Ibid). Of course, political rhetoric on the matter, while surely as sinister as Chen conveys, is also more complicated. Let us take, for instance, the following claim made by Arizona state legislator, Russell Pearce: “We need to target the mother. Call it sexist, but that’s the way nature made it. Men don’t drop illegal anchor babies, alien mothers do” (Carmon 2010). One thing immediately comes to mind here: the use of the word “mother.” Different from the humanizing effect Chen suggests the term would have, in this particular case, the idea is precisely being used to dehumanize women. Interpreting the words of Pearce, these are not women (which would be the equivalent of men), but mothers/bodies that “drop illegal anchor babies.”

This dehumanizing narrative recalls Natalie Cisneros’ idea that contemporary discourses constitute “‘illegal alien’ sexuality as dangerous, threatening, and perverse,” becoming “an important example of the confluence of discourses about race, gender, and sexuality that are constitutive of ‘illegal alien’ subjects” (2013, 291). Cisneros goes further to discuss the image of the “‘illegal alien’ as a sexual deviant and a threat to the well-being of the nation” (Ibid). The question that must be answered, then, is what kind of threat does the “illegal (female) body” pose? We argue that it is a threat in concordance with notions embedded in the *9/11 project*--one in which bodies are turned into terroristic threats and in which babies are transformed into lethal weapons.

The Anchor Baby

A further issue that can be raised about Pearce’s quote, cited above, is the very term “illegal anchor baby,” for no such thing exists. In fact, the very definition of an “anchor baby” is someone who is born in the United States and is thereby an American citizen. There is nothing illegal about that baby, except for his/her parents (specifically the mother), at least as conceived within popular and political discourse. To be clear, we use “anchor baby” to refer “to children born in the United States to undocumented migrant parents who are thought to have been conceived in order to improve their parents’ chances of attaining American citizenship” (Ignatow

and Williams 2011, 60). The trope of the "anchor baby" is one that has captured the collective imagination of Americans in the last decade, with fairly devastating consequences, as they are associated with illegality, criminality, and illegitimacy. As we discuss later, they are also at times directly associated with terrorism.

In a column on her website, Ann Coulter claimed that "more than half of all babies born to Hispanic women today are illegitimate" (2012). The number of Latino/a children in the United States has been an ongoing concern for conservative pundits and politicians who espouse the view that a majority of these children are born out of wedlock. To this effect, the conservative Center for Immigration Studies published a report titled, "Illegitimate Nation," in which they conflated immigrants with Mexican/Latin American immigrants and argued that "illegitimacy is common in much of Latin America" (Camarota 2007). The Center further claimed, "those concerned about family breakdown among immigrants, particularly Hispanics," are worried that these immigrants "will add to a growing problem: children of immigrants born to unmarried parents will be at higher risk for low academic achievement, criminality, weak attachment to the labor force, high use of welfare, and all the other social problems that illegitimate children are at higher risk to experience" (Camarota 2007). Importantly, concern about immigrants having "illegitimate" children is concern about immigrant *women* having those children. The report included the word "women," often preceded by the word "immigrant," 56 times in 23 pages, which averages 2.4 times per page. In contrast, the word "men" did not appear in the report at all.

The idea that "illegitimate" children are more likely to "breed" social problems leads conservative minds to the idea that illegitimate children will foster liberal behavior. For instance, continuing with her anti-immigrant rant, Coulter reproached elections' conservative maven Michael Barone, whom she said was "shockingly off in his election prediction," since "Barone has been assuring [conservatives] for years that most of these Third World immigrants pouring into the country would go the way of Italian immigrants and become Republicans" (Coulter 2012). With her rhetoric, Coulter makes use of the Latino threat narrative as articulated by Chávez, which posits:

Latinos are not like previous immigrant groups, who ultimately became part of the nation... as they 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 reconquering land that was formerly theirs (the U.S. Southwest) and destroying the American way of life (2008, 2).

In addition, as deployed by Coulter in this particular case, the narrative of Latinos as Third World immigrants “pouring into the country” aims to trigger a specific response of fear and even contempt among the public, as this creates an image of an enormous number of people entering the country, perhaps illegally. Coulter countered the idea that these immigrants are hardworking and have family values by saying, “maybe at first, but not after coming here, having illegitimate children and going on welfare” (Camarota 2007). She cites Charles Murray, who “pointed out that—contrary to stereotype—Hispanics are less likely to be married, less likely to go to church, more supportive of gay marriage and less likely to call themselves ‘conservative’ than other Americans” (Coulter 2012). Thus, for Coulter, as for other conservatives, “illegal” immigrants (from Third World Countries) = Hispanic = social problems = liberal = threat.

But as we discussed above, the idea of immigrants as threats is not a new idea, for it has been part of the American collective consciousness for centuries. What *is* new is the articulation of immigrant threats as terrorist threats, an idea that has particularly gained traction in conservative circles. The notion of “anchor babies” links to concerns over terrorism given a consistent admonition of Latin American immigrants, especially Mexican immigrants, and particularly immigrant women and their babies. For instance, speaking against the 14th Amendment in 2010 and 2011, and making use of the “anchor baby” narrative, California U.S. Congressman Gary Miller posted the following press release on his website:

The Author of the Arizona immigration law, State Senator Russell Pearce, will soon introduce legislation in the Arizona State Senate to deny citizenship to anchor babies. Birthright citizenship is yet another loophole in our laws that encourages and facilitates illegal immigration. In fact, approximately 200,000 to 300,000 babies are born to illegal immigrants each year. By granting children of illegal immigrants citizenship, the child can eventually anchor an entire family in the United States, even though they gained access to our nation illegally.... Congressman Miller is the first sponsor of House legislation that would deny citizenship to anchor babies (Miller 2010).

The connection between immigration, illegality, “anchor babies,” and citizenship is clear in this release. Below is another example, in which Speaker of the House John Boehner stated, while being interviewed by David Gregory on *Meet the Press*, that when it comes to immigration:

[T]here is a problem. To provide an incentive for illegal immigrants to come here so that their children can be U.S. citizens does, in fact, draw more people to our country. I do think that it's time for us to secure our borders and enforce the law, and allow this conversation about the 14th Amendment to continue (Gregory 2010).

Similar to Miller and Boehner, and also speaking against the 14th Amendment, South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham warned that women are “crossing the border” to have a child in the United States, who is “automatically an American citizen.” The Senator argued that this “shouldn’t be the case,” for it “attracts people for the wrong reasons” (Gardella 2010). Finally, Iowa Representative Steve King introduced H.R. 140 in 2011, a bill that would eliminate the automatic granting of U.S. citizenship to those born in the United States, limiting it to those born to at least one parent with U.S. citizenship. According to King, “The current practice of extending U.S. citizenship to hundreds of thousands of 'anchor babies' must end because it creates a magnet for illegal immigration into our country. Now is the time to ensure that the laws in this country do not encourage law breaking” (Foley 2011).

The Terror Baby

We use “terror baby” to reference the belief that “terrorist organizations send pregnant women into the United States so that their children will be American citizens who can enter and leave the country at will as they are trained to be terrorists abroad” (Mirkinson 2010). While “anchor baby” has emerged as a rather widespread notion (for instance, *Time Magazine* listed it as one of 2010’s “Top Buzzwords” [Ignatow and Williams 2011, 60]), “terror baby” is a concept with more of a fringe status (relegated, perhaps, to the category of conspiracy theory). However, that only a few politicians have discussed “terror babies” through public statements should not detract from the strongly reactionary path that discussions about “illegal” or foreign bodies have taken in 9/11 U.S. society. At the same time that references to “wrong reasons” (by Graham) and “law breaking” (by King), mentioned above, have motivated some of the more conspiracy-theory-like notions of immigrant women and their babies, indirectly connecting “anchor babies”

to terrorism, references to "terror babies" place the offspring of immigrants squarely within the fold of terrorism.

The notion of "terror babies" itself was first advanced by two Texas politicians, U.S. Congressman Louie Gohmert and State Representative Debbie Riddle, and has emerged as the most improbable scenario within debates about undocumented immigrants and the 14th Amendment. Although limited in scope, the conviction of these politicians conveys a great deal about Americans' fears at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The first to broach the subject was Congressman Gohmert in 2010, as debates over the 14th Amendment were occurring, when he "warned about an insidious plot by terror organizations to infiltrate the U.S. with pregnant women" (Tacopino 2010). The Congressman argued that these organizations were planning to send young pregnant women to have their babies in the United States, who would then "turn back where they could be raised and coddled as future terrorists." These "terror babies" would "return to wreak havoc on the U.S. once they come of age... and help destroy our way of life" (Ibid). Gohmert proceeded to discuss "anchor babies" and the way they might ultimately destroy the United States, saying, "[Illegal immigrants] figured out how stupid we are being in this country to allow our enemies to game our system" (Ibid).

Less than two months later, during an interview on Anderson Cooper's *360°* on CNN, Texas State Representative Debbie Riddle also claimed that, according to information received by her office from former FBI employees, there was a plot involving pregnant women from Middle Eastern countries traveling to the United States as tourists to give birth to U.S. citizens. They would then raise these babies as terrorists (Cooper 2010). Though Gohmert's conception of these immigrants was kept fairly broad, Riddle drifted into talking about "illegal immigrants" from "South of the Border." These immigrants come to the United States to have babies, she maintained, and these babies, whom the Constitution grants U.S. citizenship, are "taking down our [systems of] health care and education" (Ibid). Riddle concluded her statement with "this is about security. The border have got [sic] to get secured" (Ibid).

Two points should be made in relation to these statements. First, the fact that "anchor babies" and "terror babies" are conflated in both statements conveys that both sets of babies present equal amounts of threat in the eyes of these politicians--threats directly or indirectly related to terrorism. Similarly, the fact that immigrant women, Middle Eastern women, and women from "South of the Border" are all used interchangeably suggests that the conflation of

brown bodies that is part of the *9/11 project* informs the anchor and terror babies narrative, as all three are considered threats to the security of the homeland. In the end, in a 9/11 era, "a growing United States 'brown population' has created a sense of insecurity within the mainstream (with anti-immigrant sentiment being but one expression)" (Bloodsworth-Lugo and Lugo-Lugo 2010, 73).

Each statement made by a pundit or politician regarding babies born to immigrant parents, at the start of the twenty-first century, can be analyzed in its own right. However, when considered together, they comprise a disturbing rhetorical pattern demonizing immigrant women and transforming them into (potential) terrorist threats. The rhetoric of conservative pundits gives the appearance that immigrant women have found a way to use their bodies purposefully against Americans. Or more to the point, it is as if immigrant women are weaponizing reproduction, such that their babies become the equivalent of bombs being "dropped" in hospitals to be deployed at a later time against the American public.

The account above can also be added to Kim Rygiel's notion of the "biopolitics of citizenship" (2006). Drawing from Foucault, Rygiel defines biopolitics as "political power that has assigned itself the task of administering life" (2006, 152). She articulates citizenship as the "range of discourses, policies and practices having to do with governing populations" (146). Recent discourse around the dangers of the 14th Amendment and immigrant women can be described as discourse seeking to administer life, by literally controlling who is born in the country, and governing populations, by determining who is a U.S. citizen and who is a (terrorist) threat. Cisneros calls on biopolitical racism by tracing an important connection between discourse about "anchor babies" and "alien mothers," showing how they act to manage the mother's sexuality (2010, 298). Cisneros conveys how this discourse "betrays the always-already perverse nature of the alien body in general as a racialized, anti-citizen body," leading to what she calls "backwards uncitizenizing"--the concerted effort to deny citizenship to children born in the United States to undocumented immigrants (302-303).

Conclusion:

A Country Terrorized by Babies

Chavez conveys, “Latina reproduction and fertility, especially that of Mexican immigrant women, became ground zero in a political war not just of words but also of public policies and laws in post-1965 America” (2007, 67). The long history of problematizing Latina reproduction and fertility is undeniable. However, it took the sociopolitical project of 9/11 to transform Latina bodies and Latina reproduction from a threat to the American way of life to a threat to national security; that is to say, a terrorist threat. And the particular difficulty with a terrorist threat is that, according to the narrative of the *9/11 project*, it should be hunted down, confronted, and eradicated. In the words of former President G.W. Bush:

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning. We acted. I have led. We pursued the terrorist enemy across the world. We have captured or killed many key leaders of the al-Qaida network. We will stay on the hunt until justice is served and America is safe from attack (2004).

Returning to a point made by Chen, the problem with terms such as “anchor baby” and “terror baby” is that they reduce (Latina) immigrants to the status of breeders, criminals, and even terrorists, erasing not only their subject position as mothers, but their humanity as well (2010). The terms also erase the humanity of these babies, who become objects of contempt, admonition, and even ridicule. The dehumanization of Latinas and their babies is key, for as Cebe Martínez et.al. contend, “Conservatives' rhetoric on this issue is particularly insulting, likening the human birthing process to that of farm animals. By portraying immigrant women as less than human--that they “drop” babies as animals drop their offspring--immigration opponents stir up fears that foreigners specifically come here to have children in order to derive citizenship from their children, or claim government benefits” (Martínez et al 2010). Finally, as Nira Yuval-Davis (1997) claims, women who are seen as belonging to the nation can be articulated as the symbolic, cultural, and biological reproducers of that nation, women who are considered “abject” to the nation can be articulated as symbolic, cultural, and biological reproducers of threat. In this case, the threat is a terroristic one, with babies becoming a symbol of fear, or perhaps more accurately, of terror.

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