

# Tucsonenses Save Spanish

The Spanish language was expressed, spoken and sung in Tucson during the 1930s. Spanish was able to flourish despite the fact that many Mexican immigrants were voluntarily leaving Arizona, and even deported forcefully in California and Texas. In Tucson, many middle class Mexican businessmen set up Hispanic publications and organizations that in turn printed a majority of the public Spanish literature by 1930.



Sitting in AHA office on March 12, 1935.  
-Courtesy AHS, #78910

One of these middle class Mexican "pioneers," Carlos Y. Velasco, settled in Tucson in 1878 using the wealth inherited from his family. This wealth helped him publish *El Fronterizo*, a Spanish-language newspaper, the same year.

At the end of the century, Velasco's wealth and status grew in Tucson and he decided to form the Alianza Hispano-Americana in 1894. Often known simply as Alianza, the mutual-aid society was designed to give funeral loans and offer support to Tucsonenses or Hispanic Tucsonans. The group spread out across the U.S. with smaller clubs called lodges. These lodges were stationed in major cities across the U.S. and before 1914 there were lodges in five states and Mexico. Carlos Y. Velasco died in 1914 and 15 years later one of his sons, Carlos Jr., lead the Alianza.



Alianza Parade on West Congress in the 1930s.  
-Courtesy AHS, #47870

By 1929, the Alianza had over 200 lodges in the U.S. and Mexico. The Alianza community was growing in the U.S. while Hispanic individuals were being deported. The Tucsonenses resisted this discrimination by continuing to publish Spanish material. The greatest example of the Spanish upkeep was in the Alianza periodicals published in Spanish from 1907 to 1965, and on a monthly basis from 1932 to 1947. These periodicals were all published in Spanish from 1932 to 1942 without mentioning "deportation" or "repatriation" once. The periodicals had many different topics in each issue: world

events, Alianza statistics, member information, a literary page, home living pages and pages for women. The Spanish language and culture did not get lost because the Alianza published material in Spanish for the Hispanic population that stayed in the U.S. and those in northern Mexico.

Wealthy Mexican Americans published these newspapers and periodicals, not recent or poor Mexican immigrants. Nonetheless the Alianza gave a voice to the left-out Mexican communities by publishing their stories, music and poetry in the periodicals. This inclusion inspired other students to do the same years later. University of Arizona graduate student Vicente Acosta's thesis called "Some Surviving Elements



Alien-Mexicans being deported in Tucson, 1930s.  
-Courtesy AHS, PC 042, F8, #62446

of Spanish Folklore in Arizona" in 1951 was a collection of corridos, poems and lullabies. Interviewed by Acosta, worker José María Ortiz from Hayden, Arizona, in 1947, shared his story in the form of a corrido.

## Corrido del Repatriado

*Es repugnancia racial  
No querer al mexicano,  
De afuera o ciudadano  
A todos nos tratan igual.*

*Yankee malvado si tú  
me trajiste,  
Me trajiste reenganchado,  
Me pasaste contratado  
Y la cara me escupiste.*

*El mexicano ofendido,  
Lleva siempre en su  
memoria  
Que se trató como  
escoria,  
Y nunca fue  
comprendido.*

## Ballad of the Repatriate

It's racial repugnance  
Not to like the Mexican,  
From abroad or citizen  
We're all treated the same.

Evil Yankee if you  
brought me,  
You brought me recruited,  
You hired me  
And you spat in my face.

The offended Mexican,  
Always bears in his  
memory  
That he was treated like  
scum,  
And he was never  
understood.

<sup>1</sup> Brian Gratton and Emily Merchant, "Immigration, Repatriation, and Deportation: The Mexican-Origin Population in the United States, 1920-1950," *The International Review* 47, no. 4 (2013): 952.

<sup>2</sup> Manuel G. Gonzales, "Carlos I. Velasco," *The Journal of Arizonan History* 25, no. 3 (1984): 280.

<sup>3</sup> James Officer, 88.

<sup>4</sup> Gonzales, 279.

<sup>5</sup> C.L. Sonnichsen, Tucson: *The Life and Times of an American City* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), 238-239.

<sup>6</sup> Alianza December 1935-January 1936, Alianza Periodical Collection, 1932-1947, Arizona Historical Society Archives, Tucson, Arizona.

<sup>7</sup> Vicente Acosta, "Some Surviving Elements of Spanish Folklore in Arizona," Master's Thesis, University of Arizona, 1951, 122. Translated by Olga Haydeé Hernandez and myself. Some words underlined in his draft were given a separate translation in his glossary, 186.

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