

Nuestra Plataforma
Hispanics Protest Anglo Encroachment in New Mexico (1890)

The White Caps

With the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), which concluded the U.S. war with Mexico, Hispanics who were living in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, suddenly found themselves foreigners in the native land; the Mexican North became the American Southwest by right of U.S. conquest. Not surprisingly, the process of political incorporation, which took decades to complete, created racial tensions as well as class and economic conflicts. One such conflict erupted in San Miguel County in the territory of New Mexico when Anglo interests in the 1880s tried to enclose the communal lands of Hispanic villagers. Taking matters into their own hands, angry local residents, known as Las Gorras Blancas, or “the White Caps,” resisted these encroachments by cutting the Anglos’ newly strung barbed wire and committing other acts of destruction. The White Caps also put their grievances in writing and on the night of March 11, 1890, posted copies of “Our Platform” throughout the town of Las Vegas.

NUESTRA PLATFORMA –

Our purpose is to protect the rights and interests of the people in general and especially those of the helpless classes.

We want the Las Vegas Grant settled to the benefit of all concerned, and this we hold is the entire community within the Grant.

We want no “land grabbers” or obstructionists of any sort to interfere. We will watch them.

We are not down on lawyers as a class, but the usual knavery and unfair treatment of the people must be stopped.

Our judiciary hereafter must understand that we will sustain it only when “Justice” is its watchword.

We are down on race issues, and will watch race agitators.

We favor irrigation enterprises, but will fight any scheme that tends to monopolize the supply of water sources to the detriment of residents living on lands watered by the same streams.

The people are suffering from the effects of partisan “bossism” and these bosses had better quietly hold their peace. The people have been persecuted and hauled about in every which way to satisfy their caprices. (whims).

We must have a free ballot and fair court and the will of the Majority shall be respected.

We have no grudge against any person in particular, but we are the enemies of bulldozers and tyrants.

If the old system should continue, death would be a relief to our suffering. And for our rights our lives are the least we can pledge.

If the fact that we are law-abiding citizens is questioned, come out to our houses and see the hunger and desolation we are suffering; and “this” is the result of the deceitful and corrupt methods of “bossism.”

The White Caps 1,500 Strong and Gaining Daily

1. What connections can be made between the experiences of the White Caps and Native Americans in the new “American” West?
2. Based on Nuestra Platforma, how serious do you believe that these Hispanic people are regarding Anglo incursions on to their lands? Explain using excerpts from the above text.
3. Imagine that you were a member of the White Caps and your job was to make up a slogan for the movement. What would your slogan be? Explain your reasoning.

Sources: From *Foreigners in Their Native Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans*, ed. David J. Weber (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1973), 234-236. taken from: Kevin J. Fernlund, University of Missouri – St. Louis. Henretta, J.A., Brody, D. and Dumenil, L. *Documents to Accompany America’s History*, sixth ed. vol. two, since 1865. Bedford / St. Martin’s, New York. pp. 45-46