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**José Martí's attitude toward immigration in
postcolonial America**

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During his stay in New York from 1880 to 1895 Martí became a witness of a major demographic change of the U.S. population due to an unprecedented influx of predominantly European immigrants. Their poverty and struggle to find roots in America prompted him to write several essays on the issue based on social and political considerations. This article will provide a survey of immigration to the U.S. in the late nineteenth century and it will explore Martí's attitude toward the social implications of immigration for the young American democracy. Martí saw the millions of immigrants with skepticism and as a politically and socially destabilizing force for the new nation. Only around the mid-1880s did his opinion change and he gradually became sympathetic to the foreign workers and their families due to their social plight and marginalization.

Often described as a nation of immigrants, the United States was transformed by immigration in the nineteenth century from a country small in population and size to a world power dominating the continent from ocean to ocean. In 1800, 5,297,000 people lived in the United States; a century later, immigrants and their descendants had helped to increase this number to more than seventy-six million. Five million people immigrated to the United States between 1815 and 1860, mainly from Britain and Ireland. Ten million more arrived between 1860 and 1890, predominantly Germans and Scandinavians as well as other northwestern Europeans. A third wave of immigration began around 1890; before it tapered off at the start of World War I in 1914, about fifteen million came, many from Italy, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and other parts of southern and eastern Europe (Chin 62).

The 1880s—the decade of Martí's stay in New York—saw an increase of 5.2 million immigrants, the greatest number in a decade up to that point. Almost 3.7 million more came in the 1890s, despite the economic panic and depression in the United States during those years (Bennett 67).

The increasing number of immigrants in the nineteenth century created new tensions. Catholic immigrants drew public hostility because of their poverty; the diseases they brought with them after the perilous ocean voyage; the slum housing they were forced to live in; and the dramatic rise in crime rates, alcoholism, and the poverty rolls that occurred after their arrival. Many American-born Protestants, equating their English heritage with “true” Americanism, despised the desperately poor Irish and feared the Germans, who spoke a strange new language. The antialiens were nativists, convinced that opposition to the growing minority of Catholic immigrants was necessary to protect their America (Bennett 66). The contempt of North American Protestants for the Irish will be reflected in Martí’s criticism of the immigrants from the green island.

Martí exposes his views on immigration directly in several essays on that topic and indirectly in some of his articles on other issues. His writing between 1883 and 1884 is particularly revealing with regard to his position concerning the influx of foreigners to America. In an 1883 article for *La América* in New York, he draws up a list with detailed numbers of foreigners who have arrived in the month of May. It is significant that apart from the numbers, Martí provides his readers with attributes of national character for the different nations. Thus, the Germans are “industrious, wise, invading and frightful” [laboriosos, sesudos, invasores y temibles] (VIII, 377)¹, France is “fierce” [fiera] (VIII, 378), and Sweden is “poor and cold, as well as beautiful and original” [pobre y fría, tanto como bella y original] (VIII, 378). Martí’s views expose the nineteenth century idea of the nation state, which stipulates that every country has a homogeneous population and a specific national character. At the beginning of the 1880s, Martí felt that the U.S. population was essentially democratically-minded, peaceful, and hard-working. Thus, he was concerned that the influx of foreigners would destabilize the young American democracy, which he considered a model for Latin America. With a tone of indignation he remarks that from May 1882 to May 1883, 517,000 immigrants arrived in the United States, and he adds that the sheer amount of newcomers causes concerns because of “such a tremendous and frightening conflict which must seem that the sky tumbles down and the earth opens” [un conflicto tan tremendo y espantoso que ha de parecer que los cielos se derrumban, y la tierra se abre] (VIII, 378). Nevertheless, he expresses the Emersonian view that “there are no contradictions in nature [no hay contradicciones en la naturaleza] (VIII, 378) and states that “the earth offers enough to sustain all the people it creates” [la tierra basta a sustentar todos los hombres que cría] (VIII, 378). Besides, “there is still much uninhabited woodland, much fallow land, and many regions that wait for cultivation” [hay aún mucha selva desierta, mucha llanura no labrada, mucha comarca impaciente de cultivo] (VIII, 378).

However, Martí’s apprehensions about unrestrained immigration remained, and he expressed them openly in an 1884 article for *La América* in New York titled “On uncultured immigration and its dangers—its effect on the United States”

¹ All of Martí’s quotes are taken from: Martí, José. *Obras Completas*. Havana: Editorial Nacional de Cuba, 1963-73. The Roman numbers denote the volumes, the Arabic ones point at the pages.

[De la inmigración inculta y sus peligros—su efecto en los Estados Unidos] (VIII, 382). He warns of uneducated and brutish people, who bring vices to America and thus destabilize the nation:

Hablando de esos inmigrantes sin educación industrial y sin familia, espuma turbia de pueblos viejos y excrescencias de cueva, que de Europa vienen a los Estados Unidos en bandadas—demuestra una estadística reciente que no hay alimento más abundante para las cárceles, ni veneno más activo para la nación, que estas hordas de gente viciosa y abrutada. No embrutecida, no: abrutada. (VIII, 382)

Martí's critical characterization of the European newcomers and the dangers they pose, implies a favorable judgment of the U.S. and its institutions. For Martí, North America represents a nation with the characteristics that the immigrants lack: North Americans are educated, peaceful, virtuous, and cultivated. This view is also reflected in his 1880 series of essays titled "Impressions of America (by a very fresh Spaniard).² He writes in English that "at last" he has arrived "in a country where every one looks like his own master." And he continues:

One can breathe freely, freedom being here the foundation, the shield, the essence of life. One can be proud of his species here. Every one works; every one reads. Only does every one feel in the same degree that they read and work? Man, as a strong creature—made to support on his shoulders the burden of misfortune, never bent, never tired, never dismaying,—is unrivalled here. (IX, 103)

This entire quote was originally written in English by Martí himself. The impression that Martí gives of the U.S. here, is entirely positive. He portrays it as a country of freedom, where people go about their business and pursue what Martí generally considers most important: they work and indulge in education. Thus, they are productive and at the same time spiritually inclined. For Martí, the U.S. brings out the best of man: he never bends, he is never tired, and never dismays. Yet, according to Martí, this stability is treacherous and can be ruptured by "the vulgar storm of immigration" because "many strangers bring here their odiums, their wounds, their moral ulcers." Then, expressing his admiration for his host country, he exclaims "How great a nation must be, to conduct in a quiet way, these bands of wolves, hungry and thirsty, these excrescences of old poor countries, ferocious or unuseful there,—and here, under the influence of work, good, kind and tame!" (IX, 106). Martí depicts the U.S. as the nation that "tames" and cultivates the European immigrants, who are dehumanized and brutalized by lack of work and food. The U.S. is rich and young, whereas the immigrants come from "poor" and "old" countries.

In his article "On uncultured immigration and its dangers," Martí analyses the cause-and-effect relationship between immigrant crime and lack of practical skills. He cites a statistics, according to which crime originates from "the lack of a

² During Martí's first extended stay in the United States, in 1880, he was invited by influential journalist and publisher Charles Anderson Dana to contribute to a New York weekly magazine called *The Hour*. Martí published twenty-nine short essays in the magazine that year on various topics, most of them originally written in French. But he also wrote in English, with what seems to have been rather minimal intervention from his editors (Allen 32).

steady job and of special training in a craft in a certain work” [la falta de ocupación regular e instrucción especial en un arte u oficio determinado]. These deficiencies produce “temptations and need for crime, not less in number and scope than those caused by intoxication” [tentaciones y necesidades de delitos, no menores en número e importancia que los que la embriaguez estimula] (VIII, 382).

Martí elaborates on his claim about the supposedly high amount of crime among immigrants by providing further data from that statistics. Thus, out of 705 inmates of the Penitentiary of the State of Pennsylvania only 93 had received training in practical skills [705 eran los presos; sólo 93 habían recibido educación industrial]. Likewise, according to Martí, a study of 1880 in the Penitentiary of Maryland showed that “of 591 prisoners, not more than 68 knew a practical trade” [de 591 presos, no sabían oficio más que 68] (VIII, 382).

Martí’s information on immigration is meant to give evidence to his theory that an uncontrolled inflow of foreigners can potentially disrupt the social order of a nation. In addition, he views the U.S. as a “new people” without the European burden of aristocracy but with the need for education. The presence of aristocracy and absence of education tie down man and impoverishes him. Backing up his claim of delinquency among immigrants, he cites Self, “a North American author who is knowledgeable about immigrants” [Self se llama un escritor norteamericano que sabe de inmigrantes], according to whom “there is no bigger danger for a new people than those shiploads of rude men, without aptitudes and with vices, full of hate and devoid of knowledge in farming, mechanics and industry” [No hay, a juicio de Self, peligro mayor para un pueblo nuevo que esas barcadas de hombres rudos, sin aptitudes y con vicios, llenos de odios y vacíos de conocimientos agrícolas, mecánicos e industriales] (VIII, 382).

The use of animal imagery is another indicator of Martí’s concerns about the inpouring of aliens and their adverse effect on the U.S. Martí affirms that “the locust causes destruction in the country; but not more than similar emigrations in the cities” [la langosta hace estragos en los campos; pero no más que semejantes emigraciones en las ciudades] (VIII, 382). The image of the locusts also alludes to the Old Testament and one of the ten plagues that came upon the Egyptians. Martí suggests that like insects, the foreigners gnaw away at a system that allows its citizens unprecedented freedom and might finally bring about its collapse, which is why he claims that accepting too many immigrants “is like making a leg out of mud; a strong nation will not be able to stand on it” [es como hacerse una pierna de lodo; una nación fuerte no podrá mantenerse sobre ella] (VIII, 382).

In his 1883 article “On Immigration” [Sobre Inmigración], Martí again uses the metaphor of animals describing the European peoples “as annoying insects descending habitually on America” [como insectos enojosos, suelen sacudir sobre América los pueblos de Europa] (VIII, 377). He insinuates that just as insects cause plagues and disruptions in the production of food, aliens produce social problems in their host countries.

Generally speaking, Martí only advocates immigration that fits the national character and can be absorbed into the host country without friction. Therefore,

he states that “one should not provoke an immigration that cannot be assimilated into the country” [no se debe estimular una inmigración que no pueda asimilarse al país] (VIII, 384). According to Martí, the spirit of the host country should match that of the immigrants to avoid social unrest:

Porque esa es la ley capital en la introducción de inmigrantes: sólo debe procurarse la inmigración cuyo desarrollo natural coincida, y no choque, con el espíritu del país.—Vale más vivir sin amigos, que vivir con enemigos. Importa poco llenar de trigo los graneros, si se desfigura, enturbia y desgrana el carácter national. Los pueblos no viven a la larga por el trigo, sino por el carácter. (VIII, 384)

Martí's emphasis on the value of the national character echoes the nineteenth century vision concerning the need for preserving the homogeneous character of the nation state. The U.S. was the first western country that promoted a culturally and racially heterogeneous population, and Martí was obviously not used to this novelty. Thus, he expressed his caveats claiming that “in immigration, like in medicine, it is necessary to take precautions” [en inmigración como en medicina, es necesario prever] (VIII, 384). The critic Marta Inés Waldegaray refers to Martí's concerns about the dissolution of a nation through immigration. She names as one of his recurrent topics “the social heterogeneity as an obstacle for the creation of a nation; the nation as a historic-social fabric, as a spiritual communion of shared glories and pains” (3). For Martí, the idiosyncratic character of the U.S. consisted in its newness and democratic spirit, and he was concerned that this trait would be diluted by the immigrants.

Martí's preoccupation about heterogeneity and the preservation of the nation state reflects his resistance to imperial control. It is a concept that relates to that of a shared community, one which Benedict Anderson calls an “imagined community” (15) and “which has enabled post-colonial societies to invent a self image through which they could act to liberate themselves from imperialist oppression” (Ashcroft 151). Martí watched with admiration how the United States developed its own national character independent from its former colonizer and he saw this process as a model for Latin America. However, his reservations toward the increasing heterogeneity of the U.S. through immigration differed from his advocacy of the diversity of races in Latin America.

Homi Bhabha's vision of a modern nation stands in contrast to Martí's ideal of a homogeneous U.S. society. According to that critic, Benedict Anderson's “imagined community” has been “altered by mass migration and settlement. He adds that “migrant communities are representative of a much wider trend towards the minoritization of national societies” (221). This view maintains that the monolithic classifications based on ethnic traits are no longer valid in a modern society. Martí's concerns about ethnic homogeneity stand opposed to Bhabha's call for a society based on multicultural concepts. His adverse reaction to the influx of European immigrants and his insistence on racial homogeneity were based on his colonial experience and his desire to create a strong national identity as an antidote to continuing imperial influence in the colonies.

With regard to the increasing numbers of foreigners in New York, Martí also showed practical sense. If the spirit of the host country matches that of the

immigrants, things can work out well. The ideal situation is when both spirits coexist in harmony because “there is nothing more beautiful than to see how the tributaries pour into the rivers, and in their waves they mix and mingle, and they will move to the immense ocean in a serene and magnificent current” [no hay cosa más hermosa que ver cómo los afluentes se vierten en los ríos, y en sus ondas se mezclan y resbalan, y van a dar en serena y magnífica corriente, al mar inmenso] (VIII, 384). The comparison between the confluence of rivers and the mixing of cultures is reminiscent of Emerson’s view on analogies in nature. In his essay on Emerson, Martí writes that “he sees nothing but analogies: he finds no contradiction in nature” [él no ve más que analogías: él no halla contradicciones en la naturaleza] (XIII, 23). Just as two rivers can merge and create a bigger and more powerful stream, so can two cultures mingle and generate unprecedented vigor and energy.

According to Martí, some nationalities are better suited for integration into the U.S. than others because they match the spirit of the nation. The Germans in the U.S., for example, elicit little criticism from Martí. He regards them as “hardworking” and states that “they are crowded into the cities; but with their disciplined intelligence and their mechanical professions they produce what they consume, and they create children that like their country and their work” [se aglomeran en las ciudades; pero con su inteligencia disciplinada y con sus profesiones mecánicas producen lo que consumen, y crean hijos amigos de su país y del trabajo] (VIII, 383). The Norwegians are “moderate, intelligent, and hardworking” [sobrios, inteligentes, trabajadores]. “Of the French,” Martí asserts, “everybody brings a craft” [De los franceses, cada uno trae un arte] and they can be found “in houses of crafts, in jewelry stores, in hotels, in all the skills that require refinement, ingenuity and invention” [En las casas de arte, en las relojerías, en los hoteles, en todas las industrias que requieren refinamiento, ingenio e invención, se hallan franceses] (VIII, 383).

For Martí, the worst kind of immigrants and those that fit the least into the American society are the Irish. He feels that “they are parasites; not plants of their own growth.” And Martí adds:

Son parásitas; no plantas de propio crecimiento. Viven en las hendidias y las grietas. No tienen pujanza ni el valor de la creación, que da al más burdo hombre de campo o de minas, cierta apariencia simpática y augusta. El comercio con la naturaleza hermosea y fortalece.—Y dignifica: de un pueblo de agricultores no se hará nunca un rebaño. (VIII, 383)

The description of the Irish living in “cracks and crevices” suggests insects or vermin, which are annoying to humans and lead a parasitical existence. They are not a product “of their own growth,” but of exploiting the energy of others. Martí disapproves of their accumulation in the cities, where they contribute to the urban proletariat. He finds more beauty and dignity in the farmer or miner, who deals directly with nature. What Martí evidently values most about people toiling with the earth is the fact that this labor creates individuals rather people in “herds.” This is an allusion to Emerson’s recommendation to stress one’s own personality rather than become a member of the “herd.” In “The American Scholar” Emerson

deplores the mass mentality of people and asserts that “men in history, men in the world of to-day, are bugs, are spawn, and are called ‘the mass’ and ‘the herd’” (58). It is significant that Martí also adopts Emerson’s image of an insect to describe the loss of identity of people who live in overcrowded cities. Since the Irish were predominantly unskilled people who lived in the cities in large communities, Martí was overly critical of them.

Martí’s depreciative comments about the Irish might sound surprising considering his respect for human life and dignity. Since most Irish arrived poor and uneducated in New York and lived in close communities to survive in a foreign land, they did not meet Martí’s ideal of culture, learnedness, and individualism. Another reason for Martí’s contempt is the demeaning evaluation of the Irish expressed by the above-mentioned North American writer Self, of whom Martí writes:

De los irlandeses Self escribe: “Menos de la mitad del término medio de las demás inmigraciones, es el número de los inmigrantes irlandeses con alguna habilidad u oficio. Todo un octavo de la inmigración total en los Estados Unidos componen los irlandeses; y con no ser más que un octavo de la inmigración, proporcionan una mitad del número total de criados y jornaleros sin oficio. Un cuarenta y seis por ciento de la inmigración irlandesa vive en las cincuenta ciudades principales.” (VIII, 383)

Self’s number game must have convinced Martí to the extent that he feared a social disaster in view of the high number of Irish without education or practical skills. Since they were mostly unemployed and without hope of finding a decent job, Martí was concerned about the financial strain on the rest of society for supporting them. His greatest concern, however, was a social collapse of the “young” nation, which he so admired at that stage of his stay in New York, along with its unbound potential for democracy and freedom. In “Impressions of America,” he writes in English, “I am deeply obliged to this country, where the friendless find always a friend and a kind hand is always found by those who look honestly for work” (XIX, 104). Martí appreciates the hospitality of his host country and the opportunity for work and a new life. For him, the Irish apparently exploit the U.S. system and endanger the existence of a still fragile new nation.

Martí’s resentment against the Irish immigrant resurfaces in his 1884 essay “Una distribución de diplomas en un colegio de los Estados Unidos.” He refers to a graduate student who “examines the reasons for the harmful influx of ignorant Irish immigrants into the cities.” Then Martí continues:

Examina otro las razones del dañoso influjo de la ignorante inmigración irlandesa en las ciudades, donde con su número sofocan el voto y se lo adueñan, sin que por su hábito de no reunirse más que con gente de su terruño y por no ser la idealidad elemento singular de su naturaleza, ascienda en ellos la cultura a la par con su influencia y autoridad de sufragantes en el pueblo que los recibe como a hijos. (VIII, 441)

Martí’s criticism of Irish immigration exposes his key concerns in view of the increasing numbers of foreigners. He fears that the hundreds of thousands of Irish newcomers could cause an imbalance of the U.S. voting system and tilt it to their favor. The Irish meet only “people of their native land” and thus demonstrate

a lack of communal sense with the rest of the country. Most aggravating for Martí is their supposed deficit of “idealism” and “education,” which for him represents a grave shortcoming because he expects the United States to be built on spiritual concepts rather than materialistic ones. Since the Irish arrive in large numbers and sooner or later will make up a formidable voting bloc, Martí is concerned that their alleged brutishness will spill over to the rest of the nation and corrupt it. In “Graduation Day” Martí gives further evidence of apparent Irish depravity:

Crían por las lomas de los suburbios los irlandeses, gansos, patos y chivos e hijos descalzos, que de sus padres encervezados y de sus madres harapientas y del sórdido cura de la parroquia, no pueden sacar modelos para mejor vida, sino que en cuerpo y espíritu salen de sus chozas de mala madera, depauperados: y como la inmigración de Irlanda a New York es tan cuantiosa, sucede que de veras está gravísimamente amenazada de miseria mental y moral la gran ciudad. ... Y hay escuelas por cierto; pero en los hijos de irlandeses lo que la escuela cría, el chivo se lo come. (VIII, 441-442)

Martí's warnings about “mental and moral misery” for New York through the Irish immigrants and his critical remarks about the Irish priest reflect the views of North American nativists, who favored the interests of established inhabitants over those of immigrants. In the 1830s nativists began focusing their attacks on Catholic immigrants, asserting that America's republican form of government could not be sustained with a large Catholic population. These Protestants insisted that republican governments require a virtuous, educated, and independent electorate, and they perceived Catholic immigrants to be superstitious, ignorant, and dominated by their priests. Martí was evidently influenced by the nativists' sociopolitical policy as his criticism of alleged Irish lack of education and virtues reveals.

Martí also demonstrates his skepticism toward immigration in his 1883 essay on Karl Marx. In this article, he portrays European immigrants as a threat to the political stability in the U.S. He writes that “there are some with broad foreheads, long unkempt hair, skin the color of straw, flashing eyes, and an air of rebellion about them, like the blade of Toledo steel, and they are the ones who lead, mobilize, oppose, publish newspapers, organize meetings, and make speeches” [Los hay de frente ancha, melena larga y descuidada, color pajizo, y mirada que brilla, a los aires del alma en rebeldía, como hoja de Toledo, y son los que dirigen, pululan, anatematizan, publican periódicos, mueven juntas, y hablan] (IX, 387). Describing the immigrants' “broad foreheads, long unkempt hair, skin the color of straw,” Martí suggests their brutish and uncultivated character. With their “flashing eyes,” they have an “air of rebellion” about them, which Martí despises. He also suspects them of fomenting violence, which he insinuates with the words “blade of Toledo steel.” But it is their political agitation and their potentially destructive plans that Martí is most concerned about. He considers them a threat to the political stability of the United States. His fear of revolution and upheaval is also reflected in the description of another group of immigrants:

Los hay de frente estrecha, cabello hirsuto, pómulos salientes, encendido color, y mirada que ora reposa, como quien duda, oye distintos vientos, y examina, y ora se inyecta, crece e hincha, como de quien embiste y arremete. (IX, 387)

Again, Martí alludes to the immigrants' untamed and barbaric character when he describes their "coarse hair." The rest of his depiction insinuates an unpredictable and dangerous animal that is about to attack. Portraying the immigrants as beastlike creatures demonstrates Martí's aversion to their activities on the American continent.

At that stage of his life, Martí regarded the U.S. principally as the land of freedom and progress, and he saw a manifest threat to those achievements through the political unrest that the immigrants brought with them from Europe. Since he always strove for harmony, he repeatedly referred to the immigrants' hate and rage, and to the damage they can cause in the U.S. He relates the immigrants to "the battlefields of wrath" [campos en que se combate por ira] and pronounces that "the future must be conquered with clean hands" [la conquista del porvenir ha de hacerse con las manos blancas] (IX, 387). Martí believes that "the workman of the United States would be more cautious if the most aggrieved and enraged workmen of Europe did not empty the scum of their hatred into his ears" [más cauto fuera el trabajador de los Estados Unidos, si no le vertieran en el oído sus heces de odio los más apenados y coléricos de Europa] (IX, 387). According to Martí, "the Germans, Frenchmen, and Russians guide these talks" [Alemanes, franceses y rusos guían estas jornadas] (IX, 387). For him, these nationalities obviously represent the main culprits for social unrest. They are different from Americans because these "tend to resolve the concrete matter in their meetings, while those from abroad raise it to an abstract level" [el americano tiende a resolver en sus reuniones el caso concreto: y los de allende, a subirlo al abstracto] (IX, 387).

Martí alludes to the freedom in the U.S. and adds that "good sense and the fact of being born into a free cradle make the step toward rage difficult" [el buen sentido, y el haber nacido en cuna libre, dificulta el paso a la cólera] (IX, 387). Finally, Martí compares the disruptive immigrants to a decaying element that threatens to corrupt the healthy and free society of the U.S., warning that "the rotten apple must not be allowed to spoil the healthy basket—though it could! The excrescences of monarchy must not be allowed to become so powerful that they can rot and gnaw like poison at Liberty's bosom" [no ha de ser--¡aunque pudiera ser!--que la manzana podrida corrompa el cesto sano. ¡No han de ser tan poderosas las excrescencias de la monarquía, que pudran y roan como veneno, el seno de la Libertad!] (IX, 388).

It is significant that in this essay on Karl Marx, Martí's thoughts about the politically explosive character of the immigrants precede directly his portrayal of the German reformer. This leads to the conclusion that Martí does not approve of Marx's rhetoric of class warfare and violent upheaval of the social order. It seems that he also implicitly blames Marx for contributing to incite the wrath and hatred among the disgruntled immigrants because it is primarily his ideas that are circulating among the foreigners. Martí's ideals were based on his rejection of social revolution and socialism, and on his approval of the social and political

order of the U.S. Toward the end of the 1880s he modified his attitude toward the U.S. and became increasingly critical of his host country, but he never suggested a complete change of the U.S. political system, let alone a violent upheaval.

It is noteworthy that with regard to the ethnic fabric of Latin America, Martí adopted a reversed position toward the beginning of the 1890s. In “Nuestra América” he famously exclaims that “there are no races,” meaning that the future of that continent is based on cultural multitude. This view is consistent with his 1883 essay “Sobre inmigración,” where he approvingly describes the influx of Italians in Argentina proclaiming that “it is pleasant to watch those poetic Italian workers as they step, smiling and serene, into the solemn and fragrant fields of Buenos Aires” [da gozo ver entrarse, sonrientes y serenos, por los campos solemnes y fragantes de Buenos Aires a esos poéticos trabajadores italianos] (VIII, 377). The laudatory depiction of the “solemn and fragrant fields of Buenos Aires,” explains why Martí’s attitude toward immigration to Latin America was more supportive than that in North America. Since he expected the European newcomers to settle primarily in the Latin American countryside and engage in agricultural work, he welcomed their arrival. They would not contribute to the city proletariat and vices but dedicate their energy to honest work in the fields. This hope is reflected in his belief that the rustic people from Italy would not come to Argentina and “sell sweets and fruits at ignoble city corners, but will enrich the sowing of the land” [no van a vender desde innobles rincones de ciudad dulcecillos y frutas, sino a enriquecer las siembras] (VIII, 377). Since Martí was convinced that work in the country “embellishes,” “strengthens,” and “dignifies” people, he did not mind immigration of foreign farmers. In North America, he witnessed mainly the huddled masses in urban centers such as New York and the resulting social and political problems. Those impressions prompted his criticism of indiscriminate immigration.

Towards the mid-1880s, Martí’s reservations toward immigration gradually changed and gave way to a more sympathetic view. This was due to the increasing poverty of immigrants, which he could witness personally in New York. His new attitude was also a result of his heightened interest in socialist writings such as John Rae’s *Contemporary Socialism*. The critic José Ballón comments on the Cuban’s reading this book claiming that “Martí incorporated modern socialism in his ideas.” Ballón evaluates Rae’s book and states that “it is a compendium of the socialist theories and its political advances both in the U.S. and in Europe (you can say, in the western world) of the nineteenth century” (64).

Martí’s change of mind concerning the immigrants is reflected in his reaction to the trial of the Chicago anarchists in 1887. On May 4, 1886, a dynamite bomb was thrown in Chicago’s Haymarket Square and several policemen were killed. Eight anarchists, who were mainly immigrants, were tried for the bombing, and seven were condemned to death, though the evidence linking them to it was scant and dubious. On November 11, 1887, four of them were executed (Allen 195).

In an article on the trial written for *La Nación* in September 1886, Martí expressed little or no sympathy for the anarchists and no doubt about their guilt. He considered them bothersome people who spread a message of hate among

the American population. But one year later, in 1887, he wrote an account of the events with a significant change of perspective. In that article, he blamed the American society for the violence perpetrated by the anarchists. Now he speaks of “a concrete accusation that was never proven” [una acusación concreta que no llegó a probarse] and of the anarchists who died as “victims of social terror” [víctimas del terror social] (XI, 334).

Martí defends the violent immigrants because of their social problems. He asserts that “they reason like trapped animals” and “all that grows seems to them to be growing against them” [Júzganse como bestias acorraladas. Todo lo que va creciendo les parece que crece contra ellos] (XI, 337). “They are cold and hungry,” Martí claims, and “they live in stinking houses.” He concludes that “America, then, is the same as Europe” [Tienen frío y hambre, viven en casas hediondas. ¡América es, pues, lo mismo que Europa] (XI, 338). Martí feels that the immigrant anarchists’ motivations for their deed were just because

Cree el obrero tener derecho a cierta seguridad para lo porvenir, a cierta holgura y limpieza para su casa, a alimentar sin ansiedad los hijos que engendra, a una parte más equitativa en los productos del trabajo de que es factor indispensable, alguna hora del sol en que ayudar a su mujer a sembrar un rosal en el patio de la casa, a algún rincón para vivir que no sea un tugurio fétido donde, como en las ciudades de Nueva York, no se puede entrar sin bascas. (XI, 339)

Martí’s list of workers’ rights reads like the demands of a socialist pamphlet, which he might as well have read, and his call for a “fairer share in the profits from the work” is reminiscent of Marx’s concept of “alienation,” which holds that workers in capitalist nations are alienated because they have no claim to ownership of the products they make. Martí feels that social justice demands that the workers are entitled to these rights, but “every time the Chicago workers asked for these things in any way, the capitalists joined forces, punished them by denying them the work that for them means meat, fire, and light; they throw the police on them, who are always anxious to unleash their clubs on the heads of badly-clothed people” [cada vez que en alguna forma esto pedían en Chicago los obreros, combinábanse los capitalistas, castigábanlos negándoles el trabajo que para ellos es la carne, el fuego y la luz; echábanles encima la policía, ganosa siempre de cebar sus porras en cabezas de gente mal vestida] (XI, 339).

It is significant that Martí uses the Marxist term “capitalists,” who “joined forces” against the poor immigrants. Thus, he also blames the wealthy classes for the class warfare and not only the working classes. In fact, it is the “capitalists” who are mainly responsible for the tensions because they deny the workers the necessary means for survival such as food, heat and light.

Martí’s defense of the immigrants in his 1887 essay stands in sharp contrast to the critical attitude toward foreigners that he had demonstrated from the beginning of his stay in New York in 1880. However, it represents the only instance when Martí supported violence apart from the context of political independence. Despite voicing socialist theories in that essay, Martí stops short of establishing a Marxist order. The critic Carlos Ripoll rightly states that “there is no doubt that Martí, after many years and various experiences in the United States, accentuated his preoccupation with social problems. This does not mean

that his thought changed" (65). Martí's thought was to create a humane republic characterized by social stability and devoid of class violence and the excesses of American-style *laissez-faire* capitalism. The United States, that he initially wholeheartedly admired, eventually failed to provide him with a political model for Latin America.

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