

# *The Outcast Bandits*



Social Bandit 1

Social bandits were popular within their own communities. They helped and protected their communities from governments because of the social suppression (Zamora-Evans1).

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## Introduction:

Social bandits were popular within their own communities because they protected and never stole from their communities. "These social bandits were considered an outlaw by the legal law, while remaining a hero to the public. These social bandits represented the oppressed foreigner who suffered discrimination under the law" (Zamora, Evans-1). These social bandits were mainly discontented because they had lost their wealth to other groups and combined their powers to form alliances to attack Anglos. The Social Banditry concept was eventually introduced by some Chicanos scholars. The scholars stated that after the United State Civil War, 1890, social banditry became a common practice. Social banditry was the Mexicans', living in the United States territory, revenge against Anglos.

## Social Banditry:

According to Outlaw Guns of the Middle Border: American Social Bandit by Richard White, a social bandit is a person who has been forced to become an outlaw by robbing from the rich to give it to the poor (i.e. Robin Hood). White continues explaining that a social bandit kills on self-defense or revenge. Social banditry was a phenomenon that started because of animosity between Mexicans and Anglo-Americans. After the victory of the Anglo-Americans over the Mexicans' territory 1848 (after the Treaty Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed) there were three factors that caused animosity among these two cultures. These were the political, economical, and social-cultural issues that

divided the two cultures in the states of California, New Mexico, and Texas. The result of this animosity among these two cultures originated social banditry.

### California:

According to the book Mexico and The United States, right after the Treaty of Guadalupe was passed, Californians discovered gold in the estate. When Mexico lost California, a lot of Anglo-Americans came to occupy the new territory. This caused animosity among the Spanish-speakers, especially Mexicans, and Anglos who resided in the area. The racism from Anglo-Americans against Mexican was in its apogee causing humiliations to the Mexicans who decided to stay in California. The majority of these Mexicans were owners of ranches while California was part of Mexico, but when California became part of the American territory, they lost their land and power. Because of the Mexican government did not give them the owner certifies of the land when the territory was still part of Mexico. Therefore, with new government, new laws were passed about land ownership. The Land Act of 1851 was the main law which did not recognize Mexican as owners. This increased the Mexican's hatred against Anglo-Americans. Some of the bandits were people who came from wealthy families or ex-rancher who had lost their land and power. One of the most famous bandits in California was Joaquin Murrieta who is believed terrorized Anglo-American because they occupied his land where they found gold; therefore, he took revenge against those who occupy his land.

## New Mexico:

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, guaranteed the South West (US territory) was not part now of US territory. Also, this treaty guaranteed the United States government that Mexicans would not get involved in issues against Anglos, but this didn't happen. After the Mexican-American war only a few Anglo families moved to the Upper Rio Grande area because of the social issues in that territory. However, after the American Civil War, a great influx of Anglos entered in the New Mexico's south area. The story of Californian ranchers was repeated in New Mexico, New Mexicans lost their land in the hands of newcomers. In order to take the land and power from Mexicans, Anglos married the wealthiest Mexican family's members. Half century later, Anglos were the majority and dominant race of the area. This caused animosity and revenge from some Mexican who eventually became bandits. New Mexico saw the rise of bandits such as Mariano Leiba of Bernalillo and Vicente Silva of Las Vegas. These bandits defended Mexican's communities from Anglo advance of their lands. Among the best known bandits were the "white caps" or Gorras Blancas and their main point was that they wanted to preserve the Mexican heritage and cultures.

## Texas:

Texas had the worst situation of discrimination and abuse against Mexicans, especially, at the border. During the first half of nineteenth century there were mutual animosity among Mexicans, but Anglos dominated political and economically. The most

famous bandit was Juan Nepomuceno Cortina who initiated his life as a bandit when he killed a land owner defending a Mexican prisoner. He also believed that fighting against Anglos vindicated the rights of his people; however, some believe that he was looking to recover his wealth.

### Manuel G. Gonzales's Opinion:

According to the author of Mexicanos: A History of The Mexicans In The United States, Manuel G. Gonzales, banditry was initiated a quarter century following the Mexican-American War. Gonzales states that banditry was the result of the loss of land and status of the Mexican-Californians (New Mexico and Texas, too). Since Mexicans felt the humiliations and arrogance from some Anglo-Americans, they became anarchist. It is believed that "there were many more Mexican bandits in 1850s and 1860s than their relatively small numbers would warrant" (Gonzales-88). These bandits were family members from well-known rich families, some others were middle class who had lost their properties because of the Land Act of 1851. This act demanded that Rancheros of California or anybody who had land under their "ownership" to prove it; unfortunately, the majority of them were not able to prove it. A couple of important ex-rancher from California was Castro Sepulveda and Vallejo who then became bandits and fought against the Anglos. These Mexican bandits believed robbing, assaulting, and killing Anglos to demonstrate the new government that they were still powerful. The awful crimes these bandits committed against Anglos were not justified. The same situation happened in New Mexico and Texas where racism was the main factor that initiated social banditry.

These Social bandits were, before the Anglo intervention, wealthy men who had lost their wealth in the hands of Anglos.

### Conclusion:

The Social Banditry was the result of discrimination and overthrow from Anglos against the Spanish-speakers, especially Mexicans in the area of California, New Mexico and Texas. After the Mexican-American war hostility increased because of the Anglo presence in what was Mexican's territory, but mainly because Anglos stole the Mexican territory with dishonest methods. Consequently, Mexicans' anger increased against Anglos and they took revenge. This revenge brought death, and the increment of hate among these two cultures.

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