BROWN ERASURE: MEXICAN AMERICANS AND THE TEACHING OF HISTORY IN COLD WAR TEXAS

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of
College
Texas Christian University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctorate of Philosophy

Spring
2024

APPROVAL

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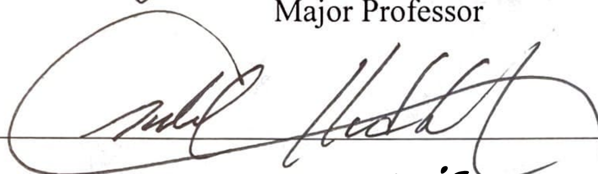

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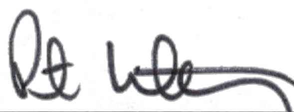

For the College Dr. Peter Worthing

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 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At a particularly difficult moment in the dissertation process, in an effort to remind me why I was pursuing this challenging goal, my best friend Blanca Ramos told me that I was my ancestors wildest dreams come true. Both my paternal and maternal ancestors were farmworkers who did not have the same educational opportunities I have had. Their underpaid and underappreciated labor in the fields of Texas supported the growth of the state and the country. My ancestors and other Mexican Americans like them are part of the fabric of the United States and their narratives and perspectives are essential to the history of the nation. I thank them for their strength to endure and to prosper despite the oppressive systems that prevented them from moving out of an arduous life. I also thank all the activists who worked to change these systems that provided my generation with more equitable opportunities.

Many professors and academic mentors made this dissertation possible. Dr. Elizabeth Alexander and Dr. Brenda Matthews shaped my early love of history and desire to learn more during my time at Texas Wesleyan University. They also introduced me to the world of academic conferences as an undergraduate student that built the foundation for my passion for sharing my research. Dr. Cristina Salinas and Dr. Stephanie Cole at the University of Texas at Arlington not only guided my master's thesis but have also continued to be important mentors through the dissertation process. Whether it was advice during conversations at conferences or social gatherings or writing letters of recommendation, both of these women have continued to support my endeavors. I am thankful for Dr. Philis Barragán Goetz's commitment to serve on my dissertation committee. She agreed after a short conversation the first time we met where I explained how influential her first book has been to my research. Dr. Barragán Goetz's scholarship is vital to the field of Mexican American educational history and I look forward to continuing to collaborate with her in the future.

The professors and mentors at TCU to thank are numerous. I began my doctoral program as the graduate assistant for the Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies Department. The space created by CRES professors and staff made my entry into a Ph.D. program as a first-generation Chicana historian welcoming and inspiring. Sharing an office and working with Toni Taylor to organize and execute student, faculty, and community events for the nascent department made me feel like an essential part of CRES and TCU. Toni played such an important role as a sounding board and confidante who always checked on my spirit and made sure I had everything I needed to be successful. Dr. Sylvia Mendoza and Dr. Ryan Sharp came in and out of the office and offered daily nuggets of encouragement and guidance. Thank you to all the affiliate CRES faculty and staff, especially Dr. Emily Farris, Dr. Gabe Huddleston, Dr. Brandon Manning, Orlando Lara, Dr. Jane Mantey, Dr. Janelle Hope, Dr. Luis Romero, Dr. David Colón, Dr. Mona Narain and Dr. Santiago Piñón. Your consistent reassurances and your own dedication to your scholarship motivated me to push through all my doubt. Dr. Gabe Huddleston in the College of Education invited me into his academic world and gave me a crash course in the field of Curriculum Studies. While brainstorming a topic for a final paper in his class he suggested I look for the white architects of Mexican American education, a nod to the work of William Watkins. This dissertation began with that conversation.

The professors in the History Department challenged me in every class and provided the necessary feedback to become a historian. Thank you to the department and to the Schmidt family for granting me the LCPL Benjamin W. Schmidt Scholarship to complete this dissertation. Dr. Greg Cantrell made me a better writer. Dr. Todd Kerstetter made me a better researcher and his enthusiasm for my pedagogical practices contributed to my confidence in a university classroom. Dr. Celeste Menchaca opened new avenues to understanding the formation of race. Her mentorship and feedback led to my first publication. Even though I did not have a

course with Dr. Alex Hidalgo he always offered useful advice and said my name with the correct accent, a simple but comforting action. Lastly, Dr. Kara Vuic and Dr. Max Krochmal have both guided me through the Ph.D. program. Through their teaching and mentorship I am able to make sense of and contextualize my own lived experiences and those of my family and ancestors within in Texas and US history. As I wrote this dissertation they both consistently demanded deeper analysis and a sharper argument. Dr. Vuic asked indispensable questions that led me to think more critically about my topic. Through his own scholarship Dr. Krochmal taught me how to make my research accessible and applicable to those who are continuing the fight today. I choose to attend TCU to learn from Dr. Krochmal and I am grateful I made this decision. I am a more critical scholar and a more engaged citizen because of his mentorship.

Many people and organizations have assisted the research and writing process of my dissertation. First, thank you to all the archivists and staff who helped me access the needed primary sources for this project. A special thanks to Kristin Carpenter and the FWISD legal department who granted me access to the district's meeting minutes, provided a comfortable space to scan documents, and whose questions and comments gave me an opportunity to work out my thoughts about all the new discoveries. Pamela Woodson and Lenna Hughes, both retired teachers helped me navigate the Billy W. Sills Center for Archives which was in transition during the height of my research. They also shared their own experiences working with Billy Sills and teaching in the district. The Texas State Library and Archives Commission and the Texas A&M University Corpus Christi Special Collections supported my research with grants and the archivists at each location were accommodating and knowledgeable. I am thankful for their assistance in finding what I needed to tell this story. I am also thankful for all the writing groups that kept me accountable, especially to Lindsay Dunn who facilitated the graduate student group at the TCU William L. Adams Center for Writing and provided value feedback in the early

stages of the dissertation. Thank you to the Night Owl Zoom Writing group that kept me productive from 9 pm to 2 am a couple times a week. These scholars from around the country motivated me meet my final deadlines.

A special thanks to the Ethnic Studies Network of Texas (ESNT) core team members and the Historians of Latino Americans (HOLA). Both ESNT and HOLA reminded me why my work was important. The core team of ESNT, Orlando Lara, Deyadira Alvarado, Maria de los Ángeles De Santos Quezada, Richard Thomas, Dr. Eliza Epstein, Dr. Marissa Muñoz, and Dr. Valerie Martínez provided both inspiration and emotional support to complete this project. I hope I have made them proud. Rita Rodriguez Utt, a lifetime resident of Fort Worth and Chicana trailblazer, created HOLA to document and research the history of Mexicanos in Fort Worth. We shared a passion for learning our history and more importantly sharing that history. Rita was one of the few people outside of my academic advisors who had read my master's thesis. She died just a few weeks prior to the completion of this dissertation. I was looking forward to hearing her thoughts about how I portrayed the events she lived through. I hope I made her proud too.

Finally to my family, this dissertation is dedicated to you all. My parents, Raul and Maria Sánchez who provided me and my sisters with a safe and loving home that supported and encouraged our ambitions. I am also thankful for their willingness to listen to me talk about my research and to share their own experiences as Mexican Americans in Texas public schools. My sisters, Tina, Lisa, and Victoria checked on me throughout this process and made sure I was okay. I am thankful to them and their spouses, Santiago, Kevin, and Michael for giving me nieces and nephews that I could share my love of learning with. Pablo, Jaclyn, Antonio, Joaquin, Lorelei, Stella, and brand new Paloma fill my heart with joy and I am thrilled to be their tia. Thank you to Antonio for making sure I had hot tea and snacks during my long writing sessions. He also helped me think of words and rearrange sentences when my brain was not functioning at

its highest capacity and gave me tools to help relieve my daily anxiety. To my in-laws Joe, Viva, Bryan, Melissa and Celeste thank you for all your words of encouragement during this six-year journey. Your support has been invaluable. My best friend Blanca always knows what to say when I need to be lifted. She can make me laugh and cry good tears all at the same time. I am honored to have her in my life. Thank you for always answering my texts and reminding me why I needed to finish this endeavor. We did it! Most importantly, my husband Jarrett who not only worked overtime to financially support us through these years but also consistently reassured me that I was capable of completing this project. He never let me wallow in my imposter syndrome. Jarrett made sure I knew I was loved and that I belonged in these academic spaces when I doubted my abilities. Thank you for loving me and providing everything I needed to finish this dissertation.

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ABSTRACT

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Ph.D.
2024
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This dissertation explores the white architects of curriculum and instruction in Texas, the Mexican experience and resistance to that curriculum, and the effect on identity and community formation that schooling played on Mexican origin students throughout the twentieth century. Through theorizing curriculum as the whole experience a child has at school from their relationships with their teachers to the schools relationship with the community, I posit that schooling has served as mechanism to maintain white supremacist social hierarchies. I argue that local and state governments in the US have always used curriculum as a political tool; it is not neutral. Whether unilaterally deciding what knowledge is worth learning, sorting children by assumed future abilities, devaluing non-white cultures, and implementing assimilationist strategies into the classroom, educators and politicians have delivered curricula that reinforce America's social order and silenced those deemed unworthy of inclusion. Altering and erasing the memory of historical events and people in textbooks and classrooms is a powerful tool in the creation and maintenance of white supremacy.

"But our educational system was designed to serve White, male, heterosexual, and wealthy people. Our educational curriculum materials have been written and controlled by people pertaining to those identities and committed to keeping the hierarchies of race, class, gender, and sexuality in place."[1]

-Dr. Jacinto Ramos Jr., FWISD School Board President, 2022

INTRODUCTION

Brown Erasure: Mexican Americans and the Teaching of History in Cold War Texas

In the middle of a US history lesson, an eighth grade Latina student in an urban Texas school district raised her hand and asked me, "Mrs. Hill, did any Mexicans sign the Declaration of Independence?" In the brief moment that I paused and realized that I had already taught more than a century's worth of US history and had not once mentioned Mexicans, a white male student laughingly responded, "Nope, no beaners." After dealing with that child, I did my best as a first-year teacher with limited content knowledge beyond the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards to provide a little bit of Mexican American history. It was clear that such content would be relevant to both students, one who was clearly longing to see herself reflected back in the history, and the other, who at thirteen years old had already formed an opinion of Mexicans as an *other*, undeserving of respect.[2] It was also clear that by the eighth grade, my students had not received a full account of US history and instead they learned an white-centric narrative that celebrates a linear progress of white Americans without acknowledging the structures of white supremacy that ensured the subjugation of people of color. Whether due to the lack of teachers and administrators who look like them, a curriculum that

[1] David Colón, Max Krochmal, and Contributors, *Latinx Studies Curriculum in K-12 Schools: A Practical Guide* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 2022), x.

[2] I taught 8th grade US history at McLean Middle School in Fort Worth ISD from August 2011 to May 2014. My use of the word other is meant to emphasize the marginalization of people of color in a society built on white supremacy.

does not include their histories, or the constant patriotic rhetoric in the content that demands unwavering loyalty to the United States, Mexican and Mexican American students have struggled to form a sense of identity that includes a positive perspective of their families and ancestors. And like the boy with the "no beaners" comment, white students have learned to perceive Mexican origin people as, at best, newcomers and, at worse, a threat to their American way of life.[3]

The curriculum and instruction of Mexican American students in Texas public schools throughout the twentieth century played a significant role in the formation of their identities. The social studies content, the white architects of that content, and the assumptions about their students that mostly white educators brought to the classroom are factors in understanding how schooling forced Mexican American students to question the value of their culture. Classrooms where the social studies content excludes the perspectives, narratives, and history of Mexicanos and where white teachers diminish their culture, while simultaneously uplifting Eurocentric stories as the norm, constructs spaces where Mexican origin children feel inferior to their white classmates. Mexicanos did not passively accept an educational system that treated their children as inferior to the dominant group; they contested and sought to shape schooling for their benefit.

Local and state governments in the United States have always used curriculum as a political tool; it is not and never has been neutral. Whether unilaterally deciding what knowledge is worth learning, sorting children by assumed future abilities, devaluing non-white cultures, or

[3] The term Mexican American describes American citizens of Mexican ancestry or origin. The term Mexican refers to people of Mexican origin living and attending school in the United States that are not US citizens. I will sometimes use Mexicanos to include both groups. I will also employ Chicana/o/x to refer to Mexican American activists during the 1960s and 1970s. While this dissertation is focused on the Mexican and Mexican American experience I will also use the term Hispanic or Latina/o/x when the data and primary sources do not distinguish Mexican origin people from people with origins in other Central and South American nations. The terms will vary for both stylistic purposes as well as to accurately reflect the evolution in identity throughout the twentieth-century. I will also use Brown at times for aesthetics, especially when combining with the experiences of Black Americans, other times these two terms are grouped as people of color. I have also chosen to capitalize both of these terms signifying their status as a distinct racial group. The term white is used to identify the dominant group in American society who have historically benefited from racial and social privileges.

implementing assimilationist strategies into the classroom, educators and politicians have delivered curricula that reinforce America's social order and silenced those deemed unworthy of inclusion. Altering and erasing the memory of historical events and people in textbooks and classrooms is a powerful tool in the creation and maintenance of white supremacy. Although this project focuses on Texas and the local school district in Fort Worth as a case study, the history of schooling as a tool of white supremacy is applicable to every state and district across the country. Delivering curricular that upholds white narratives as the norm and reduces the perspectives of non-white people as *others* deprives all young people with the ability to live and function in an increasingly global society. For people of color, the absence of counter narratives of marginalized groups in social studies curriculum is self-evident. However, what is not known is the many decisions made by the white architects of education in Texas that led to the erasure of Mexicanos, who are vital to the story of the US, from the mainstream narrative taught in classrooms across the country.

Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) is an ideal case study to uncover how state and local educational leaders worked together and were influenced by each other's choices regarding the schooling of Mexicano children. The school district's leaders, as well as influential city fathers, played important roles within the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE). Like most school districts in Texas, in the early twentieth century FWISD perceived Mexicans as birds of passage who would migrate in and out of the city and were thus not the district's responsibility to educate. FWISD then operated segregated Mexican schools in the 1930s and 1940s and implemented assimilationist curriculum that stripped Mexicans of their culture and identity. In the 1950s, in response to the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v Board of Education* the Fort Worth's white social and business leaders took action to ensure the local school board preserved the racial hierarchies of the city. However, in the late 1960s, responding

to the demands from empowered Black and Brown voices across the country, a forward-thinking consultant for the Social Studies Department pushed for multicultural curriculum supplemental guidebooks for K-12 classrooms. The “Much From Many” guidebook and the “Americans All” curriculum for elementary students, published in 1969 and 1974, respectively, was surprisingly inclusive for the historically conservative city, though it fell short of reflecting the emerging fields of Ethnic Studies. The new curriculum was not enough to prevent the Mexican American Education Advisory Committee (MAEAC), formed by parents and young Chicano social workers in the city, from suing the district for the discriminatory treatment of Mexican origin students. The lawsuit lasted more than a decade and ended with a federal judge siding with the plaintiffs, requiring the district to acknowledge Mexicans as a separate ethnic group, not a subcategory of whites, and to provide programs specifically for their needs. Like most major cities in the Southwest, Fort Worth’s educational apparatus as it relates to Mexican Americans reveals how the city’s power brokers perceived Mexicanos and the steps they took to maintain their place at the top of the economic and social hierarchy. FWISD is also an ideal case study because it is the first district in the state to use local funds to create a Latina/o Studies elective and in 2018 contracted TCU Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies Department (CRES) to write a K-12 Latinx Studies Curriculum Overlay.

Curriculum Theory

Throughout the twentieth century curriculum theorists argued whether curricular should focus on creating logical and critical thinkers without regard to the content, developing the child’s mind properly and in the right order, ensuring efficiency in preparing each child to be a productive member of society, or educating for the purpose of fixing injustices in society. From debates surrounding the purpose of curriculum, classical or practical, stirred by the rapid industrialization and urbanization at the turn of the century, to the ideas of utilizing schools to fix

society's ills during the Progressive Era, or the application of Frederick W. Taylor's scientific management to schooling, theorists considered the role of curriculum for the betterment of the nation. [4] In the mid-1920s curriculum theorist George Counts believed that schooling and curriculum were essential in a democracy and could help balance the evils of capitalism. [5] However, for at least the first half of the twentieth century, this educational discourse did not include or consider Mexicanos as most of society did not expect them to become permanent members of the community.[6] Instead, according the Pauline Kibbe, white Texans perceived Mexicanos as "a species of farm implement that comes mysteriously and spontaneously into being coincident with the maturing of the cotton . . . He has no past, no future, only a brief and anonymous present."[7]

Both writing in the early 1970s, educational thinkers Paulo Freire and Michael B. Katz theorized that oppressors used public education as a tool to preserve social hierarchies. Freire argued that schooling could be used as a tool for liberation but not in its traditional form. As long as educators treated their students as blank slates or in the case of Mexicano children in Texas as people who first needed their ostensibly inferior culture stripped away and who passively received knowledge, then these students were never empowered to question societal norms and begin the struggle to challenge the status quo. Although Freire's analysis was born from his experience as an educator in Brazil and Chile, his conclusions are apt and applicable to an

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[4] Herbert M. Kliebard, The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958 (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004).

[5] George Counts, "Dare the School Build a New Social Order," in The Curriculum Studies Reader, ed. David J. Flinders and Stephen J. Thornton (New York: Routledge, 2017), 59-65.

[6] For more on the racist beliefs of early curriculum theorists see, Ann Gibson Winfield, *Eugenics and Education in American: Institutionalized Racism and the Implications of History, Ideology, and Memory* (New York: Peter Lang), 2007.

[7] Pauline Kibbe, Latin Americans in Texas (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press), 1946, 176. Kibbe was a field associate to the Executive Committee on Inter-American Relations in Texas during World War II. She summarized her findings in Latin Americans in Texas. Cynthia E. Orozco, "Kibbe, Pauline Rochester," Texas State Historical Association website, Last modified February 21, 2017, Accessed December 12, 2019, https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fkign.

assessment of the public school systems in the United States.[8] Katz was writing about the United States but his geographic analysis did not include the South or Southwest. Nevertheless, Katz's investigations into the history of schooling in the Northeast help to evaluate the intentions of white architects of education in Texas. Katz argued that the educational reform movement of the mid-nineteenth century led by Horace Mann, also known as the father of American education who claimed that public schooling was the "great equalizer" for society, was not the "simple, unambiguous good it had long been taken to be," instead, "the central aim of the movement was to establish more efficient mechanisms of social control, and its chief legacy was the principle that 'education was something the better part of the community did to the other to make them orderly, moral, and tractable.'"[9] His initial analysis of schooling focused on the relationships between the white affluent class and poor white ethnic groups. In the early 1970s as educators faced the consequences of racial segregation in public schools he included non-white groups in his examination. Katz concluded that schools were "imperial institutions designed to civilize the natives; they exist to do something to poor children, especially, now, children who are black and brown."[10] Katz succinctly described the American education system throughout the twentieth century as "universal, tax-supported, free, compulsory, bureaucratic, racist, and class-biased."[11] Applying both Freire and Katz's theories of public schools to the conditions and experiences of Mexican Americans in Texas reveals the objectives of the dominant societal group who initially attempted to deny Mexicanos any education, then as their population grew and became less

[8] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

[9] Stephan Thernstrom, foreword to *Class, Bureaucracy, and Schools,* by Michael B. Katz (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), ix-x.

[10] Michael B. Katz, *Class, Bureaucracy, and Schools: The Illusion of Educational Change in America* (New York: Praeger, 1971), xviii.

[11] Michael B. Katz, *Class, Bureaucracy, and Schools: The Illusion of Educational Change in America* (New York: Praeger, 1971), 106.

migratory used schooling to rid them of their culture and to implement assimilationist strategies in the classroom to keep them in subservient positions in society and as a labor force to support capitalism.

More recent scholars of curriculum theory, William F. Pinar and Wayne Au argue that curriculum is more than just the subject matter. Pinar describes curriculum as a "complicated conversation between teachers and students over the past and the future and their meaning for the present."[12] In this conversation, the educator should weave their own experiences in the world into the academic knowledge and should encourage their students to do the same. Even though it is in these face to face classroom interactions between the teacher and student where education becomes reality, Au points out that an effective curriculum must consider the students' social position and relate to that position.[13] When critiquing curricular, Au questions what knowledge is made accessible, who is making it accessible and who is allowed to access it.[14] Both Au and Pinar are critical of exam-driven curriculum that creates a hierarchy of knowledge based on what is and what is not tested, as well as the division of students on assumed abilities that mimic and perpetuate societal power structures. Additionally, both scholars argue that deciding what knowledge is of most worth is inherently political. Pinar states that curriculum is "animated by ethics, history, politics, race, gender, and spirituality" and in constant flux based on the space and historical moment in which it is produced and taught.[15] Curriculum is also not always restricted to conversations in a classroom. Au describes the importance of "hidden curriculum," which he defines as the social norms and hierarchies viewed by children in school and their likelihood to

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[12] William Pinar, *What Is Curriculum Theory*? (New York: Routledge, 2019), 1.

[13] Wayne Au, *Critical Curriculum Studies: Education, Consciousness, and the Politics of Knowing* (New York: Routledge), 2012, 67.

[14] Au, *Critical Curriculum Studies*, 38.

[15] Pinar, What is Curriculum Theory?, xii.

reproduce those relationships as they become adults. Without seeing Mexican origin teachers and administrators in leadership positions, it is difficult for children to envision leadership roles for themselves. If curriculum is left without considering its role in the maintenance of power and oppression then schooling will continue to aid in the safeguarding of white supremacy.

A study of curriculum and instruction of Mexicano students incorporates more than the content used in classrooms. The entire schooling process from the relationship a child has with their teachers, the relationship between the parents and administrators, and the relationship the school has with the community is necessary to consider in order to understand how those in power have used educational systems to maintain their control. Angela Valenzuela, an ethnic studies scholar and professor of curriculum and instruction considered each of these relationships in her 1990s ethnographic study of Juan Seguin High School in Houston. Mexican origin students were the majority on campus but the teachers and administration were not. Valenzuela concluded that traditional schooling practices, where teachers' ultimate goals were to impart their expert knowledge, subtracted student resources through a curriculum that devalued their language and culture and rejected Mexicanos ideas and needs in an educational environment. Teachers and administrators at Juan Seguin did not care to understand their student's lives and made no attempt to develop genuine and meaningful relationships with their students. Students then reflected the faculty and staff's apathy in their own feelings about school. The Mexican community surrounding the high school made their concerns known through various methods including the ultimate display of intolerance and resistance, a school walkout in 1989. The Mexican origin youth understandably did not excel in this schooling environment. The whole experience of schooling for Mexicanos is necessary to evaluate to understand how traditional public schools play a role in identity and community formation.

Curriculum Theory in the Real World

Many of the questions this dissertation intends to answer were derived from personal experience teaching in an urban school district. I did the first half of my student teaching at a FWISD school, Amon Carter-Riverside High School, a campus that is predominantly Mexican and Mexican American in 2011. I met Adan, a Mexican American sophomore who had already found a path toward gangs, for the first time at a parent-teacher conference. I watched him shrink in his chair as his abuela (grandmother), assistant principal, and mostly white core teachers berated him for an hour about his current grades, missing work, test scores, and reading level. While Adan may have become motivated to do the minimum out of fear, I do not believe this setting could have created any authentic change in his academic behavior. His World History teacher, my student teaching mentor, who was his only Mexican American teacher, was busy with the baseball team so I conducted his weekly World History tutoring after that conference. We sat together and I told him stories of kings and queens, war and colonization, poverty and persecution, oppression and revolution, and he told me similar stories about his life. His grade improved, he found a desire for learning for a short time, and when I left for the second half of my student teaching elsewhere, he told me, "thank you for teaching me."[16] I do not know the path Adan took, but my short experience working with him taught me that good teaching connected classroom learning with students' lived experience. The theories of Pinar, Au, and Valenzuela's conclusions are applicable to this interaction with Adan. Adan's core teachers, assistant principal, and his abuela left that conference hoping he would "stop messing around," "pay attention in class," "do his homework," "learn the material and do better on tests." Pinar, Au, and Valenzuela might question the practice of the teachers, the culture of the school, and the stated goals of campus and district administrators, in their role in creating Adan's situation. Pinar

[16] I student taught for seven weeks at Amon Carter-Riverside High School in the beginning of the second semester in the 2011-2012 school year.

could identify Adan's experiences as a consequence of running the school as a business where Adan and his teachers are expected to produce certain outcomes, "despite the utter unpredictability of learning."[17] I do not have first-hand knowledge of the teaching and learning taking place in his other core classes, but the couple days that I observed Adan's World History teacher and coach in the classroom before he asked me to "take over," certainly gave credence to Pinar's understanding of the problems in twenty-first century schooling. The day I arrived for my student teaching the coach handed his students a worksheet created by the textbook provider. He instructed students to complete the worksheet using their textbooks in preparation for their semester exam. He then walked around and talked to students about how their dad or their cousin were doing, or about the upcoming baseball season, or scolded students for sitting on the floor (he removed all the chairs from his classroom and raised the desk to standing level using PVC pipes in an effort to combat childhood obesity). As much as the coach seemed to care about his student's lives outside the classroom, he stopped short of then connecting the student's lives to the content. I did not observe anything that resembled a complicated conversation where the teacher used both their and their student's lived experiences and the curriculum to help make sense of or connect with the world around them. There was no, as Pinar stated, "self-reflexive, interdisciplinary erudition and intellectuality;" instead the teaching in that World History classroom was transactional, exam-driven, and as Adan described, "boring."[18]

After observing the coach's teaching for two days, he asked me if I wanted to start teaching after semester exams. He gave me the teacher's edition of the textbook, a CD-ROM from the textbook publisher, a quick tutorial on how to use the Promethean Board, and told me which chapters to cover (he also allowed me to remove all the PVC pipes and find some desks

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[17] Pinar, *What is Curriculum Theory?,* 19.

[18] Pinar, *What is Curriculum Theory?,* 2.

chairs). I had what I thought was the curriculum and some resources to help me teach. I was about to stand in front of thirty to thirty-five mostly Brown students, five times a day and teach them the history of the world. I had not read Wayne Au's scholarship on critical curriculum studies nor could I articulate how schools and schooling perpetuated social hierarchies and economic inequalities or theories on how to change that reality. I did not know the phrase "standpoint theory" or understand that a person's or student's social location is the ideal place to frame critical questions because "it can provide a clearer, more truthful lens for understanding the world than that of hegemonic epistemologies."[19] I just knew that I wanted to created engaging lessons; I vowed to never resort to a worksheet. Even though I did not grow up in the same neighborhood as these kids, I had some understanding of their lived experiences as a Brown high school student in Fort Worth. None of my teachers or counselors encouraged me to attend college or directed me to any academic scholarship applications even though I had a 4.0 GPA and was in the top ten percent of my graduating class. Although I did not have the knowledge and theories of critical curriculum studies, I knew I needed to do more than just pass knowledge from my brain to theirs. I wanted them to love history like I did. While I do not think Au or Freire would see my lessons as achieving liberation through curriculum and I do not think my short time with Adan and his classmates gave me the opportunity to "shape student consciousness about . . . their worldview and their view of themselves," I certainly made it difficult for the coach to return to the classroom with his worksheets.

In May of 2019 an Amon Carter-Riverside High School English teacher, Georgia Clark posted a tweet asking the president at the time for assistance in "reporting illegal immigrants in

[19] Au, *Critical Curriculum Studies,* 55-56.

the FWISD public school system" and for help to "remove illegals from Fort Worth."[20] According to various news sources, she had taught for the district since the late 1990s. I am not certain if Clark taught at Amon Carter-Riverside when Adan was there or if he had her as a teacher. However, I do know that Clark had numerous infractions and complaints including calling a group of Mexican origin students, "Little Mexico," and demanding Brown students show her their papers proving their legal status in order to go to the bathroom. She had done this for several years and was still in the classroom. This campus culture that allowed Clark to treat students this way or that planned student-teacher conferences to belittle and berate a child, as I experienced first-hand, undoubtedly falls in line with what Valenzuela meant when she coined the phrase "subtractive schooling." I can also remember sitting in a meeting with all the social studies teachers where the focus of the meeting was on that year's state assessments. By 2011, TEA had added history to the list of state-tested subjects. TEA monitored and held districts accountable to their test results. The assistant principal asked each of the teachers to look over their rosters and take a guess as to how many students they thought would pass. Indeed, this was the focus of every meeting I attended on that campus. For this majority Mexican and Mexican American high school, keeping a racist teacher on staff and having tunnel vision for test scores is not the image Valenzuela had for a campus structure that ensured Mexican origin youth felt cared for, celebrated their culture, and motivated them to build social capital among their peers, teachers, or community.

I did not observe William Pinar's theories on curriculum as a complicated conversation between educators and learners, or Wayne Au's focus on anchoring curriculum from the

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[20] Alex Horton, "A teacher asked Trump to round up 'illegal students' – in tweets she says she thought were private," *Washington Post,* June 5, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/06/04/fort-worth-teacher-georgia-clark-asked-trump-tweets-round-up-illegal-students/.

perspective of marginalized groups, or Angela Valenzuela's attention to the power of caring and celebrating students' culture, at Amon Carter-Riverside High School. I certainly did see Katz and Freire's traditional schooling methods that would preserve social hierarchies. The test-driven culture of the campus that demeaned Mexicano students did not provide them with curriculum that would liberate students or empower them to fight against white supremacy. I left that campus with questions about how I could make my student's experiences different. However, I had little control over the entire schooling process for my students. In an effort to make a more significant change for Mexican origin students, this project uncovers and examines the methods used by white architects of education to sustain class structures, the actions taken by the Mexicano community to resist these conditions, and what paths current advocates need to take to ensure an enduring transformation rather than short-lived reforms of public school education.

Ethnic Studies and Mexican American Educational Scholarship

Ethnic studies scholars have traced the history of schooling as a vehicle for cultural genocide to the Native American boarding schools during the eighteenth century. Through a critical analysis of the history of schooling in the United States in the context of white settler colonialism it is evident that schools became a site for the elimination of indigenous people through both the killing of Native children and through the epistemological genocide that rid Natives of their language, history, and cultural ways of knowing. Ethnic studies scholars argue that this deculturalization in educational spaces did not end with Native Americans but became a cornerstone of public schooling. From the majority white teachers and administrators, the white-centric content, the pedagogical methods that do not center learning around the students, and to the relationships between schools and the community, traditional schooling uplifts whiteness as the norm and establishes non-white people as *others*. Even though early advocates for public school in America claimed that schools were democratic institutions that provided equal

opportunities to all students, schools instead aided in the colonization process and now support a capitalist system that requires a subjugated and exploited labor force to thrive. Without acknowledging the goals of the history of traditional schooling and the social and psychological effects for marginalized children when they are unable to see themselves reflected in their schooling environment including in their classroom content, then schooling will continue to prop up white supremacy.[21]

Ethnic scholars divide their field into three phases with the last one happening now. The first phase included the writings of Black scholars W.E.B. DuBois and Carter G. Woodson and the early histories of Mexican Americans by Carey McWilliams and Manuel Gamio, all written from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. White scholars ignored all of these publications and their content was not utilized in most academic institutions; however, the writings of Black scholars were familiar to students in historically Black colleges and universities. The second phase of ethnic studies began during the upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s when several marginalized groups made demands on high school and college campuses for an inclusive curriculum that included the perspectives and narratives of their own histories. In many places white educators reacted to these calls quickly but only made surface-level additions like the contributions and achievements of a few individuals, who in the opinion of the curriculum writers, exemplified American values, and the celebration of cultural holidays with food and music to their curriculum. Most districts across the Southwest did not advance beyond this approach of learning *about* diverse groups. According to ethnic studies scholars, "the

[21] Wayne Au, *Rethinking Multicultural Education: Teaching for Racial and Cultural Justice* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Rethinking Schools, Ltd., 2014); James A. Banks, "Race, Knowledge Construction, and Education in the U.S.A.: Lessons from History," *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 5, no. 1 (March 2002), 7-27; James A. Banks and Cherry A. McGee Banks, *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004); Christine E. Sleeter, "Creating an Empowering Multicultural Curriculum," *Race, Gender & Class in Education* 7, no. 3 (2000), 178-196; Christine E. Sleeter and Miguel Zavala, *Transformative Ethnic Studies in Schools: Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Research*, Multicultural Education Series (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2020).

problem here is the framing of ethnic and racial groups as 'Others' who may be gazed upon but remain silent."[22] This multicultural content does not provide an opportunity for students to question the master narrative or problematize their social conditions in the context of history. The third phase of ethnic studies scholarship builds on the inclusive curriculum of the second phase. Ethnic scholars today use curriculum as a vehicle for social justice and community empowerment. In these classes students not only learn about the structural racism that has existed throughout US history, but they also gain an understanding in how to overcome this oppression. The critical view of curriculum that uses race as lens to understand the intentions of the white architects of education in ethnic studies scholarship provides a framework for the actions and decisions of politicians and educators regarding the schooling of Mexican Americans in Texas and Fort Worth.

While the dissertation is a history of Mexican Americans, the experience of Black Americans is significant to the story. Indeed, the identification of politicians and educators as the white architects is borrowed from the work of William H. Watkins who uncovered the major actors in the development of schooling for Black Americans and their paternalistic efforts to exert power over their perceived social inferiors. The paternalistic ideologies of the rich white men did not create equitable education. Instead, each of these efforts aimed to uplift Black people into a position to harmoniously work for white people within in a capitalist system. Through his research, Watkins obliterates the notion that the debates between DuBois, who advocated for increased higher education and political equality for Black people, and Booker T. Washington, who called Black people to "cast down your bucket" and learn a skill rather than

[22] Christine E. Sleeter and Miguel Zavala, *Transformative Ethnic Studies in Schools: Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Research*, Multicultural Education Series (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2020), 8.

fighting for social or political equality, were a determining factor in the future of their race. It was the rich white philanthropists who believed in laisse faire capitalism and focused on profits who controlled the education and educational policies for Black Americans. Beginning just after the Civil War, the US economy was transitioning from regionalism to agrarianism to a corporate industrial society while those in power were simultaneously searching for new ideologies to justify the racial and class hierarchies that existed in the nation. Watkins connects white philanthropists' beliefs in scientific racism to the shaping of those ideologies. Watkins then lays out the biographies and the actions of the white, rich men that made Black education part of their philanthropy.[23] Specifically, in Texas and Fort Worth, elite and powerful white men and women used various strategies to maintain segregated schools and communities and to preserve their hegemony in society in the face of desegregation orders and the civil rights movement. Analyzing these strategies is crucial to understanding their decision-making processes for the education of Mexican origin children.

The historical literature on schooling for Mexicans and Mexican Americans has recovered a history of both discriminatory treatment in schools and contestation of that treatment by parents, students, lawyers, and activists. Guadalupe San Miguel was the first scholar to upend the long held myth of Mexican American apathy toward education in his seminal book, *Let All of Them Take Heed: Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981.* He and other historians have focused on the creation of Juan Crow education, students' experiences of it and the local community's activism to change those circumstances. Throughout these studies, it is clear that school administrators and educators segregated Mexican

[23] Max Krochmal and J. Todd Moye, eds., *Civil Rights in Black and Brown: Histories of Resistance and Struggle in Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2021); William H. Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education: Ideology and Power in America, 1865-1954*, Teaching for Social Justice Series (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001).

origin students from their white peers. In these separate spaces, Mexicanos experienced inferior buildings, untrained teachers, and limited access to knowledge. This schooling perpetuated social and economic inequalities. These studies also highlight the direct action of the families and community leaders to change these conditions. Some of those battles took place in the judiciary. Richard Valencia meticulously documents these legal battles in *Chicano Students and the Courts: The Mexican American Legal Struggle for Educational Equality.* Across the Southwest, Mexican Americans and their civil rights attorneys made judicial attempts in multiple arenas including segregation, funding, special and bilingual education, school closures, undocumented students, higher-education funding, and high-stakes testing. These studies also discuss the struggles for bilingual education and an end to English-only laws that devalued the language and culture of Mexicanos. Carlos Kevin Blanton traces the history of these detrimental laws to the efforts of progressive reformers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to professionalize and centralize schooling in *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas, 1836-1981*. In an effort to create a centralized school system, progressive reformers ended local educational decision making. These efforts coincided with the anti-German fervor, one hundred percent Americanism rhetoric, and the increase of Mexican immigrants into Texas demonstrating that adoption of English-only laws were not based in pedagogical theory but rather based in racist ideals.[24]

[24] Carlos Kevin Blanton, *George I. Sánchez: The Long Fight for Mexican American Integration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2104); Carlos Kevin Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas, 1836-1981* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007); Darius V. Echeverría, *Aztlán Arizona: Mexican American Educational Empowerment, 1968–1978* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014);); Gilbert C. Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1990); Marcos Pizzarro, *Chicanas and Chicanos in School: Racial Profiling, Identity Battles, and Empowerment* (University of Texas Press, 2005); Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&K Press, 2005); Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *Chicana/o Struggles for Education: Activism in the Community* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2013); Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *Let All of Them Take Heed: Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000); and Richard R. Valencia, *Chicano Students and the Courts: The Mexican American Legal Struggle for Educational Equality* (New York: NYU Press, 2010).

More recent scholarship has added new layers to the historiography of Mexican American education in the Southwest. Focusing on the late 1800s and up to the 1960s, Philis Barragán Goetz traces the origin of Mexican American Studies to the neighborhood escuelitas in *Reading, Writing, and Revolution: Escuelitas and The Emergence of A Mexican American Identity in Texas*. She argues that these informal and grassroots run schools centered the Spanish language and Mexican cultural knowledge and provided ethnically Mexican students with opportunities to learn. These students, who also attended Texas public schools, formed new identities while navigating these spaces that educators used as nation-building sites through either assimilationist curriculum or curriculum that reinforced their Mexican culture. Barragán Goetz also highlights the Mexican American women who established and operated the escuelitas and uncovers the foundational role that María Elena Zamora O'Shea and Jovita Idar played in developing a history curriculum that included the perspectives and contributions of Mexican Americans to the Texas story. David García traces the history of racist schooling in Oxnard, California that led to the desegregation lawsuit *Soria v. Oxnard* in 1971. He argues that white architects built a system based on racial hierarchies, segregated communities, and schools within schools that provided Black and Brown students with inferior education. He also uses the term "mundane racism" to describe the actions and inactions of the school board and their supporters that aimed to keep schooling segregated and to "reproduce inequality as a routine matter of course."[25] Jesus Jesse Esparza unearths the story of a self-governing majority ethnically Mexican school district in Del Rio, Texas. Esparza argues in *Raza Schools: The Fight for Latino Educational Autonomy in a West Texas Borderlands Town* that the San Felipe School District thrived under Latino rule. In this schooling environment that provided Mexicanos with schools

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[25] David G. García, *Strategies of Segregation: Race, Residences, and the Struggle for Educational Equality* (University of California Press, 2018), 5.

that were "academically rigorous, holistically nurturing, and culturally relevant" students performed better and were more likely to graduate and attend college.[26] However, after forty-two years of autonomy the federal government required the Del Rio schools to consolidate, forcing Mexican students to attend majority white schools where these students struggled to perform.[27]

I will also contextualize this research by placing it within Mario T. Garcia's generational model of Mexicano activism throughout the twentieth century and Barragán Goetz's education focused interventions to that model. Mexicano historians typically divide their field into three cohorts: the immigrant/Mexican generation, the Mexican American generation, and the Chicano generation. Sometimes they add another, a Hispanic generation that stretches to present. Education advocacy in the first generation centered on self-help. Originating in Mexico, by the 1870s Mexicans across the Southwest established mutualistas in response to the ruling white supremist society taking over in the United States.[28] These mutualistas provided funeral and disability benefits and also pooled community money together to celebrate various cultural events like Mexican Independence Day. Mutualistas continued after the turn of the century as Mexicans fled revolutionary Mexico and settled in nascent urban centers and in colonias. The escuelitas established and operated by mostly Mexicanas during the early twentieth century provided their community with an education that reinforced their Mexicanidad and pushed against the efforts of white schools that sought to assimilate them into American society. By the 1930s, a new generation of Mexicanos who, while continuing to celebrate their Mexicanidad, realized the benefit in speaking English and working within American systems to find a path

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[26] Jesús Jesse Esparza, *Raza Schools: The Fight for Latino Educational Autonomy in a West Texas Borderlands Town*, New Directions in Tejano History (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2023), 6.

[27] Esparza, *Raza Schools*; García, Strategies of Segregation; Barragán Goetz, *Reading, Writing, and Revolution.*

[28] David Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 35.

toward upward mobility and established the League of Latin American Citizens (LULAC). One of LULAC's first initiatives aimed to end discrimination and segregation in education for Mexican Americans. Many of the leaders of this new generation of activists attended both escuelitas and public schools. This experience navigating both worlds help form their new identities while empowering them to use the tools at their disposal as American citizens to fight for their equality in society. Mexican Americans continued to engage in local, state, and national politics during and after World War II. Whether increasing the number of Mexican registered voters through tamale drives, running for local political offices, or continuing to battle in the courts to end school segregation and discrimination, Mexicans strengthened the foundation of activism built by their elders. Led in large part by Mexican American veterans and their American G.I. Forum, this wave of activism adhered to the "cold war rhetoric of Americanism."[29] These men and women with their middle-class aspirations established Mexican American Chambers of Commerce, raised money for academic scholarships, and encouraged engagement in electoral politics.[30]

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Mexican Americans in urban school districts across the country gained access to bilingual education, legal acknowledgement of their ethnic identity as a group victimized by a segregationist approach to education, access to higher education, and ethnic studies courses at their colleges and universities. Historians often credit this progress to the walkouts, sit-ins, marches, protests that demanded changes to the decades of discriminatory

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[29] Marc Simon Rodriguez, *Tejano Diaspora: Mexican Americanism and Ethnic Politics in Texas and Wisconsin* (University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 28.

[30] Brian D. Behnken, *Fighting Their Own Battles: Mexican Americans, African Americans, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Texas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Carlos Kevin Blanton, *George I. Sánchez: The Long Fight for Mexican American Integration* (Yale University Press, 2015); Mario T. Garcia, *Mexican Americans Leadership, Ideology & Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); David Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (Oxford University Press, 1995).

education to the activism of the Chicano Movement or El Movimiento. However, while partly influenced by the actions of Black activists, Chicanx activism grew out of the long history of politically engaged Mexican American community. The Chicano Movement's new, younger, and more radical wave of engagement, with an initially localized focus, consisted of multiple avenues of activism without any one central leader. The lack of ethnic studies in secondary and higher education curriculum appeared in most of Chicanx demands across the Southwest. [31]

Using the theories and frameworks of critical curriculum theorists and ethnic studies scholars this project both builds on the foundational scholarship of Mexican American educational historians and adds another dimension to the historiography. Using critical curriculum theory and the history of Mexican American education as a lens to analyze the actions of white politicians and educators, it is evident that while the state gradually accepted Mexicanos as permanent members of society, not just transit instruments of agribusiness, they continued to perceive them as inferior. While the history of segregation, bilingual education, and community formation are included and vital to this research, the motivations, actions, and final decisions of the white architects of Mexicano education in Texas and Fort Worth reveal and strengthen our understanding of public school curriculum as a tool of white supremacy. García's description of the Oxnard school board's actions as "mundane racism" aptly depicts the attitudes of the FWISD school board throughout the twentieth century. The detailed history of Fort Worth's educational apparatus and the resistance of the Mexican American community to their

[31] Rodolfo Acuna, *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation* (San Francisco: Harpercollins Publisher, 1972); Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (University of Texas Press, 2016); Ignacio M. García, *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos among Mexican Americans* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997); David Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1981* (University of Texas Press, 2010); Maceo Montoya and Ilan Stavans, *Chicano Movement for Beginners* (Danbury, CT: For Beginners, 2016); Lorena Oropeza, *The King of Adobe: Reies López Tijerina, Lost Prophet of the Chicano Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019); Marc Simon Rodriguez, *Rethinking the Chicano Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2015); and Marc Simon Rodriguez, *Tejano Diaspora: Mexican Americanism and Ethnic Politics in Texas and Wisconsin* (University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

inferior social position serve as both a case study and an intervention into the historiography considering the dearth of scholarship on the city's relationship with Mexicanos. This project also continues Barragán Goetz's discussion of schools as driving force in the identity formation for Mexican Americans into the Chicano Movement era and the beginnings of the Hispanic generation. Ultimately, this dissertation historicizes the current moment in education and the efforts of the modern-day white architects to maintain their hegemony over the curriculum of Texas students. Juxtaposing the Mexican American, Chicano, and the very beginnings of the Hispanic Generation activism with the actions of SBOE members and the FWISD school board trustees and superintendents demonstrates the success and limitations of each of the generation's strategies in altering the schooling of Mexican and provides the current efforts with a blueprint.

Sources and Chapter Breakdowns

Drawing on state and local archives, utilizing community-based oral history projects, conducting new oral histories, and digging into family archives, I trace the history of the curriculum and instruction of Mexican origin students in Texas. I use schooling as a lens to analyze how Mexicanos viewed themselves and how they were perceived by others beginning in the 1920s and ending in the 1980s. The dissertation ends with an epilogue that jumps to 2010 when the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) approved new social standards through the peaks and valleys on the path toward a TEKS supported Mexican American Studies course and a K-12 social studies Latina/o Studies curriculum overlay in FWISD.

Although my focus is on Mexican American students in an urban school system, Chapter 1 examines the discourse regarding migratory children in rural areas because these early discussions begin the rhetoric of Mexicans as temporary members of society. This first chapter discusses the rural schooling across Texas in the 1920s. The immigration rhetoric of the decade by both politicians and powerful growers highlights the dominant culture's vision for Mexican

origin people in the United States, a vision that followed them into the cities. I argue that in the early twentieth century school district and municipal leaders in Fort Worth did not believe it was their responsibility to educate the Mexican children of the city. Even though FWISD officials claimed multiple times that the district had never segregated or discriminated against Mexican origin students, this chapter demonstrates the contrary. When more Mexican families made Fort Worth their permanent homes, FWISD schools allowed parents to enroll their children into their local school but segregated them into separate classrooms, sometimes in outside buildings or in the basement of the main building. Students were also punished for speaking Spanish. The district also built substandard one or two room schools for segregated Mexican communities. This chapter also highlights the Mexican community's desire for education through parents not only enrolling their children in school but also their own attendance in an evening community school.

Chapter two juxtaposes the rise of the Mexican American generation activism through LULAC and the AGIF with the demand from the Fort Worth white community and the FWISD school board for a curriculum that uplifted and preserved American Exceptionalism, or the belief that the United States is unique, special, and exceptional in comparison to all other nations. The chapter primarily analyzes schooling in Fort Worth as the Cold War began. Community members appeared before the board in the 1950s in greater numbers than the preceding decades. The men and women who expressed their concerns at school board meetings feared any communist infiltration into their schools through leftist curriculum. Their concerns developed into a steadfast dedication to an awareness of the actions of administrators and the school board. LULAC and AGIF's reach for acceptance in a society dominated by white Americans created an environment where both white and Brown adults pushed young Mexicanos to assimilate. Across the state these second generation Mexican Americans challenged the inequitable educational

opportunities described in the earlier chapter through multiple lawsuits. The founder of the Fort Worth chapter of the AGIF, Gilbert Garcia, believed the organization's efforts to increase Mexican American voting, school attendance, and assimilating into American society were a signal of progress; however, I argue that these interventions had not created any tangible positive change in the lives of most Mexicanos in the city. Chapter two also highlights the backlash by white society in Fort Worth in response to the *Brown v Board of Education* decision and the board's successful efforts to delay integration.

Chapter 3 focuses on the education of Mexican origin students during the 1950s and 1960s. In this chapter I turn to the Cold War discussions and decisions of the state-level white architects who initiated the SBOE's first official policies that targeted Spanish-speaking and migrant students. In an effort to consolidate the educational apparatus of the state, the Texas legislature reorganized the system in 1950 to create a state board of education with elected representatives and a commissioner selected by the board members. J.W. Edgar served as the first commissioner of education in a tenure that lasted for more than two decades. I argue in chapter 3 that the decisions of the SBOE and Edgar, as the head of education in Texas, sought to maintain the status of Mexicanos as laborers and to discourage them from seeking higher education. This chapter also examines the efforts of LULAC, the newly-formed AGIF, and the Good Neighbor Commission, which aimed to establish and maintain a friendly and politically rewarding relationship with Mexico and the rest of Latin America, across the state in illuminating the discrimination of Mexican origin students. Felix Tijerina, LULAC president from 1956 to1960, spent the majority of his tenure focused on education and founded the Little Schools of the 400 in 1957. These schools aimed to teach preschool Mexican children four hundred English words before they began elementary school. Tijerina's work influenced the Texas legislature's establishment and support of pre-school programs in the state. Each of these

groups implored the SBOE to reform social studies curriculum to include the contributions of Mexicanos to the narrative of Texas and US history.

Chapter 4 continues the analysis of the SBOE. By the mid-1960s the SBOE had to contend with the Chicano Era push for inclusive curriculum. The Mexican American generational activism led to the increase in voting and election of Mexicanos at local and state levels. These newly elected representatives, along with the Chicano youth who pushed beyond their elders' accommodationist rhetoric and made loud demands for an end to discrimination in their schools, together created opportunities to change the trajectory of education for Mexicanos in Texas. I argue that even though their efforts led to limited change, ultimately they did not have the numbers or the influence to overtake the power of the traditional conservative leaders who aimed to maintain their supremacy, made empty promises, and granted minimal gains. This chapter also discusses the Civil Rights Commission report on the status of Mexican American education across the Southwest and how local and state Mexicano leaders used this data-rich report as evidence to support their long held concerns for their children's education. The first Mexican American elected to the SBOE, Dr. Omar Garza from McAllen, opened the doors to the SBOE and invited Mexicano parents, students, activists, and educators to confront their representatives and demand action.

Chapters 5 and 6 are a close examination of the actions of FWISD and the community of Mexican American activists during the era of the Chicano Movement. After more than two decades of Mexicano parents prompting the district to offer a program for Spanish-speaking students FWISD utilized federal funding to begin Bilingual Education. The district finally conceded that the need existed after a high-ranking administrator and future superintendent, Julius Truelson, pointed out the large drop-out rate of Mexican origin youth and its connection to students falling behind early due to an inability to speak English. In addition to the Bilingual

program, Chapter 5 also discusses the various multicultural supplemental curriculum guides created by the FWISD social studies department and their efforts to comply with court orders to desegregate their campuses while disrupting the education of the white students as little as possible. I argue that the local school board and the FWISD administration allowed for minimal change in an attempt to appease the Mexicano community of the city. However, chapter 6 reveals the organized resistance by both Mexican American and Chicano leaders to the district's continued insincere assurances. Beginning with a lawsuit, Mexicanos built coalitions and new organizations to demand the board acknowledge them as a separate ethnic group, not white, who had unique needs that the district was responsible for fulfilling. In addition to the lawsuit, these new organizations led by members of the Community Action Agency (CAA), a program funded by the War on Poverty, took advantage of federal funding dedicated to the educational needs of marginalized groups. CAA leaders created their own community school, operated auxiliary programing during and after school on FWISD campuses and opened an alternative school to help students find their way back to school after dropping out. None of these programs continued after the federal government ended its funding of local poverty programs. I argue in this final chapter that by the mid-1980s, like the city's leadership, FWISD leaders had chosen their token representation, granted limited progress to shut down any uprisings, and had effectively maintained their power. The dissertation ends with an epilogue that highlights the state's successful efforts in codifying the traditional narrative of US and Texas history into the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards and the rise of a new movement for Ethnic Studies and inclusive curriculum.

The historic path that led to the current TEKS and for a young Latina student in 2012 to wonder about the inclusion (or exclusion) of Mexicans in the curriculum began in the early twentieth century as the population of Mexicans in Texas increased and local politicians and

educators made decisions based on the needs of the dominant groups rather than what might be best for all children. Whether citizens or recently arrived immigrants, Mexican-origin children experienced a form of primary schooling that initially centered on learning the English language and basic math. By the second or third grade, teachers, school administrators and growers expected these Mexican children to return to the fields with their parents. In the decades after WWII, many Mexican families transitioned out of migrant labor work to take advantage of new job opportunities in urban areas. The children of these families stayed in school longer. Still, history curriculum in secondary education aimed to ensure loyalty to America and to uplift and enforce a normatively white American identity. Mexican origin students in these classrooms struggled to form an identity that celebrated their bicultural and bilingual nature. Without naming the maintenance of white supremacy as the ultimate goal, history teachers taught a version of US history that celebrated the heroic actions of white historical actors and marginalized or eliminated ethnic minorities from the narrative. As early as the 1960s, Mexican high school and college students called for both a change to the content teachers taught in history courses and for a more inclusive curriculum, which would later become the basis for Ethnic Studies. Still, it was not until 2019 that the Texas Education Agency approved a high school elective course in Mexican American Studies, the first focused on any nonwhite group. In order to change the way history is taught in the K-12 classrooms of the present and future, we must first know the history of the erasure of Mexican origin people in the social studies curriculum in Texas.

"Most of *our* [my emphasis] Mexicans are of the lower class. They transplant onions, harvest them, etc. The less they know about everything else the better contented they are . . . The white people claim that when a Mexican gets a little education he . . . wants to become a contractor, etc. So you see it is up to the white population to keep the Mexican on his knees in an onion patch or in new ground. This does not mix well with education."[1]

--Statement by a Texas superintendent of schools, 1930

CHAPTER 1 - "MEXICANS ARE TAUGHT AMERICAN WAYS": FORT WORTH'S MEXICAN SCHOOLS

Mexican Americans have endured unequal educational opportunities in the Southwestern United States since the 1848 signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. School district officials worked actively throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries not only to segregate children of Mexican origin from their white peers, but also to provide inferior buildings, ill-prepared teachers, an English-only environment that degraded Mexican culture, and a curriculum built on the principals of white supremacy. These intentional disparities ensured the continued availability of uneducated and ostensibly submissive laborers for decades to come.[2] U.S. Senator George Murphy claimed, in a 1960s debate over the future of the Bracero Program, that Mexicans were well-matched to the stooped over nature of agricultural work because "they're built so close to the ground."[3] This racist view of Mexicans was articulated in 1927, when Harvard educated historian and eugenicist Lothrop Stoddard, writing about the future of immigration in the United States, stated "For here, right at our doors, was a great reservoir of the cheapest and most docile labor. The "Mexican peon" (Indian or mixed-breed) is a poverty stricken, ignorant, primitive creature, with strong muscles and with just enough brains to obey

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[1] Herschel Thurman Manuel, *The Education of Mexican and Spanish-Speaking Children in Texas* (Austin: Fund for research in the social Sciences, the University of Texas, 1930), 77.

[2] David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), *Texas,* 178, 191-196.

[3] Steven W. Bender, "Beasts of Burden: Farmworkers in the U.S. Field of Dreams," in *Mea Culpa, Lessons on Law and Regret from U.S. History* (NYU Press), 2015, 60.

orders and produce profits under competent direction."[4] In the early twentieth century, for Mexicans in the United States, schooling and for many the lack of schooling, served as the disciplinary mechanism that controlled their economic and social mobility and aided in the racializing and othering process.

School districts in rural counties in Texas often ignored the state compulsory attendance laws, choosing not to enforce these laws in Mexican neighborhoods. Powerful growers worried how education might change the status quo among their laborers, "if they [Mexicans] learn, they [farmers] can't handle them as well as they do now…they will unionize and ask higher wages."[5] Others stated, "I am for education and educating my own children, but the Mexicans . . . get some education and then they can't labor…they think it is a disgrace to work…the illiterates make the best farm labor," and "if Mexicans get educated, they will go to the cities where they can get more."[6] Those with power to enact change did not see a need for change. As long as Mexican agricultural laborers lacked the means for upward mobility both economically and socially then the powerful, politically-connected growers continued to have a cheap labor force that they could exploit. [7] Unlike the history of Black education when those in power used targeted and politically motivated curriculum to steer Black children into employment that

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[4] Lothrop Stoddard, *Re-Forging America: The Story of Our Nationhood* (New York: Scribner), 1927, 214.

[5] Paul Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States: Dimmit County, Winter Garden District, South Texas*, (Berkley: University of California Press), 1930, 378.

[6] *Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., "Let All of Them Take Heed,"* 51.

[7] For more researching regarding the role of Mexicans as agricultural laborers in the United States see, See, Mario T. Garcia, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, & Identity, 1930-1960* (Yale University Press), 1989; Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press), 1976; Cristina Salina, *Managed Migrations: Growers, Farmworkers, and Border Enforcement in the Twentieth Century (University of Texas Press), 2018;* Emilio Zamora, *Mexican Labor Activity in South Texas, 1900-1920,* The University of Texas at Austin, PhD dissertation, 1983.

perpetuated their low economic statues, for Mexicans, the dominant group deemed any amount of education as unnecessary or dangerous.

When educators did take an interest in the development of Mexican children, the effort typically revolved around teaching the English language. Historian, Carlos Kevin Blanton traces the evolution of the use and celebration of bilingualism to English-only pedagogy in his study on bilingual education in Texas. He argues that the push for both professionalization and Americanization in public schools during the Progressive Era ended the use of non-English languages in rural classrooms. According to Blanton, prior to the turn of the century, Texas had a tradition of the using of Spanish in public schools. Moreover, as German and Czech immigrants also arrived in the state, schools incorporated these new languages into the classroom. Blanton states that, "the extensive countywide schools in rural and isolated counties of South Texas . . . took special pains to meet the linguistic needs of their Tejano community."[8] He goes on to emphasize that these linguistic needs went beyond the classroom. Bilingualism was the tradition in school events in the community as a primary method to "establish for the school a firm connection to the larger community and cultural life." However, Progressive Era changes led to less local control of school policies and an end to these bilingual traditions. For public schools the professionalization movement during the early 1900s fostered positive reforms, including, compulsory attendance laws, teaching standards and certifications, and a state regulatory agency to oversee the functionality of schooling across Texas. Yet, Blanton offers three explanations why these reforms negatively influenced bilingual teaching and in turn Mexican students. First, the centralization of the public school system denied ethnic communities the autonomy to

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[8] Carlos Kevin Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas, 1836-1981*, New Ed edition (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 31.

develop and implement their own teaching practices. Also, English-only declarations influenced legislation and instructional mandates. Finally, the rise in nativism during this era pushed the new legislation through and ensured open "attacks on the bilingual tradition."[9] In the battle over the control of who taught, what they taught, and how they taught it, local educators lost to the state apparatus that uplifted English-only schooling.

Mexican American parents in Texas expressed their frustration with these new mandates in Spanish language newspapers. They encouraged their *gente* to establish their own schools that taught Mexican history and celebrated their culture and language. They argued that the public schools provided for them were "vastly inferior, racist, and culturally insensitive."[10] Mexicans parents and educational advocates rightly believed that the English-only rhetoric and actions would only make schooling for their children worse. English-only laws in Texas led to horrific interactions between white teachers and Spanish-speaking students. Teachers placed their fingers in the mouths of students who struggled to sound out words with the accurate pronunciation and attempted to manipulate the students' tongues and lips to move correctly. In Harlingen, Texas, English-only rules found their way to the playground. The administrators and teachers began an "English Club." All students who had not used Spanish for a full week while at school gained membership to the club. If they spoke Spanish then they could no longer be a part of the club until they successfully avoided the ostensibly foreign language for another full week.[11] Students of Mexican origin did not succeed in this learning environment leading to massive elementary

[9] Carlos Kevin Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas, 1836-1981*, New Ed edition (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 43.

[10] Carlos Kevin Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas, 1836-1981*, New Ed edition (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 54.

[11] Manuel, *The Education of Mexican and Spanish-Speaking Children in Texas*, 123.

school failures and dropouts that solidified white American teachers' belief in the inferiority of their Brown students.

Blanton also focuses on the Americanization goals of the Progressive Era to explain the rise of English-only schooling in Texas. Current scholars of Mexican American educational history have theorized two opposing methods of Americanization efforts in school: additive and subtractive.[12] While the goals were the same, creating patriotic, loyal, Americans who spoke English and uplifted the customs, traditions and values of the nation, the strategies used in each method have vastly different outcomes. In the additive method, the English language and American customs are introduced while protecting and celebrating the child's native language and culture. On the other hand, the subtractive method stripped the child of their native language and culture with the goal of replacing them with American ideals. On a national stage during the Progressive Era, educational theorists John Dewey and social worker Jane Addams pushed for the additive method that elevated the principals of cultural pluralism. Both Addams and Dewey, believed "that the traditional school was unsuitable for learning because it was disconnected from life."[13] Addams held that teachers needed to know their students' lives to create an environment conducive to learning. Addams claimed that a gap is created between the child and their parents through the process of Americanization in schools. The Progressive Era goals of Americanization in public schools included a concerted effort to create a citizenry who fell in line with white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant worldviews. Addams viewed this "most superficial standard of Americanism" as a problem with lengthy repercussions that educators needed to

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[12] Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr. and Richard Valencia, "From the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to Hopwood: The Educational Plight and Struggle of Mexican Americans in the Southwest," *Harvard Educational Review* 68, no. 3 (1998): 353; and Angela Valenzuela, *Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017).

[13] William F. Pinar, *Understanding Curriculum: An Introduction to the Study of Historical and Contemporary Curriculum Discourses*, (New York: P. Lang, 2014), 107.

address.[14] For Mexicanos in Texas these subtractive Americanization efforts, just like the English-only laws, devalued the Mexican culture and built a school system based on white supremacy.

The 1880 census is the first time ethnic Mexicans appear in Fort Worth. The census listed these nine unmarried men as common laborers. By 1910 there were 548 Mexican-born and 149 US-born ethnic Mexicans living in 121 households in Fort Worth. Of these 121 households, 74% were family units consisting of a male head, wife, and children.[15] These Mexican households lived in scattered barrios across the city known as "Little Mexicos." While Jim Crow laws did not fully segregate Mexicans or legally exclude them from public spaces, Juan Crow norms ensured city leaders and white residents racialized Mexicans in Fort Worth, regulating them to their own small communities.

As the Mexican population grew in the first decade of the twentieth century, Saint Patrick's Cathedral, located downtown, provided for their spiritual needs. However, the church only allowed Mexicans to sit in a small section on the right side, reserving the rest of the pews for the white parishioners. Although it is unclear whether any of the children from the 121 households attended public school in Fort Worth in 1910, considering the Black/white binary that categorized Mexicans as white in official government documents, Mexican children are not mentioned in the Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) board meeting minutes until 1923. At the October 6th board meeting, Mrs. Robinson, a representative of the Broadway Presbyterian church in El Papalote, a Mexican barrio just south of downtown, requested

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[14] Jane Addams, "The Public School and the Immigrant Child," National Education Association, *Journal of Proceedings and Addresses of the Forty-Sixth Annual Meeting Held at Cleveland, Ohio June 29-July 3, 1908.*

[15] Kenneth Hopkins, "The Early Development of the Hispanic Community in Fort Worth and Tarrant County, Texas, 1849-1949," *East Texas Historical Journal* 38, no. 2 (October 1, 2000), https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/ethj/vol38/iss2/9.

permission from the FWISD school board to sell paper bonnets to girls at various schools to raise money for a charitable endeavor. The church hoped to raise enough funds to build a room "to teach the Mexican girls."[16] Indeed, in the first couple of decades of the twentieth century it was Catholic, Presbyterian, and Methodists churches that took on the role as educator for Mexican children in Fort Worth. Using education policy as a lens, it is clear from the perspective of local government in Fort Worth that ethnic Mexicans were not permanent members of their society. Policy makers viewed Mexicanos as birds of passage and not their responsibility to educate. Even when ethnic Mexicans began attending Fort Worth public schools, the school district continued the Texas tradition of providing inferior facilities, segregated classrooms, and an incomplete education.

In September of 1912, the Daughters of Isabella, a Catholic women's organization established the first Mexican mission in Fort Worth at the intersection of Bridge and Franklin streets just behind the Tarrant County Courthouse in one of the first Mexican barrios, La Corte. The mission, which focused on education, began with just five children but had increased to twenty-seven by mid-October. After this quick growth, the Daughters of Isabella relocated to Our Lady of Guadalupe Mexican Mission at Peach and Hampton streets less than a mile away. According to a *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* article titled "Mexicans Are Taught American Ways in Newly Established Missions Here" a second mission school opened in 1913 in the North Side for the increasing number of Mexicans living in that community. The leader of the new San Jose mission, Father Pohlen, who was of German ancestry, had graduated from a college in Mexico City and "spent much time among the Mexicans, learning their customs, language, and characteristics." Mexicans "have a great desire to learn things," he told the *Star Telegram* and

[16] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, September 25, 1923.

“they seem almost wild to learn English.” In addition to learning English, these mission schools taught their students “the right way to live” and cleanliness habits. This education went beyond the daily instruction. Father Pohlen and the Daughters regularly visited their students homes “to see if they are profiting by their lessons.”[17] Even though these religious institutions utilized subtractive methods of Americanization efforts, they recognized a need to care for the Mexican community. Neither the city nor the school district attended to any of the needs of Mexican children in Fort Worth during these years.

Fulfilling the Progressive Era needs of caring for immigrants, a third Mexican mission school, the second in North Side, opened in 1915 under the helm of Mateo Molina, a student at the Brite College of the Bible at Texas Christian University. Molina had help teaching the one hundred enrolled students from Miss Clara Case, a professor of Spanish also at TCU, and seven other women who were public school teachers. This mission school opened its doors to both children and adults ranging in ages between seven and sixty. Molina stated that most of the students of the new mission were employees of the packing house and their children. He believed his mission met needs of the Mexican community that the school district or the city could not. Operating in the evening from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Mondays and Fridays his mission school reached adults and children who worked during the day. Molina claimed that, “In many cases both the father and mother work in the packing houses all day, and the older children are required to stay at home and look after their younger brothers and sisters.” He also stated that some families “are too poor to send their children to school.” Ultimately, Molina hoped that the

[17] ”Mexicans Are Taught American Ways in Newly Established Missions Here,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* December 21, 1913.

efforts of himself and his eight teachers would "develop their pupils into sturdy and intelligent American citizens," similar to the goals of public education at the time.[18]

By the 1920s, Mexicans in Fort Worth laid down roots in a city that continued to view them as foreigners. The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reported on large celebrations of Mexican Independence Day in 1917, 1921, and 1924. The 1917 article stated that "an army of 2,000 Mexicans invaded Hermann Park Saturday night and took command without any casualties" to celebrate Mexican Independence Day, to raise money for the Red Cross, and to encourage "their countrymen" to continue to support the United States during World War I. According to John Lerma, a resident of Fort Worth since 1901 and the chairman of the "entertainment committee," the festivities raised five hundred dollars for the Red Cross. The 1921 celebration took place at Trinity Park over two days and was "a miniature Mexican fiesta . . . with everything but a bull fight to entertain the citizens of Fort Worth's Little Mexico." By 1924, the newspaper claimed that six thousand Fort Worth Mexicans observed their "'Fourth of July' celebration and lauded the 'George Washington'" of their country, Hidalgo, a priest." Beyond these celebrations, in 1919 Mexican workers of the Hedrick Construction Company, asserted their rights to fair labor practices and went on strike to demand higher wages and shorter work days.[19] Even though ethnic Mexicans contributed to the economic growth of Fort Worth and had clearly formed active communities, city leaders did not always welcome the new residents. Referring to them as "idle Mexicans" and "surplus Mexicans," as the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* did, local officials worked alongside the Mexican consulate, local welfare agencies, and community centers to

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[18] "North Side Mission School Educates by 'Short Orders,'" *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* January 3, 1915.

[19] "Mexicans Celebrate Their Independence and Aid Red Cross," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* September 16, 1917; "100 Strike On New Refinery For More Pay," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* August 2, 1919; and "6,000 Fort Worth Mexicans Observe Independence Day," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* September 17, 1924.

remove four thousand Mexicans from the city in 1921.[20] Throughout that spring and summer, the *Star-Telegram* reported on the multiple trainloads, each with hundreds of Mexican men, women, and children, leaving the city for Laredo and then to Mexico.[21]

By the 1930s, La Corte was home to more than one hundred Mexican families.[22] In 1939, the Fort Worth Housing Authority (FWHA) demolished the neighborhood to make room for the white-only Ripley Arnold Public Housing project. The FHWA based its decision on where to build Ripley Arnold on racist data accumulated by TCU sociology professor, Dr. Austin L. Porterfield and his students. Their research aimed to identify slums and recommend a blighted area that the FWHA could clear to make room for the public housing. To identify these slums, TCU researchers "added the number of arrests, juvenile delinquency cases, forcible detainer cases, prostitution cases, and welfare relief recipients in each elementary school district" then divided that sum by the number of students attending the school in the district. This calculation created an "Index of Disorganization" that allowed the researchers to identify the "most demoralized [area] and in need of cleansing." However, their data did not take into consideration the Mexican children not attending school or that this district included the half of downtown where "crime surrounding the local downtown nightlife would skew numbers, making Little Mexico . . . worse that it may have actually been." [23] Many of the demolished barrio's displaced Mexican families then faced hostility as they attempted to move into historically white communities whose residents tried to restrict Mexicans to the east of Main Street in the North Side neighborhood. According to the *Star-Telegram* article titled, "Mexican Home Solution

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[20] "Mexican Idle Less; Protest Over Arrests," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, May 27, 1924.

[21] "Mexicans to Start on Work in Park," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* May 9, 1921.

[22] For a discussion of the clearing of La Corte barrio see, Peter Martinez, "Colonia Mexicana: Mexicans Subject to Modern Empire in Fort Worth, Texas," *Journal of South Texas,* Spring 2019, Vol. 33, No. 1.

[23] Martinez, "Colonia Mexicana."

Near," the "settlement of a dispute over the proposed sale to Mexicans of property in Fostepco Heights section was in sight." The Fostepco Heights Civic League, made up of current white homeowners, did not want lots or homes sold to Mexicans. At a meeting of interested parties, the white homeowners and the company selling the new lots agreed to only allow Mexicans to buy homes or lots in the surrounding areas but not in Fostepco Heights proper. Rev. A.G. Walls, who attended the meeting as representative the Mexican community, agreed to take the proposal back to the "Mexican citizens."[24]

FWISD did not do much better than the city in treatment of Mexican children in these early decades of the twentieth century. As the population of school age Mexican children increased in the 1920s, the district did little to demonstrate any responsibility to educate or provide educational services to these families. Even though schools in South Texas assisted Mexican immigrants with their language needs and FWISD provided language services to European immigrants in the first few decades of the twentieth century, there is no mention or discussion of bilingual education until the late 1960s in the district. FWISD did not even offer the teaching of Spanish until the good neighbor era in the 1940s. The district expected all children to begin school with the ability to speak and understand English or to catch up quickly. Even though the state and local government did not have an official segregation policy for Mexican students, FWISD board meeting minutes in the 1920s includes discussions of separate Mexican schools. After Broadway Presbyterian Church's request in 1923 regarding the selling of bonnets the next mention of Mexicans children is in 1927 when Mr. Walsh, "representing the Mexican patrons of the schools," asked the board to establish a Mexican school in their community with first and second grades and a night school in "practical subjects" for Mexican

[24] "Mexican Home Solution Near," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* May 28, 1939.

adults. The board members promised to give the issue their attention. In the same meeting, one of the trustees, Mrs. Peterson, mentioned another Mexican school, stating that, "ladies in charge of the Mexican school had completed all work possible for them to do and advised the establishment of a school for Mexicans with a teacher who spoke Spanish."[25] The chairman of the board then appointed two members, Mr. Moore and Mr. Bell to investigate and report back with a recommendation. In October of the same year, Mrs. Peterson asked about the status of a Mexican school for the "Mexican settlement on Florence Street," in the La Corte barrio.[26] The board then unanimously voted to establish a school for Mexican children believing that twenty pupils from La Corte would attend. The following month the board assigned Mrs. Peterson and Mr. Griffith the task of finding suitable land to purchase for the school.[27] Three months later in February of 1928, FWISD Superintendent M.H Moore asked the board about a building for the new Mexican school. The board agreed to allow Moore to meet with an architect and to begin accepting bids for the erection of a building.[28] By the beginning of the next school year, the Mexican school on Florence street began the year with thirty-four students and increased to forty-nine the following year.[29]

However, not only did the district take an entire school to year to establish a school for the Mexicano children living in La Corte, but they also built inferior facilities. The school sat on .3 of an acre when no other white elementary school had less than an acre of land.[30] According to a district report in the July 1930 board meeting minutes, FWISD spent $1750 to purchase the

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[25] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, June 28, 1927.

[26] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, October 11, 1927.

[27] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, November 8, 1927.

[28] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, February 14, 1928.

[29] George D. Strayer and N.L Engelhardt, *Report of the Survey of the Schools of Fort Worth, Texas (*New York: Bureau of Publication, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1931), 122.

[30] Strayer and Engelhardt, *Report of the Survey of the Schools of Fort Worth, Texas*, 112.

land for the school, $743.54 for the building, $65 for plumbing, and $860 for additional lumber. The same report includes plumbing and heating contracts for two other new elementary schools for $3154.40 and $3263.88.[31] None of the other schools have costs for lumber. It appears the Mexican school on Florence consisted of a two room shack and a couple of outhouses. The district also did not level the ground around the school or provide any type of playground for the children.[32] Moreover, in a report, "A School Building Program For Fort Worth, Texas" written less than a year after the opening of the Mexican school in February 1930, the school received one of the lowest scores, a 463 out of 1000 and required "extensive rehabilitation, additions, and repairs."[33] However, district officials did not include the Mexican school in their overall plans for repairs. The report also noted an "unusual situation" at A. J. Chambers elementary school. Instead of a discussion of the needed repairs of the school, which scored a 652, the report points out the changing demographics of the area. A.J. Chambers, located on the west side of the city, which at the time was "completely surrounded by negroes" amidst a decreasing white population had an increasing population of Mexican children. District staff contended that they could convert Chambers "into a school for Mexican children."[34]

As the district envisioned its future building needs it is clear that FWISD administrators perceived Mexicans as a separate class even though official district reports categorized them as white. The report recommends removing the "white children" from this school, A.J. Chambers, and sending them to Van Zandt elementary after the city completed an underpass making it safe for those kids to walk less than a mile on paved road. For the Mexican children, who attended the

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[31] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, July 22, 1930.

[32] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, October 29, 1929.

[33] "A School Building Program for Fort Worth, Texas," February 1930, FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, 5.

[34] "A School Building Program for Fort Worth, Texas," February 1930, FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, 35.

schools closest to their homes, the report states, "It is quite likely the future may reveal the absolute need of centralizing the Mexican children [into one school] of that part of the city between the Trinity River and the Texas and Pacific Railway in this [A.J. Chambers] building."[35] Not only did the district perceive Mexican children differently than white children, they also did not share the same concern about their safety. Even though the report explains that the conversion has not already occurred because of the long distance Mexican children would have to walk it nevertheless recommends the change in the near future.

FWISD continued to treat Mexican children as an afterthought and often created makeshift solutions to their education needs. Just two years after the Mexican school on Florence street opened sixty-five students enrolled.[36] Also, during this school year, 1930-1931, the district closed the school. The city of Fort Worth needed a twenty foot strip of land from the location of the Mexican school for the building of an entrance to the Royal Street Bridge, now the Henderson Street Bridge. The city offered to "move all buildings now on the property including the school building and outhouses to any new location on this tract of land," but the district believed the city's suggestion did not leave much room for the school.[37] The district then proposed to close the Florence street Mexican school, move those students to the white-only Peter Smith elementary a few blocks away, and to take bids on moving the Mexican school building to an elementary in North Side that needed additional rooms. For Mexican students, transferring to Peter Smith meant a longer distance to walk without an improvement in the quality of the facility. Even though Peter Smith elementary had twenty classrooms inside a brick building, the campus administrators housed the sixty Mexican children already attending that

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[35] "A School Building Program for Fort Worth, Texas," February 1930, FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, 40.

[36] Strayer and Engelhardt, *Report of the Survey of the Schools of Fort Worth, Texas,* 284.

[37] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, July 22, 1930.

campus in "a poorly located temporary building" rather than inside the classrooms, many of which were empty because of the decreasing attendance at that campus.[38] Again, even though the district categorized Mexican children as white, they treated them as an inferior class. Ultimately, the district sold the buildings of the Mexican school to the Mexican Presbyterian Mission in La Corte. This short lived Mexican-only school on Florence did not exist long enough to warrant an official name or a district assigned building number. The campus is listed in all district records as "M" and "Mexican." White schools had names, either referring to the community surrounding the campus or after someone important to the city, and an assigned building number. Black schools had a similar naming structure and an assigned building letter. FWISD's lack of investment or attention to the needs of young Mexicanos demonstrates its indifference to their education.

In the early 1930s, sociologists and educational researchers sought answers to the "Mexican problem" in education. These studies greatly influenced FWISD's decisions in how to educate and how much to educate Mexican children in Fort Worth. Hershel T. Manuel, a professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Texas (UT) described the "Mexican problem" in *The Education of Mexican and Spanish-Speaking Children in Texas* published by The Fund for Research in the Social Sciences at UT in 1930. Manuel stated, "the problem of educating many of these [Mexican] children is no different from the problem of education in general . . . however, because of language, economic condition, cultural level, prevailing social attitudes toward them, or other factors, present difficulties which together may be called 'the Mexican problem.'"[39] Manuel's research included field work in Fort Worth. He begins his research by first defining the Mexican race, citizenship, socioeconomic status, and educational

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[38] Strayer and Engelhardt, *Report of the Survey of the Schools of Fort Worth, Texas*, 126.

[39] Manuel, *The Education of Mexican and Spanish-Speaking Children in Texas* , 1.

attainability. Manuel concludes that Mexicans in the United States are Spanish with "a strong Indian influence."[40] He points out that Mexican people are not necessarily newcomers but rather arrived in Texas before the US colonists and that three Mexicans signed the Texas declaration of independence. His study estimates at the time of his research that out of the 800,000 Mexicans in Texas, between 37.5% and 62.5% are US citizens.[41] In his description of Mexicans' economic and social status, Manuel states that, "we have a varied picture—the Mexican of wealth and high social position and the Mexican of abject poverty and almost inconceivably low social status, with all degrees of differences in between."[42] Manuel's research in San Antonio revealed that a Mexican's socioeconomic status had a direct influence on a child's educational attainability. He includes in his report a description of four groups of Mexican students at Navarro School in San Antonio by its principal, James K. Harris. Children of the descendants of the original Spanish and Mexican settlers who own property and work in professional jobs have normal intelligence and attend school regularly. First generation children whose parents work in manual labor show an underdeveloped intelligence and typically do not attend school beyond the fourth grade. Migrant families, or as the principal described them "transient families," attend school sporadically and are "greatly retarded."[43] Obviously, a Mexican child's ability to succeed in school is directly tied to whether they are given the opportunity to attend regularly rather than work to supplement their parents meager wages.

Even with this vast heterogenous population of Mexicans in Texas, Manuel posits that the "prevailing picture, economically, is that of the unskilled laborer, and socially, that of the

[40] Manuel, *The Education of Mexican and Spanish-Speaking Children in Texas* , 8.

[41] Manuel, *The Education of Mexican and Spanish-Speaking Children in Texas* , 5.

[42] Manuel, *The Education of Mexican and Spanish-Speaking Children in Texas* , 9.

[43] Manuel, *The Education of Mexican and Spanish-Speaking Children in Texas* , 17.

individual who is regarded as an inferior . . . there is a tendency, indeed, for the English-speaking elements of the white population to generalize their attitude of superiority and to express it toward all Mexicans." He goes on to say that this attitude is exacerbated by the fact that many Mexicans have a darker complexion than the dominant group who carries the economic and political power in each community. Manuel sums up his investigation of the social attitudes regarding Mexicans by stating, "It [inferior treatment] is so pronounced and so much a part of general knowledge in the state that it seems superfluous to cite evidence that it exists."[44] This belief concerning Mexican inferiority is evident in other contemporary research. Sociologist, George Otis Coalson, in his investigation on the migratory farm labor system in Texas, writes, "employers had few compunctions about paying this group [Mexicans] starvation wages and forcing them to work under almost any conditions." He then quotes a woman who described the lack of toilets or water supply for women in the field in 1931, "one of the factors that is making the Mexican a welcome laborer in some sections of the State is that the American landowner and his wife dislike to see white people living that way."[45] This perception of Mexicans as subordinate to the dominant white population and ideal for field work made educators across Texas indifferent to the education of Mexican children.

Manuel's investigation of the quality of Mexican schools in rural counties in Texas reveals the apathy of educators regarding the schooling of Mexicano children. He states, "the child who lives in the country suffers a serious educational handicap. In buildings, equipment, length of term, extent of opportunities offered, quality of supervision, and preparation of the teacher, he is at a disadvantage."[46] Even though Fort Worth was not a rural community, FWISD

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[44] Manuel, *The Education of Mexican and Spanish-Speaking Children in Texas*, 20.

[45] Coalson, *The development of the migratory farm labor system in Texas, 1900-1954* (R and E Research Associates, San Francisco, 1977), 13.

[46] Manuel, *The Education of Mexican and Spanish-Speaking Children in Texas*, 59.

built an inferior facility for Mexicans similar to the ones he described, compared to other schools in the city built in the same year. Manuel also discusses the lack of attendance of Mexican students in schools across Texas. He concluded that only one third of Mexican children that are enrolled in school attend regularly while white children average ninety-five to one hundred percent. He also estimates about ten percent of Mexican children in Texas attend parochial or private schools. Additionally, enrollment drops drastically after third grade with only three to four percent of Mexican teens attending high school. In his lists of reasons why attendance numbers are abysmal, he spreads the blame across the Mexicans, white community and educators. Manuel states, "Among the reasons alleged by superintendents, principals, and teachers . . .need for work . . . lack of cultural background and interest in education . . . lack of interest and sometimes actual opposition on the part of other white members of the community . . . lack of suitable clothing . . .frequent moving . . . [and] failure to understand the privileges of free schooling." Manuel's own observations include "failure [of the districts] to enforce compulsory attendance law; sometimes a complete lack of facilities within easy range, or else very inferior provisions; [and] shabby treatment often received from other children in school—and sometimes, it must regretfully be recorded, the lack of sympathy on the part of their teachers."[47] These broad attitudes toward Mexicans in rural Texas followed them into urban communities like Fort Worth and greatly influenced their educational opportunities.

Even though Mexican families in Fort Worth and elsewhere across the state kept their children out of school, often times the financial needs of the family drove the decision rather than a lack of interest in educating their children. Coalson's study on the migratory labor system in Texas states that "The basic reason for the Mexican families taking their children out of school

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[47] Manuel, *The Education of Mexican and Spanish-Speaking Children in Texas*, 117-118.

. . . was that they could not earn enough working in the fields in their locality to sustain them throughout the year . . . due to the low wages."[48] In fact, in one investigation from Manuel's research out of 532 laborers in six onion fields almost two hundred were school-aged children. Carol Norquest, a long time white grower in South Texas, published his journals spanning the mid-twentieth century and titled the publication, *Rio Grande Wetbacks: Mexican Migrant Workers.* Although his focus is not on education but rather a collage of first-hand experiences with Mexican migrant workers, schooling is mentioned several times. After one of his workers' wife gave birth on the farm, Norquest asked him how he felt about now having an American child, his immediate response was that now his son could grow up "here and go to school."[49] In another vignette, Norquest writes that migrant families often returned to Texas before the crops are ready so that the children can attend school and that a priority of these families is to earn and save money for their children's education. [50] Even though prevailing attitudes of white people in power throughout Texas toward ethnic Mexicans aimed to keep Mexicans in inferior economic, political, and social positions, Mexicans themselves envisioned a better life for the next generation through education.

In 1931, the Institute of Educational Research Division of Field Studies Teachers College at Columbia University approached FWISD about conducting a full survey of the school district. The Teachers College had conducted similar surveys in cities across the country. The district accepted their offer. As a result of this extensive research by experts, this report, commonly referred to as the Strayer report for the director of the survey, George D. Strayer, became the blueprint for district officials for the next couple decades. The district used Strayer's

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[48] Coalson, *The development of the migratory farm labor system in Texas, 1900-1954*, 27.

[49] Carrol Norquest, *Rio Grande Wetbacks: Mexican Migrant Workers* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1972), 87.

[50] Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas, 1836-1981*, 31.

recommendations to argue for future bonds and to justify their decisions on where to build schools, which schools to close, how to revise their curriculum, and how to organize their leadership. FWISD invested eighteen thousand dollars during the Great Depression to bring this third-party expert in to diagnosis schooling in Fort Worth. His researchers read through administrative and financial documents, met with district and campus leaders, visited campuses, dug into demographic data from the city, analyzed vital statistics and projections, and referred to the most recent scholarship on schooling, including Manuel's research on Mexicans, to write a 438 page report.

In part seven of the Strayer Report titled, "School Opportunities and Their Organization," researchers included discussions and data specific to FWISD's special populations: Vocational Education, Evening Schools, Americanization, and Education of Mexican Children, among others. According to this data, the district operated a robust vocational and evening school program for both white and Black high schoolers and adults. These courses provided young men and women who did not plan to continue their education beyond high school the opportunity to learn a trade. While white men had a variety of trades to choose from in these vocational courses, the district only offered Black men an auto mechanics class. Black women could choose from courses in cooking and sewing. The district provided nursing courses for white women to help them pass the state examination. Under the general evening courses the Strayer report stated that a wide variety of courses met the needs of the people of the city and that these "people may enjoy a fuller, richer, and more satisfactory life" because of the opportunities provided by the district. This report stated that, "a telephone operator is preparing to enter business . . . a shipping clerk is preparing to become a draftsman, a messenger in a packing house wishes to finish college and become an engineer . . . a physician is taking Spanish, a door boy is taking arithmetic . . . a stenographer wishing to become an art teacher is studying art and French . . . and one man

hopes to receive his high school diploma."[51] This program began in 1920, just a few years after Mateo Molina opened a Mexican mission school in North Side to provide schooling for Mexican meatpacking employees and their families. According to Molina, this effort to provide Mexican adults with educational courses was something that the district could not do, yet there is no mention of an evening school program that met the needs of the Mexican community in this extensive schedule of courses praised by Strayer. In fact, the Mexican community asked the board for program for adults in 1927. Additionally, in the small Americanization section, the researchers seem to exempt the Mexican population from their suggestions. The report states, "This [table based on school census data] shows a relatively small number of foreign born, except for the Mexican population." According to the table, 524 families in Fort Worth spoke Spanish at home. Fifty-five families spoke other foreign languages, for example, Czech, German, Polish, Italian, Russian, and French. The researchers then compliment the work the district is doing for these European foreign-born members of society by providing an Americanization class through the use of a textbook published by the Daughters of the American Revolution. Once these foreign-born students complete the Americanization class, the district then made arrangements for their naturalization. The district did not require the completion of any other vocational courses to qualify for this assistance, nor did the district provide similar assistance to Mexican immigrants.

Although the district followed through with many of the suggestions of the Strayer Report regarding administrative structure, finance, curriculum, and the building program revisions, FWISD seemed to ignore the report's few recommendations for Mexicano students, other than abandoning the Mexican school on Florence.[52] Strayer's investigation into the

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[51] Strayer and Engelhardt, *Report of the Survey of the Schools of Fort Worth, Texas,* 277-278.

[52] Strayer and Engelhardt, *Report of the Survey of the Schools of Fort Worth, Texas,* 162.

schooling of Mexican children in Fort Worth focused on their lack of consistent attendance and their language deficiencies. The report cites Hershel Manuel's research, published just a year before this report, highlighting that the two issues, lack of attendance and language deficiencies, for Mexican children are not unique to Fort Worth, thereby suggesting minimal effort and investment necessary for the district. The researchers demonstrate the decreasing attendance of Mexican students as they progress through grade levels. According the data, there were 597 Mexican children across the district's thirty-six white-only elementary school campuses, sixty-five at the Mexican school, seventeen spread across three white-only junior high schools, and just four at North Side Senior, a white-only high school. Almost a third of the Mexican students in elementary grades attended M.G. Ellis in North Side, the only campus that did not offer fifth or sixth grade, other than the Mexican school which only provided those students with first and second grade. One hundred and fifty-seven Mexican children were enrolled at M.G. Ellis, about half of the total enrolled students, by far the most in any one campus. The researchers stated that M.G. Ellis is "of cheap construction," and "as a result of a recent fire there are only eight usable classrooms." The Strayer Report also points out the older Mexican children in lower grades. There were seven Mexican students between the ages of fifteen and eighteen in grades second through sixth including one eighteen-year-old in second and one in third grade. He praises these older students on their "real desire . . . to learn" even though they are not included in the state compulsory attendance which at the time ended at fourteen years old. Nevertheless, the Strayer researchers believe this practice of to be "a perplexing problem." The report recommended creating an "ungraded class, with equipment of varying size, with special materials of varying degrees of difficulty, and with a competent teacher in charge."[53] In regard to the lack of

[53] Strayer and Engelhardt, *Report of the Survey of the Schools of Fort Worth, Texas,* 287.

attendance, the Strayer report offered little recommendation and suggests the agricultural nature of Mexican labor as an obstacle to the educating of Mexican children in Fort Worth that the district could not overcome. Still, a couple hundred pages earlier in the report, Strayer also stated, "A good attendance service discovers children wherever they are living, makes inquiries concerning conditions which interfere with their attendance at school, and in so far as it is possible removes difficulties either of an economic, social, or physical character which contribute to nonattendance."[54] Inevitably, these suggested attendance services were not necessary for Mexican children in Fort Worth.

As far as the language deficiencies, the researchers ultimately recommended starting Mexican children in school at four years old, "while he is still too young to be of great economic value to his family," to learn English in time to attend school at the same language proficiency as the white students. The compulsory attendance laws required all children beginning at age eight attend one hundred days of school each year until they are fourteen.[55] However, most white students began school in the first grade at six years old. FWISD provided Kindergarten classes on a tuition basis for five-year-old children at twenty-two of the thirty-seven elementary schools. By 1944 the tuition was four dollars per month per student. Strayer's suggestion of starting Spanish-speaking Mexican children in school at age four did not make this recommendation contingent on a fee. The report states that if the district invested in educating young Mexicanos beginning at age four then, "The Mexican children would, as a result, enter the first grade with a sufficient command of English to make regular progress from that time on."[56]

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[54] Strayer and Engelhardt, *Report of the Survey of the Schools of Fort Worth, Texas,* 22.

[55] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, November 26, 1929.

[56] Strayer and Engelhardt, *Report of the Survey of the Schools of Fort Worth, Texas,* 287.

This FWISD school board and the district leadership did not fulfill this progressive recommendation from the Stayer report. This lack of action is not surprising considering the overall nature of the board and the district leadership during this time period. From 1919 to 1931 the FWISD school board consisted of all white males and just two white women. Through the 1930s and 1940s only one other white woman served on the board. Only white men served in FWISD leadership throughout these decades. Voters elected the seven board members at-large for two-year terms. The board then appointed a superintendent, or chief executive for the district. The board members were not paid for the time but rather "are offered as a reward only the satisfaction which comes through having served the public well."[57] The board members had to be financially secure to volunteer the amount of time they dedicate to the school district. While they were considered leaders in their community and well aware of its needs, they are not educational experts. These men and women were not seeking to encourage social progress through education. Their actions demonstrate a desire to continue racial and social hierarchies in the city. The mostly male board's opinion regarding women is evident in the resignation of a board member and later firing of a department director. When the one of the first women on the board, Mrs. O.W. Peterson resigned from the board in 1934 to move to Austin with her family after serving on the board for seven years, board member Thompson offered a glowing resolution to document her time with the board. However, a few words in the resolution make his attitude toward women clear. He stated that Mrs. Peterson had "executive ability and a grasp of business and financial matters unusual in a woman." The board unanimously voted in favor of this resolution. In the late 1940s, the board decided to fire the Director of Cafeterias, Mrs. Bena Hoskins after a dispute over various contracts with outside parties. The *Fort Worth Star-*

[57] Strayer and Engelhardt, *Report of the Survey of the Schools of Fort Worth, Texas,* 5.

Telegram published both Superintendent Moore's letter to Hoskins and her response. According to Hoskins, her problems stemmed from the network of "pressure groups, powerful politically and financially" who wanted to see her fired because of her unwillingness to enter into business with these men. She goes on to say that she asked the board to delay their decision until she could seek counsel but "the board refused by request and met in the [all-male] Fort Worth Club for breakfast, and passed an order suspending me."[58] This decision making outside the bounds of the official board meeting was not uncommon.

The board and the district leadership's actions regarding racialized people in Fort Worth go beyond the standard segregation of the day. Not only were the schools for Black and Brown students inferior compared to their white counterparts, the district also discriminated against their Black employees (there were no Mexican employees). At the end of 1943, in the middle of World War II, a group of Black maids wrote a letter to the board asking for a pay increase. The letter stated, "We, the maids are asking for an increase in our salary to bring it up to $75 per month. No, we do not care to meet the Board, we will expect the answer on our October 29th check. Thanks. Signed the Maids (38 signatures)."[59] During the discussion that followed, Mr. Williams, the FWISD business manager, stated that the board deny their petition considering the salary adjustments that the district made for all employees just the previous year. He then went on to "recommend that the Board accept the resignations of any maid employed who were not entirely satisfied with their present position and salary." Vice President of the board, Dr. Helbing, then doubled down on Williams's threat by making a motion that, "due to the war effort and shortage of labor and in view of the existing emergency . . . the position occupied by colored maids in the schools be abolished by the public schools, and that the maids be allowed to seek

[58] "Letter to Mrs. Hoskins and Her Statement in Answer," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* February 26, 1949.

[59] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, October 13, 1943.

more gainful and serviceable positions, effective October 20, 1943." Board member Mr. Maben seconded the motion and all members voted aye.[60] Earlier in the same year, the Colored Teachers Advisory Committee, represented by Chairman, Mrs. Lillian B. Horace, Mrs. Mabel Spearman, Mr. Haymon King, Mr. J. Martin Jacquet, and the President of the Colored Classroom Teachers Association, Mr. Milton Kirkpatrick (the last two currently have schools named after them) petitioned the board for equal pay for Black teachers across the district. Although the district eventually passed this policy, it took an entire year of research, judicial referrals, and continuous letters written by the Black educators for the equal pay policy to take effect.

The FWISD school board, district leadership, local government officials, and the dominant culture's overall indifference to schooling of Mexican children make it difficult to find similar stories of specific instances of discrimination against Mexicans in the meeting minutes or local newspapers. However, personal stories from Mexicanos who attended Fort Worth schools in the 1930s and 1940s demonstrate not only apathy but also out right violence on the part of the students, teachers, and administrators. Just after Antonio Ayala turned ten in June of 1927, his father, mother, and sister moved from Mexico directly to Fort Worth. His aunt already lived in the city. After violence broke out due to the Cristero Wars in Mexico, his father Jose, who worked for the local government in Guanajuato, sought refuge away from the chaos. Ayala's family took a train to Laredo where they crossed the border with the help of contractor who found carpentry work for Jose. The carpenter met them at the border and drove them to Fort Worth. His family moved to the North Side barrio of La Garra, or "the rag," named because of its close proximity to a dump. Ayala initially attended M.G. Ellis but because he consistently had to physically defend himself against the white kids, his parents moved him to the San Jose

[60] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, October 13, 1943.

Mexican mission school. He remembers attending school here with all Mexican kids. They had two nuns, Sister Mary Angela who was Mexican and Sister Lorencia who was white. These sisters instructed the Mexicano children in English. Ayala then attended North Side Junior High, now J.P. Elder Middle School, with only a few other Mexican students. Even though, Ayala succeeded at the junior high and completed tenth grade at North Side high school, the kids and teachers did not treat him and his Mexican classmates well. He said during gym, the did exercises and played a game called "hot tale." In this game the kids were supposed to throw baseballs at each other to tag someone out but the white students and the teacher would always target the handful of Mexican kids.[61]

Rosa Gomez who lived in El Papalote barrio, now the Near Southside neighborhood, in the 1930s and 1940s experienced discrimination in Fort Worth both in and out school. She was victimized by both emotional and physical violence that accompanied an English-only environment in school. East Van Zandt elementary school, a white-only campus near El Papalote barrio had a few Mexicans mixed into each of the classes. Gomez vividly remembers administrators and teachers enforcing a zero tolerance policy regarding the use of Spanish on campus. While drinking at the water fountain during recess, her best friend Elvira told her something in Spanish, and Gomez responded in Spanish. The "patrol girl, Wanda Ball" heard Gomez and said, "ohh I caught Rosa . . . you were talking that Mexican . . . you are going to see Ester Willies." Gomez stated that the principal, Ester Willies, who "had a cigar and looked like a bulldog . . . humiliated me in the worst way." The principal made Gomez pick up her long dress and expose her underwear then hit her five times causing extensive bruising that made it difficult for her to sit down when she got home. Her mother and step-father then made the decision that

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[61] Antonio Ayala, "Antonio Ayala Interview," *Fort Worth Public Library Digital Archives,* October 17, 2015, video, 34:21, http://www.fortworthtexasarchives.org/digital/collection/p16084coll25/id/40/rec/2.

she would not return to school in Fort Worth and would only go to school when the crops led them to Wisconsin. Instead, her stepfather taught her to read and write in Spanish at home. According to Gomez, neither the campus nor the FWISD district officials ever followed up on why she had not returned to school.[62]

Gomez also remembered having to sneak in and out of St. Patrick's on her own to listen to the mass. After she and her brother Frank rummaged through discarded bruised fruits and vegetables from the fresh markets set up on Jones Street on Sunday mornings and filled up a wheelbarrow to take home to their family, Rosa slipped away. Eleven at the time, she always made sure she had a clean skirt and tried not to get her blouse dirty. She then quietly entered the cathedral after mass started and sat in the last pew in the corner that was always empty. Then left before the "rich, rich people, real rich and all white" parishioners began to leave. When she told her step-father about her time at St. Patrick's and that she did not want to continue to attend the Presbyterian church, he told her she could go to San Juan's Catholic Church. He said she needed to stop sneaking into St. Patrick's because "if the whites catch you in there they are going to put you in jail."[63]

On the south side of the city in the barrio known as La Fundición, or the foundry, named for the numerous steel mills that pulled Mexicanos to the community, FWISD built another Mexican-only school. Prior to the district building this new school, a woman in the La Fundición taught the Mexican kids in her home charging only one dollar per month. However, the district told her she had to stop teaching the children because she did not have a certification.[64] FWISD

[62] Rosa Gomez, "Rosa Gomez on Speaking Spanish at School," Latino Fort Worth, March 17, 2023, video, 5:03, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0eO8C4IDQhQ.

[63] Rosa Gomez, "Rosa Gomez on Sneaking in and out of St Patrick's," Latino Fort Worth, March 17, 2023, video, 4:29, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndTlnPEOetY&t=2s.

[64] Hortencia Laguna, "History and Memories of Life in the Barrio," Latino Americans: 500 Years of History, Fort Worth Public Library Digital Archives.

purchased the land for the Katy Lake school in 1934 for twenty-four hundred dollars and built the small two room facility on the west side of Hemphill not far from South Fort Worth Elementary school on Fogg street (now Wilson Elementary).[65] Laguna and several of her brothers attended Katy Lake. Even though during the 1930-1931 school year, eighty-six Mexican students attended South Fort Worth elementary, Laguna stated that the school district believed it was too dangerous for kids to cross Hemphill and built Katy Lake to accommodate the younger Mexican kids. Laguna's brother Roy, however, remembers the herd of Mexicanos walking "like cattle down the street" to the Katy Lake, or the *escuelita* as the community called the new school.[66] According to Nora Hernandez Perez who attended Katy Lake in the 1930s, the district also did not have a dedicated teacher for the school and students sometimes only had a couple hours of instruction.[67]

Katherine (Kuehling) Castillo, who moved to Fort Worth when she was five years old, also lived in the Katy Lake community. Her father who was a "bolillio," slang for white man, and of German ancestry, registered all his kids at South Fort Worth elementary without a problem. She remembers crossing Hemphill to attend school and getting harassed by the Pacheco boys who threw rocks at them and called them *alemanes*, or Germans in Spanish.[68] Katy Lake only offered school for lower first through higher third grade. If the Mexican kids at Katy Lake succeeded beyond third grade then they could attend South Fort Worth. Laguna remembers that the administrators at South Fort Worth segregated Mexicanos from their white peers and only let them inside and in the basement when the weather was cold. She said her mom, who spoke in

[65] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, March 16, 1934.

[66] Hortencia Laguna, "Hortencia Laguna on Crossing into Anglo Section of Town," Latino Fort Worth, March 17, 2023, video, :35, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FaG628fTUyc.

[67] Nora Hernandez Perez, interview by author, Fort Worth, January 27, 2020, (in author's possession).

[68] Katherine Castillo, Interview by author, February 10, 2020.

"broken English" went to the FWISD administration building, spoke with Superintendent W.M. Green and demanded that the Mexicanos be allowed in the school's classrooms. According to Laguna, Green stated that he was unaware of the campus's policies regarding Mexicanos and that he would tell the administrators that they could no longer separate them from the other students. Nevertheless, when it came to school picture day, the administrators again segregated the Mexicans into their own pictures ensuring white families had a keepsake of their youngsters in school without the perceived blemish of brown kids in the photo.[69]

The 1935-1936 FWISD Plan of Organization includes a report and proposal for a revision of the curriculum. The report begins with the district's definition of curriculum, "The curriculum is the sum total of the actual experiences children have under the direction and guidance of the school."[70] Using this definition, for Mexican origin students throughout the first half of the twentieth century FWISD provided an abysmal curriculum. Leaning into the advice of educational theorists and experts, and the prevailing belief of Mexicans as inferior and only necessary for manual labor, the district did not invest in their education. Although the district progressed from providing zero educational opportunities for Mexicanos, leaving that responsibility to the Mexican churches and missions in the city, to establishing Mexican-only campuses, they built drastically inferior facilities and limited the amount of schooling these students could benefit from. By the 1930s and into the 1940s, Mexican and Mexican American students attend elementary schools across the city. Within these campuses, administrators continued to segregate young Mexicanos into separate buildings or classrooms. Teachers attempted to strip the kids of their language, culture, and pride. Administrators beat the Mexican

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[69] Hortencia Laguna, "Hortencia Laguna on Segregation in Elementary Schools," Latino Fort Worth, March 17, 2023, video, 1:25, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRi7U-Oqxfc.

[70] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, Vol. 14, July 1935 – June 1936.

children for speaking Spanish, threw balls alongside their white students at the Mexican kids, denied them access to the main building, separated them from the white students for picture day, and did not enforce mandatory attendance laws.

In 1948, a decision by United States district judge, Ben H. Rice, Jr in the case of *Minerva Delgado, Et.Al. vs. Bastrop Independent School District of Bastrop County,* forced the FWISD board, and all boards across the state to review their practices regarding the schooling of Mexican origin students. L.A. Woods, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction communicated to all school boards that "Segregation of Mexican or other Latin American Pupils in separate classes or schools is forbidden" and that "School officials are instructed to take necessary steps to eliminate any and all segregations that may exist in the district." The statement ends with a clarification that the State Superintendent will enforce these instructions. After the FWISD board reviewed Woods' communication they began a discussion of Katy Lake School. According to the board, the school was never intended to segregate Mexican children. Instead, the district built the school at the request of the "Latin American citizens of the Katy Lake School District." In order to be in compliance with the state's instructions, the board put forth a resolution declaring the campus open to all "pupils of Anglo and Latin American descent alike." The resolution also stated that the Mexican kids did not have to go to that school. If their parents wanted their kids to attend another school then all they had to was apply for a transfer.[71] A new generation of Mexicanos who contributed to the victory over fascism and tyranny in World War II, whether at home or abroad contributed greatly to this groundbreaking lawsuit win. Their continued efforts to create positive change for Mexicano children during the height of anticommunist fervor in the first decade of the Cold War is the subject of the next chapter.

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[71] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, July 28, 1948.

"Gilbert C. Garcia . . . admits the [American G. I.] Forum can't take credit for all the progress Latin-Americans have made in Fort Worth in the past decade. But he cites these points . . . Each year the Forum holds a back-to-school drive. Its success can't be measured in numbers, but Mr. Garcia feels that it gets back to school many kids who otherwise might have been allowed to drop out. In some cases, the Forum provides shoes and clothing . . . The Forum is the sponsor of Boy School Troop 150 and helped Troop 157 get started. 'Those kids are as American as ham and eggs,' Mr. Garcia says."[1]

--*The Fort Worth Press*, Monday, August 19, 1957

CHAPTER 2 - COLD WAR CURRICULUM AND THE RISE OF THE MEXICAN AMERICAN GENERATION

One hundred years after the end of the US-Mexico War and the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, a treaty that guaranteed full U.S. citizenship rights to the Mexicans living on the stolen lands, Mexican Americans in Bastrop, Texas filed a desegregation lawsuit in a federal court. In 1948, the parents of Minerva Delgado, a six-year-old first grade student, attempted to enroll her in the school closest to their home. Bastrop Independent School District, like most school districts across Texas with large Mexican and Mexican American populations, had a history and tradition of segregating Mexican origin students into their own inferior schools. According to the attorneys and experts for the plaintiffs, which included nineteen other Mexican American students, the segregation of Mexican origin students, a long-held custom throughout Texas, was unconstitutional. The 1896 Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy v Ferguson*, made the establishment and maintenance of separate Black and white schools legal. However, the attorneys for Delgado claimed that segregation based on racial classification did not apply because Mexicans were the same race as white Americans. Judge Ben H. Rice, Jr. ruled in favor of the plaintiffs with the caveat that districts could separate first grade Mexican origin students only and on the same campus as white kids if they had limited English language abilities. In those situations, districts had to administer a test to determine the students' language abilities

[1] Marshall Lynam, "GI Forum—Its Hitting Heavy Blows at the Enemy—Prejudice, *Fort Worth Press,* August 19, 1957.

before placing them in separate classes. His ruling did not just apply to the plaintiffs or Bastrop ISD. Judge Rice ordered all districts in Texas to comply within fifteen months of his ruling.

The newly established League of Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the American G.I. Forum (AGIF) aided the Delgado attorneys. Mexican Americans in Texas organized LULAC in 1929. Although LULAC members celebrated their Mexicanidad, they also realized the benefit of speaking English and working within American systems like the courts to find a path toward upward mobility. LULAC restricted their membership to American citizens and conducted their meetings and correspondence in English. One of LULAC's first initiatives aimed to end discrimination and segregation in education for Mexican Americans. In 1930, LULAC lawyers sued the Del Rio Independent School District in Texas on behalf of their named plaintiff, Jesús Salvatierra. They also argued that Mexican origin students could not legally be segregated because they were white. LULAC's executive board hoped to use this case to end the segregation of Mexican American children in Texas public schools.[2]

The AGIF, like LULAC, believed educational equality was the first step to social, economic, and political mobility. Dr. Hector P. Garcia organized the AGIF shortly after World War II in 1948. From its title to its policies and procedures, the American G.I. Forum embodied the ideology of many second generation Mexican Americans who, unlike their parents, no longer perceived Mexico as their homeland and instead envisioned a space for themselves in the United States. These were men and women who identified as American, and with their World War II contributions and sacrifices as proof, demanded their rights. With a motto of, "Education is Our Freedom and Freedom should be Everybody's Business," the Forum emphasized and encouraged education in the Mexican American community. The Forum also focused on veteran's issues and

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[2] Valencia, *Chicano Students and the Courts*, 17.

the civil rights of Mexican Americans. American systems were at the heart of their efforts. They encouraged Mexican American communities to learn and speak English, graduate from high school, seek higher education, pay their poll taxes, and to vote. Between the 1950s and 1960s the Forum, along with LULAC, filed almost a hundred complaints challenging educational inequalities, including school segregation.[3]

LULAC and AGIF courtroom claims to whiteness, which through a contemporary lens was one and the same with Americanness, is understandable considering their lived experiences as Mexican origin students in Texas public schools throughout the first few decades of the twentieth century. These men and women also had to negotiate Juan Crow society that often led to racial violence. During that time, the perspectives of state and local leaders regarding the education of Mexicanos ranged from unnecessary for a class of inferiors to necessary in order to strip them of their culture and replace it with white, Anglo, protestant norms. By the end of WWII, the number of Mexican American students in Texas urban school districts increased as did LULAC and AGIF's advocacy on their behalf. This new Mexican American generation of educational activism and their patriotic rhetoric coincided with educators and politicians push for an emphasis on citizenship and patriotism in social studies curriculum. Fortified by Cold War rhetoric, the Fort Worth Independent School District's curriculum reform in the 1940s and 1950s aimed to indoctrinate unwavering loyalty to the United States in all K-12 students. Public accusations of communism typically followed any criticism or deviations from the Anglo-centric narrative that celebrated linear progress of white Americans.[4]

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[3] Henry A. J. Ramos, *A People Forgotten, a Dream Pursued: The History of the American G.I. Forum, 1948-1972* (United States: American G.I. Forum of the U.S., 1983).

[4] In both the SBOE and FWISD board meeting minutes there are comments from the public as well as concerns expressed by board members when textbook authors made attempts to complicate the narrative of United States history or to deviate from a patriotic retelling of the nation's past.

The scholarship on LULAC, AGIF, and other Mexican Americans leaders' educational advocacy is robust. Scholars of Mexican American education history have effectively ended any debate regarding Mexican American apathy for education. These scholars have demonstrated the lengths Mexican origin people took to ensure their children received an education that could improve their opportunities. Whether through the establishment of their own community schools, judicial actions, or grassroots efforts to influence racists board policies, Mexican Americans in Texas fought throughout the twentieth century for quality education for their children.[5] This chapter aims to place their goals, decisions, and outcomes in the context of the Cold War, Jim Crow, and the massive push by local leaders to reform social studies curriculum based on nationalistic principals. For young Mexicanos in Fort Worth schools, this push by politicians and educators to use social studies curriculum to create tiny patriots was assisted by Mexican American activists who preached that the path to acceptance and success in American society went through a white-washing that cleansed them of their culture. However, Mexicans Americans in Fort Worth did not receive equitable treatment in schools or in the city even with this cleansing. In the 1940s and 1950s, the assimilationist discourse from their elders, along with the curriculum that aimed to maintain social orders and the racist and segregated society in Fort

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[5] Carlos Kevin Blanton, *George I. Sánchez: The Long Fight for Mexican American Integration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2104); Carlos Kevin Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas, 1836-1981* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007); Darius V. Echeverría, *Aztlán Arizona: Mexican American Educational Empowerment, 1968–1978* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014); David G. García, *Strategies of Segregation: Race, Residences, and the Struggle for Educational Equality* (University of California Press, 2018); Philis M. Barragán Goetz, *Reading, Writing, and Revolution: Escuelitas and The Emergence of A Mexican American Identity in* Texas (University of Texas Press, 2020); Gilbert C. Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 1990); Marcos Pizzarro, *Chicanas and Chicanos in School: Racial Profiling, Identity Battles, and Empowerment* (University of Texas Press, 2005); Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&K Press, 2005); Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *Chicana/o Struggles for Education: Activism in the Community* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2013); Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *Let All of Them Take Heed: Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000); and Richard R. Valencia, *Chicano Students and the Courts: The Mexican American Legal Struggle for Educational Equality*, 50076th edition (New York: NYU Press, 2010).

Worth, made it difficult for Mexican Americans students to form an identity that included a positive perspective of themselves, their families, and their ancestors.

LULAC's first attempt to improve education for Mexican Americans by ending the segregation of their children occurred in Del Rio, Texas. The plaintiffs' attorneys, like the Delgado case, argued that the district could not legally segregate Mexican American children on the basis of race because these children were the same race as the majority white students. Del Rio's superintendent testified. He claimed the segregation of Mexican origin children was based on educational justifications, claiming that the district separated Mexican students because of the migratory status of their parents causing the kids to arrive late in the year to school and their special needs to be "instructed by 'teachers [who] specialized in the matter of teaching them English and American citizenship.'"[6] Considering the superintendent's admission that he did not send white migratory children to a separate school and that the school district did not administer an exam to test the proficiency of the segregated Mexican students' language abilities the district's decision to operate separate white and Mexican schools were not educationally based but rather based on race. The school leadership in Del Rio clearly had more interest in maintaining a society based on white supremacy than providing Mexican American children with a quality education. The District Court ruled on behalf of the plaintiffs; however, the ruling was overturned on appeal.

Just a couple years prior to Delgado, LULAC filed a lawsuit with the U.S. District Court of the Southern District of California on behalf of Mexican American students. The plaintiffs lawyers in *Westminster v Mendez* argued that the local school district violated their clients Fourteenth Amendment rights to equal protection by segregating them from their white peers.

[6] Valencia, *Chicano Students and the Courts*, 17.

Although the NAACP also chose to file in federal court and used this argument to end segregation in higher education institutions, the Mendez case was the first to do this in K-12 public schools. The Mendez attorneys also utilized the testimony of students, social scientists, and educators to dispute any notion that separate was equal or that Mexican origin students benefitted from segregated schooling. The federal judge ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. Not only did this decision reverberate across the Southwest aiding other Mexican American communities with their own court battles, but it also provided the NAACP with a roadmap to ending de jure segregation for Black children in K-12 public schools.[7] With the experience of the Salvatierra and Mendez cases LULAC prevailed in Delgado.

The Delgado ruling did not change schooling for Mexicans in Fort Worth. Judge Rice's order arrived on the desk of the FWISD school board members less than sixty days after his decision. The board members discussed Katy Lake campus, the small Mexican-only school on the south side, even though other FWISD school administrators traditionally segregated Mexican origin students into their own classes in basements or in temporary shacks outside the main building. In response to a directive of the state Superintendent of Public Instruction, L.A. Woods, the school district, ensuring the segregation of Black students continued, declared Katy Lake open to all "Anglo and Latin American descent alike" and stated that students at that campus were free to transfer if they wanted to attend a different school.[8] The board also instructed FWISD Superintendent J.P. Moore to "notify the public of this action by means of the daily newspapers of the City of Fort Worth."[9] However, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* nor the *Fort Worth Press*, the major newspapers in the city, make any mention of this declaration. Without

[7] Valencia, *Chicano Students and the Courts,* 24.

[8] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, July 28, 1948.

[9] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, July 28, 1948.

following through with the claim to inform the public, the school board preserved their inferior treatment of Mexican origin children.

In the same year as the Delgado ruling and of Fort Worth ISD's supposed disavowal of the segregation of Mexican origin students, Gilbert Garcia, a Fort Worth veteran of WWII, established a local chapter of the American G.I. Forum (AGIF). Gilbert Garcia's journey to president of the Fort Worth chapter of the Forum began with his enlistment into the U.S. Army. After serving three years in the Civilian Conservation Corps, Garcia moved to Fort Worth in 1940 and lived with his uncle Alfredo. Instead of waiting to be drafted, Garcia joined the Army in 1941. His Philippines-bound ship's engine malfunctioned and was diverted to the Hawaiian Islands in November 1941. Garcia woke to the sounds of gunfire on Sunday, December 7th. Once he realized it was not a training exercise, he proceeded to shoot at anything and everything in the sky.[10] Garcia not only survived the attack on Pearl Harbor, but he also fought at Midway and four other Pacific battles, earning him six battle stars. He returned to Fort Worth in August 1945, married the woman he had proposed to prior to joining the Army, then attempted to cash-in the rewards promised to him by the nation for which he fought. Garcia hoped to open his own business but struggled to "negotiate bank loans and enter the Anglo-dominated business community."[11] Garcia was not satisfied, and after his first encounter with Dr. Hector P. Garcia and his American G.I. Forum, made a decision to no longer live under this second-class citizenship. This continued inferior treatment in American society was a reality faced by Mexican American veterans throughout the Southwest. These distinguished, loyal Americans,

[10]Carlos Eliseo Cuéllar, *Stories From the Barrio: A History of Mexican Fort Worth* (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 2003), 143-144.

[11] Jeff Guinn, "Voice of Strength," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, October 13, 1992.

many of them decorated, were quickly forgotten and forced to continue fighting for not just these war entitlements, but also the rights and freedoms in their own nation.[12]

The need to change this second-class citizenship for Mexican Americans became paramount for Forum founder Dr. Garcia. Dr. Garcia served in the European Theatre during World War II and earned the rank of major. Prior to the war he was a licensed surgeon in Corpus Christi, Texas. He served as a member of the Army Medical Corps during the war. After the war, back home in Corpus Christi he continued his work as a doctor. Working directly with the community, Dr. Garcia was distinctly aware of the subordinate and forgotten status of his fellow Mexican American veterans. While attempting to provide medical services, both physical and mental, to veterans in South Texas he became aware of the complicated world of "bureaucratic red tape of the VA" that prevented many Mexican American veterans from receiving services. These Mexican American veterans suffered from both the effects of war and the continued inequality in society, leading to "a combination of poor health, lower socioeconomic standing, and social and educational discrimination."[13] These conditions led Dr. Garcia to attend a meeting of veterans that birthed the American G.I. Forum.

Dr. Garcia served as the first president of the veteran's organization as it was propelled into the national spotlight less than a year after its founding. Local chapel owner, Tom Kennedy denied funeral services to the family of Felix Longoria, who was killed in action in the

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[12] Richard Griswold del Castillo, *World War II and Mexican American Civil Rights* (University of Texas Press, 2010); Elizabeth R. Escobedo, "From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: The Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front," *The American Historical Review* 119, no. 2 (April 1, 2014): 541–42; Raul Morin, *Among the Valiant: Mexican-Americans in WWII and Korea* (Pickle Partners Publishing, 2016); Henry A. J. Ramos, *A People Forgotten, a Dream Pursued: The History of the American G.I. Forum, 1948-1972* (United States: American G.I. Forum of the U.S., 1983); Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, *Mexican Americans & World War II* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005); Maggie Rivas-Rodríguez and Emilio Zamora, *Beyond the Latino World War II Hero: The Social and Political Legacy of a Generation* (University of Texas Press, 2010); Maggie Rivas-Rodríguez, *Texas Mexican Americans & Postwar Civil Rights* (University of Texas Press, 2015); and Emilio Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas: Mexican Workers and Job Politics During World War II* (Texas A&M University Press, 2009).

[13]Steven Rosales, "Fighting the Peace at Home: Mexican American Veterans and the 1944 GI Bill of Rights," *Pacific Historical Review* 80, no. 4 (2011): 597–627, 613.

Philippines, on the basis of Longoria's race and fear that the "town's whites would object" to the burial of a Mexican in their cemetery.[14] Kennedy's instincts were correct. In a letter signed, "Several untolerant [sic] students, who still think we should run every Mesican [sic] out of Texas," the authors express disapproval of Dr. Garcia's treatment of Mr. Kennedy. They stated that "your sneaking [sic] actions have proved to us—what we already knew—that you and all the rest of your race are nothing by greasy pepper bellies . . . furthermore, everytime [sic] any of us get chance, we solemnly swear to kick every Mesican [sic] we can right in the swarthy ass." In another letter written to Dr. Garcia, a "Native Texan" told him that "you can't mix your 'Mexican bunch' with 'we whites.'" The author also stated that "during the war our government allowed you [Mexicans] many privalegies [sic], but the war is over, therefore you'll have to go back to the Mexican system," assuring Dr. Garcia that any sense of entitlement to equality in society because of his service in the war was unwarranted.[15] However, Longoria's status as a slain soldier gave Dr. Garcia an opportunity to make this common occurrence of discriminatory treatment in rural Texas towns a matter of national concern. The first step was enlisting the support of Johnson, a Democratic U.S. Senator from Texas, who, along with many other Americans, viewed the actions of the mortician as an antipatriotic act. Once the incident garnered local and national attention, the Mexican American community in the immediate area openly criticized the actions of the funeral director. Observers in Latin American countries also viewed the funeral director's refusal as evidence of the racism and discrimination that existed in the United States for people of Latin American origin. This demonstration of ethnocentrism did not

[14] Patrick James Carroll, *Felix Longoria's Wake Bereavement, Racism, and the Rise of Mexican American Activism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 196.

[15] Hate Letters, 1949 - 1984, Box: 36, Folder: 62. Dr. Hector P. Garcia papers, Coll-5. Special Collections and Archives, Mary and Jeff Bell Library, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

play well with the efforts of the US to be a good neighbor to Latin America. With the intervention of Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, Private Longoria was buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Dr. Garcia and Senator Johnson used their "keen political instincts" to shed light on the second-class status of Mexican Americans through the Longoria affair and to establish the AGIF as a nationwide organization and leader in the fight for Mexican American civil rights with access to equitable education as paramount.[16]

In 1948, Dr. Garcia held a G.I. Forum meeting in the living room of Gilbert and Linda Garcia in Fort Worth. Gilbert Garcia had attended one of the G.I. Forum's first conventions in San Antonio where he met Dr. Garcia. According to Linda, "he came home from that convention and he couldn't stop talking about it." [17] Their meeting led to the creation of a Fort Worth chapter and the beginning of Gilbert Garcia's almost fifty-year long active involvement in service to his community. Gilbert Garcia also served as State Chairman for three years in which he traveled over 100,000 miles organizing and activating chapters all over the state.[18] After Gilbert Garcia began spending weekends driving all over the state helping Mexican veterans get their businesses organized, Mrs. Garcia decided to join his efforts and began a Forum auxiliary for women.

Gilbert and Linda Garcia and Dr. Garcia travelled the state but were not always welcomed. According to Linda, "There was a time [when] Dr. Garcia went into a restaurant and was told, 'We don't serve Mexicans here.'" He jokingly replied, "That's ok, I just want a hamburger." In this case Dr. Garcia used humor to defuse the tension of being refused service but did not back down. But there were lots of times when the situation did not end with humor,

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[16] Carroll, *Felix Longoria's Wake,* 196.

[17] Jeff Guinn, "Voice of Strength," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, October 13, 1992.

[18] Jeff Guinn, "Voice of Strength," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, October 13, 1992.

and "he and Gilbert had to be escorted out of town by police."[19] Even though they were treated as second-class citizens, Gilbert, Linda, and Dr. Garcia did not accept it and continued to challenge everyday practices of segregation as they traveled the state organizing and supporting AGIF chapters. These important stands resonated with local Mexican Americans as they journeyed across Texas.

Throughout the 1950s, Forum leaders contended that a lack of education was a primary reason for the mistreatment of Mexican Americans as second-class citizens. These new leaders of the community believed that a proper education provided their children with the tools to assimilate and enter the middle-class. This in turn would lead to more acceptance by white society. The leaders of the Forum attributed the low educational achievement of Mexican Americans not to a lack of interest in education in the community, but rather to the institutional discriminatory practices of the school system, from segregation and inequality in school financing to a lack of cultural and linguistic awareness in performance evaluations. The AGIF first focused on the community, organizing back to school drives and holding conversations with parents about the importance of formal education through door-to-door visits, appearances on local radio stations, and the distribution of written materials. This advocacy was supported by local business donations, *tamaladas*, and dances to raise funds.[20] Tamaladas brought Mexican American women together to make numerous batches of tamales using ingredients donated by local businesses. The AGIF would then hold a voter registration drive and give away a dozen tamales for each poll tax paid. This allowed a parent to both register to vote and provide dinner for their family. The Forum's successful activities were aided by the increase in the Mexican

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[19] Jeff Guinn, "Voice of Strength," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, October 13, 1992.

[20] Ramos, *A People Forgotten, a Dream Pursued,* 55-63.

middle-class and the aspiring middle-class who mostly made its membership.[21] They were men and women and families who understood the necessity of education and active reform efforts to aid in the upward mobility of their community. Through these grassroots efforts Forumeers found success in both retention and enrollment numbers in Mexican American school-aged children.[22]

The population of Mexican Americans in Fort Worth was much smaller than in other Texas cities where the AGIF was drawing attention both statewide and nationally. The existence of the AGIF's Fort Worth chapter reflected Dr. Garcia's determination to open chapters wherever a local population called for one, regardless of the overall size of the Mexican population. By August 1957, Gilbert Garcia pointed to the following as evidence of the AGIF's presence in Fort Worth and their impact on this small Mexican American community: a vast increase in paid poll taxes in the Latino community, more Mexican students prepared for and staying in school, mediations between stores and businesses and Mexican Americans who experienced discrimination, success in getting a "Latin-American" hired to the Fort Worth Police Department, and an established Boy Scout Troop for Mexican American youth.[23] The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reported these successes in a full page contemporary article highlighting the work of the American G.I. Forum and Gilbert Garcia, who was featured and interviewed for the article. The *Star-Telegram* interest in reporting on the AGIF's efforts in Fort Worth is in and

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[21] For more on the rise of the Mexican middle-class after WWII see "Part One: The Middle Class" in Mario T García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, & identity, 1930-1960.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Chapter 4 "The Contradictions of Ethnic Politics, 1940-1950 in David Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); and Chapter 12 "The Rise of the Second Generation" in Sanchez, George J., *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles 1900-1945.* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

[22] Carroll, *Felix Longoria's Wake;* Ramos, *A People Forgotten, a Dream Pursued.*

[23] Marshall Lynam, "GI Forum—It's Hitting Heavy Blows at the Enemy—Prejudice," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, August 15, 1957.

of itself a marker of the success of the Forum's goals to pull Mexicans from marginalized spaces into mainstream society.

Between 1940 and 1956 the rate of Mexican Americans who paid their poll taxes increased two thousand percent, from fifty to more than one thousand. Garcia attributed this increase in part to poll drives conducted by the AGIF. Just like chapters in other major cities, the local chapter believed increased political participation among the Latino community was paramount to ensuring their needs were addressed by the city. Gilbert Garcia's experiences in poll tax and voting drives led to his leadership in the Viva Kennedy Clubs, which he was named chairman of the Fort Worth section of the state organization.[24] The efforts of Viva Kennedy Clubs and the increase in Mexican American voters contributed greatly to the success of the Kennedy/Johnson ticket in Texas in the 1960 election.[25]

The AGIF in Fort Worth also focused on education. The Forum held yearly back-to-school drives to distribute school shoes and clothing. These drives encouraged and motivated Mexican youth to stay in school and educated the community on the value of a high school diploma and pursuing a college education. Garcia believed that without these drives many school-aged kids in the community may have dropped out. Specifically, the Forum was instrumental in encouraging Lucy Caram to follow through on her dreams of becoming a doctor. After her mother died, Caram almost dropped out of high school to help her father financially. Members of the Forum persuaded her to continue her education. She eventually enrolled in pre-med classes at the University of North Texas.[26]

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[24] Samuel Garcia Papers, "JFK-LBJ Ticket Gets 'Vivas" Here, Series III: Subject Files-Politics, Box 3, Folder 4.

[25] Brian D. Behnken, *Fighting Their Own Battles: Mexican Americans, African Americans, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Texas*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 85; Ignacio M. García, *United We Win: The Rise and Fall of La Raza Unida Party* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989); and Max Krochmal, *Blue Texas: The Making of a Multiracial Democratic Coalition in the Civil Rights Era* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

[26] Marshall Lynam, "GI Forum—It's Hitting Heavy Blows at the Enemy—Prejudice," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, August 15, 1957.

Issues of discrimination were also a priority for the AGIF in Fort Worth. However, many of these instances went unresolved without the legislative backing of the Civil Rights Acts of the 19060s or the attentive audience created by the aggressive methods of the Chicano Movement. Garcia stated that, "when Latin-Americans are barred from stores and businesses strictly because of their race, a committee from the Forum tries to call on the owner and reason with him. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't."[27] Garcia believed in dealing with these issues in a "friendly [and] level-headed manner."[28] Even though local government was not necessarily on the side of the Mexican American community in these instances, Garcia "doesn't think it hurts to try." [29]

The last two successes of the Forum, according to Gilbert Garcia, were the hiring of two Mexican police officers and establishment of a Boy Scout Troop for Mexican American youth. The first Mexican American police officer hired by the Fort Worth PD was Inez (Chico) Perez. He began his career working with the school district when the board began integrating Fort Worth schools in the late 1960s. Perez worked closely with Mexican American youth when he served as a liaison officer at various schools. Sam Garcia, a member of the Fort Worth AGIF (no relation to Gilbert), credited him with "helping them [Mexican American students] to become productive members of society" through his active mentoring.[30] By the 1980s, Perez was a Tarrant County Constable. Juan M. Gonzalez was also hired by FWPD in 1957 and assigned to the Northside neighborhood. Meanwhile, Gilbert Garcia established Boy Scout Troop 150 to encourage the participation Mexican American youth in the predominantly white organization.

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Samuel Garcia Papers, *Community News and Events*, March 1984, Series VI: Newspapers, Box 2.

This troop was sponsored by the Fort Worth chapter of the Forum. Garcia believed that the kids in the troop were, "as American as ham and eggs."[31] Garcia also attributed much of the improvements in the Mexican American community to the "breakdown of the language barrier" as more Mexicans were speaking English at home. Garcia was clearly pushing an assimilationist agenda, referring to himself and his community as "Latin-Americans" rather than Mexicans, that he and other Forumeers believed would lead to acceptance of Mexican Americans by Fort Worth society.

Even though Garcia paints a pleasant and progressive picture for Mexican Americans in Fort Worth in the decade following WWII, the overall experiences of Mexicanos with the local school district tell a different story. FWISD continued to strip Mexican origin students of their culture. While not an official policy of the local school board, campuses forbade the use of Spanish on school grounds. Rey Martinez, Jr.'s family came to Cowtown in 1950 after his father transferred from the army depot in Fort Sam Houston to a new one in Fort Worth. Martinez was two years old when he began living in Southside Fort Worth. He attended Worth Heights Elementary school where his teacher, Mrs. Hickman, told him he was not allowed to speak Spanish. She also told him that he was a mestizo, a label he had never heard and did not understand. In an act of defiance, Martinez told the teacher that he could not speak English. Ms. Hickman instructed another Mexican student to translate everything for Martinez. By the second grade the teacher caught on, and his charade ended. Martinez is unsure why he decided in the spur-of-the-moment to tell the teacher he did not speak English. He just knew he always spoke both languages at home and did not appreciate the teacher telling him to alter his daily norms.[32]

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[31] Marshall Lynam, "GI Forum—It's Hitting Heavy Blows at the Enemy—Prejudice," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, August 15, 1957.

[32] Rey Martinez, Jr., "Rey Martinez, Jr. Interview," Latino Americans: 500 Years of History, Fort Worth Public Library Digital Archives, http://www.fortworthtexasarchives.org/digital/collection/p16084coll25/id/456/rec/1.

FWISD school administrators continued to restrict expressions of Mexican culture in secondary schools. Joe Lazo, Jr. attended a Catholic school in North Side until he began seventh grade in the late 1950s. Even though the nuns were white at the Catholic school, all the kids were Mexican, and they spoke both English and Spanish. On his first day at J. P. Elder Junior High, an announcement over the loud speaker instructed all Mexican American students to go to the auditorium. Lazo, who had never been called Mexican American before, was unsure if he had to go. His teacher divested him of his uncertainty and told him to head to the auditorium. Once there, the vice principal, Mr. Louis said, "you are not to speak any Spanish on the grounds at all." If students did speak Spanish, the vice principal would expel them.

Around the same time, the Fort Worth Boys Club in Northside denied Lazo entry into their facilities. His white friends who lived on the west side of Main Street invited Lazo to join them at the United Way-sponsored club. He filled out and turned in the form necessary to receive a membership card, but front desk workers told him that he had not been approved entry. Lazo recalled that he tried several times before his dad got involved. The club representative told him that his son was not approved to join because he lived on the wrong side of N. Main St. Without clearly stating that the club did not welcome Mexican children, the United Way staff instead used his address to disqualify him from entry.[33]

In addition to FWISD's efforts to rid Mexican students of their native language, the district also prevented Mexican educators from teaching. Robert Galvan earned a bachelor's degree with a double major in Chemistry and Physics from East Texas Normal College (ETNC), now Texas A&M Commerce, in 1956. He wanted to work in a lab as a research chemist, but because he had a 1A draft status, civilian facilities worried that they would spend the money and

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[33] "Lazo Family Interview," Latino Americans: 500 Years of History, Fort Worth Public Library Digital Archives, http://www.fortworthtexasarchives.org/digital/collection/p16084coll25/id/13/rec/2.

time to train him only to have the military require his presence. Civilian facilities did not want to put this effort into someone who the military would likely draft into service. At the suggestion of the employment center at ETNC, Galvan reluctantly decided to try teaching. He was offered a position with Andrews ISD in West Texas, but he turned it down after visiting the city. Having grown up in East Texas surrounded by trees and grass, he could not imagine himself living in the semi-arid climate of West Texas. He then found two opportunities in North Texas, in both Dallas and Fort Worth. He first met with the Dallas assistant superintendent, Mr. White, for a Chemistry and Physics job at Hillcrest High School, in a predominately wealthy and white neighborhood in North Dallas. According to Galvan, Mr. White had "kind of a frown" when he first laid eyes on Galvan and questioned if he was meeting the correct person, then asked him to sit down. Mr. White then told Galvan that there were no openings at any of the "colored schools" and that he did not think Galvan "would work out there [Hillcrest] well" because he was "not the right color." Galvan explained that he attended a high school where he was the only Hispanic student, attended East Texas Teachers College where he was the only Hispanic Chemistry and Physics major, and was married to an Anglo woman. Even though Galvan insisted that he did not have any problems working with Anglo people, the assistant superintendent said, "Well I am sorry, we can't use you," and ended the meeting. Galvan then heard about a high school chemistry job available in Fort Worth at Arlington Heights. He mailed in his resume to Superintendent J. P. Moore. He then spoke over the phone with Moore's secretary who scheduled an interview. When Galvan arrived for his interview, the secretary seemed confused, told him to wait, but did not offer him a seat. Superintendent Moore came out of his office and asked Galvan, "What do you want?" Galvan explained that he was there for the Arlington Heights high school chemistry position. Moore told him that he was mistaken and there was no position available. When Galvan attempted to interject, Mr. Moore cut him off and told him, "You are wasting my time, good

day." Galvan, who grew up in poverty and was the son of a Mexican immigrant, understood the benefits of assimilation. He spoke without an accent, used Bob as his first name, and white-washed or anglicized the pronunciation of his last name. Nevertheless, Galvan describes himself as a dark Mexican and understood this as the reason for his abrupt dismissal from Moore's office.[34]

The majority of Mexicans in FWISD elementary school throughout the 1950s never had the opportunity to learn from a teacher who looked like them. The district hired the first elementary school teachers with Spanish surnames in 1951, Mrs. Margaret Martinez and Mrs. Dolores Rios Quintero, both for positions at M. G. Ellis, the school with the highest concentration of Mexican students. In 1955, only eight women with a Spanish surname appeared on the faculty rolls, including Alice Contreras, who eventually became the director of bilingual education in the 1970s and now has an elementary school named after her. The district did not hire any Mexican middle school or high school teachers until the mid-1960s. There were also no Mexican or Spanish-surnamed individuals appointed as administrators in FWISD until 1969 when the district elevated Robert Rodriguez to become the vice principal at Diamond Hill-Jarvis High School. He had previously served as an interim vice principal at J. P. Elder Junior High.[35]

In addition to the discrimination facing students and the lack of representation among teachers and administrators during the 1950s, FWISD, like other districts in Texas, also implemented social studies curriculum practices that aimed to strip Mexican origin students of their culture and replace it with white American, Protestant values. Social studies and history curriculum has often served to teach the meaning of democracy, inspire civic virtue and to define

[34] Dr. Robert Galvan, Jr., interview by author, Fort Worth, May 23, 2023 (in author's possession).

[35] This data comes from my scouring of the lists of teachers and new hires for Spanish-surnames found in the FWISD board meeting minutes beginning in 1923. These numbers could be slightly different considering the limitations of relying on surnames as an indicator of ethnicity.

U.S. national identity; however, during the Cold War the desire of educators and politicians to instill a love of country in young Americans became paramount for politicians and social studies educators. Accusations of communist infiltration accompanied any efforts in the classrooms to deviate from the master narrative of American exceptionalism. The path to a patriotic social studies curriculum that aimed to create loyal Americans began just before the turn of the twentieth century.

Throughout the Progressive Era, historians and educators debated and developed the objectives for social studies. While historians' goals concerned the safeguarding of their profession, educators focused on how the school subject could benefit society. For a brief moment, just before the turn of the twentieth century in 1893, the architects of history curriculum believed the purpose of studying history was to "prepare the pupil in eminent degree for enlightenment and intellectual enjoyment in after years" that would benefit the "affairs of the country."[36] These architects, which included future president Woodrow Wilson, who was on the faculty at Princeton University, believed that the study of history and other related subjects served to "broaden and cultivate the mind," to provide an opportunity to think critically about the world around them. However, they limited the study of history to Greek, Roman, American, French, and English histories, and civil government. By the nineteen teens, social efficiency education reformers questioned the usefulness of history courses that boiled down to memorizing events, people, and dates. Fearing the elimination of their profession from public schools, the American Historical Association in 1932, with a grant from the Carnegie Commission, facilitated a new discussion to ensure the continued teaching of history in secondary schools. Several

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[36] *Report of the Committee of Ten on Secondary Social Studies,* (New York: American Book Company, 1894), 167. https://ia800202.us.archive.org/12/items/cu31924032709960/cu31924032709960.pdf and Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum*, 237.

preeminent historians, including Charles Beard, worked with educators to create *A Charter for the Social Sciences in the Schools.* The inclusion of educators like George Counts, Harold Rugg, and Franklin Bobbitt who held diverse perspectives on the purpose of education made for a disorganized committee. Although the historians in the room were able to defend the study of history as necessary without declaring a specific societal function that historical knowledge would fulfill, in the end, the committee concluded that teaching young people how to be a good citizen in a democracy was the ultimate function of social studies education. By the mid-twentieth century, with history, specifically American history, fully entrenched as a secondary school subject, the debate surrounding the teaching of the subject turned to whose history should be taught. Initial US history textbooks were nationalistic: they did not encourage exploration of thought but rather provided *truths* about the country that elders wanted children to know. Early criticisms of these textbooks came from Jewish and Black groups who claimed that textbook authors underrepresented them in the narrative of US history, and from Catholic groups who had problems with the way these authors portrayed them.[37] Ultimately, history textbooks and social studies curriculum focused on the experiences and needs of white, Protestant Americans.

With the rampant inequality and class conflict driven by the Gilded Age and the increase in federal power in the decades leading up to World War II many Americans worried about the rise of socialist ideology in American society. Social studies educators began to see an absolute need for more teaching of US history and civics to preserve American culture and to prevent the intrusion of all the "isms" plaguing Europe.[38] Educators in Fort Worth were aware of these national debates on the purpose of public schooling and curriculum. In 1931, after the Strayer

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[37] Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum,* 244.

[38] Keith A. Erekson, ed., *Politics and the History Curriculum: The Struggle over Standards in Texas and the Nation* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 21.

report stated that the "constructing, revising, and installing a sound curriculum in the schools of the city is the most insistent need now facing the Board of Education," the school board established a program for curriculum development and pledged to consistently evaluate and revise their curriculum based on the needs of the Fort Worth community and on the most current nationwide principals of curriculum. FWISD created a social studies course, *Personal and Social Problems* for ninth graders in 1940 that would make "it possible for each boy and girl to acquire an understanding of the present social order, its complexities, its problems, its memories and its hopes . . . [and] to achieve the maximum of his or her potential ability to contribute to and live in a better social order."[39] Considering only a handful of Mexican students reached secondary schools, FWISD did not develop this curriculum with them in mind. District officials were not concerned with Mexican youth reaching their potential abilities. Although it is not clear whether this course was available to the Black ninth grade students in Fort Worth, the committee, who created this course at the University of Texas during a curriculum conference, did not have any Black representation and therefore did not include a Black perspective of life in the Jim Crow South.[40]

The curriculum committee seemed to only have white Protestant students in mind, or in the very least the white architects of Fort Worth schooling were attempting to establish conformity among all children in the city to their worldviews, when they created this new course. However, respect of different races and religions are mentioned several times in the course objectives. Objective C1 in the religion unit state that students will have "attitudes of tolerance

[39] "Social Studies, A Tentative Course of Study in Personal and Social Problems for Grade Nine," Fort Worth Public Schools, Fort Worth, Texas, Curriculum Bulletin Number 115, 1940, FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, i.

[40] The committee members names appear in one list in the beginning of the bulletin. Throughout FWISD history, up until the mid-1960s, documents always separated Black faculty and staff under a "colored" or "negro" category. "Social Studies, A Tentative Course of Study in Personal and Social Problems for Grade Nine," Fort Worth Public Schools, Fort Worth, Texas, Curriculum Bulletin Number 115, 1940, FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives.

toward other religions, races, and economic standards of living," However, these nods to acceptance of others are brief while the committee gave ample space to the uplifting of a white Protestant way of life as the superior way. The objective immediately following C1 states students will have "attitudes of desire to acquire the virtues found in the Bible."[41] The curriculum also did not prepare students for the reality of Jim Crow and Juan Crow society. The writers of this curriculum bulletin titled the course *Personal and Social Problems.* After surveying more than eight hundred high school students and gathering the opinions of teachers, parents, and "other competent adults," the committee analyzed the data and narrowed down the major problems facing young people in Fort Worth as they transitioned from school to adulthood. The course consisted of twenty-two units that covered a variety of topics including, Installment Payments, Family Harmony, The Importance of Religion, Democracy and the Citizen, Control of Infection, Developing Socially, Crime and Its Prevention, and a unit at the end of each semester titled Current Problems. The final unit for the first semester allowed students to discover various occupations. Students then choose a vocation to explore during the final unit of the second semester. According to the district, this course helped fulfill a major responsibility of public schools, "serving as a conscious agent for social improvement." Specifically, *Personal and Social Problems* aimed to not just provide students with the tools they may need to navigate their lives after public school but to assist them in how to use those tools. The curriculum bulletin states that the course "bridges the gap between education and action," allowing the teacher to act as a guide to assist students in understanding the problems they will likely encounter and know how to act in those situations. For example, course objectives included: "The ability to face opposition and to stand for personal convictions against popular ideas and material gains," and,

[41] "Social Studies, A Tentative Course of Study in Personal and Social Problems for Grade Nine," Fort Worth Public Schools, Fort Worth, Texas, Curriculum Bulletin Number 115, 1940, FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, 56.

“The ability to participate in activities that contribute to the well-being of democratic society.” To reach these goals, the Importance of Religion unit aimed to instill an appreciation of “our democratic way of life compared with methods accepted by other countries, religion as a dominating factor in social control, what is right because it usually pays rich dividends,” and “a personality that is socially approved.” The overview for the religion unit points out how the introduction of Christianity to Asiatic nations has “broken the barriers to social progress” and “lifted these nations to a higher level in their social and political life.” The writers of this curriculum cautioned teachers to “discuss only the benefits of religion” and to “not raise controversial issues.”[42] This course, likely taught to only white students in FWISD, allowed these students to reach adulthood with a perception of anything other than people like them as inferior and un-American. If teachers did teach this course to the handful or Mexican origin students in high school and the Black students at I.M. Terrell, the only Black high school in the district, then it would have served as a tool of assimilation and indoctrination to the white architects ideologies.

By the end of the war, the social studies classroom became one of the battlegrounds in the fight against communism. Just like Senator Joseph McCarthy aimed to rid the US Congress of communist influences, Texas politicians sought to remove any leftist teachers, administrators, and textbook authors from the classroom. The 1951 Texas Communist Control Law required all school district employees to sign a non-subversive oath declaring that they were not a member of any Communist party or any organization “designated as totalitarian, fascists, communist, or subversive, or as having adopted a policy of advocating or approving the commission of acts of force or violence to deny other their rights under the Constitution of the United States, or as

[42] “Social Studies, A Tentative Course of Study in Personal and Social Problems for Grade Nine,” Fort Worth Public Schools, Fort Worth, Texas, Curriculum Bulletin Number 115, 1940, FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives.

seeking to alter the form of Government of the United States by unconstitutional means." According to this law, school districts could not use public funds to pay any person who did not execute this oath. During the December 5, 1951, FWISD school board meeting, Superintendent Moore read this directive from State Board of Education (SBOE) Commissioner J.W. Edgar. The school board members unanimously voted to "have each employee of the Fort Worth Public Schools sign the Non-Subversive oath before they receive a check for December."[43] Two years later, with the support of the Texas legislature, the SBOE began to require a signed oath from all authors, illustrators, and editors of textbooks before the board considered any of their work for submission to "safeguard the schools from subversive elements."[44] The SBOE also began a new textbook adoption process that encouraged local school districts to only use the state approved books by covering the costs of only the books approved by the board. This new system, open to public debate, led to conservative crusades throughout the 1960s to rid history textbooks of anything that subverted the master narrative of US history that emphasized American exceptionalism, textbooks for government class that gave credence to other forms of government beyond a republic, economics textbooks that did not clearly teach capitalism as the superior economic system, and science textbooks that upheld evolution as any more plausible than creationism.[45] This is discussed more fully in the next chapter.

The FWISD curriculum department employees, fully aware of the national conversation about fighting communism in the classroom, issued a new curriculum bulletin in 1952 that

[43] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, December 5, 1951.

[44] SBOE Meeting Minutes, August 25, 1952, p. 57, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[45] Erekson, ed., *Politics and the History Curriculum;* Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum.*

specifically sought to enshrine love of country in the hearts of the city's children. In the forward of *Emphasis Upon Citizenship and Patriotism: A Handbook for Teachers of Elementary School Children*, Superintendent J.P. Moore stated that "we may take it for granted that children come to school already indoctrinated in the fundamental principles upon which American patriotism and citizenship are founded, this handbook . . . has been developed to assist teachers to exploit every opportunity of teaching our boys and girls how to be good American citizens." Unlike the *Social and Personal Problems* curriculum bulletin that the committee wrote with the help of scholars at the University of Texas, the creators of this local curriculum consisted of elementary school teachers, principals, and district staff, without any guidance content or curriculum experts. Superintendent Moore pushed to establish a curriculum committee to figure out a way to help Fort Worth students "become better and more patriotic citizens." Moore insisted that it was the duty of public school educators to ensure elementary students understood the importance of superior nature of American democracy and capitalism. In the bulletin's introduction, the committee stated, "There is abundant evidence that the American way of life provides the richest and most satisfying existence that has yet been achieved by man." That statement, one that encapsulates American Cold War ideology, discouraged any acceptance or teaching of cultures outside of white, Protestant norms that emphasized individualism. The committee believed that "as long as communism and fascism and predatory aggression exist upon the earth, the ideals of Democracy will be subject to attack, and danger." They understood the elementary school classroom as the best place to fight this assault. As shown above, for Mexican origin children in Fort Worth, this foundational belief in the superiority of the "American way of life" meant that their teachers and school administrators perceived their language, customs, and traditions as inferior and a danger to American democracy.

The Fort Worth community also envisioned the public school as a battleground for the fight against communism. Fort Worth chapters of organizations such as Crusade For Freedom, Pro American, Citizens Council, and ad hoc committees of concerned citizens appear in the FWISD school board meeting minutes throughout the 1950s to present or protest classroom curriculum materials. Fred H. Korath, the chairman for the Fort Worth Crusade For Freedom, a national organization headed by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, appeared before the FWISD school board in September of 1950 to request permission to leave a "Freedom scroll" in every classroom with the hope that all students in the district would sign the scroll pledging their support of democracy. Korath also asked to place a coin receptacle in every principal's office to encourage students to donate to their efforts to fight communism.[46] The Crusade For Freedom raised money to construct a ten-ton bell in Berlin with the inscription "That This World, Under God, Shall Have a New Birth of Freedom."[47] The Crusade then planned to bury the signed scrolls under the bell in a freedom shrine. The fundraising also helped Radio Free Europe establish a network of radio stations along the Iron Curtain that could refute communist propaganda coming out of Russia. The school board approved their request. According to the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Korath expected the scrolls in the schools to provide twenty-five thousand signatures. Fort Worth classroom teachers, beginning in the third grade, dedicated classroom time to signing the scroll and accompanied the signing with "messages on Americanism and citizenship."[48] By the end of the campaign, Fort Worth surpassed its goal by reaching more than one hundred thousand signatures and contributed more than thirteen thousand dollars, representing more than a quarter of both the total signatures and total funds

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[46] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, September 13, 1950.

[47] "Crusade for Freedom Plea Will Be Made," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* July 28, 1950.

[48] "Convair Will Circulate Freedom Scroll at Plant," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* September 18, 1950.

collected by all Texans.[49] Mexican American veterans and many other Mexican origin community members in Fort Worth would likely have encouraged their children to participate in this effort, a clear act of American patriotism, considering the assimilation efforts of the AGIF in the 1950s.

Other Fort Worth organizations also included the public schools in their missions to ensure the continuation of their American way of life. Mrs. C.G. Condra and Mrs. William Hall, who were both active in white Fort Worth women's clubs and prominent in the society pages of the local newspaper, appeared before the FWISD school board as representatives of the Fort Worth chapter of Pro American in October 1952. They introduced a film titled "Government is Your Business" to the board in hopes that they would approve its use in high school classrooms. The film, based on a book written by Father James Keller, the founder of The Christophers, a non-denominational Christian organization, imbued religion into politics. In the film a character named Johnny, "an average man" is encouraged to enter the local political field after reading the book *Government is Your Business* by James Keller. Everyone in his life tells him that entering politics in their town is bad idea because of the rampant corruption. He eventually gained support of his family and friends to take on the corrupt system and run for office. He states in his passionate debate speech, "it's our country, one day we are going to be asked what we ever did for it, and I for one, want to be able to stand before Almighty God and say I tried."[50] The board members approved the film for screening in the senior high schools as long as an investigation into the "background of [the] film and author for subversive nature" did not reveal any communist leanings.[51] The board did not express any concern about the religious influences in

[49] "Fort Worth Gave $13548.77, Texas total $50767.94 in Freedom Crusade," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 21, 1950.

[50] "The Christopher Films Collection," Internet Archive, accessed on August 24, 2023 https://archive.org/details/TheChristophersFilmsCollection/GovernmentIsYourBusiness1952.m4v.

[51] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, October 8, 1951.

the film. The board's acceptance of religious-based curriculum is not surprising considering that in 1948, after the *McCollum v. Board of Education* ruling that limited the use of public schools for religious teaching, the board members decided that the district's current customs of Bible reading in elementary school and a Bible course graduation requirement in high school, taught by a local preacher, did not violent any law. According to the 1951-1952 FWISD plan of organization, the district continued to require at least a half credit in Bible to graduate. Again, the district unabashedly established a curriculum that intended to instill a white Protestant worldview in all their students.

During the 1950s both the SBOE and the FWISD school board worked to uphold white supremacy in schooling through preserving segregated schools. From June to July 1955, Fort Worth attorney Cecil Morgan served as a chairman of a Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) subcommittee organized to study the board's responsibilities regarding the Supreme Court's *Brown II* desegregation order. Morgan called for the creation of this subcommittee in June. He wanted to be sure that any decision made or actions by the SBOE were "within the framework of the Texas public school system and within proper concepts of constituted authority."[52] At the following SBOE meeting in July, regional leaders of the NAACP appeared before the board and implored them to "issue a clear and concise statement of policy" in line with the Supreme Court decision and to "use all of its powers, authority and prerogatives to press for prompt and efficient compliance with the Court's decrees." The NAACP also wanted to be sure that the SBOE used their authority to "prevent any willful, or calculated action by school districts under your jurisdiction to avoid, impede or circumvent the full realization of the spirit and purpose of the

[52] SBOE Meeting Minutes, June 4, 1955, p. 40, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

Court's decrees."[53] Additionally, Dr. Jack Kilgore of the Texas Commission of Race Relations, a body that offered its services to anyone hoping to establish better understanding among races anywhere in the state, spoke passionately about the need to work with local communities to combat racial injustices. He stated, "foreign observers whose countries are vexed with racial animosities are convinced that as America goes racially, so goes the world" and "from the vantage point of our country's history, it is evident that as the South goes racially, so goes America."[54] Dr. Kilgore assured the board that he and the rest of the Commission were ready to guide any community who needed their help through the school desegregation process.

Nevertheless, these powerful statements by leaders of the NAACP and the Texas Commission on Race Relations had no effect on the subcommittee, which had already reached their own conclusions after a month of meetings held in Fort Worth. Under the guise of local control as the foundation of schooling in Texas, Morgan, who would later become the attorney for the Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) and the subcommittee recommended that the SBOE refrain from dictating desegregation procedures. Not only did the board agree to do nothing to "suggest or direct the action which county and local school officials should take" they also did not take any steps to hold the school districts accountable for taking action on their own. The subcommittee instructed the Commissioner of Education to "distribute the Foundation Program Funds [state funds for education] . . . regardless of whether or not the schools are segregated or non-segregated."[55]

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[53] SBOE Meeting Minutes, July 4, 1955, p. 5, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[54] SBOE Meeting Minutes, July 4, 1955, p. 14, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[55] SBOE Meeting Minutes, July 4, 1955, p. 39-40, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

The Citizens Council, formed in response to *Brown v. Board of Education*, appeared before the school board to encourage the district to continue segregation and to express concern with any curriculum that could threaten the current social order. The Tarrant County chapter met on August 11, 1955, at the Hilton Hotel in Fort Worth, selected a temporary chairman, and made plans to "enjoin in court any Tarrant County school which attempts desegregation."[56] The Council also decided to send representatives to school board and PTA meetings to gather support from district leaders and members of the community. Their decision to take direct action to stop the integration of schools may have also been motivated by the first group of citizens that appeared before the board to discuss the recent Supreme Court ruling that called for the integration of public schools "with all deliberate speed." A group of "negro citizens" led by Dr. G. D. Flemmings appeared before the board earlier in the summer of 1955 to "hereby call upon you in good faith and with implicit confidence in your sincerity of purpose, as relates to your duty to take immediate steps to reorganize the public schools of Fort Worth on a non-segregated basis." The group of fourteen Black citizens, almost half of whom were women, included two reverends and four doctors. After they made their statement, the school board president, O.C. Armstrong, thanked them for their interest in the matters of the students and the school system and invited them to stay for the remainder of the meeting. The group declined the offer and left the meeting. Just two agenda items later, Mr. Armstrong opened up the floor to discuss segregation. Board member Atwood McDonald stated that the process to reorganize the district would take longer than a summer to plan and that "what the Board of Education did should not be done on an emotional, hurried, or careless manner but rather be the result of careful study." He then motioned to continue the 1955-1956 school year "on the same segregated basis that has

[56] "Tarrant Group Formed to Uphold Segregation," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* August 13, 1955.

heretofore been in effect.” The board unanimously approved the motion. The following month, on August 10, Dr. Flemmings and Dr. M. J. Brooks returned to the board meeting to express their disapproval of the board’s decision to delay integration. After Mr. McDonald explained to Dr. Flemmings and Dr. Brooks that the desegregation process would create too many problems that they could not solve by September, he moved to table any further discussion of the topic. Again, the board voted unanimously to approve the motion. It was just one day after this interaction that opponents of integration formed the Citizens Council.[57]

Even though FWISD did not show any signs of following the Supreme Court’s directive to integrate schools, the Citizens Council quickly and loudly organized like-minded people in the city and county to prepare for what they believed to be a “disastrous force.”[58] On August 19 the Citizens Council announced in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* that lawsuits from “a highly organized NAACP” could bring integrated parks, schools, swimming pools, and golf courses and that a “Negro group” called for immediate desegregation at a school board meeting. In this announcement the Council invited all people who did not want segregation to end to attend its next meeting.[59] White members of the Fort Worth community voiced their opinions on segregation in the “Letters From the People” section of the newspaper. J. L. Boydston expressed confusion as to why the “Negro race” would want to be around white people who did not want them “in white schools, churches, theaters, [or] parks.”[60] At an August meeting of the Citizens Council, Robert A. Stuart, a former state senator, suggested the district “maintain three types of schools: All-white, all Negro and mixed” and let parents decide where to send their children. He

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[57] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, July 13, 1955 and August 10, 1955.

[58] “The Eight Ifs . . . And Your Answer,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, April 18, 1957.

[59] “Segregation!,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 19, 1955.

[60] “Letters From the People,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 21, 1955.

elaborated that this would not only keep segregation alive but also that it would expose parents who sent their children to the mixed schools as "communist thinkers, left-wingers, and fellow-travelers." Stuart also believed that Americans should impeach the justices who ordered an end to segregation. [61] The September meeting announcement encouraged attendees to "bring a car-load of your neighbors" to hear Dr. Homer G. Ritchie, the pastor of First Baptist Church, speak in support of segregation.[62] By the following March in 1956, the Citizens Council had grown tremendously. They held an event at the Will Rogers Memorial Auditorium with US Senator Eastland of Mississippi, who was a strong supporter of segregation. Now led by John T. Gano and Joe L. Munn, the Fort Worth chapter hosted other Councils from the state at luncheons and banquets in the city.[63]

Not all white citizens in Fort Worth shared the Citizen Council's worldview. One particular letter-to-the-editor highlights the damage the Council's mission could do to others who are not white Christians. Mrs. Claudell Smith, who described her family as "red-faced Irishmen," disagreed with the Citizens Council's propaganda which opined that the United States is "composed of one white race and one white culture." She titled her letter, "Not Speaking For All." Smith stated that "there are good Texans and Southerners left who still believe all men are created equal" and that "we are patriotic enough to believe that the sons and daughters of all the colored men who fought and died to protect democracy deserve to be treated as human beings and not like tolerated animals." She reminded readers that the country includes more than just white people, "many citizens whose skins are not pure white, such as Italians, Mexicans, Spaniards, Chinese, Japanese, Indians, [and] Negroes" and that "this great country was

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[61] "San Antonio Plans Integration Delay," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 28, 1955.

[62] "Citizens Council Invites You to Hear Dr. Homer G. Ritchie," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 22, 1955.

[63] "Integration Foe Eastland to Speak Here," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 3, 1956.

discovered by a dark-faced Catholic many years before the Puritans landed." Smith worried that the Council's insistence on protecting white people from Black infiltration could begin a slippery slope of "protecting their race and culture from the Catholics and Jews."[64] Although the Citizens Council initially formed to fight against desegregation, their propaganda and rhetoric quickly evolved into an effort to combat any change in society that threatened white Protestant supremacy—including in the schools.

Joe L. Munn and John T. Gano appeared before the FWISD school board in the fall of 1956 to voice their concerns about "leftist leaning" curriculum materials. Munn, who did not acknowledge his position with the Citizens Council at the September 26 meeting, was first concerned with material found in *Junior Scholastic Magazine* and a political poll that was distributed to high school students at R. L. Paschal. He believed that the magazine's content was "not desirable for school-age children." The board referred the matter to the superintendent for further investigation. Another community member, Joe B. Watson, told the board that "objectionable posters had been found in some schools and [that he] wished for some action on the matter." Surprisingly, considering the board typically did not respond quickly to public comment on items not on the agenda, the board took immediate action and voted unanimously to require approval from the assistant superintendent before any "outside organizations" placed posters or polls and authorized the removal of all materials in the schools until they could be approved under this new policy. [65] In 1952, a few years before these concerns by the community, at Superintendent Moore's request, the FWISD board investigated the districts engagement with third-party organizations, including the use of printed materials in the schools, and concluded that as long as an organization was "readily identified as primarily of civic, patriotic, or

[64] "Letters From the People," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 21, 1955.

[65] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, September 26, 1956.

educational in purposive functioning in the community" and not "political in purpose" then campuses were authorized to engage.[66] The district clearly only viewed content that critiqued patriotic rhetoric as political in nature while perceiving content that pushed a patriotic narrative as neutral. Just two days after that board meeting Superintendent Moore issued a bulletin to all principals. In this letter, Moore states that "we are operating in a very tense atmosphere in a number of areas and must exercise care in the approval of materials to be presented to our pupils." He then instructs principals to use time during their next faculty meetings to make sure teachers are aware of and understand the need for approvals of all outside materials, including magazines, posters, or opinion polls. Moore stated that "articles which are of a propaganda nature and particularly slanted in directions which are definitely not in accord with the general sentiment of the local citizenship must not be used . . . we must exercise due vigilance in the screening of materials."[67] On the other hand, as long as the materials did not threaten the current social order or power structure in the city, teachers could use them in the classroom.

After a thorough investigation into these ostensibly leftist curriculum support materials, Superintendent Moore issued a detailed report to the board. He begins the report by stating that FWISD had used these materials for many years and that "their use is customary in the better school systems of this nation." Moore also explained that the use of these periodicals allows students to engage in current history and that this type of learning is necessary for students to learn to apply their knowledge to the modern world around them. The district's current subscriptions that were reviewed included *My Weekly Reader, Readers Digest, American Junior Red Cross News, Junior Scholastic,* and *Current Science*, all of which provided teachers with literature that targets their student's reading levels and assessments to aid them in evaluating

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[66] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, November 12, 1952.

[67] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, Bulletin #7, September 28, 1956.

student's performances. Moore emphasized that these publications were voluntary to use and were purchased by teachers, principals, students, and funds from the Parent Teacher Association and not with public tax dollars. He then reassured the board that the curriculum used in Fort Worth "is conceived as a means of acquainting pupils with their American heritage, not as a means of social reform." While Moore believed that the use of current events in the curriculum was good pedagogy and the norm across other major school districts, he maintained that all teaching supports should be politically neutral. He conceded that it may be difficult for teachers to screen all the materials and that, from time to time, it may be possible for students to infer that one side of a social, economic, or political debate was more righteous than the other based on an article's topic or the publisher's choice of illustrations. He provided two examples from a recent issue of *American Junior Red Cross News* that used pictures of "mixed groups of white and Negro children . . . and the handling of reports about the United Nations in such a manner that the United Nations appears as an accepted part of American life." White Southerners hated the UN and believed the United States' involvement or acceptance of the United Nation's principles constituted a relinquishment of the country's sovereignty. In fact, in 1953 the Texas State Board of Education voted to remove the United Nation's Declaration of Human Rights and any author comments from all the recommended world history textbooks.[68] He also pointed out that the questionable issue of *Junior Scholastic* mentioned in the board meeting included a reference to Dr. Ralph Bunche in "a favorable light," even though the House Un-American Committee (HUAC) had cited him for un-American activities. [69] The article in question provided students with a historical background and short summary of the Supreme Court's decision on segregation.

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[68] SBOE Meeting Minutes, November 9, 1953, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Library and Archives.

[69] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, letter to Mr. O.C. Armstrong from J.P. Moore, October 17, 1956.

The author used Bunche, who was the current undersecretary-general of the United Nations as an example of "negroes [who] have risen to important positions in education, science, literature, music, sports, and other fields" under segregation.[70] Overall, content that aimed to teach students about the history of segregation or that highlighted successful Black men and women was, from Munn's perspective, "not desirable for school-age children."[71]

At the following board meeting on November 14, Gano and Munn spoke again, this time as representatives of the Citizens Council. Gano let the members know that he presented Superintendent Moore's report to the rest of the Council. He stated they were satisfied with the board's investigation to the questionable materials and that they would be diligent in examining future curriculum used in the classrooms and would take the necessary steps to report any negative findings to the board. He also thanked the board for their "continued action on maintaining racial segregation." Munn seemed less satisfied with the district's actions regarding the use of *Junior Scholastic*, to which he repeated his previous objections. He said he did additional research and learned that the editor-in-chief had a citation with the HUAC and that he was also the editor of a "communist front" magazine, *Champion of Youth.* He explained that *Junior Scholastic* is "leftist because it teaches one world citizenship and not nationalism which is the thing that has built this nation." Munn goes on to add another piece of teaching material he believed should be excluded from use in the classroom. According to Munn, *Adventure in American Literature*, which was used in English classrooms, included authors with multiple

[70] "America Faces a Problem: The Supreme Court decision on segregation—historical background and summary of recent developments," *Junior Scholastic Magazine*, found in Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, October 17, 1956.

[71] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, September 26, 1956.

citations from (HUAC). The board instructed Munn to provide the superintendent with his objections in writing.[72]

Considering Superintendent Moore's push for a patriotic curriculum that uplifted white American norms, his reassurance to the school board that social reform was not a goal of public schooling in Fort Worth and his warning to teachers and administrators about providing students with curriculum materials that deviated from the accepted views of the "local citizenship," it is clear that throughout the 1950s, FWISD aimed to maintain white supremacy in the city. The massive participation by Fort Worthians in the Crusade For Freedom, the quick growth of the Citizens Council, and the district's success in maintaining racial segregation in school for years after the Supreme Court's desegregation order all demonstrate the city's conservative sentiments. The actions of the school district and the conservative leaning city did not leave room for a nurturing or celebration of any non-white culture in the school system. Indeed, the white power structure of the Fort Worth worked diligently to keep Black citizens regulated to their segregated schools and communities. Although the district categorized Mexican children as white and allowed them to enroll in their neighborhood campuses, school administrators punished them for speaking their native language, continued to segregate them within buildings, and taught them that any way of life that deviated from the dominant culture was inferior and un-American. Mexican children in Fort Worth suffered from this one-sided perspective of what it meant to be an American.

During these same years when the school district and the majority of the white Fort Worth community used their power to maintain white supremacy in the city, Gilbert Garcia utilized the AGIF as a vehicle to bring Mexican Americans into the political and social life of

[72] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, November 14, 1956.

Fort Worth. He considered the AGIF's efforts in their first decade in Fort Worth a success. However, Garcia measured success on more Mexicanos voting, attending school, and becoming more American, achievements that fostered limited assimilation but did not create tangible change for the vast majority of Mexican Americans in Fort Worth. Due to at-large electoral systems for school board and city council seats, Mexican American registered voters had the opportunity to choose between one conservative white man or another conservative white man, both who sought to maintain the current social order of the city, but they could not elect candidates of their community's own choosing. The additional Mexican students in elementary school and the increase in Mexicans in junior and senior high meant that the Fort Worth schools included more young Mexicanos in their classrooms, but that only meant that they could be more effectively stripped of their culture and identity and instilled with a belief in the superiority of white, Protestant, American values. Considering the Cold War ideology that demanded unwavering loyalty to the United States and deemed any deviation from this belief as dangerous to American society, it us understandable that Garcia applauded Mexicans for speaking more English at home or participating in patriotic organizations like the Boy Scouts. Yet Mexicans' success in American society and adherence to the dominant group's ideology in the absence of substantive social, political, or economic upward mobility created a contradiction that would prove central to the next generation of Mexicano community advocates, a group who would demand changes in the schools, including new curriculum that centered their own histories, and would lead walkouts across the Southwest when local school districts did not meet their demands.

"The fact that some of the West Texas school boards closed their schools in order to get around the Federal law [Federal Wage Hour Administration that prohibits children working during school hours]points out that those people are interested only in the exploitation of our children. It should not surprise us either to see that the Governor and the State Department of Education refuse to do anything about it. It is no secret to know that Texas permits the hiring of children in agricultural pursuits. It is no secret that Texas has for the past 100 years and to a certain extent is still segregating our children hoping to retard them and to discourage them from seeking higher education so that they would furnish cheap labor. It is no secret that we had to take the segregation issue to a Federal Court [Delgado Decision] to get some justice. It is no secret that the State Department of Education now refuses to take action in cases of segregation."[1]

--Dr. Hector P. Garcia in a letter written to Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, October 1950

CHAPTER 3 - THE WHITE ARCHITECTS OF MEXICAN AMERICAN EDUCATION IN TEXAS

In 1949, the Texas legislature passed the controversial Gilmer-Aikin laws, which reorganized the state's independent school districts under one institution, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), with J.W. Edgar at the helm. The state legislature wrote the laws to make the education of Texas children more efficient with streamlined funding, but opponents of the bills called them "Communist and Fascist and tried to kill them by delay tactics."[2] The impetus for the new laws occurred after the fiftieth legislature in 1947 could not come to a comprise on the passage of a minimum salary for all teachers. The Gilmer-Aikin laws established the Minimum Foundation School Program that set a universal salary for teachers and other school employees, supplemented local taxes to equalize school funding, added educational specialists to campuses, centralized curriculum, and made state-funding contingent on attendance. The intention behind the laws were to attract more people to education field and to motivate school districts to

[1] Letter from Dr. Hector P. Garcia to Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, October 20, 1950, Latin-American Segregation Folder, Commissioner J.W. Edgar Files, Texas State Library Archives Commission.

[2] Oscar Mauzy, "Gilmer-Aikin Laws," Texas State Historical Association, January 1, 1995, accessed on March 11, 2024, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/gilmer-aikin-laws; Deborah L. Morowski, "Meeting the Needs of Texas School Children: The Texas Minimum Foundation School Program," *American Educational History Journal* 36, no. 2 (2009): 327–41.

increase their attendance numbers. The laws also reconstituted the SBOE, which henceforth consisted of twenty-one elected members representing each of the state's congressional districts, replacing the nine member governor-appointed board. Cecil Morgan was elected as the representative of the Fort Worth area. The Superintendent of Public Instruction, a position that was previously elected statewide, was replaced by the Commissioner of Education, a post appointed by the board for a four-year term. Edgar, a professional educator, became the first Commissioner of Education beginning in 1950 and served in that role until 1974. Even though voters in Texas, through the Gilmer-Aikin laws, gave the SBOE and Commissioner Edgar the power to make educational decisions for all students in the state, Edgar and the SBOE typically operated with the philosophy that local leaders should have the ultimate power to decide matters for their communities. This local control philosophy provided them with a political shield when they washed their hands of local Black and Brown segregation issues. When local school board members and leaders of industry in communities like Fort Worth expressed concern over the new Gilmer-Aikin laws, Edgar reassured them of his interpretation of the laws and his commitment to leave control to local leaders. J.P. Moore, the FWISD superintendent, wrote to Edgar less than a week after the board selected him as commissioner. Moore wrote, "it so happens that Fort Worth is probably the center of the greatest organized opposition to the new program [Gilmer-Aikin Laws] . . .we think you could render a valuable service if you would consent to appear on a program at which we could have adequate representation of our civil leadership."[3] Edgar agreed to speak before the Fort Worth Kiwanis Club where he reassured the elite men of Fort Worth, a

[3] "Letter from J.P. Moore to J.W. Edgar, February 10, 1950, Curriculum and Finance Folder, Commissioner J.W. Edgar Files, Texas Education Agency, Texas State Library and Archives.

few of whose names adorn buildings in the city today, that they would continue to hold power in their community regarding education.[4]

The newly-elected SBOE unanimously chose Edgar as commissioner to lead the modernized Texas education system. Edgar made decisions, sometimes unilaterally, for students and teachers across Texas during the major upheavals in education caused by Cold War fears of communist infiltration and in response to the voices coming from empowered Black and Brown communities demanding change for their children via the NAACP, LULAC and the AGIF. He along with the other white, elite men who served on the SBOE, built and rebuilt Texas education for the benefit of white children. At times these white architects deemed controversial issues that were important for the education of Black and Brown students as a local problem then chose not to act. These cherry-picked indecisions were just as significant as their actions and necessary to the maintenance of white supremacy in the state. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the SBOE underscored their desire to not disrupt the schooling of white students by choosing to stay silent regarding the Supreme Court's desegregation order even though the efforts of Black students to exercise their rights to attend their local schools forced them to face violent white mobs. The Texas Rangers and a hanging effigy greeted Black students in Mansfield, just a few miles southeast of Fort Worth, when they tried to attend an all-white school in 1956.[5] Their silence spoke volumes for and emboldened segregationists across the state and demonstrated their commitment to the ideology of the Southern Manifesto that claimed that the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown* was an overreach of their power.[6] Regarding Brown students, the

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[4] "Kiwanis Club of Fort Worth program outline" May 4, 1950, Curriculum and Finance Folder, Commissioner J.W. Edgar Files, Texas Education Agency, Texas State Library and Archives.

[5] J. Todd Moye, "Contesting White Supremacy in Tarrant County," in *Civil Rights in Black and Brown: Histories of Resistance and Struggle in Texas,* ed. Max Krochmal and J. Todd Moye (University of Texas Press, 2021).

[6] John Kyle Day, *The Southern Manifesto: Massive Resistance and the Fight to Preserve Segregation* (University Press of Mississippi, 2014).

SBOE did not consider the psychological repercussions for young Mexicanos, for whom local and state leaders continued to segregate and provide inferior schooling even after legislative and judicial decrees outlawed the practice, when they chose to leave the enforcement of those decisions to the local school district. They did not address early calls for change to inaccurate and racist Texas History content. They did not provide quality education to Mexicanos but instead only established programs that ensured the rising number of Mexican immigrants would continue to provide growing industries with a labor force with minimal skills. The white architects of Mexican American education in Texas made choices of when to act and when to leave decisions to local leaders in the first couple decades of the Cold War that aimed to reinforce the social hierarchy and did so, as Dr. Hector P. Garcia stated in the quote above, "hoping to retard them and to discourage them from seeking higher education so that they would furnish cheap labor."[7]

Commissioner Edgar's actions during his first decade as head of the state education institution when dealing with Mexican American's segregation complaints across Texas demonstrated that he placed the needs of Mexican origin children below his desire to leave control of districts in the hands of the local trustees and to not threaten white supremacy. Commissioner Edgar's interpretation of the duties and responsibilities of his role as the head of education in the state differed from that of his predecessor, L.A. Woods, as did their perception of Mexican American children. Woods had been a progressive ally for Mexican Americans and a "long-standing champion of Mexican American educational equality." While Woods was committed to ending segregation in Texas, Edgar had "little appetite for dismantling the

[7] Letter from Dr. Hector P. Garcia to Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, October 20, 1950, Latin-American Segregation Folder, Commissioner J.W. Edgar Files, Texas State Library Archives Commission.

practice."[8] After the federal district court's decision in the 1948 Delgado case that declared the segregation of Mexican origin children as unconstitutional, L.A. Woods had instructed all school districts to stop segregating Mexican American students from their white peers. When the Del Rio school district defied his order, Woods decertified their accreditation. In contrast, Commissioner Edgar refrained from such interventions. His first official meeting as commissioner was with attorney Gus Garcia and Dr. George I. Sanchez, a psychology and education professor at the University of Texas. As representatives of LULAC, they urged Edgar to uphold Woods' directive. Edgar and the SBOE instead recertified Del Rio ISD without holding them accountable to ending the discrimination of Mexican American students.

Shortly after becoming the Commissioner, Edgar and the SBOE issued a desegregation resolution for Mexican origin students along with a letter clarifying the appeal process to all school districts across the state. Even though the resolution made it clear to school districts that it was illegal to segregate Mexican origin or "Latin-American" students from their white peers, Commissioner Edgar's letter explained what steps he and the SBOE would take if someone in the community claimed that segregation persisted. Commissioner Edgar's policy was in line with his local control philosophy. If the SBOE received a complaint, they would immediately turn it back to the local trustees to deal with. Then, if the complaining party was not satisfied with the actions of their local school board they could appeal to the SBOE. This appeal process proved to delay any progress in eliminating illegal segregation. In 1955 Mexican Americans in Carrizo Springs, Kingsville, and Mathis, supported by the AGIF and LULAC, filed a lawsuit in federal court charging J.W. Edgar with "having been advised that segregation of children of Mexican

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[8] Esparza, *Raza Schools,* 134.

descent existed and with failure to take any action." The plaintiffs charged Edgar "with condoning, aiding, and abetting" the districts in the violation of the law. Federal courts dismissed all these cases without judgement before they made it to trial. Even if the federal courts had sided with the plaintiffs in these cases, as they did in Delgado in 1948 and later in Driscoll in 1957, the enforcement fell to Commissioner Edgar and the SBOE. In fact, Edgar faced more than twenty complaints in the first nine months of his tenure from the AGIF and LULAC regarding the segregation of Mexican origin students in Texas. One by one Edgar and the SBOE either ignored the complaint or ruled on behalf of the school district in the cases that made it through the appeal process.[9] Historian Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr. refers to this period of Mexican American education activism as the "era of subterfuge."[10] Throughout the 1950s, Commission Edgar and the SBOE created their own delaying strategies that enabled local school district officials to devise numerous schemes to preserve their racist practices.[11] After the 1957 verdict in the Driscoll case, the AGIF and LULAC felt the judiciary efforts were "futile" since the SBOE and local districts had numerous strategies to "bar effective relief" and did not pursue any additional litigation regarding illegal segregation until the late 1960s, when "political and economic circumstances" created new opportunities to judicially challenge de facto segregation.[12]

Segregation in schools was not the only issue facing Mexican Americans at the beginning of Edgar's first term as commissioner. In October 1950, Tom Sutherland, the Executive

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[9] Stephen C. Anderson, *J. W. Edgar: Educator for Texas* (Austin: Eakin Press, 1984); Marilyn Kuehlem, "Education Reforms From Gilmer-Aikin To Today," TPS Handbook, Sesquicentennial Handbook 1854-2004, Texas Education Agency; Gene B. Preuss, "The Modernization of Texas Public Schools: World War II and the Gilmer-Aikin Laws," Dissertation, Texas Tech University, 2004; San Miguel, Jr., *"Let All of Them Take Heed*;" American G.I. Forum News Bulletin, Vol. 3, No. 8, April 1955, Latin-American Segregation, Commissioner J.W. Edgar Files, Texas Education Agency, Texas State Library and Archives.

[10] San Miguel, Jr., *"Let All of Them Take Heed,"* 134.

[11] American G.I. Forum News Bulletin, Vol. 3, No. 8, April 1955, Latin-American Segregation, Commissioner J.W. Edgar Files, Texas Education Agency, Texas State Library and Archives.

[12] San Miguel, Jr., *"Let All of Them Take Heed."*

Secretary for the Good Neighbor Commission of Texas (GNC) sent Commissioner Edgar two letters. In the first letter, a concise and direct message that asked for an opportunity to discuss "two problems affecting the Mexican and people of Mexican origin in Texas."[13] The GNC, whose membership included both white and Mexican Americans, had its origins during WWII, when federal and state officials sought to improve and sustain a healthy political relationship with the nation's southern neighbor. This placed the plight of Mexican origin people living in Texas and the rest of the Southwest within the view of US government officials. Although the GNC, LULAC, and the AGIF shared many of the same goals and often appeared in each other's newsletters, the GNC was concerned about all ethnic Mexicans in Texas, not just citizens. The Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA) funded the GNC until the end of the war. The state of Texas took over the funding and operation of the GNC in 1945. The GNC played a role in the 1947 lifting of a ban on Bracero labor in Texas placed by Mexico due the state's reputation of discrimination toward Mexican origin residents. Pauline R. Kibbe was the first executive secretary of the GNC from 1943 until 1946 when she resigned due to pressure from Valley growers demonstrating the power of those who controlled industries and had a desire for cheap labor. Kibbe had angered Valley growers by publishing a detailed account of the deep and embedded racism all over Texas in 1946 then again in 1947 when she used confidential internal GNC documents that highlighted grower's exploitation of immigrant labor in a report to the *Texas Spectator,* a weekly newspaper. Tom Sutherland served as executive secretary after Kibbe's resignation until the mid-1950s. He compiled bi-weekly reports during the early 1950s that documented the Commission's work. Even though both Kibbe and Sutherland made recommendations based on the Commission's investigations into Mexican discrimination the

[13] Letter from Thomas S. Sutherland to Dr. J.W. Edgar, October 10, 1950, Latin-American Segregation Folder, Commissioner J.W. Edgar Files, Texas State Library Archives Commission.

organization had no enforcement power.[14] From its roots under the OIAA and through its time as a state agency the Commission had "no power to compel compliance with its lofty principles . . . and ultimately its largest contribution to resolving the problems confronting the persons of Mexican descent in Texas was its de facto acknowledgement of their existence."[15]

An important job of the GNC was to keep Mexican government officials informed of the progress in alleviating discrimination of Mexicans. Sutherland copied Mr. Alejandro V. Martinez, the Consul of Mexico.[16] The SBOE also did their part in painting a pretty picture for Mexican consults, at times inviting them to sit in on board meetings. Mexican Consulate Juan Merigo spoke at a board meeting in August 1952, thanked the board for the invitation and informed the board that they could call on the consul to help "meet some of the problems which confront" them regarding "those of Mexican descent."[17] Even though Mexican Americans sometimes sought help in addressing school discrimination from Mexican consulates there was little the Mexican government could do.[18] There was also little the GNC could do except investigate the complaints and make the necessary parties aware.

In Sutherland's letter to Commissioner Edgar and Consul Martinez he informed them that the segregation and non-attendance of Mexican children were issues that needed attention.

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[14] George N. Green, "Good Neighbor Commission," Texas State Historical Association, February 9, 2022, accessed March 13, 2024, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/good-neighbor-commission; George Robert Little, "A Study of the Texas Good Neighbor Commission," Thesis, University of Houston, 1953, https://hdl.handle.net/10657/9942; Cynthia E. Orozco, "Kibbe, Pauline Rochester," Texas State Historical Association, August 12, 2020, accessed March 13, 2024, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/kibbe-pauline-rochester.

[15] Griswold del Castillo, ed., *World War II and Mexican American Civil Rights*, 97.

[16] Letter from Thomas S. Sutherland to Dr. J.W. Edgar, October 10, 1950, Latin-American Segregation Folder, Commissioner J.W. Edgar Files, Texas State Library Archives Commission.

[17] SBOE Meeting Minutes, August 25, 1952, p.2, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[18] Carlos Kevin Blanton, "The Citizenship Sacrifice: Mexican Americans, the Saunders- Leonard Report, and the Politics of Immigration, 1951-1952," *Western Historical Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (2009): 299–320; Rubén Donato and Jarrod Hanson, *The Other American Dilemma: Schools, Mexicans, and the Nature of Jim Crow, 1912-1953* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021).

Commissioner Edgar's office scheduled a meeting with Sutherland for the following week. To help ensure a productive meeting, Sutherland sent the commissioner the most recent GNC report on education. In the handwritten letter, Sutherland wrote that the report included "some of the fields of need in education that are of special interest to our own inter-American relations."[19] Sutherland's GNC weekly report included five major education issues for Mexican origin children. The five issues discussed in the weekly report dated October 13, 1950 were the lack of attendance of Mexican American children, segregation and inferior schools, teaching of English to Spanish-speaking children, teaching of Spanish to English-speaking children, and the lengthiest issue concerned the erroneous teaching of Texas history. The report began by wishing "Dr. Edgar every success" in his new position as commissioner and stating that if he and the SBOE are able to address these five areas of concern then "a direct benefit will result for Latin-American relations and for Texas as a whole."

The first issue the report addressed was the "customary absence" of Mexican American children. The GNC believe this custom to be a major factor in the ability of Mexicanos to assimilate and a "retarding factor in their preparation as useful citizens of this country." According to this report, the recently passed Gilmer-Aikin laws were expected to fix this problem by only allotting state education funds based on average attendance of the children in each district rather than solely on the number of school-aged children living in the community. Throughout the first decade of the twentieth century, schools were able to collect state funds for the Mexican children without ensuring their attendance. On paper, the new method for receiving state funds should incentivize districts to find and keep all children in school. However, the

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[19] Letter from Thomas S. Sutherland to Dr. J.W. Edgar, October 14, 1950, Latin-American Segregation Folder, Commissioner J.W. Edgar Files, Texas State Library Archives Commission.

report stated that some schools chose to close campuses during the cotton picking season and warned their readers that if this practice continued then "the children of migratory, nomadic cotton pickers—approximately 250,000 in number—will never attend school."

For the Mexican American children in school, the GNC reported continued segregation and maintenance of inferior facilities. In this section, the authors point out that a federal court already declared this persistent practice as illegal and that "unless equal facilities in class room space, sanitation, general appearances, and teacher's training are given these pupils, they will continue to study under the impression that they are penalized for being 'Mexicans.'"[20] These two major issues were foundational to ensuring equitable access to education of Mexicano children. Even though by 1950, the new SBOE had support from the state's legislature and judiciary by way of the Gilmer-Aikin laws and the Delgado decision, it was the responsibility of Commissioner Edgar and the elected members of the state board to execute these measures.

The GNC also considered the proper teaching of languages as necessary for building a productive relationship with Mexico. When this report was authored schools did not have an appropriate method for teaching English to Spanish-speaking children. Instead, schools banned the use of Spanish and forced children to learn English through repetition. According to the report, with this process "the child does not think or speak coherently in either language." Instead, the GNC suggested schools teach Spanish-speaking children how to read and write in Spanish before teaching English. Additionally, the authors of the report stated that "the decay in teaching of languages in the United States brought about by a poor understanding on the part of monolingual educators [was] alarming . . . when you consider that for many centuries the

[20] "Weekly Report to Members of the Good Neighbor Commission," Vol. 1, No. 10, Austin, Texas, October 13, 1950, Latin-American Segregation Folder, Commissioner J.W. Edgar Files, Texas State Library Archives Commission.

progress of civilization was based on educating men in other languages."[21] According to the report, the lack of teaching of Spanish to all children in Texas, a border state, seemed even more egregious. The authors wrote, "a border state, Texas is, for some reason difficult to explain, one of the better examples of this alarming state of language and cultural decay in the public schools."[22]

The final concern of the GNC was the teaching of Texas history. The report explained the inaccurate teaching of the subject and blamed the problem on the "teachers who are not only ignorant but frequently prejudiced." For Mexican origin students the teaching of Texas history made them the villains in the story or the "wrongful aggressors" while the ancestors of the white students in class were the "rightful defenders and invincible warriors." The GNC argues that this "false, chauvinistic treatment" of Texas history was invented decades after the conflict by "historical societies dominated by sheltered ladies and gentlemen far removed from the original events." The teaching of this version of history did not mention or highlight the numerous Tejanos or Mexicans living in Texas who fought side-by-side with the white Americans and "perpetuated prejudice and ignorance of our international relations." Even though the report authors seem to only hope to uplift the Tejanos to hero status along with the white Americans rather than expand the teaching of Texas history to include the perspectives of Mexicanos, the next section of the weekly report suggest recently published books to read that do provide a new perspective on Texas history. The authors suggested both Lyle Saunders' *Spanish-speaking Population of Texas* and Dr. Carlos E. Castaneda's *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, stating, "we

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[21] "Weekly Report to Members of the Good Neighbor Commission," Vol. 1, No. 10, Austin, Texas, October 13, 1950, Latin-American Segregation Folder, Commissioner J.W. Edgar Files, Texas State Library Archives Commission.

[22] "Weekly Report to Members of the Good Neighbor Commission," Vol. 1, No. 10, Austin, Texas, October 13, 1950, Latin-American Segregation Folder, Commissioner J.W. Edgar Files, Texas State Library Archives Commission.

believe [Saunders' book] to be basic to any investigation of the Spanish-speaking people of Texas" and "an excellent use of the old archives in telling the story of the Spanish and Mexican settlement and regime in Texas [Castaneda's book]."[23] Commissioner Edgar and the SBOE ignored this issue and did not address any concerns regarding curriculum until the late 1960s.

Although Mexican origin children are the subject of the GNC report, the overarching goal in addressing these concerns is the improvement in relations with Mexico rather than the elimination of unequal and discriminatory education of Mexicanos in Texas. Nonetheless, one small section of the report mentions a restaurant in Lamesa that displayed a "No Mexicans Inside" sign. The GNC praised the Lamesa community for convincing the restaurant to remove the sign stating, "we insist that Texans are fair and friendly people who want to be good neighbors but don't always get around to it . . . Lamesa has!"[24] Similarly, another GNC report written in the early 1950s acknowledged the challenges in establishing better relationships between Mexicans and white Americans. In a small section that lists the "Problems in Texas" the report noted the "traditional resistance of nordic [sic] population to social equality of peon class, particularly when class conditions are coexistant [sic] with identifiable physical characteristics," or more plainly stated, the racist population of Texas was a problem. Just a few lines below this acknowledgement, the report authors contradicted themselves by stating that "conditions favoring a solution to the problem in Texas" is the "natural friendliness and energetic good will of Texans."[25] After the GNC forced the outspoken Kibbe to resign, Sutherland hedged his

[23] "Weekly Report to Members of the Good Neighbor Commission," Vol. 1, No. 10, Austin, Texas, October 13, 1950, Latin-American Segregation Folder, Commissioner J.W. Edgar Files, Texas State Library Archives Commission.

[24] "Weekly Report to Members of the Good Neighbor Commission," Vol. 1, No. 10, Austin, Texas, October 13, 1950, Latin-American Segregation Folder, Commissioner J.W. Edgar Files, Texas State Library Archives Commission.

[25] "Outline of History of The Good Neighbor Commission of Texas," Correspondence Misc. Folder, Commissioner J.W. Edgar Files, Texas State Library Archives Commission.

criticisms of white Texas and painted the state as a place where the future was bright for ethnic Mexicans.

In reality, the GNC's optimistic outlook on race relations in Texas did not match the actuality of public sentiment that Commissioner Edgar faced. Just a few years into his tenure, Commissioner Edgar received letters from white parents who did not want their children in class with Mexicans. In one letter, a parent in Mathis (located in south Texas) stated that, "I get mighty sick reading about this G.I. Forum, which surely is a misnomer . . . it isn't the Latin-American who should be howling but the white citizens . . . if our children had been forced into classes with some of these filthy kids, who chattered in Spanish all day long, it wouldn't be long before our children would be speaking Spanish instead of English . . . it's just about time we pinned this G.I. Forum down and laid our cards on the table." In addition to this veiled call for violence against the AGIF, who were actively trying to end the segregation of their children in school, this parent also feared the children themselves and suggested their complete removal. She stated, "at the rate we are going, it won't be long before we have a famine in this country, and with these foreigners multiplying like gnats we might just as well turn our country over to Italy or Mexico right now . . . until Mexicans can learn our habits and language, they had better stay over in their own dirty, filthy towns . . . if they can't clean them up, send them back to Mexico, lice and all."[26]

At mid-century, Commissioner Edgar and the members of the SBOE did not provide Mexicans in Texas with equitable educational opportunities, they instead established programs that ensured a labor force for the state's agricultural and industrial pursuits that could speak some

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[26] "Letter from Mrs. Ncl. G. Reed to State Education Commissioner J.W. Edgar, Mathis, Texas, May 15, 1955, Latin-American Segregation Folder, Commissioner J.W. Edgar Files, Texas State Library Archives Commission.

English and had attained basic skills. Not only did they not enforce judicial decrees regarding segregation, but they also did not consider the needs the GNC brought to their attention. Instead, the SBOE turned their attention to the problems caused by the increase of students from what they called "migratory families," who by the 1950s were majority Mexicans. According to historian Cristina Salinas even though the federal government passed restrictive and racist immigration laws in the 1920s and deported large numbers of ethnic Mexicans in the 1950s, this era of immigration history was both a period of "expansion and restriction."[27] The first waves of migratory farm labor were male immigrants who entered into a pattern of circulatory migration for the first quarter of the century, coming and going across the border with little resistance from the American government. Initially established in the 1920s through the Department of Labor, the U.S. Border Patrol made the process for entering the United States much more laborious and degrading, including public bathing to ensure immigrants did not carry diseases over the border, long waiting periods, and scrutinized questioning. This change led to less circulatory migration and an increase in permanent residency for many Mexican men and their families.[28] The introduction of the Bracero Program in 1942, an agreement between the US and Mexico governments that allowed entry of agricultural workers temporarily to subsidize the labor shortage due to the war existed until 1964 and led to an increase in both legal and illegal migration. Throughout the more than two decades of the program growers and agribusiness leaders throughout the nation gained power during the various negotiations for extensions of the agreement and began their own labor recruitment on both sides of the border for work all over the United States.

The first educational program specifically for Mexicanos, the Migratory Pupil Formula

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[27] Salinas, *Managed Migrations,* 4.

[28] Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American,* 54.

(MPF) alleviated the burden of increased students for teachers at various times based on coming and going of the season rather than improving the quality of school for migrant students. The Migratory Pupil Formula allotted additional teacher units to districts whose average daily attendance fluctuated with an increase in students from families who were migratory farmworkers. Even though the 1949 amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) outlawed the employment of children during school hours, the SBOE created policies that reinforced the status quo and enabled farm owners to continue to employ whole families, including school-aged children. According to this formula, for each month that a district had seven percent more attendance than the average attendance for the year, the SBOE would increase the district's budget to allot $1/9^{th}$ of an additional teacher. Districts were then able to decide when to employ these additional teachers. Instead of the typical nine month contracts, these additional teachers, should the district choose to, could be employed for only the last 6 months of the school year when the average daily attendance was higher. This formula only pertained to grades one through eight. High schools did not experience attendance fluctuations in conjunction with Mexican migratory workers since very few Mexican students in Texas advanced beyond primary school.

The TEA and the SBOE were fully aware of the many migrant students in the state who worked with their parents rather than attend school. They feared that the 1949 FLSA amendments could create chaos in schools if the federal government enforced the new laws. In August 1950 the TEA mailed out a form letter to superintendents making them aware of the new law. The letter, written by L.P. Sturgeon from the Division of Finance of the TEA, stated "some districts will literally be flooded if all these migratory pupils asked for admission, and a real problem could be created." Sturgeon continued warning the superintendents and instructed them

to contact their Texas Employment Commission representative to obtain an estimate of how many school-aged children live in their district "during the cotton picking season." He ended the letter by emphasizing that he did not meant to "alarm you unnecessarily" and that "there may be no change at all in your migratory enrollment" but he felt that the letter was needed because "parents may insist on their [child] attending school for the four to six weeks period that they are in *your* community [emphasis added]."[29] In other words, Sturgeon, a representative of the TEA gave school districts officials an opening to discourage these marginalized Mexicanos from enrolling in school, thereby protecting the schooling of the white students of the community. His letter gave district administrator's an opportunity to preemptively find a solution just in case the parents asserted their right to enroll their children in school. Even though the TEA and SBOE knew the possible result of the FLSA amendments and made superintendents across Texas aware of the possible increase in students they did not create any policies that would provide the additional Mexicano children with an environment where they could learn and succeed in school.

The TEA and the SBOE were aware of the lack of quality and stable educational opportunities in Texas for migrant students but only established and followed through with a minor lackluster plan that did not directly impact or reach many Mexicano students. The TEA established a Division of Curriculum Development in January 1952 with the purpose of fulfilling the legal mandate included in the directive of the Department of Education to "assist local school districts in developing effective and improved programs of education through research and experimentation, consultation, conferences, and evaluation."[30] The Division of Curriculum took

[29] Letter to Superintendents from L.P. Sturgeon, August 18, 1950, Curriculum and Finance, Commissioner J.W. Edgar Files, Texas Education Agency, Texas State Library and Archives.

[30] SBOE Meeting Minutes, January 4 and 5, 1952, p. 47, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

direction from the Commissioner of Education and the SBOE including setting their yearly objectives. During the following school year, one of their eight objectives concerned the study of "Children of Migrant Parents." According to the Curriculum Development staff, who presented their objectives to the board in May 1953, "with new experiences and information in the background of staff members, increased emphasis will be placed on problems related to the education of children of migrant parents."[31] The staff claimed that they would devote time and energy during the next year to "analyzing and clarifying the nature of the problem . . . defining responsibilities . . . determining the immediate points of attack in solution of the problem; and clarifying the role of the Curriculum Development Division staff in the solution of these problems."[32] Considering that children of migrant parents are not mentioned in the SBOE meeting minutes again until 1960 when the board updated the Migratory Pupil Formula, it seems the Division of Curriculum did not follow through on this objective. Instead, the SBOE continued to offer districts additional teachers using the Migratory Pupil Formula for more than a decade, lowering the percentage over the average monthly attendance required to receive more funds allotted for teachers in 1960 downward from seven percent to five percent, then to three percent in 1963, and changing the formula in 1964 to allow for even more additional teachers. Although this policy could have indirectly impacted Mexican students by creating small classrooms and more attention from their teachers, there is no evidence that districts used these additional teachers to their benefit.[33]

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[31] Minutes of State Board of Education, May 4, 1953, p. 115, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[32] Minutes of State Board of Education, May 4, 1953, p. 115, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[33] Minutes of State Board of Education, July 8, 1950, p. 68-a; July 4, 1960, p.17; May 6, 1963, p.56; May 4, 1964, p.43-45, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

Spanish-speaking students in Texas, whether from migratory families or not, could benefit from the use of Spanish in the classroom; however, since the Progressive Era Texas banned the use of Spanish as the language for instruction.[34] The SBOE did not establish or fund bilingual education programs until the late 1960s with support from the federal government; however, Jack Binion, a SBOE trustee, who represented Harris County, opened a discussion about the teaching of Spanish in 1953 then again in 1956. He was a former district attorney in Fort Worth and had served on the previous iteration of the school board appointed by former Texas Governor Beauford Jester and helped select Edgar as the first Commissioner of Education. During the WWII Binion served with the US Air Force. In 1949 he accompanied Texas Governor Shivers "as his military aide on a friendship caravan to Mexico City."[35] In Binion's first plea he qualified his request by ensuring he was not asking to override any local authority, he stated, "I am not in favor of taking away any prerogative of a local school, but I think it is a shame and a disgrace that the school children of Texas know no Spanish and have no incentive to study it." Commissioner Edgar responded by stating that his suggestion was "well based" and that "we [the Texas Education Agency] will . . . try to do more about it."[36] The school board meeting continued without any discussion or action regarding Binion's comment nor did Commissioner Edgar present any new directives during that school year. The next mention of teaching Spanish at the board meetings came again from Binion. This time, he was less concerned about leaving this initiative in the hands of local school leaders. Binion asked the Commissioner and the board why Spanish was not required for all students to take alongside English courses. He pointed out that the international students coming from Latin-American

[34] Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas.*

[35] "Three Houston Residents in Race for Board of Education Post in 8th District," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* October 23, 1949.

[36] Minutes of State Board of Education, March 2, 1953, p.38, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

countries to study in the United States already spoke English. Binion expressed his frustration and stated, "If those countries down there are that interested in education that they will require their students take English . . . I do not see why Texas cannot start working toward that same idea, so that every child should be required to take Spanish." Again, Commissioner Edgar brushed off his request by pointing out that Binion sits on the committee that oversees graduation requirements where he believed was the proper place to "give due consideration to that topic."[37] According to an article in the *Star-Telegram* highlighting Cecil Morgan's role as the head of the new SBOE graduation requirements committee states, Binion had already made this request during a committee meeting. Binion wanted Texas schools to teach Spanish and English "from start to finish." He believed the state's proximity to Spanish-speaking nations "and the probable economic interdependence in the future make it necessary to break down the language barrier."[38]

Even though teaching English-speaking students Spanish may not have enhanced schooling for Spanish-speaking Mexicanos, it could have established a path for teaching about Spanish cultures to all students and in turn, as the GNC hoped, create better relationships between white and Mexican Americans. Additionally, for Mexican American students who did not speak the language, learning Spanish in school would allow them to connect with an important part of their culture and identity. However, Binion was not advocating for Bilingual Education or an end to the English-only laws in schools. He was concerned with the lack of mandate for a foreign language course in Spanish. Bilingual programs would allow teachers to use a child's mother tongue for instruction and teach students to be fluent in both languages. The goals for students in bilingual classes exceeded language acquisition. Ideally, students also

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[37] Minutes of State Board of Education, March 4, 1956, p.6, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[38] "Ft. Worth Man To Head Study for Schools," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* January 4, 1956.

became bicultural. These courses were also meant for all students not just Mexicanos and not just for Spanish-speakers. Advocates of bilingual education in Texas believed their programs could help build solidarity among races and ethnicities by introducing and teaching about the histories, language, and cultures of Spanish-speaking people.

Even though the SBOE meeting minutes do not demonstrate the increasing demands for the teaching of Spanish among the citizens of Texas, the actions of Fort Worth community members and the local school board's hesitation in creating a program without state support highlights how the SBOE's inactions influenced education in locales across the state. FWISD offered Spanish in junior and senior high as early as 1940 and sporadically in elementary school beginning in 1944.[39] Manuel Jara, future leader of the Mexican American community in Fort Worth and the namesake of an elementary school in the district today, appeared before the board in 1959 asking for a more robust foreign language program for the teaching of in elementary schools. He appeared with fellow members of the Fort Worth chapter of the Good Neighbor Council (FWGNC) including the chairmen and former president of the organization, Bill Turner. The school board brushed off their request by thanking them for their appearance and instructing them to put their recommendation in writing. Three years later, a 1962 report created by FWISD assistant superintendents revealed that at many schools "lay people" teach Spanish and that only ten minutes during the spelling and writing part of the day is allotted for teaching.[40] Without a mandate and financial support from the SBOE, FWISD, and other school districts across the state, could only provide a limited Spanish program that reached only a few students through the

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[39] Plan of Organization, 1940-1941, Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes; Plan of Organization, 1944-1945, Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes.

[40] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, September 12, 1962.

early 1960s. The state had to take positive action before local district's would establish their own Spanish programs

The fifty-sixth Texas legislature in 1959, following pressure from LULAC president Felix Tijerina and his Little School of the 400, which taught preschool children four hundred English words, forced the TEA and the SBOE to establish and fund a program for non-English speaking children under five years old beginning in the 1959-1960 school year. Tijerina presented his idea of a pre-school program to teach Spanish-speaking children English to several leaders of the state including Commissioner J.W. Edgar but no one offered him financial assistance to initiate the program. Without significant funding from the state, Tijerina began the Little Schools in early 1957 as a radio program on the Spanish airwaves. He then began using his own money to pay teachers over the summer of 1957. A veteran teacher also stepped in to create the four hundred word curriculum for the class. The sixty students who enrolled in first grade after this summer program had overwhelming success in attending school more regularly and moving on to the second grade. The following summer, again without funding or support from the state, the Little Schools grew to more than four hundred students across eight different schools. More than two hundred additional students took the preschool class during the fall of 1958. Tijerina took his results to the Texas legislature and demonstrated how the state would save money educating non-English speaking children by investing in a preschool language program that diminished the need for repeating first grade. Senators Alexander Mack Aikin and John Kazen wrote the bill that instructed the TEA to create the program and fund it through the Minimum Foundation Program. The legislation capped the funding at two hundred dollars for a teacher salary and fifty dollars for maintenance and operation per month for each classroom. The bill authors justified the need for the program, they stated the legislation was necessary because

"non-English speaking students cannot successfully complete the work of the first grade in the normal period of one (1) year, and . . . no provision [by the TEA or the SBOE] has been made to prepare such children to meet the requirements of the first grade."[41]

Although this legislation was groundbreaking, the SBOE did little to safeguard its success. A few details strategically left out of the final text of the bill ensured both little opposition to its passage and the likelihood that the SBOE would not follow through on this initiative that could improve educational opportunities for Mexican origin children. The legislation did not make preschool mandatory, again leaving the decision to local districts to decide for themselves, nor did the bill specifically target Spanish speakers or mention Mexican children. Even though many white ethnic children could also benefit from this preschool program the majority of non-English speakers in Texas were Mexican. The legislature also did not provide any funding to promote the initiative and without any mandates only a small percentage of Spanish-speaking children in Texas benefitted from this endeavor. By not clearly stating that this bill would aid Mexicanos in Texas in succeeding in school or not fully supporting its implementation, the authors did not threaten the state's white supremacy. Creating such a weak law ensured the white architects of education including the legislators and school board members, and the business leaders and social elites who supported their elections that this new program would not impede their goals of preserving the inferior status of Mexicanos who provided their industries with cheap labor.

[41] Behnken, *Fighting Their Own Battles;* Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas;* Craig A. Kaplowitz, *LULAC, Mexican Americans, and National Policy* (Texas A&M University Press, 2005); Craig A. Kaplowitz, *LULAC, Mexican Americans, and National Policy* (Texas A&M University Press, 2005); Erasmo Vázquez Ríos, "The Little School of the 400: A Mexican-American Fight for Equal Access and Its Impact on State Policy," Thesis, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2013; Pre-school Instructional Classes for Non-English Speaking Children Program, S.B. 62, 56th R.S., 1959.

After the FWISD school board ignored the FWGNC's request for more teaching of Spanish the organization decided to fund their own venture.[42] With the financial help of Fort Worth oilman and president of the FWGNC Neville Penrose, the council operated a summer preschool for non-English speaking students at six elementary schools. Even though the preschool was a success, Penrose only provided financial support for the year he served as president of the FWGNC.[43] After Penrose pulled his funding for the preschool summer program, Bill Turner appeared before the FWISD school board in March 1960. He asked the trustees to continue the program "in connection with the Texas Education Agency," referring to the legislation passed in 1959. Turner presented the board with comments by principals and teachers that highlighted the success of the previous summer's program. Board members then discussed the current school district policy that required all summer programs to be self-sustaining by charging tuition. Assistant Superintendent Harold Graves presented the board with the cost of continuing to operate a preschool for non-English speaking students without tuition. According to Graves, the total cost after the state covered its portion was twenty-five hundred dollars. Even though the board acknowledged the benefit to this summer program they expressed concern that this could open the door to additional summer or preschool programs "without cost to any group." At the present time the only people that benefitted from the advantages of summer and preschool programs were those in the city who could afford the tuition. The school board feared that a tuition free summer program, no matter its value to the students who attended, could set a precedent and lead to other economically disadvantaged people asking for programs that could then threaten the established social hierarchies of the city. They did not want to provide underprivileged children with the same opportunities to be better prepared for school. After the

[42] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, May 13, 1959.

[43] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, March 23, 1960.

short discussion they "agreed that no action would be taken by the board to adopt this program at the time."[44]

Four years later, in March 1964, newly promoted FWISD Superintendent Elden Busby proposed a preschool summer program for non-English speaking children. Referring to the preschool summer school authorized by the state five years earlier, "we have been informed by the Texas Education Agency of the preschool instructional program authorized by the 56th Legislature." He continued, "although we have never expended any local funds in preschool programs before . . . I feel that this is different in nature and purpose and will pay big dividends to us down the road in our efforts to combat the 'dropout' problem." During the discussion, a principal from the 1959 FWGNC funded program spoke positively about the preschool then the board asked questions about the potential number of students, how to inform the "prospective pupils," and the types of material that the teachers needed. Framing the need for the preschool program as a remedy for reducing the dropout rate convinced the board to approve the program. Like the state legislature, Busby and the other district officials advocating for approval never identified the beneficiaries as "Mexicans," or "Spanish-speaking." Under a new board president, and a new superintendent, FWISD school board unanimously approved the operation of the summer preschool for non-English speakers. The board's unanimous vote was a common occurrence with an all-white conservative board who shared similar social and economic status in the city.

Even though the new superintendent pushed for the adoption of a preschool that would directly improve the schooling experience of children across the city, the district did not dedicate

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[44] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, March 23, 1960.

resources and there is little evidence that FWISD followed through with the program. Considering the choice in locations for the summer school which included Worth Heights and M.G. Ellis elementary schools, both in established Mexican barrios, this program could have greatly benefited Mexican children in Fort Worth.[45] The program is never specifically mentioned again in board meetings nor is it ever listed separately in the district's yearly Plan of Organization. If the district did begin operation and included the attendance numbers for the non-English speaking program under the summer school section in their yearly plans, then the records demonstrate that the district did not pursue the endeavor with fidelity and allowed it to dwindle just a few years later. Prior to the board approval of a summer preschool for non-English speaking children, FWISD operated a tuition based elementary summer school. During the 1963-1964 school year, the district served 212 students at four schools "one in each section of the city." The next year, following the board's approval of the new summer program, 389 students attended summer school. Elementary summer school attendance peaked in 1968 with 447 students and decreased by two hundred the following year.[46]

At the state level, Tijerina's passion for this preschool summer program kept it alive for a few years. He found private funding for promotional materials and worked with other LULAC leaders to encourage districts to establish a preschool and to inform Mexican families about the opportunity. With Tijerina's help, at its height in 1966, one hundred fifty school districts, out of more than fourteen hundred, operated a preschool. More than twenty-one thousand students attended that year. The following year the program had almost twenty percent fewer students. A major detriment to the state run preschool program was the selection of teachers. The legislation

[45] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, March 25, 1964.

[46] Plan of Organization, 1963-1964, 1964-1965, 1967-1968, and 1968-1969, Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes.

that authorized the preschools required that all teachers be fully certified which greatly reduced the number of Mexican American instructors. All of the teachers in the Little School of the 400 classrooms were of Mexican descent and native Spanish-speakers. With or without a teaching certification, these teachers' passion and commitment to giving their students the opportunities that they did not have made the schooling environment welcoming and loving. The students benefitted greatly from connecting with their instructors. Even though the teachers hired under the preschool legislation could speak Spanish they did not necessarily have the lived experience to connect to their students. Tijerina lobbied education and political leaders to strengthen the program by making it mandatory; however, by the late 1960s, the architects of Mexican American education in Texas, including FWISD leaders, had turned their attention to a new preschool initiative, one that did not specifically benefit Mexican origin students and did not focus on language acquisition, the federally funded Head Start program.[47]

The SBOE launched its first statewide program that acknowledged the failure of the current public school system to provide equitable educational opportunities to Mexican origin students in 1963. SBOE trustee Paul Greenwood, who represented the Rio Grande Valley region of South Texas and served as the chairman of the Committee on the Migratory Pupil Formula, stated at the March 1963 board meeting that "our state is gradually becoming aware of the fact that it has a problem of migratory labor, and our educational forces are gradually becoming aware that growing out of that we have a problem of educating these children of migratory laborers." Greenwood also stated that the Texas legislature had recently "become aware" of the problems of migrants and had begun their own research. He explained the path for many families

[47] Ríos, "The Little School of the 400;" Pre-school Instructional Classes for Non-English Speaking Children Program, S.B. 62, 56th R.S., 1959.

who lived in his community. According to Greenwood, after the laborers harvested the cotton, fruit, and vegetables they move onto Florida, Kentucky, Michigan, Colorado, and the plains of Texas before returning to the Rio Grande Valley "when the winter gets cold."[48] This schedule caused their children to only attend school for five or six months rather than a full nine months for children of non-migratory families. He then discussed why the MFP program had not worked to help these students. Even though the formula allows for more teachers to help with the additional students, Greenwood stated that since these students missed so much school they need "the best teachers" to "speed them up." The shortened contracts for teachers under this formula led to the hiring of less qualified teachers for these positions. There was also no guarantee that school districts utilized these additional teachers for the benefit of migrant students. Greenwood added, "It [the MFP] has not worked out as well as it might" and "it hasn't gotten the children educated."[49] Greenwood's 1963 revelation to the rest of the board that the Texas education apparatus had not served Mexican migratory children well should not have come as a surprise. Pauline Kibbe wrote in 1946 that "children of migratory laborers suffer, perhaps, the severest handicap." Traveling as a family group, "the swing through the cotton-growing areas of the State begins in June or July, and by the time the season is over in December or January, an opportunity for half a year's schooling has already been lost." Kibbe pointed out that migratory parents wanted to send their children to school but their poverty and the racist environment made it a difficult decision. She stated, "the inability to dress like other children, or take lunches that could be eaten without shame before other children . . . and in some cases it is the attitude on the part of Anglo American children or teachers, . . . he [Mexican child] is made to feel that he is not

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[48] Minutes of State Board of Education, March 4, 1963, p.3, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[49] Minutes of State Board of Education, March 4, 1963, p.4, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

wanted, that his presence in the class is distasteful."[50] Any adjustments to the MPF or adoption of similar programs that solely aimed to improve the quantity and not the quality of schooling for migrant children would not help breaking the cycle of poverty for Mexicanos.

In an attempt to address the shortcomings of their migratory program the SBOE established a research committee who devised a new program; however, like the MFP these new solutions did not address the quality of education for migrant students. The research committee included board members and staff and was headed by Dr. R. P. Ward, a former superintendent of schools in Edinburg and former president of Pan American College in south Texas. Dr. Ward submitted his findings to the SBOE. After the board received his report that indicated that there were one hundred thousand migrant children in Texas, Greenwood established an advisory committee of fourteen representatives from districts with large migrant populations to analyze the report and provide recommendations to the board.[51] The two solutions that emerged from this advisory committee were to adjust the Migratory Pupil Formula to provide more support to districts who experience the increase of migrants in their district and to provide migrant children in grades one through eight "more education by an enlarged day and try to give them in six months what others are getting in nine."[52] The SBOE adopted these recommendations. Without addressing issues like language acquisition, school curricular that demeaned Mexican culture, or lack of Mexicano teachers and administrators a longer day in an unwelcoming space was not an answer to problems of migrant education. Just like previous programs, this new initiative to deliver more education to Mexicans was not mandatory. Instead, districts had to volunteer for the

[50] Kibbe, *Latin Americans in Texas*, 90-91.

[51] Minutes of State Board of Education, September 7, 1963, p.21-22, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[52] Minutes of State Board of Education, April 4, 1963, p.4, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

program and had to meet a few requirements: develop a six month program, have "adequate facilities and other resources needed to implement the program," and keep separate attendance records.[53] In other words, other than the increased funding for additional faculty, staff, and students in attendance, the rest of the costs, including facilities and supplies, to operate this plan was left to the district to fund. In the inaugural year, 1963-1964, five districts agreed to pilot the six-month school year. By March 1964, Commissioner Edgar reported to the board that officials in the school districts operating the pilot program as well as staff members of TEA believed that the programs were "offering better educational opportunities to the migrant pupils than they have had in prior years."[54] Edgar's report did not contain any feedback from the migrant students or parents. Edgar requested that the board approve the extension of the program to ten school districts for the following school year. With the extension to ten districts, the program included a total of six thousand students out of the one hundred thousand migratory students in the state. The SBOE believed they were addressing the needs of migrant children and families in Texas. In actuality, their insufficient program was reaching less than one percent of the migrant students.

While not acknowledging their role in the hindering of the educational achievement of adult migrants, the board considered programs for their needs. The board asked for a report from M. A. Browning, the Assistant Commissioner of Vocational Education for the state. He gathered data from his offices to generate a report for the SBOE and for legislators, who were also interested in the updated data on migrant labor. Browning began his statement to the SBOE informing the board that the education of migrant laborers had been studied by The Texas Good

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[53] Minutes of State Board of Education, May 6, 1963, p.58, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[54] Minutes of State Board of Education, March 2, 1964, p.28, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

Neighbor Commission, the Texas Council of Migrant Farm Labor established in 1957, and the 47th Texas Legislature in 1941. The GNC as noted earlier only had the power to investigate and present their findings. The Council also did not have the power to create any new programs; however, Commissioner Edgar was a member of the Council and therefore privy to the conditions of migrant labor and was in a position to address their needs but had never presented the issues before the board. The Chairman of the House Interim Committee on Migrant Labor, established in 1941, Senator Don Kennard of Fort Worth also asked for Browning's report. The report focused on the educational needs of adult migrant workers, the Mexicanos whom the state had previously perceived as birds of passage and not their responsibility to educate. Browning explained his findings and recommendations to the board. He stated, "because of the high rate of illiteracy, they [adult migrants] need basic education to learn to read and write and perform simple arithmetic." Also, "because of poor home living conditions, both in their counties of residence and the labor camps, homemaking education instruction was found to be needed." The last section of the report concerned the "increasing mechanization in agriculture" and the need for "occupational training to learn new skills in order to find employment." Browning recommended to both the SBOE and the legislature that migrants needed "training and retraining for low skills" that are transferable when they "have to go wherever they can" and as the Assistant Commissioner of Vocational Education, his department would help. The board had already decided that Mexican farmworkers were in the appropriate economic station and there was not any need to provide opportunities for upward mobility. The board ended this portion of the meeting by patting each other on the back for their "excellent work." The SBOE did not take

any action on Browning's findings until 1965, when the state applied for funding from President Johnson's Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO).[55]

Under a new Texas Migrant Project, funded by the OEO, the Texas Education Agency extended the pilot program for migrant students to forty districts and established the Special Programs of Education and Training for Adult Migrants. The initial pilot program served six thousand students in ten districts and cost the state and local communities seventy-five dollars per student.[56] With the approved grant from the OEO the funding for the program for migrant students increased from $450,000 to just over $3.3 million and served an additional twelve thousand students.[57] Beyond providing extended days for the students, the new program included funding for additional teachers, librarians, counselors, teacher aides, special and physical education teachers, physical examinations for students, consumable supplies, teaching equipment, meals, and $7.50 of aid directly to children for the "extraordinary costs needed to keep the children in school, such as shoes and clothing items."[58]

With the availability of federal funding, the SBOE established a gendered and paternalistic program for adult migrants that they believed would give migrants an opportunity to leave the trail, but like the SBOE's programs for students it reached a small percentage of the target group and was built on the perception of Mexican as an inherent labor force . The second grant from the OEO provided more than $3.6 million dollars for adult migrant education and

[55] Minutes of State Board of Education, March 4, 1963, p.5, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[56] Minutes of State Board of Education, September 6, 1965, p.104, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[57] Minutes of State Board of Education, October 2, 1965, p.26, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[58] Minutes of State Board of Education, September 6, 1965, p.105-107, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

training. According to the grant proposal, by 1965 Texas had 127,000 migrant farm laborers. Ninety-five percent of these migrant laborers were of Mexican descent earning less than $1,000 annually. Again without acknowledging the role of the educational apparatus in denying these Mexicanos opportunities to learn when they were children, the proposal lists the numerous deficiencies of these laborers: "reading, writing . . . speaking the English language . . . arithmetic . . . citizen education, including the legal responsibilities and rights of citizens in the community, State [sic] and nation."[59] The proposed curriculum for the education and training of adult learners went beyond simple reading, writing, and arithmetic and was full of paternalistic ideas on what these men and women needed to improve their livelihoods. Rather than connecting their living conditions to the low pay, lack of political power, and racist societal practices preventing their social mobility, the proposal authors blamed their situation of the migrants themselves, stating that "They [migrant laborers] do not understand or use proper living facilities, such as bedding, bathing, toilet, garbage disposal and other sanitation facilities." The authors perceived the migrants eating habits and their parenting choices as inferior and in need of training, stating, "parents in such families lack knowledge of nutrition; child-rearing; housekeeping standards; home and budget management; preparation of nutritious, economical and balanced meals; child guidance and protection; home care of the sick; and provision of adequate clothing for the family."[60] These migrant families had traveled all over the country for generations, yet the TEA and SBOE believed they needed to teach them how to "prepare to migrate" which included instruction in "preparing for the trip and to be away from home, planning the items to take . . . suggestions relating to living in labor camps . . . improvement of housing and facilities" and

[59] Minutes of State Board of Education, September 6, 1965, p.108, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[60] Minutes of State Board of Education, September 6, 1965, p.110, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

"plans for the children while the mother works."[61] For the wives who stayed home the training program included courses on "homemaking and how to make the food budget stretch further." Even though Browning claimed he "had a dream a good many years about getting adult migrant workers to educate themselves so they won't have to be migrants anymore," he still envisioned them as laborers.[62] This program also considered the increased mechanization of agricultural labor and included plans to provide migrants with occupational training to help them transition into other labor intensive jobs. In one short paragraph the authors conceded the possibility that "some migrant workers may have or achieve the education and possess the aptitudes to be successful in higher skilled occupations" and therefore may need training in jobs that require more knowledge and skills.[63] The proposal planned to provide this education and training to three thousand unemployed farm workers or adult members of migratory families. More than two million of the grant was planned for a weekly stipend of thirty dollars to each participant. In order to qualify each participant had to be unemployed and over twenty-one or the head of the household and not earn more than three thousand dollars annually.[64] However, if an unemployed migrant worker enrolled in the program they were no longer eligible for unemployment benefits because they were not available for work full time while attending classes.[65] This made it difficult for migrants to choose to leave the trail where they would earn more money than the program stipend.

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[61] Minutes of State Board of Education, September 6, 1965, p.110-111, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[62] "State Officials Hope to Free the Migrant Worker," *Robstown Record*, November 4, 1965.

[63] Minutes of State Board of Education, September 6, 1965, p.113, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[64] Minutes of State Board of Education, September 6, 1965, p.116-117, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[65] "Adult Migrant Students Get No Unemployment Compensation in Texas," *Eagle Pass News-Guide,* February 10, 1966.

While the migrant program for children continued into the mid-1970s before the state reorganized their agendas for Mexican children and placed the program under a bilingual and multicultural education umbrella, the Adult Migrant Project ended in 1969. The Nixon administration decided to no longer provide funds for Mexican adults, and state leaders did not step in to keep the program alive even though they claimed it was a success. After the first year, Commissioner Edgar reported to the board that because of the two migrant programs, for children and adults, sixteen hundred people, or approximately 1.6% of the migrant laborers choose to remain in Rio Grande City rather than follow the migrant trail. Throughout the late 1960s Commissioner Edgar and members of the SBOE reported on the progress of these initiatives. The program for migrant children continued to expand, adding in preschool in 1967, extending to high school, opening a bilingual education institute, purchasing new materials and buildings, and increasing the budget to more than ten million dollars in 1968 with the vast majority of the funding coming from the federal government. In the last year of the adult program the SBOE altered the objectives to be solely focused on job training and reduced the number of seasonal farmworkers enrolled from more than three thousand at thirty-two locations across the state to four hundred participants at three locations in the Rio Grande Valley. Due to a reduction in federal funding the budget also dropped from the initial 3.6 million to just 1.5 million.[66]

As soon as Commission Edgar took the reigns over education in Texas in 1950, LULAC, the AGIF, and the GNC, representing all ethnic Mexicans in state, made him aware of the needs

[66] Minutes of State Board of Education, July 1, 1967; November 19, 1967; February 3, 1968; April 6, 1968; July 1, 1968; January 6, 1967; November 9 and 10, 1973, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

of Mexican origin youth. Instead of addressing their areas of concern Edgar and the SBOE spent two decades devising their own lackluster programs that provided Mexican children and a few adults with basic education and skills. These initiatives, prior to federal funding, reached only a small percentage of Mexican migrants and after increased budgets still did not extend to a majority of students. More important, the majority of Mexican origin students in Texas were not migrants. The SBOE had not meet their needs. The GNC made Commissioner Edgar aware of the repercussions of not addressing the problems for Mexican children just months after he took control of the state education institution. The segregated and inferior classrooms made Mexicanos believe they were being punished for expressing their culture. The SBOE's unwillingness to provide preschool classes to help Mexicanos begin school with a grasp of the English language ensured they felt lost and fell behind at the onset. If Mexican children advanced beyond the first few grades, overcame the sense of inferiority, and were proficient in the English language then the teaching of Texas history, that presented their ancestors as evil and villains of state, certainly erased that progress. The success of Tijerina's Little Schools of the 400 proved there was a need for Mexican teachers who cared and loved their students and a culturally-responsive and specific curriculum. However, the SBOE did not consider Mexicans' lack of educational progress a problem they needed to solve. Instead, Commissioner Edgar and the SBOE's chosen initiatives for Mexican students and adult learners attests to their perception of Mexicans as inferior without much potential beyond their ability to provide needed labor.

"I once heard a Texas Legislator say that he wanted Texas to become first in education . . . 47%, almost half, of the Mexican American children that begin the first grade do not get a high school diploma in Texas – in this we are the leader."[1]

--Dr. Omar Garza, SBOE Trustee, April 6, 1974

CHAPTER 4 - "ALTERNATIVES SUGGESTED BY DR. GARZA . . . ABOLISH THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION:" MEXICAN AMERICAN EDUCATION IN THE CHICANO ERA

Two days after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., on April 6, 1968, the city of San Antonio, led by US Congressmen Henry B. Gonzalez, kicked off HemisFair, a celebration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of San Antonio. The event organizers decided on the theme, "The Confluence of Civilizations in the Americas," aiming to showcase the city's multicultural history. The organizers dedicated ten million of the 156 million dollar budget to the building of the Institute of Texan Cultures (ITC), now the University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures. This permanent building and exhibit highlighted the many ethnic groups that settled in Texas. State Board of Education Member, Paul G. Greenwood from Harlingen, Texas attended HemisFair and visited the ITC exhibit. In February 1969, Greenwood spoke at the state board meeting and briefed the all-white male members of the board on the many cultures that settled in Texas "as brought out at the Institute of Texan Cultures during HemisFair" and questioned whether educators teach the contributions of these cultures in Texas or US history classes.[2] Unsure of the answer, the board decided to create a committee to study whether Texas students were learning about the multicultural history of the state. This inquiry was the beginning the SBOE's efforts to enrich the social studies curriculum with the influences of diverse ethnic groups. However, in 1974 when their efforts had not produced any significant changes, Dr. Omar

[1] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, April 6, 1974, p.10, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[2] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, February 1, 1969, p.52, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

Garza, a new board member and the first Mexican American elected, in front of an audience that included his wife and daughter, demanded action.

By the late 1960s, after decades of constructing inferior education for Mexicanos in Texas, the white architects faced newly elected Mexican American politicians who arrived in these traditionally white spaces with their lived experience in Texas public schools and a clear agenda to build new policies and programs for the benefit of their children. After years of organizing and increasing Mexican American voters, the success of the Viva Kennedy campaigns, and with the aid of federal legislation that eliminated the poll tax, Mexican Americans across the state elected representatives who had their interests in mind when legislating. These new representatives with the support of the established Mexican American Generation organizations like LULAC and the AGIF continued to work within American systems to create change for their community. At the same time, younger grassroots activists who pushed beyond the accommodationist methods of their elders put education discrimination front and center in local, state, and national political discourse using militant tactics like protests, marches, sit-ins, and walkouts. These activists called themselves Chicanos as a reflection of their Brown, not white, distinctiveness and a rejection of the hyphenated Mexican American identity of their elders. This Chicano-era activism emerged during a wave of new federal education programs and the latest pedagogical theories regarding language acquisition and multicultural education. All of these factors coalesced in the late 1960s and provided Mexicanos in Texas with opportunities to force the state to address the community's long-held concerns.[3]

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[3] Acuna, *Occupied;* Blanton, *George I. Sanchez;* Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas;* García, *Mexican Americans*; Mario T Garcia, *Blowout!: Sal Castro and the Chicano Struggle for Educational Justice* (Chapel Hill: University Of North Carolina Press, 2014); Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation*; Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers*; Rodriguez, *Rethinking the Chicano Movement*; San Miguel, Jr., *Chicana/o Struggles for Education;* San Miguel, Jr., "'*Let All of Them Take Heed.'*"

Every conference held, committee formed, and commission report written during the late 1960s and through the mid-1970s was a new opportunity to change the trajectory of education for Mexicanos in Texas. The first wave of discourse mostly focused on bilingual education and the benefits of teaching a second language by first instructing students in their mother tongue. After several studies, language experts like Theodore Andersson, a leader of the Foreign Languages in the Elementary School (FLES) movement at the University of Texas, no longer believed that drills and memorization was the proper method for language acquisition. He along with other experts pushed for an end to the English-only techniques in classrooms. Schools and classrooms that banned the use of Spanish created a space where administrators and teachers diminished the language, a major element of the Mexican culture. Teaching in Spanish opened the door for teaching Spanish and Mexican culture.

Joe Bernal, a newly elected Texas Senator organized the first major statewide educational conference for the benefit of Mexican Americans in San Antonio in 1967. A few of the invited speakers at the conference mentioned the lack of curriculum that included the contributions of Mexicans in history classes as an issue that they needed to address. The one-sided narrative of social studies curriculum that placed the dominant culture as superior to all others was the ultimate concern of the SBOE's Committee of the Confluence of Texas Cultures (CCTC). Their position statements were extraordinarily enlightened for the SBOE and had real potential to influence curriculum development and textbook production and selection. The Texas Council for the Social Studies (TCSS), an organization established in 1942 and made up of social studies educators, experts, and university professors also influenced statewide curriculum. In 1969, the SBOE approved TCSS's recommendations to change the structure and pedagogical practices in social studies classrooms. In response to the numerous Chicano-led upheavals on high school and college campuses across the Southwest, the federal government established the U.S.

Commission on Civil Rights and began investigating and issuing reports on the education of Mexican Americans in 1968 and published the final report in 1974. As Mexican Americans formed local and state committees to bring their concerns to school boards armed with these reports, Chicanas and Chicanos continued to lead walkouts to demand change on their campuses. Both methods were necessary for progress. This era of Mexicano educational activism, while still concerned with segregation and language, expanded to include discussions of the lack of inclusive curriculum, discrimination on campuses, and the dearth of Mexican Americans in educational decision-making positions.

From 1967 until the mid-1970s, white, Black, and Brown liberal state and local educational leaders, with support from federal funding, pushed public schooling toward inclusivity. Chicana and Chicano college students, along with their Black classmates, achieved a major victory of the era by founding ethnic studies classes on their campuses. In public schools, these leaders engaged in discussions that moved Mexican origin children from the margins to the center, supported forward-thinking position statements, and authorized new programs that aimed to finally provide quality education for Mexicanos. However, these newly elected leaders did not have the numbers or the power to push through the wall of established conservative white men who used their positions to maintain white supremacist social hierarchies. Ultimately, despite being made aware of the new directions and programs advocated by the newly-elected liberals, the state's traditional, established leaders made only empty promises and allowed only minimal change.

The political and educational activism of Mexicanos in Crystal City, Texas in the 1960s bridged the path from the Mexican American Generation ideology to the Chicano Movement Era. Even though by the 1963 eighty percent of the residents of Crystal City were Mexican

American, white people still dominated the city's leadership including the schools.[4] In an effort to challenge the racial hierarchies of the city, working-class Mexican American men, known as *Los Cinco*, swept the 1963 election for city council beating all five incumbents. Although the campaign's message was fully in line with the Mexican American Generation activism language of first-class citizenship and achieving their rightful seat in leadership, there was a also a nascent "militant ethnic tone" that demanded change in the "deeply segregated Crystal City."[5] Their victory was aided by the Teamsters Union, the Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations (PASSO), youngsters who were fighting for their own leadership positions at school, Mexicanas, and grassroots neighbor, church, and migrant social circles. PASSO organizers provided the electoral blueprint for a successful campaign. The Teamsters brought in union leaders and helped keep the local police and Texas Rangers, sent by Governor John Connally, at bay as the campaign workers held poll tax drive events and knocked on doors through the Mexicano community.

Young high school and junior college students were the heart of the campaign. Throughout the 1950s, the number of Mexican American students grew exponentially at the high school and began participating in extracurricular activities. In an effort to push back on the Mexicanos students success and attempts at control of the campus, school administrators developed skill-tracts and faculty-selected awards and honors. Counselors placed Mexican origin students in the lower-tracts that restricted them from taking advanced courses. After these students began to succeed, despite these efforts, earning accolades for their athletic abilities and winning the majority in student elections, campus administrators implemented new procedures

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[4] Erick Kanter, "Mexicanos Take Over Crystal City Politics," *Austin Daily Texan,* April 23, 1963.

[5] Rodriguez, *Rethinking the Chicano Movement*, 12.

for selecting students for certain honors in an effort to preserve the schools importance in the local white society. These students' reality did not reflect what they learned about democratic institutions in the US in their social studies classes and questioned why Mexican Americans were not fully engrained in city leadership if they were the majority in Crystal City. Jose Angel Gutierrez, one of the founders of the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) in 1969 and La Raza Unida in 1970, two of the most influential organizations during the Chicano Movement, was one of the young college students, too young to vote, who led the successful grassroots campaign of *Los Cinco*.[6] The events of Crystal City in 1963 were foundational for the political development of a new generation of Mexicanos activists. The continued racism at school and in their community drove them to fight with more militant tactics and for a better and more equitable existence in all aspects of their lives including education. These young Mexicanos, over the following few years grew into organized, educated, and dedicated men and women whose local movement spread across the state and the country.

A close examination of the first state-wide conference for Mexican American education reveals the growing frustration among emerging Mexicano elected and appointed leaders. In their presentations they expressed pride as American citizens and confidence that they and their white colleagues could reform the education system. However, they also openly described their own experiences with discrimination in school and expressed their frustration that this discrimination continued to existence in education for Mexican Americans. Their speeches straddled both the Mexican American generation's faith in American systems and the Chicano Movements fearlessness in describing the racist conditions in their lives. The speeches by white

[6] Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers;* Rodriguez, *The Tejano Diaspora;* Rodriguez; *Rethinking the Chicano Movement*.

politicians and educators demonstrated the lack of dedication to addressing the foundational problems of schooling for Mexicanos and, at times, their unwillingness to even accept that discrimination existed for Mexicanos. The major walkouts and protests of Chicanos in Texas began just a year after this conference.

The Texas Conference for the Mexican-American: Improving Educational Opportunities, held in San Antonio in 1967, gathered together Mexican American educators and newly-elected representatives, and white politicians in powerful decision-making positions into one space. This unprecedent event had the potential to alter the path for the education of Mexicanos in Texas. After attending a similar conference in Arizona in 1966, former teacher and first-term Texas Senator, Joe Bernal; Chairman of the Department of Education at St. Mary's University, Dr. Joe Cardenas; and Principal of J.T. Brackenridge Elementary School in San Antonio, Nick Garza organized the Texas conference. Senator Bernal served as chairman for the conference, which was funded by the Inter-American Educational Center, the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, the TEA, and the Hogg Foundation. In Senator Bernal's opening comments he described the conference as "historic" and stated that "for so many years the problems, educational, economic, social, and political, of the Mexican-American have been obscured and literally lost in a maze of apathy, ignorance, and fear."[7] He highlighted the importance of this conference to those who had "personal experience" with those problems and believed that the only answer for Mexican Americans in society was "equal educational opportunities for all."[8] Senator Bernal also addressed the use of the term "Mexican-American." He assured the conference participants that he believed himself to be "100 percent" American but that problems

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[7] Joe J. Bernal, "Introduction," Dwain McKinley Estes and David W. Darling, eds., *Improving Educational Opportunities of the Mexican-American; Proceedings of the First Texas Conference for the Mexican-American, April 13-15, 1967, San Antonio, Texas* (Austin: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1967), 2.

[8] Joe J. Bernal, "Introduction," 2.

in education exist which are "peculiar to our group" and that it is necessary to distinguish between white Americans and those of Mexican descent. He stated that he would agree to be called "Mejicano" or "Spanish-American, Hispanic-American, Spanish-surnamed, White with Spanish Surname, Brown Power, or 'Pocho' but not as "Pepper Belly, Greaser, Meskin, or even Latin American."[9] At forty years old Senator Bernal, who was born and raised in San Antonio's majority Mexican West Side, attended Texas public schools when teachers and administrators punished students for expressing Mexican culture on campus, served in the U.S. Army during WWII, and then represented his community as an elected official, had an evolving identity influenced by every chapter in his life.

Senator Bernal also discussed major issues facing Mexican American education in Texas in his opening statement including financial inequality, poverty, language, and the loss of cultural identity. He shared data on two school districts in San Antonio as an example. Edgewood had approximately 21,000 students who were mostly Mexican American and received only 1.5 million dollars in local taxes; whereas, Northeast Independent School District, located in a white community, with the same number of students, received 3.5 million dollars. Bernal connected these inequalities to low achievement. According to the 1960 census a third of all Spanish-surnamed families in Texas earned less than three thousand dollars a year, and eighty percent of all Mexican Americans over twenty-five years old did not complete high school. He highlighted the peculiarity of the situation for Mexicans. Bernal stated "we [Mexicans] had to overcome not only the old one-room country school, but the old one-room Mexican school." He continued, "not only must we overcome poverty, as the Appalachian citizens are now doing, but we have to cope with bridging cultural and linguistic barriers."[10] To illustrate the issues that a

[9] Joe J. Bernal, "Introduction," 2-3.

[10] Joe J. Bernal, "Introduction," 4.

fully supported bilingual education program could address, Bernal shared an anecdote from Carlos Conde, a reporter for the *Dallas Morning News* and a guest editor for the American G.I. Forum newsletter. Conde wrote about a teacher whipping him for speaking Spanish at school then getting beat up by friends after school for speaking English: "the first was to remind me that I was living in the United States and the second was to not let me forget I was Mexican."[11] Bernal seemed hopeful with the recently passed Bilingual Education Act and ended his opening statement with the following words:

> We have the unique opportunity in history to be the generation which opened its eyes to the problems that confront us. We now have the opportunity to erase the sting of prejudice, the fire of hate, and the darkness of ignorance from the Texas scene. The challenge is present, the goal is in sight. May this Conference, may we as individuals have the courage to pursue what well may be a more perfect union.[12]

The conference was a new opportunity, as Bernal stated, and the for the first time Mexican American elected leaders were in a position to make decisions for their community rather than only the white architects.

Conference organizers decided on four goals: identify and define the problems faced by Mexican Americans in schools; highlight and discuss any current programs like bilingual education that are were targeting Mexican Americans; focus attention on problems that have not been solved and need immediate attention; and lastly, develop an action plan to disseminate data that can help remove barriers and find solutions. Although the conference was in fact historic for Texas, as Senator Bernal described it, the solutions offered by politicians and those in high-ranking government positions would at best provide minimal change and at worst perpetuate the existing problems. When conference speakers delivered ideas from the perspective of their own

[11] Joe J. Bernal, "Introduction," 7.

[12] Joe J. Bernal, "Introduction," 9.

lived experience as Mexican Americans, their proposals were meaningful and they said them *con ganas*.

The keynote address came from Dr. Nolan Estes who deviated from the safe, government talking points at the end of his speech and provided the conference participants with clear solutions to the problems in education for Mexicanos. Estes was the Associate Commissioner for Elementary and Secondary Education from the U.S. Office of Education. He first discussed the origins of current federal education programs and the initiatives aimed at Mexican Americans. He associated the "revolution" in federal programs for education to the launching of Sputnik and the "civil rights drives" beginning in the 1950s. According to Dr. Estes, these two events placed a spotlight on the nation's inadequate educational institutions. Included in his list of inadequacies was the "ugly blot of discrimination and segregation . . . that touched the Mexican-American, the Puerto Rican, the Oriental, the Negro, and the poor of whatever race, color, or creed."[13] Estes stated that the federal government's efforts began with the National Defense Education Act in 1958 from which it initiated and funded numerous programs that increased the number of college students, provided more than eight million dollars in special education, and added four hundred thousand new teaching jobs. He pointed out the Texas Project for the Education of Migrant Children that Title I funds supported. Dr. Estes then used the platform at the conference to announce five new initiatives from the U.S. Office of Education: the establishment of a special unit for the planning and coordinating programs vital to Mexican Americans, an approved grant of $716,000 to the Texas Education Agency to increase aid to migrant children, a "Follow Through" program to address the needs of children who completed Head Start, new in-service

[13] Nolan Estes, "Innovations in Federal Assistance to Education," Dwain McKinley Estes and David W. Darling, eds., *Improving Educational Opportunities of the Mexican-American; Proceedings of the First Texas Conference for the Mexican-American, April 13-15, 1967, San Antonio, Texas* (Austin: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1967), 10.

training for elementary teachers, and "some new Title III projects" that "will be of direct benefit to Mexican Americans of Texas."[14]

Although Dr. Estes's announcements of new programs were vague or did not directly address the needs of Mexicanos he ended his keynote speech with four directives based on his own personal experiences that he believed conference participants needed to take action on immediately. First Dr. Estes implored the "Mexican-American community—the political, educational, business and labor leaders" to take full advantage of numerous federal programs and money available by organizing and establishing "power and influence" in their schools.[15] He believed that the money and structure was now available and Mexican Americans needed to do their part in organizing and making sure their local districts and governments used all tools at their disposal to improve education for their children. His second directive was clear and concise – eliminate the English-only law in public schools. Dr. Estes stated, "I ask this not as an official of the Office of Education: I ask it as a native Texan, as an American and as an educator . . . our country is blessed with the richness of many cultures and languages . . . it is rich and strong, and it can tolerate differences among us which once it feared." Then Dr. Estes, referring to bilingual education, warned the conference participants to not "be fooled by the lure of over-simplified solutions." Although he believed bilingual education to be important, he did not think it could solve all the social, economic, or education problems facing Mexican Americans. According to Dr. Estes, "intensive education and training" needed to work in tandem with better wages, transportation, and housing to alleviate the plight of Mexican Americans. His final directive was aimed at all levels of government. He stated, "local, state, and federal agencies must join

[14] Nolan Estes, "Innovations in Federal Assistance to Education," 11-16.

[15] Nolan Estes, "Innovations in Federal Assistance to Education," 17.

together in a common crusade in the war on ignorance and education deprivation."[16] Unfortunately, these last four recommendations were Dr. Estes's ideas and not initiatives his department planned to fund or encourage.

A few speakers included a nod to the one-sided narrative of social studies curriculum in their presentations. Severo Gomez, the State Coordinator for the Regional Educational Agencies Project of International Education at the Texas Education Agency began his presentation with a discussion about the power of bilingual education. Gomez defined bilingual education as the "development of literacy in two languages by first using the child's first language as the medium for learning the reading and writing process."[17] He emphasized that this process should not only apply to language but also to culture. Gomez pointed out the many inaccuracies and omissions in the teaching of history in Texas public schools and how they influence the self-identity and self-worth of Mexican children. He stated, "whatever a native Texas is, be he English speaking or Spanish speaking, he is a product of the confluence of three dominant cultures: Northern European, the Southern European, predominantly Hispanic, and the pre-colonial indigenous culture." Gomez left out the influence of Black or African cultures that also contributed to making of Texas. He went on to review the lack of understanding among the general public of the origin of the cowboy or *vaquero*, or the contributions of the Hispanic culture to ranching and dry land farming. Gomez also highlighted the inaccurate portrayal of Mexicans as the villains at the Alamo while the "transients who came into Texas as adventurers" were the heroes. He ended this portion of his speech by commenting on how this teaching, along with the forbidden use of their mother tongue, created conflict for young Mexicanos in school. Gomez stated, "the

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[16] Nolan Estes, "Innovations in Federal Assistance to Education," 18-19.

[17] Severo Gomez, "The Meaning and Implications of Bilingualism for Texas Schools," Dwain McKinley Estes and David W. Darling, eds., *Improving Educational Opportunities of the Mexican-American; Proceedings of the First Texas Conference for the Mexican-American, April 13-15, 1967, San Antonio, Texas* (Austin: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1967), 47.

Mexican-American student has tendencies to be ashamed of his heritage . . . it is a conflict that easily develops into problems, educational and psychological, that too often leads to dropping out of school."[18]

Gomez did not believe that all educators and politicians wanted the best for Mexican Americans. He stated, "there are too many in our ranks who are satisfied with the status quo of the Mexican-American children—that of tolerating them, helping them as little as possible, and waiting for them to drop out." Any efforts to increase the attendance of Mexican Americans, according to Gomez, was just to improve overall attendance numbers for the purpose of increasing state funding. He claimed that any Mexican American who succeeded in school, despite the efforts of educational leaders to produce the opposite results, was understood by those leaders as exceptional or "unusually talented" and therefore "to some extent, acceptable to society."[19] Toward the end of his speech Gomez described what he believed were the problems facing Mexican Americans and offered solutions in the form of educational programs. Gomez listed the first problem as the Mexican American's cultural difference from the dominant group, which led to a difference in values and attitudes. To address this problem, Gomez focused on the teacher. Teachers of Mexican American children needed to have "attributes of sympathy and understanding and be free of prejudices toward peoples of varying cultures," or more plainly, teachers should not be racist. Gomez believed that "these are rare personal qualities" but did not think the state could make any progress without this "essential ingredient."[20] Gomez ended his speech with hopeful words and emphasized that the only way forward is to eliminate "the idea of

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[18] Severo Gomez, "The Meaning and Implications of Bilingualism for Texas Schools," 44-46.

[19] Severo Gomez, "The Meaning and Implications of Bilingualism for Texas Schools," 47.

[20] Severo Gomez, "The Meaning and Implications of Bilingualism for Texas Schools," 60.

superiority for one group of people and inferiority for another group."[21] Gomez's read on the most pertinent problems for Mexican Americans in Texas schools was accurate but he did not provide any specific plans on how to solve those problems.

Commissioner Edgar, who was arguably in the best position of all the presenters to directly influence the education of Mexicanos in Texas, began his speech by stating that most Mexican-American children were doing well in public school and moving "successfully through the twelve grades."[22] He conceded that just like white and Black students, some Mexican Americans needed special programs to succeed. For these students, according to Commissioner Edgar, Texas provided remedial instruction, language development, cultural enrichment, assistance with issues that led to absenteeism, preschool, and adult education. He went on to describe the programs specific to Mexican American students including the migrant program, summer preschool, "exploring the use of the bilingual classroom," and the addition of 1,800 teacher aids who worked with Spanish-speaking students.[23] Commissioner Edgar believed that providing teacher aids who could play games or read stories to small groups of children ensured there was "continuous interchange in English" in the classroom.[24] Commissioner Edgar then informed the conference participants of two newer programs created specifically for native Spanish speakers. The TEA developed curriculum "designed for the special talents of the bilingual citizen."[25] The high school section included a "concentrated study of Mexico" with the intention of helping the students develop pride in their culture. The college section of the program included the teaching of basic business principles and skills. These students then "could

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[21] Severo Gomez, "The Meaning and Implications of Bilingualism for Texas Schools," 62-63.

[22] J.W. Edgar, "Programs in Texas for Improving Educational Opportunities for Mexican-Americans," 95.

[23] J.W. Edgar, "Programs in Texas for Improving Educational Opportunities for Mexican-Americans," 96.

[24] J.W. Edgar, "Programs in Texas for Improving Educational Opportunities for Mexican-Americans," 96.

[25] J.W. Edgar, "Programs in Texas for Improving Educational Opportunities for Mexican-Americans," 98.

be more valuable" as a "corps of people fluent in both languages and trained in the skills of commerce."[26] He ended his speech with a brief description of a few current initiatives in El Paso, Rio Grande Valley, Austin, and San Antonio. All but one of these initiatives focused on language concerns and the other on intercultural education. Edgar, as described in the previous chapter, whose first meeting as commissioner was with LULAC representatives and who, considering his repeated dismissal of appeals initiated by Mexicans across the state, was fully aware of local districts' continued efforts to circumvent desegregation laws and to provide inferior schooling, did not think Mexican origin students needed any additional programs to be successful. He was unwilling to accept that discrimination existed in Texas public schools for Mexican Americans and therefore believed they did not need any further programing.

Much like Commissioner Edgar, who only offered bland platitudes that ignored the pleas of the other conference participants, the statements by elected officials at the Texas Conference did not include any groundbreaking announcements, ideas, or plans to improve the educational opportunities for Mexican Americans. Governor John Connally, who had ordered Texas Rangers to intimidate Mexicanos in Crystal City, spent his time discussing the importance of public education, the increase in state funding he authorized for public schools, vocational courses, junior colleges, and higher education. When speaking specifically about Mexican Americans, the governor focused on preschool, migrant programs, antipoverty initiatives, and job corps opportunities, then listed the Mexican Americans he appointed to positions in his administration.[27] The liberal politicians did not offer much more than the conservative ones.

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[26] J.W. Edgar, "Programs in Texas for Improving Educational Opportunities for Mexican-Americans," 99.

[27] John B. Connally, "The Role of State Government in Improving Education," Dwain McKinley Estes and David W. Darling, eds., *Improving Educational Opportunities of the Mexican-American; Proceedings of the First Texas Conference for the Mexican-American, April 13-15, 1967, San Antonio, Texas* (Austin: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1967), 102-111.

Senator Ralph Yarborough's speech centered on bilingual education and his efforts in the senate to increase funding for the program.

Congressman Henry B. Gonzalez's speech was titled "The Hope and the Promise." Gonzalez who had earned a reputation as a "defender of the Anglo dominated status quo," began by describing the poor conditions of Mexican Americans and their unique circumstances as a people who arrived in the United States "from many places, at different times and for different reasons" who cannot decide on "what they are with any degree of certainty," and who are not "able to set forth a single program or a single set of goals at which to aim."[28] Just a year after this conference Gonzalez tried to hide these poor and segregated Mexicans from the media while San Antonio was on the world stage during HemisFair.[29] Gonzalez claimed that the main issue confronting Mexican Americans was the internal conflict created by American society that forced them to choose between retaining and celebrating their own culture or assimilate to appease the dominant group in order to find success. He stated, that "if one [a Mexican origin person living in the United States] wants to be assimilated into the majority, one cannot expect them [white Americans] to accept the individual as he is; it is *he* that must change . . . he must speak their language; he must act as they do; and he must, as well as he can, share their values and their culture."[30] In other words, a society based on white supremacy was a problem for Mexican Americans. Like Gomez, Congressman Gonzalez was also concerned with the "cultural suppression" in school curricula. He praised the recent additions to textbooks that are "at least beginning to treat the Negro as a human being, presenting him in a true light" and now textbook

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[28] Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers*), 85; Henry B. Gonzalez, "The Hope and the Promise," Dwain McKinley Estes and David W. Darling, eds., *Improving Educational Opportunities of the Mexican-American; Proceedings of the First Texas Conference for the Mexican-American, April 13-15, 1967, San Antonio, Texas* (Austin: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1967), 115-116.

[29] Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers*), 84.

[30] Henry B. Gonzalez, "The Hope and the Promise," 118.

authors needed to do the same for Mexicans.[31] Gonzalez did not end his speech with proposed solutions to these problems. Instead, using the word "poor" as a euphemism for Mexican, he warned his audience to not misjudge the poor in society. He stated, "those poor people that we seldom see and seldom pay attention to, those same poor people who suffer innumberable [sic] and complicated ills and problems, who bear up so patiently under their burdens, will one day rise and build a new Southwest."[32] None of these elected officials had the answers to fix the problems of education for Mexican Americans.

The final two speakers, Armando Rodriguez, Coordinator of the Mexican-American Unit of the U.S. Office of Education, and Abelardo B. Delgado, a self-identified "uninvited, unscheduled problemed [sic] Mexican with a good chunk of future at stake," offered clear and concise solutions that other conference participants had not mentioned.[33] At the end of Rodriguez's passionate speech that called for immediate action on the conference resolutions he presented two areas of "critical weakness."[34] The first concerned the lack of counseling to encourage and guide Mexican Americans students to college. He added that there should be an effort to build a pipeline for these students to enter the field of education and counseling. Rodriguez was also concerned with the lack of courses on Mexican Americans in teacher-training institutions. He stated, "we may be able to forgive North Dakota for not having such course, but how much longer can we forgive California . . . [and] Texas, for this omission."[35] Just like white students in school, Mexican Americans needed and deserved to see themselves reflected back in their curriculum and in the histories of their nation.

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[31] Henry B. Gonzalez, "The Hope and the Promise," 120.

[32] Henry B. Gonzalez, "The Hope and the Promise," 122.

[33] Abelardo B. Delgado, "A Personal Statement," 136.

[34] Armando Rodriguez, "The Time for Action is Now," 134.

[35] Armando Rodriguez, "The Time for Action is Now," 134-135.

Delgado, a neighborhood coordinator for the El Paso Juvenile Delinquency Project, arrived in San Antonio with five Chicano friends. They each borrowed twenty-five dollars and took time off of work to make the more than six hundred mile drive from El Paso to San Antonio. He said he was not speaking for anyone except himself and his seven children. Delgado was disappointed that the conference organizers did not invite others to provide "first-hand presentations" about the issues they face and give them an opportunity to take part in finding solutions.[36] Delgado expressed his frustration and stated, "I am sick and tired of many conferences which are phony and where the so-called experts write a paper to air the problems, filling them with statistics to dazzle all, while my children continue receiving a second-rate education." He continued, "many conferences turn out to be a good opportunity for politicians to say a few kind words to the *mejicano* and maybe release handout number 109."[37] He then expressed hope that this conference would be different. He hoped the participants were not going to walk out feeling satisfied with the discussions and then just promise to do "something about it soon."[38] Delgado listed the resolutions he and his friends wrote that included providing conferences for the poor, allowing Mexicans to express their cultures in school, eliminate laws that perpetuate discrimination, prepare them for college, stop enrolling Mexicans in only vocational courses, and to stop placing them in special education classes based on I.Q. tests that "are not for us." He then stated that he felt he had overstayed his welcome but that he "had no intention of letting [them] walk out of here satisfied." Delgado then ended his statement in Spanish, saying that many immigrants come to this country that is supposedly rich in opportunity to find better prospects than they could in their country but "mis abuelos y yo no las hemos

[36] Abelardo B. Delgado, "A Personal Statement," 136.

[37] Abelardo B. Delgado, "A Personal Statement," 136.

[38] Abelardo B. Delgado, "A Personal Statement," 136.

encontrado . . . quizas . . . mañana (my grandparents and I have not found them . . . maybe . . . tomorrow.)"[39] Delgado traveled across the state of Texas to attend this conference and after listening to the many speeches and presentations he did not have much hope that the conference would lead to any significant changes for his Mexican American children.

While this conference had little impact on the SBOE, considering Commissioner Edgar believed most Mexican Americans were doing well and did not need any additional programs, Mexican American congressmen and senators in the Texas legislature passed new bilingual education laws in 1969. Senator Bernal and Representative Carlos Truan worked in tandem to pass bilingual legislation during that session that eradicated English-only laws more than fifty years after their inception.[40] Although the records do not indicate whether Commissioner Edgar attended the other presentations at the conference, his silence about the conference at the subsequent board meetings suggests he either attended only to make his statement or did not value the content of his co-presenters. He did not debrief the board about Estes' reassurances of federal money available to initiate programs for Mexican American students, he did not encourage the board to expand bilingual education as proposed by Gomez, he did not question the board about the lack of Mexican representation in social studies curriculum highlighted by Gomez and Congressman Gonzalez, and he did not act on behalf of Mexicanos with the urgency called for by Rodriguez and Delgado at the conference.

While state and education leaders discussed the needs and best methods for teaching Mexican origin children, young Mexicanos at college and high school campuses across Texas and in other Southwest states grew tired of their inferior treatment in public schools and led walkouts to demand change. Between 1968 and 1972 Chicana and Chicano high school students

[39] Abelardo B. Delgado, "A Personal Statement," 137-138.

[40] Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas,* 146-147.

in Texas chose to take direct action to force their communities to provide equitable educational opportunities and led at least thirty-nine walkouts.[41] Their demands included additional Mexican American teachers and administrators, access to extracurricular activities, teaching bilingual education, curriculum that included their experiences, improved facilities, or an end to racist discriminatory treatment from their school officials. The first high school blowout, as the students' called their actions, occurred in San Antonio in May 1968. Hundreds of Mexican origin students at Edgewood ISD, the same school district Senator Bernal used as an example of inequitable school financing in his speech at the San Antonio conference the previous year, walked out of their classes in the middle of the day on May 16, 1968. Students had previously made demands for building repairs, better supplies at school, access to the upper level courses, and new curriculum that included the history and culture of Mexican Americans. The student council met with school officials on three different occasions. After the district demonstrated their unwillingness to meet these demands the students organized the walkout and subsequent march to the superintendent's office. Teachers unsuccessfully tried to block the students from leaving the school. Not only did this demonstration led to almost immediate positive changes in Edgewood ISD, the hiring of the first Mexican American superintendent, the election of a new school board, an end to English only rules on campus, improvements to campus buildings, and the introduction of college-prep courses, but the actions of the students garnered national attention.[42]

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[41] San Miguel, *Chicano Struggles for Education,* 25.

[42] James B. Barrera, *"We Want Better Education!": The 1960s Chicano Student Movement, School Walkouts, and the Quest for Educational Reform in South Texas* (Texas A&M University Press, 2023); Suzanne Gamboa, "Forgotten history: Chicano student walkouts changed Texas, but inequities remain," NBC News, November 23, 2019, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/forgotten-history-chicano-student-walkouts-changed-texas-inequities-remain-n1090071; Sarah Martinez, "Westside San Antonio Students Made History with 1968 Walkout," MySA, May 14, 2023, https://www.mysanantonio.com/news/local/article/edgewood-walkout-discrimination-18094466.php; Virginia Raymond, "Enriching Rodríguez: Alberta Zepeda Snid of Edgewood," in *Recovering the Hispanic History of Texas*, ed. Monica Perales (Arte Publico Press, 2010), 69-91.

A US Commission on Civil Rights held a hearing at Our Lady of the Lake (OLL) University in San Antonio in December 1968 revealed that public schools must consider students' cultural differences and the unique needs of students when developing curriculum and other systems in school. After more walkouts in the fall of 1968 in Edcouch-Elsa, in the Rio Grande Valley, and Houston ISD, the Texas Advisory Committee for the Commission organized the hearing and published a report on February 1970. However, SBOE members did not need to wait for the report to be aware of the discussions and findings of the students' testimonies at OLL. News outlets reported on the major event across the state. According to a San Antonio paper, after several high school students described their own experiences at local schools and in the community, the audience gave them a standing ovation. Edward Lozano, a senior at Lanier High School told the commission that he was hit several times by teachers for speaking Spanish. He said he "was getting tired of being hit" so he tried to only speak English. He heard his white classmates call the teacher "mam." Lozano thought it was "good English" so he decided to give it a try. He told the Commission that "I thought I was really doing something [good] . . . but she [the white teacher] hit me, right in the mouth. She knocked me down and called me 'stupid' or something like that." Another student, Irene Ramirez, also a senior at Lanier, stated that going to college felt like an "impossible dream" because teachers always told her that "having nice things, like going to college" was not a possibility for her. James Sutton a history teacher at Lanier told the Commission that the "state-adopted Texas history text" only included "Anglo-oriented views." He said that the book "skips lightly over the state's 'Hispanic heritage,' delving instead into the revolt against Mexico and continuing to the present with no more mention of the Mexican Impact on Texas history." Dr. Manuel Ramirez III, a child psychologist at Rice University testified. He described how these and other racist conditions in schools influenced the identity formation of Mexicano youth. Dr. Ramirez explained to the Commission that young

Mexican Americans do not want to betray their family's culture but "employees and teachers tell him that unless he does reject the Mexican-American culture he will be an economic failure." He strongly recommended that all white teachers should take the time to learn about the Mexican American culture in order to create the "right atmosphere" for Mexicanos to thrive in school.[43] Dr. Jack Forbes, a historian with the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development in California equated the conditions in public schools for Mexican Americans as a continuation of the "'process of conquest' of the Anglo American culture over the Mexican American culture in the Southwest" that Europeans began centuries before. This process of both demeaning the Mexican culture in school while erasing their historical perspectives in the curriculum according to Dr. Forbes, "leads to a great deal of hostility in the Mexican-American high school student" and "he [the student] comes out of school not knowing what he should be."[44]

The final report from the hearings described the educational record of Mexican Americans in Texas as "deplorable." According the report, "an astounding" almost eighty percent of Mexican American children drop out of school in comparison to sixty percent of Black children and thirty-three percent of white children. Almost twenty-three percent of Mexican Americans over age twenty-five never attended school. The same statistic for Black and white students was just over five percent and one percent, respectively.[45] The Commission concluded that the conditions that led to these shocking statistics was the environment that forces Mexican American (and Black students) to "conform to an agreed-upon image of the American

[43] Don Heath, "'Cultural Gap' Cited As Big S.A. Problem," *San Antonio Light,* December 11, 1968.

[44] Don Heath, "Rights Group Hears Intimidation Charge," *San Antonio Light*, December 10, 1968.

[45] "Hearing before the United States Commission on Civil Rights: Hearing Held in San Antonio, Texas, December 9-14, 1968," HathiTrust, accessed March 18, 2024, 4, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015002680141?urlappend=%3Bseq=5.

type, one most nearly resembling the ideal of the white Anglo middle class."[46] Regarding the content, the authors of the report also stated, "it is wrong and shortsighted to teach American and Texas History without the inclusion of contributions made by Blacks and Mexican Americans."[47] This inquiry by the Civil Rights Commission continued across the Southwest over the next six years. The commission issued six reports that focused on a specific issue in education for Mexican Americans: Ethnic Isolation, The Unfinished Education, Educational Practices, A Function of Wealth, Teachers and Students, and the final report Toward Quality Education for Mexican Americans. Before the Commission issued their final report in 1974 Chicana and Chicano high school and college students continued walking out of school or sitting in at administrative offices to demand changes. High school walkouts occurred in Los Angeles in 1968, in Denver and Arizona in 1969, and in El Paso, Uvalde, and Crystal City, Texas in 1969. The Crystal City walkout led to electoral takeover of the district's school board by La Raza Unida and the appointment of José Angel Gutierrez, the founder of the organization, as the superintendent.

In the case of the Uvalde Public Schools walkout in April 1970, hundreds of students walked out in protest of the high school's firing of a popular Chicano teacher, Josue Garza. After Garza began engaging in Chicano politics, Principal E.P. Shannon and the Uvalde school board chose not to renew his teaching contract for the 1970-1971 school year citing arbitrary instances of an "uncooperative attitude."[48] Garza credited his run for county judge with the support of the Mexican American Youth Organization and his activities registering voters in Uvalde's Mexican

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[46] "Hearing before the United States Commission on Civil Rights: Hearing Held in San Antonio, Texas, December 9-14, 1968," 5.

[47] "Hearing before the United States Commission on Civil Rights: Hearing Held in San Antonio, Texas, December 9-14, 1968," 1.

[48] "Before the State Board of Education for the State of Texas, Josue F. Garza, Jr. vs Board of Trustees of Uvalde Independent School District," [Name redacted] v. Board of Trustees of Uvalde ISD, Texas Education Agency legal counsel records, Texas Education Agency, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, 9.

neighborhoods for his dismissal from teaching at Robb Elementary School. During Garza's appeal testimony before the Texas Education Agency he stated that he believed Shannon and Uvalde school board members violated his civil rights and choose not renew his contract because of his Mexican heritage and his participation in politics. Garza stated that "He [Shannon] really didn't believe that we should be out there trying to register all the Mexican-American people and we should spend more time with the Anglo part of town."[49] When the lawyers for the defense questioned why Garza did not mention these violations during his initial hearing in Uvalde, he said he felt intimidated by the numerous Texas Rangers in the room, including one sitting next to him. Local school districts often used the Texas Rangers to keep Chicanos in line. Garza stated, "my father at a young age had a sad experience with the Texas Rangers, and those stories had been related [relayed] to me."[50] Hundreds of Mexicano students at the high school and junior high supported Garza and walked out of school. Before returning to class, the students demanded Garza's reinstatement, teaching of Mexican American history classes, hiring more Mexican American teachers, and for their current teachers to learn to pronounce their names properly. The school district did not budge. The walkout lasted six weeks, one of the longest in American history, until the school year ended. Schools penalized students for their absences. Seniors did not graduate and students repeated grades despite passing their classes.[51] Commissioner of

[49] "Before the Texas Education Agency Austin, Texas, Josue F. Garza, Jr. vs Board of Trustees of Uvalde Independent School District," [Name redacted] v. Board of Trustees of Uvalde ISD, Texas Education Agency legal counsel records, Texas Education Agency, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, 41.

[50] "Before the Texas Education Agency Austin, Texas, Josue F. Garza, Jr. vs Board of Trustees of Uvalde Independent School District," [Name redacted] v. Board of Trustees of Uvalde ISD, Texas Education Agency legal counsel records, Texas Education Agency, Texas State Library and Archives Commission, 37.

[51] Uriel J. García and Jinitzail Hernández, "Before the school shooting, Uvalde was known for a 1970 Hispanic student walkout. Its aging participants fear its spirit and memory are fading." *Texas Tribune,* June 22, 2022, https://www.texastribune.org/2022/06/22/uvalde-school-boycott-walkout-shooting-robb-elementary/.

Education J.W. Edgar upheld the decisions of the Uvalde school board and Garza did not get his job back.[52]

Even though the Uvalde walkout did not lead directly to positive change for the Mexicano youth of the city, it did garner national attention; just like the previous student-led direct actions. During the following summer, Senator Walter Mondale of Minnesota and the chairman of the Senate Equal Educational Opportunity Committee visited Uvalde and stated to the Dallas Morning News that the problems in education for "Texas Mexican-Americans are 'just as bad if not worse' than those he's seen in black communities." Mondale's visit also placed a spotlight on the brutality of the Texas Rangers, specifically Captain A.Y. Allee who was filmed "shoving and slapping a Mexican American boy."[53] These Chicano led school walkouts provided sympathetic white leaders with the clear evidence they needed to lobby for substantial policies that would create real difference for Mexican American youth. These direct actions by Chicanos also led to a more politically engaged community who motivated their elders to push beyond their traditionally accommodationist rhetoric.

Even though the SBOE members never discuss the Chicano student walkouts during the official meetings, their sudden decisions to develop inclusive and multicultural curriculum and courses is evident that they knew the demands of Mexicano students. The SBOE established the Consulting Committee on Confluence of Texan Cultures at the March 1969 board meeting. According to the meeting minutes, the SBOE selected fifteen interdisciplinary scholars and educators to aid the board "in their formulation of plans, policies, and programs which enhance

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[52] Vinicio Sinta and Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, "The 1970 Uvalde School Walkout," in *Civil Rights in Black and Brown: Histories of Resistance and Struggle in Texas*, edited by Max Krochmal and J. Todd Moye, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2021).

[53] "Latin Situation in Texas Called Bad as Blacks," *Dallas Morning News,* July 26, 1970.

the concept of cultural confluence in Texas public school curriculum and instruction."[54] The board also asked the consultants to provide expertise in various content areas, to help curate resources for teaching a more diverse curriculum, and lastly to foster relationships across disciplines that would help in understanding distinctive cultures. Demonstrating their commitment to this inquiry, the board provided travel and per diem funds as well as honoraria for the consultants to meet quarterly for the following three years. The diverse fifteen-member committee included Dr. Robert R. Galvan, a Psychology, Sociology, and Reading professor from Texas Christian University (TCU), whom FWISD Superintendent J.P. Moore had dismissed in his office in 1957, folklorist Americo Parades from the University of Texas (UT), Dr. Roger A. Abrahams, an Anthropologist with a specialty in "Negro culture and folklore," also from UT, among other professors and educators from around Texas.[55]

According to Dr. Galvan, the Confluence Committee meetings were like a "think tank." The members of the committee were all like-minded and believed their work was necessary to improve education for all students in Texas. He described the committee members as "brilliant and talented individuals." According to Galvan, SBOE trustee Paul Greenwood showed great leadership as the chairman of the committee and was not worried about any political implications. Although the archival records do not indicate that the committee's work received negative responses from the SBOE or anyone else, in a recent oral interview, Dr. Galvan stated that some white people pushed back. He said that the committee members were a unified group, "their hearts were in it" and the push back did not slow their progress. Galvan believed the committee was able to produce enlightened ideas and recommendations because they were free

[54] SBOE Meeting Minutes, April 12, 1969, p.15, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[55] SBOE Meeting Minutes, April 12, 1969, p.16, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

to discuss the issues as educators without any infringement from the government or politicians who do not know what they are talking about.[56]

After roughly a year of meetings, in May 1970, the Consulting Committee presented their findings and recommendations to the board. The consultants began their report with the following:

> The confluence of many cultures and cultural conflict have been characteristics of American life throughout our history. They have been powerful influences in structuring our social system, enriching our national heritage and creating some of our most critical problems. Our national future will be greatly influenced by our understanding of our cultural diversity and resolution of the problems it creates. It is urged, therefore, that Social Studies instruction and textbooks, wherever relevant, stress the contributions of individuals from many groups to our national development and the enrichment of our heritage by influences from all cultures represented in our population. Children from all ethnic groups are required to study both Texas and American History. Each should find in these courses material which would help him identify with the whole national historical and cultural pattern, with justifiable pride in the contributions made by his group, or individuals from it.[57]

This statement demonstrates the Consulting Committee's acknowledgement of their role in providing all students with a curriculum that reflects their own identities. Commissioner Edgar, aware of the changing climate in education across the state and the nation supported the committee's forward-thinking position statement and instructed the board to use their findings as a guide for textbook publishers and local curriculum planning.[58] The opening statement goes on to highlight the history of racial conflict in the United States as a result of the convergence of varying ethnic groups. However, their hope is that future teaching of the national story include both the positive and negative results of a diverse country and most importantly provide all

[56] Dr. Robert Galvan, Jr., Personal Interview with the author, May 23, 2023.

[57] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, May 4, 1970, p.54, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[58] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, May 4, 1970, p.41, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

students with a shared understanding and respect for one another's place in US history. In the final portion of their position statement, the committee listed six student expectations under this new classroom instruction. Students were expected to consider the diverse groups in America and their contributions to the nation's heritage, examine the roles individuals from various ethnicities played in the building of the country, identify the cultural sources of American society and customs, study the history of cultural conflicts in US history and the ways society could have solved them, reflect on the effects of unresolved cultural conflicts, and lastly, reconcile with past conflicts and aim to solve future struggles.[59]

In addition to their position statement, Commissioner Edgar also signed off on the Consulting Committee's design for implementation of their ideas.[60] The Committee begins their implementation plan by defining confluence of cultures and stating why a need existed for this change in instruction and curriculum. Issued just a couple months after the Commission on Civil Rights report on the San Antonio hearings, not only does this opening to their plan acknowledge the existence of a majority culture, described as "white, Christian, Anglo-American," that dominates American society and education, but they also emphasize the impact the lack of multicultural curriculum has had on non-white students.[61] The committee wrote, "This is by no means a new educational concept. There has for some years been a growing awareness among curriculum specialists of a void that exists both in teacher preparation and in instructional materials for meeting many of the needs of pupils from a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual society that

[59] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, May 4, 1970, p.41-54 Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[60] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, May 4, 1970, p.43, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[61] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, May 4, 1970, p.45, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

characterizes Texas."[62] They go on to write that, "Members of minority groups, generally speaking, do not see themselves and their accomplishment in the instructional media."[63] The committee also acknowledged that this lack of understanding of contributions and culture of non-white groups has led to a majority of white teachers who have no understanding of the "problems and characteristics" of their Black and Brown students.[64] Ultimately, the committee decided on nine priority areas for the implementation of their recommendations. The first was to create a statewide curriculum for all subjects that reflected the various cultures of the state. The committee recommended that any curriculum planning for history should consult "historical resources" to attempt to have an accurate portrayal of history in classrooms. The committee believed teachers and students should take advantage of federal programs that promoted intercultural education as a method for expanding their understanding of other cultural groups. Several of their recommendations dealt with language. They recommended "preserving and strengthening" the many languages used in Texas, study the speech and cultural patterns of various ethnic groups, and expansion of bilingual programs. The committee also suggested a study of vocational and gifted and talented programs to be sure districts were utilizing them appropriately rather than ushering non-white students into the former while limiting their opportunities for the later. The final recommendation concerned testing. The committee stated, "schools should make every effort to perform a guidance and testing function which is culture

[62] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, May 4, 1970, p.45, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[63] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, May 4, 1970, p.45, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[64] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, May 4, 1970, p.45, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

fair rather than discriminatory . . . most aptitude and achievement tests are based on national norms and reflect only the dominant middleclass culture patterns."[65]

The SBOE did not follow through with all of the committee's recommendations with fidelity nor did they provide significant financial support to implement these liberal ideas. Nonetheless, over the next few years, the work of the committee is certainly present in the SBOE's discussion of textbook requirements, teacher training institutions, and bilingual education. Anytime the board considered any of these there was always a requirement that they included the confluence committee's recommendations. In May 1972 the board required that content for selected textbooks for fourth grade Texas history included, "the book shall have a strong confluence of culture theme, including stories and accounts of those from a number of cultural groups who settled and developed the State and region."[66] For fifth grade the required content had to reflect that "cultural diversity has been and continues to be a powerful influence in structuring the social system and in enriching the National."[67] By including the committee's language in the requirements for textbooks, the SBOE proceeded as though they were following through with CCTC's directives; however, the SBOE also continued to uplift a white-centric narrative. For example, In 1977 the SBOE required that all American History and Citizenship textbooks for grades one through eight were ones "in which the Confederacy shall be fairly represented" and as late as 1986 the SBOE textbook committee continued to ask publishers to include "the role of Hispanics in Texas history"—suggesting that the task remained

[65] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, May 4, 1970, p.46-52, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[66] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, May 13, 1972, p.48, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[67] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, May 13, 1972, p.50, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

incomplete.[68] In 1972, the board authorized a pilot in-service training for teachers, administrators, and counselors at the Institute of Texas Cultures as recommended by the confluence committee. The board approved a small budget of $1,190, approximately $8,800 in today's money, for the entire conference to cover the honoraria and travel costs of the keynote speakers, printing services, and a film rental. Participants had to secure their own funds to attend.[69] The board did not continue to offer similar training in the following years. Instead, the SBOE required that all teacher training programs at universities and colleges include one course in multicultural education. Considering the state's commitment to local control, the board did not make any of the committee's recommendations regarding curriculum mandatory nor did they encourage or provide funds to local districts to implement curriculum changes. The CCTC's ideas faded throughout the 1970s as did the influence of their work on the board. They are mentioned in the board meeting minutes a few times when the committee members resigned or when the board authorized new members.

At the same March 1969 meeting when the board established the CCTC, the board members also discussed and approved the circulation of proposed changes to the order of content in Social Studies courses. The conversation, however, went beyond just the order of courses. The discussion, although separate from the confluence of cultures inquiry, opened up a possibility for foundational changes to both the content and pedagogical practices in K-12 Social Studies classes in Texas. After a three year study that included a few schools, teacher preparation and educational organizations, and the Texas Council for the Social Studies (TCSS), the board considered alterations to the structure of the subject. The most significant recommendations from

[68] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, October 8, 1977, p.20; October 30 and November 6-8, 1986, p.200, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library

[69] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, May 13, 1972, p.99-100, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

the TCSS included a deliberate effort to focus on teaching skills and critical thinking rather than the "traditional approach" that emphasized "memorization of content."[70] Additionally, the proposal suggested the creation of ethnic studies courses titled "American Culture Studies" that emphasized the "multi-ethic nature of American society in Texas."[71] The short discussion ended with a general agreement to distribute the gleaned ideas from the study to various schools to solicit feedback.[72]

The Texas Council of the Social Studies, an organization that was originally a branch of the Texas Education Agency and revived by a group of social studies educators in the 1940s, provided the SBOE with recommendations based on their extensive research and expertise.[73] The state of world affairs, including the curriculum demands from Chicano groups in the late 1960s led this group of more than a thousand social studies educators and professional historians to begin discussions about the structure and content of the subject in Texas schools.[74] They formed committees to focus on elementary and secondary social studies, surveyed teachers in districts across the state, and consulted the most current research on how children learn, to write an extensive report for the SBOE. In March 1968, a year prior to their official recommendations, the elementary committee, charged with deciding on content that incorporated interdisciplinary and inquiry-based approaches, suggested that the social studies program for K-6 follow a theme of "Man." They divided the theme into six categories, Man in his environment, Man in his heritage,

[70] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, March 3, 1969, p.7, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[71] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, March 3, 1969, p.7, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[72] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, March 3, 1969, p.8, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[73] "About TXCSS," Texas Council for the Social Studies, 2023, https://txcss.net/about.

[74] "Texas Council for the Social Studies Executive Board Meeting," Pilot Project-Membership, 71-72, Texas Council for the Social Studies Records, 1957-2012, Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, the minutes for this meeting state that the TCSS membership as of June 1, 1969 was 1,533 up from 1,258 from the previous year.

Man and his culture, Man and his institutions, Man and his groups, and Man and his ideas. According to the committee this thematic approach would allow educators to build on basic concepts like a child's community to more complex ideas including philosophy. The committee was also tasked with considering the materials and teacher training needed to make changes to the elementary school social studies program. They stated that a single textbook was no longer sufficient to teach and suggested a "multimedia approach" with materials from a variety of sources. For teachers to be successful in their social studies classrooms they needed access to these materials, should understand how children learn, employ a "more scholarly approach," and use diverse techniques to engage their students.[75] Although their initial discussions regarding the elementary program did not specifically call for the teaching of diverse cultures, allowing students to begin their introduction to social studies with an exploration of their own families, homes, and community would certainly provide the opportunity for young Mexicanos to see themselves in their classroom lessons.

The secondary committee then laid out a suggested structure for grades seven through twelve social studies with changes to the methods of teaching away from memorization of facts. They also recommended world history courses include more global content rather than just western nations and that government courses introduce concepts found in political science rather than a focus on the structure and function of American government.[76] TCSS members were aware of the social movements taking place and the implications for the teaching and learning of history. The 1968 TCSS conference included a presentation from students titled "What Student Rebels and Nonconformists Are Saying," and a general assembly session that discussed

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[75] "Report of the Elementary Group of the Social Studies Curriculum Committee (ad hoc)," Constitution, 1969-1970, Texas Council for the Social Studies Records, 1957-2012, Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

[76] "Report of the Secondary Group of the Social Studies Curriculum Committee (ad hoc)," Constitution, 1969-1970, Texas Council for the Social Studies Records, 1957-2012, Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

Vietnam, "Black Power," and "Valley Farm Workers." These sessions were structured with "two opposing speakers" and current teacher who provided and analysis on how educators could apply these topics to their classroom instruction.[77]

The TCSS Curriculum Committee meet again in October 1968 at the Fort Worth ISD administration building for a full day to discuss the responses they received from the recommendations they had mailed out the previous spring. TCSS submitted their final recommendations to Commissioner Edgar and to social studies educators across the state in May 1968. In addition to a positive response from the commissioner who stated that he, TEA, and the board would study the materials, the chairman of the committee reported that "over forty persons from school districts representing 75% of the school children of Texas responded to the recommendations."[78] The majority of the responses endorsed the committee's changes to the state's social studies curriculum. The final proposal included both a restructuring of the curriculum in current social studies course to foster critical thinking skills and a more diverse curriculum. The TCSS suggested the addition of the American Culture Studies for grades ten through twelve. Their recommendations state that "this series of courses provides opportunity for students to study a number of groups that have, within the American scene, maintained a unique cultural identity." The courses were designed to "to highlight the particular group's historical backgrounds, traditions, and contributions to the American way of life." These courses included American Indian Studies, Mexican American Studies (MAS), and Negro American Studies (later titled Black American Studies). For each course the TCSS provided suggested content. The MAS course suggested three pieces of content teachers should cover: origin and historical background

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[77] "16th Annual Conference of the Texas Council for the Social Studies," Constitution, 1969-1970, Texas Council for the Social Studies Records, 1957-2012, Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

[78] "A Report from the Curriculum Committee of TCSS," Constitution, 1969-1970, Texas Council for the Social Studies Records, 1957-2012, Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, quotes on pages 10 and 11.

of Mexican settlers in the Southwest from the Spanish colonial period through the War with Mexico, 1848, the contributions of "Mexican Texans" to the Texas revolution, Texas republic, and state formation, and the continued contributions of "noted Mexican Americans" to American culture and development. The SBOE approved the TCSS suggestions and by the 1970-1971 school year a few districts began teaching the American Culture Studies.[79]

The addition of the American Culture Studies to the list of courses available to school districts to implement was a victory for Mexicano and Black activists who had asked the SBOE for an inclusive curriculum for decades. Ethnic studies activists today are shocked when they learn that these courses existed fifty years ago considering their modern-day struggle for similar classes. Unfortunately, by not spending the time or the resources to recruit content experts to develop thorough curriculum for the courses, the SBOE ensured the courses' failure. The SBOE, like many of their initiatives, left the decision and the labor to build these classes to local school districts. The state did not sponsor training for educators to teach the American Culture Studies. They did not collaborate with a university to provide professional development for the TEA's curriculum department. They did not promote the course to textbook publishers. The SBOE only approved the courses. This was only the first step toward making inclusive curriculum available to Texas students even though many Texas teachers and students wanted these courses in their districts.

The work of the Consulting Committee and the TCSS acknowledged the need for a more diverse curriculum that included the contributions of marginalized people and one that fostered critical thinking skills. Social Studies educators across the state agreed. While developing their

[79] "Proposed Changes in Subject Content and Sequence for the Social Studies, Grades K-12," TCSS 1969-1970, Texas Council for the Social Studies Records, 1957-2012, Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

changes to the state's social studies curriculum the TCSS surveyed teachers from various school districts. TCSS also followed up with teachers the following year after the state approved the changes. In 1969, they asked teachers and administrators about the current and most popular electives in their districts. More than half of the twelve districts that responded stated that their most popular electives were courses that examined contemporary issues in American society. Teachers stated that their students "want to find out about such problems in international relations as Vietnam, the Middle East crisis, and the Biafran crisis," and "students are better able to see the relevancy of the topics discussed to their lives and needs." When asked what changes they anticipated in the secondary social studies program several districts including Fort Worth stated that they planned to increase the teaching of "multi-ethnic" contributions.[80] In February 1970, TCSS surveyed districts again to inquire about their concerns and successes of the new social studies program. When asked about the new courses in their districts over half of the responses included all or some of the American Culture Series electives.[81] There was clearly a demand for the teaching of the experiences and contributions of non-white Americans; however, without continued support from the SBOE beyond approval, most districts could not sustain them. The American Culture Series is rarely mentioned in the board meeting minutes throughout the 1970s and by 1983, with no fanfare, the board voted to remove them from the list of courses in need of a textbook because they did not meet the five thousand enrollment threshold

[80] "What are the most popular social studies electives," TCSS 1969-1970, Texas Council for the Social Studies Records, 1957-2012, Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, the districts that participated in this survey was Victoria, Harlingen, Carrollton-Farmers Branch, Austin, Fort Worth, Pasadena, Houston, Corpus Christi, Brazosport, Lubbock, Midland, Spring Branch, and San Angelo.

[81] "Handout F," Pilot Project-Membership, 71-72, Texas Council for the Social Studies Records, 1957-2012, Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, the districts that participated in this survey was Dallas, El Paso, Longview, Mesquite, San Antonio, San Benito, Texarkana, Port Arthur, Fort Worth, Houston, Corpus Christi, Lubbock, Spring Branch, and San Angelo.

necessary.[82] With no textbook and no support from the state, school districts, in some cases individual teachers, had to carry the burden of collecting the resources for these nascent ethnic studies courses.

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights final report on the status of Mexican American education in the Southwest concluded that the educational process in the US "not only ignores the needs of Chicano students but also suppresses their culture and stifles their hopes and ambitions." The report authors recognized the evolving identities of Mexican origin people in the United States. The authors noted that many Mexican Americans had adopted the term "Chicano" as a reflection of their solidarity as a group who were proud of their culture and heritage. They choose to use both "Chicano" and "Mexican American" interchangeably in their report. The Commission organized their study of Mexican American education into five categories: Curriculum, Student Assignment, Teacher Education, Counseling, and Title VI. Regarding curriculum, the Commission recommended that states incorporate the history, language, and culture of Mexican Americans into the all curriculum and instructional materials, make special courses that focused on these topics available on a regular basis to all students, require all textbooks to include "accurate portrayals of Chicanos," end all prohibitions to the use of Spanish at school, develop strategies to engage Mexicano parents and the community, and establish clear timetables for these reforms. Conceding that the federal government did not have the authority to hold school districts accountable to these recommendations, the Commission provides suggestions for state authorities to ensure implementation at the local level. They suggest additional legislation and the withholding of state funds when districts violate these requirements. The Commission's recommendations in the other categories included an end to

[82] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, June 11, 1983, p.275, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

long-term ability grouping that placed Mexicanos into special education classes, requirements for teacher trainees to conduct a portion of their student teaching in classrooms with Chicano students, recruitment of Chicano counselors, and for the Office of Civil Rights to continue to collect data "regarding the denial of equal educational services to Mexican American students." The Commission recognized that their findings and recommendations were "numerous and detailed and relate[d] to complex and highly technical issues." They offered three "basic principles" that "should govern educational reform for Chicano students: the language, history, and culture of Mexican Americans should be incorporated as inherent and integral parts of the educational process, Mexican Americans should be fully represented in decisionmaking [sic] positions that determine and influence educational policies and practices," and "all levels of government . . . should reorder their budget priorities to provide funds needed to implement the recommendations."[83] This data rich report provided educational leaders with the irrefutable evidence that the state and local districts were providing inequitable education to Mexican American youth.

Dr. Omar Garza, from McAllen, was the first Mexican American member of the State Board of Education in January 1973. Dr. Garza was the president of the Edinburg School Board in South Texas and ran unopposed after Paul Greenwood vacated the seat. After settling into his position he proposed a change to the "arbitrary manner in which counselors determine the destiny of our children."[84] Dr. Garza wanted the SBOE to require school counselors to document their sessions with students. To ensure school counselors were providing equitable service to their students, Dr. Garza asked that they log who they meet with, their discussions, and a

[83] "Toward Quality Education For Mexican Americans: Report VI Mexican American Education Study," February 1974, quotations on pages 67, 75, 81, and 71, https://www2.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/usccr/documents/cr12m573rp6.pdf.

[84] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, April 6, 1974, p.9, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

justification for any recommendations they gave each student.[85] After eight months of silence from the board who insisted that they would study his proposal and discuss its feasibility and armed with the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights final report on the status of Mexican American education in the Southwest, Dr. Garza prepared a statement to address his colleagues, the outgoing commissioner and the commissioner-elect. He invited his wife Dora and oldest child DeeDee to the board meeting on April 6, 1974 when he read his statement. Dr. Garza began his statement by addressing the terms Chicano and Mexican American. He stated, "The word Chicano has become popular recently in referring to us, and I am in sympathy with it because it denotes to many of us a declaration of independence. I personally prefer Mexican American, perhaps because I like the word American, and it makes me feel I belong in this land . . . the point is, regardless of what we are called we are entirely united in our feelings about this report. It confirms what many of us have been saying for years." In the next section of his statement, Dr. Garza presented the board with undeniable data, "47 percent, almost half, of the Mexican American children that begin the first grade do not get a high school diploma in Texas . . . Mexican American children in Texas lead all other states in overageness and grade retention . . . Texas leads with 16 percent of Mexican American eighth graders being overaged. This compares to 2 percent in California . . . bilingual education which offers the greatest promise for both Mexican Americans and Anglo students is the most infrequently used reaching only 2.7 percent of the Mexican American population. Income per pupil in districts with 80 percent or more Mexican Americans is less than half of districts 20-30 percent Mexican American." He ended this section stating that considering all of the data it would be a "gross injustice" to not make significant changes to the present system of education in Texas. He concluded his statement by

[85] "Doctor Tells of 'Biased' Counseling," *Abilene Reporter News*, April 7, 1974.

asking for a commitment from the board and the commissioner to act on the information provided by the Civil Rights Commission report.[86]

After this powerful and passionate statement, the vice chairman of the SBOE stated that no action could be taken on that day because the item was not on the agenda and proposed the issue be added to the May meeting after the priorities committee studied the report. The vice chairman then thanked Dr. Garza's guests for attending, encouraged them to return for the following meeting, and moved on to the next agenda item.[87] At the May meeting, the priorities committee members informed the board that they had spent most of the previous committee meeting studying the report and acknowledged that much needed to be done to provide quality education to Mexican Americans but, even though the report provided clear recommendations, were unsure if they needed to establish new programs, alter current ones to be more effective, or whether the problems be solved through new legislation. They asked for the staff of the Texas Education Agency to provide them with answers to these questions and to appear at the June meeting with recommendations on how to proceed. Dr. Garza had his own recommendations ready: allow an ad hoc committee of Mexican American school board members and educators to propose their own solutions, provide funding to local districts to implement these solutions, and lastly abolish the SBOE and let the legislature oversee the Texas Education Agency. Garza was the first board member to ever make the suggestion to abolish the institution. The board did not take a vote on any of Garza's ideas.[88]

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[86] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, April 6, 1974, p.9-11, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[87] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, April 6, 1974, p.9-11, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[88] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, May 11, 1974, p.4-5, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

Prior to the June meeting Dr. Garza's ad hoc committee wrote to chairman of the board Ben Howell. The committee was made up of the Mexican American School Board Members Association, The Texas Association of Bilingual Educators, and the Texas Association of Mexican American Educators led by Chris Escamilla. The committee met with high ranking staff of the Texas Education Agency to discuss their potential role in the drafting of recommendations In the letter to the board president, Escamilla asked for certain conditions to be met to ensure proper communication and commitment from the board to allow them to be part of the process. The group of Mexican American educational leaders asked for time with the Priorities committee during their next meeting, to be allowed to present at the June board meeting, that they be given status as an official advisory committee to the SBOE on the "quality of education for Mexican Americans," that the board give them advance notice on all projected actions in regards to Mexican American students so they can advise the board, that the board provide them will all TEA documents to ensure they are fully informed and able to provide feedback, and that they be allowed to represent all local groups who feel that the TEA and the SBOE are not fulfilling their responsibilities in providing equitable education opportunities.[89]

At the June meeting, after the introductions of guests, including Dr. Garza's wife Dora Garza, former member and chairman of the CCTC Paul Greenwood, a board member-elect Ruben Hinojosa from Mercedes, and Texas State Representative Ben Reyes from Harris County, chairman Howell welcomed Jesse Herrera, the second Mexican American board member. Howell then began the discussion about Mexican American students. Howell again acknowledged the existence of problems and the need for solutions. He stated that "there is no single simple solution" and that they were not "going to brush these matters under the rug."

[89] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, June 18, 1974, p.13-14, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

Howell also criticized the report because "much of the investigative work that went into it [the Commission's report] was done several years ago."[90] He informed the board that he received several requests from community members after the board released that day's meeting agenda and that these individuals and groups planned to speak at the July meeting. Howell then turned the floor over to attorney Gus Garcia (not the same Gus Garcia who was an active civil rights attorney in the 1940 and 1950s) was representing the ad hoc committee. He presented their proposal to become an official advisory committee to the board on matters dealing with Mexican American students. Al Ramirez, a member of the ad hoc committee, provided the board with a tiered plan: today, begin implementing bilingual education in kindergarten, train more bilingual teachers, develop or designate a test to determine oral English proficiency, tomorrow, begin recruiting more Mexican Americans in decision making positions at the TEA, the day after tomorrow, begin a program that will provide education and training to all members of non-English speaking communities, children and adults. Dr. Garza then made a motion to accept Garcia's proposal. Herrera, in his first action as a state board member, seconded Garza's motion. No other members of the board voted in favor and the motion failed. The chairman of the Priorities committee then updated the board on the progress of their recommendations. The chairman stated that the committee again met and spent the previous meeting discussing the issues and were still unsure what to do, wondered why local districts were not fully implemented existing programs, and planned to continue the discussion in July.[91]

Prior to the July meeting, Raul De Anda, the executive director of the Mexican American Education Council, an activist group who organized walkouts and boycotts in Houston, wrote to

[90] "Mexican-Americans Ask Advisor Status," *Abilene Reporter News,* June 19, 1974.

[91] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, June 18, 1974, p.3-6, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

Chairman Howell expressing his disappointed in the board's reluctance to make the ad hoc committee of Mexican American board members and educators an official advisory committee.[92] He stated that he will appear at the July meeting and speak about the three principles that should guide education reform for Mexican Americans in Texas based on the Civil Rights Commission report.[93] By the early 1970s, Mexicanos across the state had formed numerous activists organizations that utilized the strategies of both the Mexican American and Chicano Generation. They had also reached numerous leadership positions in local school boards. Even though Mexicanos had allies on the SBOE previously, like Paul Greenwood who made several attempts to compel his colleagues to approve programs for their benefit, the election of Dr. Garza and Herrera gave them hope that the SBOE would finally meet their needs. However, the efforts of these Mexicano organizations had not persuaded the rest of the board to implement the recommendations of the US Commission on Civil Rights.

After months of informing the SBOE of specific actions that they needed to take to address the problems facing Mexican American students in Texas, Mexican American activists showed up in mass to the July board meeting. The audience included a group of Brown Berets from Austin. De Anda spoke first and spoke to the board on behalf a delegation from Houston. He recommended that the board accept all the findings from the Civil Rights Commission and implement their suggestions beginning the following school year and to recognized the ad hoc committee as an official advisor to the board. Angel Gonzalez, the superintendent of the Crystal City ISD, which had become the vanguard of Mexican American educational experiments since the 1970 election of Raza Unida officials, then spoke to the board and listed eight points that the

[92] San Miguel, *Brown, Not White,* 97.

[93] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, July 13, 1974, p.1-2, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

described as the "real issues." His major points included, initiating immediate changes in response to the Civil Rights Commission report recommendations, eliminating "the worthless seven month migrant program," which was discussed in the previous chapter, and to recognize Mexican American board members and educators in an official advisory capacity.[94]

The Priorities Committee arrived at the July meeting with their recommendations to the board. They claimed to have considered all of the information and presentations from the community before deciding on five recommendations. They agreed they needed more qualified teachers and suggested that the board expand their program in training monolingual teachers to be sufficient in Spanish to handle a first grade class of Spanish-speakers. They suggested proposing new legislation to fix the issue of an inadequate supply of supplementary textbooks an instructional materials for bilingual classes, they agreed there was a need for a language assessment test, they recommended that the board request more federal funding to hiring more qualified bilingual teachers, and suggested they hold local districts accountable to the current programs by withholding accreditation. The committee chairman then addressed the recommendations of the ad hoc committee. The Priorities Committee did not believe the SBOE needed the Mexican American ad hoc committee as an advisory group because they already had an advisory committee on bilingual education. They also stated there was nothing the board could do to increase Mexican American representation in decision-making positions and hoped the emerging affirmative action programs would help with this issue. After a spring and summer of intense discussion regarding Mexican American children, at the September meeting the board voted and agreed to accept the priorities commission recommendations.[95] That was the last time

[94] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, July 13, 1974, p.1-4, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

[95] SBOE, Meeting Minutes, July 13, 1974, p.14-16, Texas State Board of Education Minutes and Agenda, Texas State Archives and Library.

the board mentioned the civil rights commission report. Dr. Garza left the board just a few months later in December 1974.

In the middle of this examination of the quality of Mexican American education, Commissioner of Education, J.W. Edgar retired after a twenty-four years at the helm. A testament to both Mexicano educational activism and the white architects resistance to their equitable educational opportunities, just like Edgar, his successor, M.L. Brockette's first major issue to handle as the head of the Texas educational apparatus dealt with the education of Mexican Americans. Edgar's first official meeting in that capacity in 1950 was with LULAC representatives Gus Garcia and George I Sanchez concerning the illegal segregation of Mexicanos in schools. Both Edgar and Brockette did not listen to the Mexican American community preserving inequitable education in Texas.

Between 1967 and 1974, motivated by the direct action of Chicano activists, state and local politicians and educators engaged in significant conversations that sought to improve education for all Mexican origin children, not just migrants and Spanish speakers. However as the 1970s continued, state-level discussions that centered Mexican Americans and education dwindled as did the possibilities that these discussions would lead to real change in the schooling of Mexicanos. Chicanos had proposed changes to curriculum that reflected their culture and history, an end to discrimination on their campuses, more funding for their schools, additional representation in decision-making positions, and access to rigorous classes that would prepare them for college. The new elected officials tried to use their new positions to establish new policies that would benefit Mexicano youth across the state. The old guard fought it and the old tropes of migrants and bilingualism returned as the dominant way to understand and deal with Mexicans. The SBOE's acceptance of the Confluence Consulting Committee and the Texas Council for the Social Studies' proposals ended up as unfulfilled promises. Even though the

SBOE did not follow through with the recommendations of the CCTC and TCSS or provide local districts with the support to initiate their own programs, some local districts charted their own paths. FWISD would soon implement new curriculum that targeted Black and Brown students.

"An educational system which has emphasized the negative factors of the Mexican culture and which has forced upon its participants a concept of 'Americanism' which excludes cultural benefits from other historical entities is the cornerstone of 'vendidoism.' The system has created a person ashamed of his cultural heritage and fearful that any display of his ethnic origin will cause a sacrifice in the recognition and financial benefits mercifully granted to him by the superior 'Gringo.'"[1]

Victor Vasquez, 1969

CHAPTER 5 - CHICANO ERA EDUCATION IN COWTOWN: LIMITED PROGRESS

At an ad hoc Mexican American Leadership Conference held in Waxahachie in November of 1969, conference participants critiqued the Fort Worth education system. They expressed a desire for a reinterpretation of history that would highlight the positive contributions of Mexicans and their continued oppression as a conquered people. Young activists in Fort Worth drew inspiration from Chicana and Chicano college students who, across the Southwest in the 1960s, demanded curriculum that would encourage a new sense of identity that uplifted the "indigenous roots of the mestizo."[2] Chicana and Chicano activists argued that without such culturally-responsive education, Mexican American students would be less likely to take pride in their cultural backgrounds and would only find ongoing poverty and oppression after being rejected by the dominant group in society. The opening discussion at the conference focused on a lack of unity in Fort Worth. Conference participants believed that many of the men and women who claimed to represent the Mexican community had rejected their culture and instead were a product of the forced assimilation in public schools. They named this attitude "vendidoism," or selling out. They expressed concern that not all Mexican American leaders in Fort Worth had their needs in mind when making decisions. Instead, participants believed these "pseudo leaders"

[1] Victor Vasquez, "Report on Mexican-American Leadership Conference," November 7-9, 1969, Samuel Garcia Papers, Series II: Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, Box 6, Folder 11, Fort Worth History Center Archives.

[2] García, *Chicanismo;* García, *Mexican Americans*, 300-301.

were more concerned with their own access to power. The conference almost ended the first night when participants broke into "factions" and began to argue about each other's intentions. Even though they all agreed that none of Fort Worth's vendidos were present at the conference, the first night revealed the divide that existed among them and their ideas on how to fight for equitable treatment in a city dominated by an oligarchy of wealthy white men.

The Chicano movement arrived in Fort Worth in the late 1960s when young college graduates, many of them veterans, began working as social workers with the Community Action Agency (CAA). Within the CAA, at the neighborhood betterment councils and community centers, these young men and women empowered themselves to improve the lives of the Mexicanos in the city. The CAA focused on the economic, social, and educational issues that plagued those in poverty. Many of the CAA board members and workers met through the AGIF but diverged into various organizations often due to conflicting strategies for civic engagement. The conflicting strategies is evident when focusing on these two groups of Mexicanos in the CAA: those on the board who were older, had not received a formal education, but found success as business owners, and those who were younger, identified as Chicanos, were college educated, and chose careers with non-profit organizations.[3] Just as in other major cities, activists struggled to come together toward a common goal. In Fort Worth these men and women who may have not always agreed on strategies found unity in their efforts to fight for equitable educational treatment and opportunities for Mexican origin youth in FWISD. Although their strategies did not include those used by Chicanas and Chicanos in the Texas cities with greater populations of

[3] For more about this divide between Mexican American activism see, Blanton, George I. Sánchez; Garcia, Mexican Americans; and Sanchez, Becoming Mexican American.

Mexicanos, they did push beyond the actions of Gilbert Garcia and his contemporaries that were discussed in chapter 2 and clearly declared themselves as Brown, not white.[4]

Beginning in the late 1960s, FWISD created inclusive curriculum guides based on the recommendations of the SBOE's confluence committee (CCTC) and the Texas Council for the Social Studies (TCSS) that were influenced by the actions of Chicanas and Chicanos all over the state. After several requests from the Mexicano community the district utilized federal funds to established bilingual education. After almost a decade of violating the Supreme Court's *Brown* decision the district followed court orders to end the segregation of schools. The district also added ethnic studies to the list of available electives. However, these efforts to improve education in the district reached only a few campuses, did not fully address the needs of Black and Brown students, and did not consider Mexicanos in the desegregation process, only provided limited progress for Mexican American students and continued to uphold white supremacy.

The district's initial commitment to creating inclusive pedagogy for Black and Brown students represented an opportunity to alter the course of white centric classroom instruction; however, the school board and district leadership limited its reach and regulated content to ensure American Exceptionalism stayed integral to the narrative of history. Although the addition of the *contributions* of non-white people to the curriculum was an improvement over completely ignoring these individuals, this method of curriculum reform during the 1970s still did not reveal the perspectives in history of non-white people. Sprinkling in the actions of individuals from marginalized groups does not disrupt the master or traditional narrative that paints US and Texas history as story of exceptional white men, and a few women, who

[4] For more on this evolution in identity in educational litigation see, San Miguel, Jr., Guadalupe, *Brown, Not White.*

consistently triumphed over their inferior enemies and built a remarkable freedom-loving nation and state. Without viewing historical events through the eyes of marginalized groups this narrative is not disrupted and students do not have the opportunity to problematize their social conditions in the context of history and will not be able to understand their treatment as second-class citizens as result of systemic racism. Without this transformation of curriculum all students are denied their opportunity to feel empowered to advance social justice issues, leaving white supremacy in place.

FWISD's curriculum reform efforts did not move beyond the contribution methods. Billy Sills, future namesake of the FWISD archives center, led the charge to update the curriculum in the district.[5] Sills began his career with FWISD as a social studies teacher and was named the district's first full-time social studies consultant in 1963. He was an active member of the TCSS and the organization's president in 1971. Sills served on TCSS's secondary social studies curriculum committee that wrote the proposal for the SBOE. Under Sills's leadership, FWISD developed multiple curriculum bulletins that aimed to expand students' learning to include the contributions of non-white people to the history of Texas and the United States. He helped write and obtain board approval for "Much From Many," a multicultural resource for social studies teachers in 1968, developed a curriculum bulletin for an African Studies elective in 1972, and led the workshop to write "Americans All," a curriculum resource for K-5 that helped Fort Worth children to "know something about their friend's heritage" in 1974.[6] Sills was dedicated to reforming curriculum. He was well-read in both the history of curriculum reform and modern

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[5] The Briscoe Center for American History holds the record for the TCSS. Although the archive does not have the provenance of the donated TCSS records used for this dissertation, based on the handwriting in these records and his own donated materials in the FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives, as well as the time period of the sources used for this project I have concluded that they were donated by Billy Sills.

[6] "Americans All For Grades K-5," Billy W. Sills Center for Archives of the Fort Worth ISD.

pedagogical theories. He was fully aware of the statewide and national trends in social studies education through his activities with both TCSS and the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). He attended, organized, and presented at TCSS conferences and served on NCSS committees. Sills also initiated and led a TCSS committee in 1969 that provided the TEA and the SBOE with recommendations for teacher preparation and certification requirements. The committee believed they needed to study teacher training programs around the state because by the late 1960s students' interests had changed and teachers needed to know how to teach critical thinking skills so that their students would be able to navigate the world around them. Sills and the committee also wanted to ensure programs that prepared individuals to teach in Texas provided training for future teachers in the many cultures of their future students.[7] Sills was dedicated to the teaching of social studies and the preservation of history. He began collecting archival material as soon as he started working for the district. By 1979, Sills was the program director for secondary social studies and began an archives advisory committee to discuss the "genuine need to have an effective means for preserving the heritage" of FWISD.[8] The school board honored Sills in 1983 for his contributions to the district by naming the archives the Billy W. Sills Center for Archives for the Fort Worth ISD.[9]

Julius Truelson, the newly selected superintendent of Fort Worth schools supported Sills's forward-thinking vision for the district's social studies curriculum. The FWISD school board appointed Truelson to a one year contract after the previous superintendent resigned without notice. Truelson fit the formula for a FWISD superintendent: white, male, and homegrown. He attended TCU on a football scholarship, lettered in multiple sports, and

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[7] "Guidelines for Training and Certification of Social Studies Teachers," TCSS 1969-1970, Texas Council for the Social Studies Records, 1957-2012, Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin

[8] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, February 28, 1979.

[9] "Welcome to Archives," Fort Worth Independent School District, 2023, https://www.fwisd.org/domain/1254.

graduated in 1935. His career as an educator began at Riverside High School in FWISD as a coach and teacher, then he rose up in the ranks to assistant superintendent. His first role in administration began in the summer of 1942 when he served as a temporary athletic director after the U.S. military drafted the full-time director. By the late 1950s, Truelson was an administrative assistant to Superintendent J.P. Moore, then became the assistant business manager in 1960, and the assistant superintendent for Junior High Schools in 1964. His first major initiative as an assistant superintendent was to study and make recommendations to the board regarding “the dropout problem.”[10] In 1966, Superintendent Busby assigned Truelson to the role of assistant superintendent of the newly organized division of instruction. The following year Truelson presented the school board with an extensive pilot program, a “blueprint for the future,” titled Project 1978 to improve instruction across all grade levels on all campuses over the following twelve years.[11] Truelson’s Project 1978, prior to the state’s reversal of the law that prohibited the use of Spanish in school instruction, included a pilot for bilingual classes in schools with high populations of Spanish-speakers and where bilingual teachers were already working.[12] Just a few months later in late June 1967, Superintendent Busby, who often conflicted with school board members, resigned. The board named Truelson as superintendent on July 5th. Truelson signed a one year contract and understood that should the board find a “better qualified” person then he would be “very happy to work under that person.”[13] After a nationwide search the board unanimously chose Truelson. Even though the board hoped to “attack at the top the in-breeding” and hire someone from outside the district, in an effort to clear up any accusations of nepotism,

[10] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, February 12, 1964.

[11] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, March 22, 1967.

[12] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, March 22, 1967.

[13] Kathi Clough, “Julius Truelson Named Head of City Schools,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 6, 1967.

board president Loyd Turner stated that, "we don't claim that Mr. Truelson is the best superintendent in the United States, but no better ones applied for the job." Truelson also meet the board's list of twenty-five qualifications for superintendent that included: excellent health, high moral character, and pleasing personal appearance.[14] Truelson's first year as superintendent was also the first year that FWISD claimed to have fulfilled court orders and achieved full integration. However, throughout Truelson's tenure as superintendent, he continued to face lawsuits and demands from both the Black and Brown communities of the city regarding sustained segregation. Truelson also oversaw the opening of a bilingual program and the diversifying of the district's social studies curriculum.

Billy Sills, with the support of Superintendent Truelson, followed through with TCSS proposals for social studies curriculum reforms. Truelson's previous position as the assistant superintendent of instruction made him keenly aware of the need for consistent curriculum updates to meet students' needs and to keep them engaged. At the September 1968 board meeting, President Turner addressed a letter he received from the Community Action Agency. The group requested that the district add a course in "Negro history" for high schools. Turner asked Truelson to report back at the meeting in December about the "possibility and advisability of such a course." Truelson stated that he would present a "position paper" on the topic and make a recommendation for implementation at mid-term.[15]

Rather than a course that focused solely on Black history, at the December meeting Billy Sills, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction James Bailey, and Director of Secondary Instruction Nancy Vick presented the board with supplementary material that included the contributions of all ethnic groups to the history of the nation for use in eighth and eleventh grade

[14] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, March 6, 1968.

[15] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, September 11, 1968.

American history courses. Truelson began the presentation by stating that they were looking for the board to approve the district's new "philosophy and approach for teaching the multi-cultural history." Bailey stated, "we are attempting to solve a very complex problem that can be stated in rather simple terms—our social studies curriculum at present does not do an adequate job of representing the various ethnic and cultural groups." Speaking for himself, Sills, and Vick, he continued, "we feel that in the society in which we live today this problem must be corrected as quickly as possible." Bailey acknowledge that history textbooks did not have "ample or correct coverage" of ethnic groups and hoped that textbook publishers would fix this omission by the next adoption. In the meantime, he believed these new materials could "so far as humanly possible" teach FWISD students "history as it really was." As hopeful as this sentiment seems, Bailey and presumably the other district officials were only willing to recommend the use of these supplementary materials instead of considering the request from the community for a designated course in Black history. Bailey stated that a Black history course would "be overcorrecting the pendulum swing." Sills organized and facilitated a workshop titled "Much from Many" over the fall semester. During the workshop sessions, secondary social studies teachers, studied the contributions of "Negroes, Mexican-Americans, and other ethnic groups" to American history. There is no indication that any of these teachers had expertise or, at the very least, lived experience as Mexican Americans to decide what or who should be included in the curriculum supplement.

The teachers selected fifty-two individuals from these groups to highlight. They wrote a biographical sketch for each individual and planned to provide suggestions on how to incorporate each person into current lessons. According to Vick, this would offer students "a more nearly true history of our nation" with the goal of providing opportunities for students to "develop a positive self-image" and to build "respect and understanding of his fellow

Americans." Using Title II funds, federally earmarked to support effective instruction, the district planned to provide teachers with history filmstrips, transparencies, classroom reference books, and library books. Vick stated that "commercially-produced" materials would mostly focus on Black history because "material dealing with Mexican-American contributions are almost non-existent." Vick ended her statement by recognizing the work of Sills in leading this effort and ensuring the board that this work was only the beginning. The board voted unanimously to approve the proposal to integrate "multi-cultural history in the American History courses."[16]

Sill, Vick, and Bailey attended the following board meeting in January and presented the board with the complete multi-ethnic program. District officials titled the final product, "Much From Many, A Resource Book for Secondary Social Studies Teachers." Truelson provided board members with a copy of the completed resource book at the beginning of the meeting. Trustee Reverend John Leatherbury objected to the materials because of the "indefinite references" throughout the book like "some say," and he believed "many ethnic groups were omitted." The new curriculum included Black Americans, "Mexican Texans," Mexican Americans, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, Japanese Americans, Jewish Americans, and Chinese Americans. Leatherbury was not satisfied without the inclusion of more white ethnic groups. Leatherbury stated he would approve if this was going to be for "Black History" but otherwise it was not inclusive enough. He also "protested inclusion of certain individuals because of their Communistic associations," specifically the Langston Hughes. After Leatherbury voiced his concerns, Truelson paused the discussion and suggested postponing the vote to the next meeting so that everyone had time to review the material thoroughly.[17] Leatherbury continued to voice

[16] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, December 11, 1968.

[17] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, January 29, 1969.

his objections to the resource book outside of the board meeting. He stated to the press that he was not happy with the product because it "does not adequately represent all minority groups, contains biographies of some persons of questionable loyalty and was hurried into production to please somebody."[18]

At the February meeting, Truelson told the board members that district staff listened to Leatherbury's concerns and had made minor changes and that he recommended that the board now approve the resource book. Bailey reported that the district staff will address all the "indefinite references" and rewrite them. He then focused on Leatherbury's issues with the inclusion of Langston Hughes who "admitted sympathies toward the communist movement." Bailey presented a portion of Hughes' testimony at a hearing before Senator Joseph McCarthy where he denounced communism and expressed love of democracy and regret for his earlier work that expressed support of communism. Bailey conceded that their initial biography of Hughes was incomplete and after considering Leatherbury's concerns they updated his section to include his ideological evolution. Bailey stated that this inclusion "will make the life of Langston Hughes a valuable vehicle for teaching how democracy triumphs over communism when the true nature of each is known." Hughes' updated section included a paragraph that discussed his hearing and testimony. In the "utilization and placement" section the writers suggested teachers in high school classrooms research Hughes and "have a class discussion upon the false promises of communism which ensnared Hughes" and to "help the class examine the resultant consequences of this action."[19]

Vick defended the heavy focus on Black contributions to American history in the resource guide. She provided the board with demographic data for the city and the district. Based

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[18] "Parents Decry 'Sex Education" In Health Class," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, January 30, 1969.

[19] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, February 12, 1969.

on research from the Chamber of Commerce, Fort Worth in 1968 was 81.81% white, including 6% with Spanish surnames, 17.91% Black, and .28% others. The school district had 58,286 "Anglo Americans," 20,369 "Negro Americans," 7,572 "Mexican Americans," 101 "Indian Americans," and 71 "Oriental." Vick then stated that "because, in former years, the textbooks were written primarily for the Anglo-Americans, Anglo children have been able to identify with the characters, historical and fictional." She continued, "we had assumed all children could identify with them, but now psychologists and anthropologists tell us this has not been true." This initial publication aimed "to attack this problem from the area of Fort Worth's greatest need." She then restated that they planned additions to the resource book as materials and research become available. Vick also pointed out that this book was a supplement; therefore, only individuals left out or inadequately covered in the textbook were included. Vick reassured the board that they were not pressured from any outside individuals or groups. They were only motivated by their "own convictions that this is the right thing to do" to respond to the "changing nature of our society." Vick stated that "our country represents a confluence of cultures, each unique and valuable in its own right." Vick then requested the board approve the adoption of the "Much From Many" program.[20] Even though Vick believed no outside agitation influenced their decisions to write this supplementary curriculum, the language she used to justify their efforts reflected the SBOE's curriculum reforms that Chicanx and activism did persuade.

Before the board voted on the program, Dr. Eck Prud'homme, the president of the Greater Fort Worth Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ALCU), read a statement in support of the resource book. Prud'homme stated, "the Fort Worth School Board is to be commended for moving to correct an error of long-standing: the exclusion from the course of

[20] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, February 12, 1969.

study of certain individuals whose contributions were great but whose color was dark." He then addressed Leatherbury's concerns about Langston Hughes and stated that the ALCU objected to any effort to censor school curricula. Prud'homme ended his statement by demonstrating the hypocrisy of leaving Hughes out because of his political ideology while continuing to teach "such men as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, who were slaveowners, the polygamist Brigham Young, and a host of white writers including John Steinbeck and Ernest Hemingway who wrote sympathetic of Communism."[21]

These presentations and reassurances that the district would continue to add to the resource book did not sway Leatherbury. Vice president of the board, Bill Elliott also had reservations. Elliott made a motion to postpone the vote and for the district staff continue to study and bring a more complete product to the board at a later date. Leatherbury seconded the motion. They were out voted by the other five members of the board. The board then voted five to two to approve the materials for use in American history classes and planned for "the program [to] be constantly improved and updated."[22]

FWISD's follow through on both SBOE and TCSS recommendations in developing their own multi-ethnic curriculum is commendable; however, these new historical interpretations the district acknowledged only considered the *contributions* of "minority ethnic groups," but did not aim to break away from the traditional narrative. Truelson stated that "these materials are to be integrated with the traditional units of history. Only in this way can we teach students history as it really happened. Only in this way can teachers build each student's own self-image and, at the same time, help him develop respect and understanding of his fellow American." He also emphasized that "this publication marks the beginning—not the end—of this resource guide."

[21] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, February 12, 1969.

[22] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, February 12, 1969.

The district gave the guide to teachers in a loose-leaf binder "so that subsequent workshops can add to it as information and circumstances permit."[23] The introduction to the resource guide demonstrates the potential this initiative had in creating real change for students of color in the district, as well as its limitations. The resource guide described history as "never finalized" and underscored the need to allow students to learn by playing "the role of the historian" to "promote his knowledge of historical interpretations."[24] Additionally, the district highlighted the need for "constant improvement through planned learning opportunities" for all teachers. The introduction states, "it behooves teachers to recognize that it is wise in historical studies to grant occasional credit to individuals—little-noted, isolated, or even anonymous—who, without mankind's awareness, directed and molded aspects of heritage."

The guidebook author's descriptions and suggested integration of Mexican American individuals is at times completely inaccurate and at others precise and push beyond just their contributions to American history. Out of the fifty-two individuals in the "Much From Many" guidebook seven are Mexican American. Three Tejanos from the Texas Revolutionary period: Juan Seguín, Jose Antonio Navarro, and Lorenzo de Zavala, and four Mexican Americans active during the 1960s: Richard Pancho Gonzales, Henry B. Gonzalez, Edward R. Roybal, and Roy L. Barrera are included. Born in Tejas when it was still ruled by Spain and a significant figure in the fight for Texas independence from Mexico, Seguín's section in the guide suggests high school teachers compare his contributions to the "foreigners or immigrants who fought for the United States in the War for American Independence." Although the curriculum labels Seguín a foreigner, he was born in Texas. Leaving out the stories of American immigrants in the Republic of Texas that pushed out and stole the land of Tejanos through violence and intimidation,

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[23] "Much From Many: A Resource Book for Secondary Social Studies Teachers," FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives.
[24] "Much From Many: A Resource Book for Secondary Social Studies Teachers," FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives.

Seguín's bio in this curriculum states that "Seguín returned to Mexico because he preferred that Texas remain an independent republic."[25] Richard Pancho Gonzales was an accomplished Mexican American tennis player born in Los Angeles who, according to the curriculum, published a book in 1962 titled *Tennis* that he "dedicated 'to the youth of America—in an endeavor to help them achieve happiness in a noble way of life through a clean, healthy, wholesome activity.'"[26] The guidebook refers to Gonzales as a Mexican American but also suggested to teach about the contributions of immigrants to sports when they discussed Gonzales. The guidebook's coverage of US Congressmen Henry B. Gonzalez and Edward Roybal gave students a small opportunity to think critically about their nation. Authors suggested for teachers to highlight the lack of ethnic representation in Congress when they covered Congressman Gonzalez and recommended asking students when they taught about him to "consider why this has been true."[27] For Roybal, the guidebook authors wrote for high school teachers, "have the class research the type of role usually assigned to the Mexican-American; then discuss the problems inherent for those of the ethnic group as a result of the designation."[28] Even though this suggestion is more than just considering Roybal's contributions and advanced for the era, the use of passive voice in the writing, much like textbooks today, did not point students directly to white supremacy as the problem.

The "Much From Many" curriculum bulletin did not satisfy the Black and Brown community in Fort Worth even with the district's promises for continued improvement and

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[25] "Much From Many: A Resource Book for Secondary Social Studies Teachers," pg. 11c, FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives.

[26] "Much From Many: A Resource Book for Secondary Social Studies Teachers," pg. 37b, FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives.

[27] "Much From Many: A Resource Book for Secondary Social Studies Teachers," pg. 46c, FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives.

[28] "Much From Many: A Resource Book for Secondary Social Studies Teachers," pg. 50c, FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives.

updates. Charles Griffin and Dr. Marion Brooks, both leaders in the Black community, believed that the resource book did not do enough for Black students. Griffin, representing the Community Relations Commission, stated at the February board meeting that "we have waited many years for such a history and could wait a little longer to get a better program." Dr. Brooks, founder and a member of the board of directors of the Neighborhood Action Inc. (NAI), a community group funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity, took his objections to the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram.* He described "Much From Many" as "throwing a dog a bone." Brooks did not believe a supplement with fifty-two biographies was enough to demonstrate the role Black Americans have played in United States history. Brooks stated, "Blacks dug every ditch, laid every brick, and built every road."[29] Brooks also referred to the district's attempt to write this inclusive resource book as "token curriculum," or just a list of individuals who contributed to American history. [30] Fellow member of the Neighborhood Action Inc., Reverend David Maldonado suggested that their organization take on the burden of writing a history of "Blacks and Latin Americans" and teach kids outside of school just as other "Latin America communities" were already doing. The NAI board formed a volunteer committee to "get recommendations from citizens on what should be taught and how it should be taught."[31]

Billy Sills believed "Much From Many" was a useful resource to help students see themselves in the history of the United States. He hoped this resource guide would address the "recently recognized shortcomings" in the traditional narrative of US history as described by Vick. After the numerous upheavals of Chicanx activists across the Southwest, Social Studies experts had begun to acknowledge that the lack of diversity in the story of the United States did a

[29] "Official Says Minority History just 'Tossing a Bone,'" *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 12, 1969.

[30] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, March 19, 1969.

[31] "Official Says Minority History just 'Tossing a Bone,'" *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, February 12, 1969.

disservice to non-white students. Sills held that all students needed to learn that all cultures have had an influence on the nation's heritage. When promoting the district's multicultural curriculum at the 1970 TCSS conference in Austin, Sills stated that "minorities have contributed uniqueness to majorities" and that school districts and teachers need to "acknowledge every person's right to pride." He told his audience this resource guide was just the beginning of FWISD's new program to address the textbook omissions. He hoped that the district would invest in yearly updates and conceded that the content covering Mexican American contributions was lacking and needed further development. Sills was proud of the district's efforts to add non-white voices to the social studies curriculum. He presented the resource guide at TCSS conferences and meetings and shared the product across the state.[32] Sills knew FWISD did not add enough to the Mexican American story in its curriculum guidebook. He continued to seek out and promote the teaching of Mexican American Studies. At the same 1970 TCSS conference where Sills promoted the district's new guidebook, during breakout sessions Sills choose to attend a presentation titled "The Mexican American in Texas: Three Viewpoints."[33] He took extensive notes when listening to Dr. George I. Sanchez. Dr. Sanchez was an educational scholar, former president of LULAC, and a civil rights activist who, with attorney Gus Garcia, led the judicial effort in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s to end the segregation of Mexican American students across the Southwest.[34] Dr. Sanchez pointed out that Mexican Americans were a diverse population with varying histories and that they "are on [their] homeland—they belong here." After this notation, Sills quoted a statement by Dr. Sanchez. According to Sills, Dr. Sanchez stated, "If Anglos don't like it here,

[32] Billy Sills, "Terrace Motor Hotel, 2/13/1970," TCSS 1969-1970, Texas Council for the Social Studies Records, 1957-2012, Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

[33] "Social Studies Texan: Official Bulletin of the Texas Council for the Social Studies," TCSS 1969-1970, Texas Council for the Social Studies Records, 1957-2012, Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

[34] For more on Dr. Sanchez see, Carlos Blanton, *George I. Sánchez.*

[they can] go back where they came from." Sills learned in this presentation that Mexican Americans in Texas were the furthest behind, educationally, than in all other Southwest states and that Texas has made "no attempt to catch up through reforms." Dr. Sanchez did not have high hopes that the state would make any significant effort to change education to benefit Mexican Americans. He believed bilingual education was a move in the right direction but the "Anglo curriculum" continued to discriminate against Mexican Americans "by omission" and that the state was not making any "concerted efforts" to remedy this issue.[35] This omission of culturally relevant curriculum was apparent to Mexican American community leaders in Fort Worth.

Even though Mexicano community leaders in Fort Worth did not agree on strategies to influence change in the city, they unified under educational issues. In 1969, they held an ad hoc leadership conference that addressed Mexican American educational issues in FWISD. Although the conference had a rocky opening with groups questioning each other's loyalty to the Mexican people in Fort Worth, by the last day these men and women that included educators, administrators, religious leaders, business owners, lawyers, "militant activists" and "barrio representatives," agreed on a path forward. According to Victor Vasquez, who authored the conference report, "the entire conference was a demonstration of newly-found Mexican-American independence in thought and action . . . the binding together of youth, education, and wisdom of age to better the cause of the Mexican-American was the achievement of the conference."[36] Participants included twenty-three men and six women, representatives of

[35] Billy Sills, "Terrace Motor Hotel, 2/13/1970," TCSS 1969-1970, Texas Council for the Social Studies Records, 1957-2012, Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

[36] Samuel Garcia Papers, "Report on Mexican American Leadership Conference." Series II: Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, Box 6, Folder 11, Fort Worth Central Library Archives.

LULAC, Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations (PASSO), CAA, and the AGIF.[37] Gilbert Garcia, founder of the Fort Worth chapter of the AGIF and, at the time, a well-known Mexican American leader in Fort Worth since the late 1940s participated. Also present were several social workers and educators who served the Fort Worth Mexican community for decades following this conference. Eddy Herrera worked for the CAA and co-founded the Mexican American Education Advisory Committee (MAEAC) just a few years later that sued FWISD (discussed in the next chapter). Joe Marquez, also a social worker with the CAA and founder of the United Civic Council and author of *El Chicano*, that both aimed to speak for La Raza in Fort Worth, represented the barrio.[38] Mary Lou Lopez, secretary and future director of the Wesley Community Center served on the Bilingual Advisory Council for FWISD and led the campaign in the late 1970s to push FWISD to enroll undocumented children.[39] When the district voted to continue the policy of denying undocumented children entrance into public schools, Lopez made sure the Wesley Community Center was prepared to provide these Mexican children with an education.[40] She served as the director for forty years. Outspoken women educators Alice Navejar and Charlotte Maldonado were both present at the conference.[41] Maldonado, the only Spanish-surnamed teacher at Diamond Hill elementary during the 1968-1969 school year,

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[37] Samuel Garcia Papers, "Report on Mexican American Leadership Conference." Series II: Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, Box 6, Folder 11, Fort Worth Central Library Archives.

[38] "Minority Views Aired in Latin Publications," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 26, 1970.

[39] "Legal Notices," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*,December 5, 1976; Robert Seltzer, "'Alternative schools' try to help," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 30, 1980.

[40] Brian Howard, "Illegal alien children still have friends," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 15, 1979.

[41] Both women wrote into the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* to voice their opinions on current issues or to report instances of racism and sexism, "Letters From Readers," Alice Navejar, "Seek Understanding," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 13, 1968, in response to the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy; Alice Navejar, "In Protest," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 20, 1969, in response to her perceived racist practices of the CAA in ignoring the needs of Mexican Americans; Charlotte Maldonado, "No males?", *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 17, 1976, in response to an article that referred to women as "a fickle-minded female, always changing,"

became an officer for LULAC in the late 1980s.[42] Navejar attended TCU for her bachelor's degree and worked for FWISD as a counselor for the Adult Urban Project in the early 1970s where she aided women in improving their lives and incomes through vocational training.[43] Victor Vasquez, a former captain in the U.S. Army, had a Ph.D. from TCU in psychology and began working for FWISD as an educational specialist in research and evaluation for the Bilingual Education program in 1971.[44] The work of these vital men and women, that began at this conference in November 1969, provided Fort Worth Mexicanos with a voice and a sustained fight against white supremacy in the city for decades. Together, the participants settled on six major issues they needed discuss over the weekend conference. Aside from a lack of unity, the group decided education required their immediate attention.

The education discussion centered on the lack of equitable opportunities for Mexican origin children and the absence of culturally relevant curriculum in FWISD schools. Counselors and administrators often channeled Mexican American students into technical and vocational programs which limited their opportunities after high school. The system identified Mexican American children as inferior based on intelligence tests that were administered in a non-native language or that did not "relate to the culture in which they have been reared."[45] Participants in the leadership conference believed these practices to be a systemic problem that perpetuated the belief that a person of Mexican origin was intellectually inferior. The group agreed that "the [education] system must be changed to insure [sic] that it no longer produces 'vendidos.'" Instead they wanted teachers to "capitalize on the knowledge the Mexican-American child

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[42] "1968-1969 Fort Worth Public Schools Teacher Assignments," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, August 25, 1968; "LULAC," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 20, 1987.

[43] Alice Navejar, "Death of Kennedy Inspired Commitment," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 22, 1973.

[44] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, October 13, 1971.

[45] Samuel Garcia Papers, "Report on Mexican American Leadership Conference." Series II: Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, Box 6, Folder 11, Fort Worth Central Library Archives.

possesses." They decided to use any political power they had to bring these issues to the attention of "well-meaning educators." Conference participants eventually decided upon four steps to combat the issues within the educational system in Fort Worth. First, they decided to create a committee to study problems specific to Mexican American children and to develop recommendations on how to address them. This committee should engage the local school district administrators to make sure they are fully aware of the racist school practices that continued to discriminate and fail their children. They planned to establish scholarship funds for "promising" Mexican-American students. Lastly, they wanted educated Mexican Americans to counsel youths and serve as a role model for education achievement. The fourth step demonstrates an effort at inward reflection. After years of little success in achieving higher education, those who had beaten the odds needed to encourage and motivate the community with the goal of creating a sense of raised expectations among the children. The conference participants viewed the lack of quality and equitable education for Mexican American youths as the foundation for many issues facing their community.[46]

Even though district officials acknowledged the lack of culturally relevant classroom instruction available to Mexican American students, Fort Worth society did not blame the district for the Mexicanos' underachievement in school. The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reported on the conditions of Mexican Americans in Fort Worth in a special edition in July 1970. One article focused on education and quoted a Fort Worth ISD official, Nancy Vick, director of secondary education, who stated that a new "Ethnic studies recently added by the school system tend to stress Negro contribution but neglect Mexican-Americans," and highlighted a few other factors

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[46] Samuel Garcia Papers, "Report on Mexican American Leadership Conference." Series II: Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, Box 6, Folder 11, Fort Worth Central Library Archives.

that discourage Mexican Americans from completing their education. While claiming that Mexican families prefer to send their children to vocational schools and do not encourage them to attend college, the article also quotes Ray Valdez, a Chicano activist, who pointed out that counselors do not tell Mexican American students about all their options for higher education. Valdez also stated that Mexican students rarely have people who look like them on campus. During the 1968-1969 school year, out of the three thousand Fort Worth ISD elementary teachers, only ten were Mexican and the district recently appointed the first Mexican principal. Additionally, "school officials" cited in the article stated that eighty-six to eight-nine percent of Mexican American students who begin school in Fort Worth ISD do not graduate. Overall, the journalist blamed the Mexican American families' "pride" and their desire for their children to work rather than attend school as the reason for a "lag" in education.[47] For the first few decades of the twentieth century Fort Worth educators did not take any responsibility in providing schooling for Mexican children, throughout the next few decades did not offer programs specific for their needs, then in the late 1960s Fort Worth society attributed Mexicanos failures in school to their own culture.

In 1969, FWISD finally took steps to provide non-English speaking students (the majority in Fort Worth were Spanish-speaking Mexicans) with a program to address their language and cultural needs, but only after federal funding became available, and only accessible for a small percentage of the district's Mexicano students. At the same December 1968 FWISD school board meeting when trustees approved the district's initial proposal for teaching multi-cultural history, Assistant Superintendent Eli Douglas received board approval to apply for grant funds from Title VII and VIII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to initiate

[47] Katie Fegan, "Education Lag Continues: Language Role High in Dropout Problems," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, July 26, 1970, 5-G.

bilingual education and dropout prevention programs.[48] FWISD played a vital role in building the state's bilingual program. Out of three hundred twelve districts that applied across the country, the federal government approved seventy-eight requests. FWISD was one of the nineteen districts in Texas to receive a grant. The grant authorized an allocation of two hundred thousand dollars for four years of which ten thousand dollars was designated for planning.[49]

Educators in Fort Worth were already aware of the benefits of bilingual education but were not willing to commit local funds to establish a district-wide program. With funding support from a small grant from the Central Cities program of the ESEA the district operated a preschool bilingual summer school at M.G. Ellis elementary school in North Side, the campus with the largest concentration of Mexican origin children in the district. The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reported on the success of the program at M.G. Ellis and how it differed from the district's previous methods in teaching Spanish-speaking children. Prior to these interventions, teachers "chatted away in English to their non-comprehending Mexican-American students" believing that "they [students] would pick up English soon enough if they heard nothing else." The article points out that most Mexican-American students "fell hopelessly behind" in their education before they were able to "'pick-up' English." Schools not only denied these children the use of their native language but also denied them a celebration of their heritage. Bilingual education provided the space to teach Mexican culture and customs. By 1969, language experts had already discredited this method of teaching English and advocated for a bilingual approach. According to Mrs. Cherry Aqurrie, one of the three teachers at M.G. Ellis, "we are first trying to

[48] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, December 11, 1968.

[49] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, p.3, March 26, 1969.

build his self-concept, so we can communicate in any language."[50] In March 1969, North Side Mexican parents praised the program, informed the district that a wait list existed, and asked the district to expand with more personnel and space. Superintendent Truelson informed Mrs. Herrera, who addressed the board as a representative of the parents of North Side, that "public school funds cannot be used for this purpose," but he hoped that new federal funding may allow the district to grow the program to reach more students.[51]

After receiving federal grant approval for bilingual education, the district's first major step in implementing the program was hiring Rudy Rodriguez to serve as the coordinator. Rodriguez was a native of Corpus Christi and received his bachelor's degree from Texas A&I University. Built on principals of white supremacy, the educational system in Texas that Rodriguez navigated from elementary and secondary in the 1940s and 50s to college taught him that he should not succeed. Even though Mexican Americans were the majority in South Texas, Rodriguez recalled a psychology professor who spent the entire semester discouraging students to continue attending higher education, telling them that they were "not going to make it." Rodriguez however stayed motivated because of his mother and father's faith in his ability to achieve. After earning a bachelor's degree, Rodriguez began teaching elementary school in South Texas. He had a mix of white and Mexican students until white parents learned their child's teacher was Mexican and removed them from his classroom. By the late 1960s, Rodriguez understood the plight of Mexican Americans in public schools in Texas and the Southwest. Besides his own lived experience of discrimination and miniscule expectations from his teachers in school, he attended conferences and workshops around the state related to

[50] "Second Tongue Not a 'Pick-Up,' *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* April 6, 1969.

[51] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, p.3, March 26, 1969.

bilingual education, programs for migrants, disadvantaged youths, federally funded programs, language development, and adult education. It was at these conferences that Rodriguez first met Chicanos with masters and doctoral degrees who inspired him to continue learning. When FWISD hired him he was completing a master's degree at Central Michigan University in Educational Administration. While in Michigan, Rodriguez directed cultural appreciation programs for Mexican Americans living in Flint and taught adult education using the bilingual method. Rodriguez had not sought out the position with FWISD. He was recruited by representatives of the district who visited the university. These representatives offered Rodriguez the opportunity to build the Bilingual Education program after he gave them a tour of their community school program. [52]

Even though FWISD sought federal grants and introduced the program before other major school districts in the state, they were not fully prepared nor did they welcome the cultural shift necessary to grow and sustain a successful bilingual education initiative. Rudy Rodriguez was the first Mexican American administrator in FWISD when he arrived in the Fall of 1969. He had to create a space for himself, a self-described "novelty," a twenty-eight year-old Chicano from South Texas in all-white environment where administrators had little to no familiarity with Mexican origin people. One administrator attempted to make his support for bilingual education known by expressing his own appreciation of Mexicans by reducing Mexican culture to their love of singing and playing guitar. Part of the original grant included funding for adult education. Rodriguez invited a campus principal to open the first session with parents. After welcoming them and providing them with some words of encouragement the white principal headed out,

[52] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, July 9, 1969; Dr. Rudy Rodriguez, interview by Dr. Max Krochmal and Briana Salas, Fort Worth Texas, September 11, 2019, Fort Worth Urban History Project, Texas Christian University.

waved, and said "adios frijoles (goodbye beaners)."[53] After momentarily feeling shocked, Rodriguez took a deep breath and moved on the with the program. Rodriguez was not the only new administrator in the bilingual program to be forced to navigate racist structures in the district.

Rachel Ramirez Johnson joined Rodriguez in administration the following semester as the Director of Career Services. Johnson's initial experiences as an administrator demonstrated the efforts of district personnel to maintain white supremacist structures in the face of cultural shifts. After she was hired district officials attempted to change her title to coordinator and reduce her annual salary by two thousand dollars. Johnson appealed to Superintendent Truelson. Truelson was Johnson's teacher at Diamond Hill High School. She told him that once a person has made progress in their career they should not take steps backward and that she had an offer at TCU and would not accept less than the initial FWISD offer. Truelson attempted to take credit for Johnson's confidence saying, "I taught you well." Johnson credits her parents for her ability to demand what she deserved. Although she overcame this first attempt by the district to diminish her worth and signed a contract as the director of the program with the full salary, it was not the last time district officials aimed to make her feel inferior. During a 2019 panel celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the bilingual program, Johnson described how she had to consistently prove who she was in every new space that she entered. A supply clerk denied her office supplies until her supervisor validated her status as the director of a department. Principals questioned her position when she was in the field working with teachers and teacher aides. The

[53] Dr. Rudy Rodriguez, Bilingual Program, Panel, Chicano Trailblazer Committee, FWISD 1969-2019 Anniversary, Fort Worth, September 26, 2019.

budget office needed reassurance that she was in fact the director before giving her information about her department's finances.[54]

Aside from navigating this unfriendly and at times hostile environment, Rodriguez and Johnson's first major obstacle was staffing. Although the district had a handful of Spanish-speaking teachers, they had completed the standard general studies programs in college and were not trained in bilingual education. Rodriguez felt pressure from national and local Chicano groups to develop a program that would meet the needs of Spanish-speakers who did not have access to the conventional curriculum that only served white, English-speaking students. With the support of Superintendent Truelson, Rodriguez partnered with Texas Woman's University (TWU) to establish the Bilingual Education Centro de Acción (Bilingual Education Action Center, BECA). Through the use of Title VII federal funds, TWU students in the undergraduate bilingual education teacher preparation program utilized FWISD classrooms to conduct their field work creating a pipeline for trained bilingual teachers.[55] According to Dr. Rodriguez, during this first year of the bilingual program, "we were the blind leading the blind, flying by the seat of our pants."[56] The growing Spanish-speaking community in Fort Worth demanded that Rodriguez and FWISD push forward even though the district was not prepared. A true bilingual classroom involved more than just a Spanish-speaking instructor. Bilingual teachers were trained in language acquisition theories and methods to nurture a positive self-image in non-English speaking students. The addition of Rachel Ramirez Johnson as the Director of Career Opportunities the following semester in April 1970 helped build the bilingual department.

[54] Rachel Ramirez Johnson, Bilingual Program, Panel, Chicano Trailblazer Committee, FWISD 1969-2019 Anniversary, Fort Worth, September 26, 2019.

[55] Dr. Rudy Rodriguez, Bilingual Program, Panel, Chicano Trailblazer Committee, FWISD 1969-2019 Anniversary, Fort Worth, September 26, 2019.

[56] "TWU Bilingual Ed celebrates 50+ years," Texas Woman's University, September 22, 2020, accessed January 6, 2024, https://twu.edu/teacher-education/news-events/twu-bilingual-ed-celebrates-50-years/.

Johnson just returned to the city after working in administrative positions at the University of Wisconsin. She described arriving back to her home after her time in the Midwest as a return to the "dark ages" regarding the conditions Mexican students in FWISD in 1970.[57] Specifically, Johnson was concerned about the dropout rate of Mexicanos, which at the time was eighty-six to eighty-nine percent.[58] Johnson's job as director was to recruit, hire, and develop a training program for bilingual teachers. The federal bilingual grant supporting the program required Johnson to reserve ten percent of the jobs for Vietnam Veterans, actively recruit women, and build a racially and ethnically integrated department that included high school students.

The bilingual education program provided opportunities for Mexican American young adults to provide Mexicano youth with a positive schooling experience that FWISD and other districts had denied them. Johnson partnered with TCU to develop the Career Opportunities Program (COP) to help train bilingual teachers. COP provided aspiring bilingual teachers with scholarships to help with college tuition and in turn they worked as teacher aids in bilingual classrooms. After attending Schreiner College in Kerrville, Texas for two years, Luis Flores, a Fort Worth native and 1970 graduate of North Side High School transferred to TCU and joined COP in 1972. According to Flores, less than one percent of TCU's student body were Black and Brown. He stated that most of the Black students were athletes and then there was a "smattering" of Mexican students. Even though there were very few Mexican students many of them were in COP and attended classes together. He does not have fond memories of his time at TCU. There were no student organizations for Mexicanos. He worked full time during the day in bilingual

[57] Rachel Ramirez Johnson, Bilingual Program, Panel, Chicano Trailblazer Committee, FWISD 1969-2019 Anniversary, Fort Worth, September 26, 2019.

[58] Katie Fegan, "Education Lag Continues: Language Role High in Dropout Problems," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* July 26, 1970.

classrooms at Washington Heights and De Zavala Elementary schools then attended a full load of classes in the evening on campus. Even though he did not have the opportunities to enjoy his time at TCU, Flores was successful in the bilingual education partnership. He graduated from TCU and began a long career with FWISD. He taught at Carrol Peak Elementary and continued teaching while he earned a master's degree and administrator certification at Texas Woman's University. Flores was also a vice principal at M.H. Moore Middle School and a principal at Diamond Hill Elementary for eleven years. He ended his career as the director of human resources and in 2015 was the president of the TCU Hispanic Alumni Association.[59] The bilingual program in FWISD created a space for the hiring of home grown Mexican American teachers.

TWU and TCU faculty understood the benefits of bilingual education. BECA grew quickly at TWU. John Riley in the College of Education and Juan González in the Spanish department recruited students from all over the state. Dr. Leslie Evans in the Department of Education at TCU labeled the addition of bilingual education to public schools as "humanitarianism in educational philosophy and realism in methodology." Dr. Evans explained the merits of bilingual education beyond the learning taking place in the classroom, he stated, "his [the Mexican American child] self-concept will be enhanced if he feels like his language and cultural heritage have significant value. We would hope that we could remove any tendency he might have to view himself as a second rate citizen because he speaks a 'foreign' language."[60] FWISD may have dedicated resources to a bilingual education program as an initiative to help

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[59] Luis Flores, interviewed by Joel Zapata, September 26, 2015, Latino Americans: 500 Years of History, Fort Worth Public Library Digital Archives.

[60] Debbie Dunham, "Bilingual Education 'Realistic,'" *The Skiff, Texas Christian University,* November 17, 1970.

with the districts drop-out rate but the benefits for the children in bilingual classrooms were deeper than more Mexicanos graduating from high school.

The partnerships with TWU and TCU allowed the bilingual program to expand to middle school the following school year. By the end of the 1969-1970 school year, FWISD's bilingual program had eleven hundred students in thirty-three kindergarten and first grade classes at eight elementary schools. The majority of students in the program were of Mexican descent but not all were native Spanish-speakers. Seventy-three percent of the students were Mexican American, twenty-three were white, and four percent were Black. All students could benefit from learning to be bilingual and to discover the Spanish and Mexican culture. However, the students who would benefit the most, those who lived in homes were English was not the dominant language, only made up a third of the total students in bilingual classes, leaving two thirds of students without a command of the English language and without the needed services to remedy that problem.[61] The federal grant supporting bilingual education in Fort Worth increased from just over two hundred thousand dollars to three hundred fifty thousand for the 1970-1971 school year. This increase in the budget allowed the district to being a pilot program at Rosemont Middle School in the south side of the city.[62] The purpose of the program was to evaluate the "benefits to Texas students of Mexican descent in grade seven of a cross-discipline, bilingual studies program embodying the language arts: reading, spelling, English, Spanish, and social studies." In addition to the benefits for Mexican American children the program aimed to "produce attitudinal outcomes which demonstrate an increased cultural awareness appreciation of the language and life-style of the Spanish-speaking people" in white students.[63] In the late

[61] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, June 24, 1970.

[62] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, July 1, 1970.

[63] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, May 27, 1970.

1960s, more than a decade after the passage of *Brown v Board,* FWISD finally began to desegregate their campuses and were experiencing the effects of maintaining a hierarchical and segregated system based on white supremacy: white students believed Black and Brown students were inferior. Bilingual education, which reached less than one percent of the students in Fort Worth, provided an opportunity to reeducate non-Mexican students about their Mexican classmates.[64]

Rodriguez's early success with the bilingual program earned the district national recognition. During the May 1970 school board meeting, Superintendent Truelson announced that the Health, Education, and Welfare Department (HEW), a federal cabinet-level department created to administer federal grants related to education and public health, had chosen FWISD as "a national center for developing bilingual programs for use across the nation." Truelson stated that HEW considered almost three hundred other bilingual programs and chose FWISD because of the "exemplary program it now has." This new federal grant of half a million dollars allowed the district to establish a "National Consortia for Bilingual Education (NCBE)" to write curriculum, develop instructional materials, engage the community and bilingual parents, train staff, and evaluate new strategies. The district would serve as a "central planning and coordinating group" responsible for curating a group of experts in "management, program design, curriculum development, and evaluation" of bilingual education.[65] FWISD quickly began recruiting bilingual Mexican American educators from across the Southwest. One month after Truelson's announcement John Plakos, the former coordinator of Mexican American education

[64] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, Plan of Organization 1969-1970, according to the plan of org FWISD had more than 87,000 students.

[65] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, May 27, 1970.

for the department of education in California, became the director of the NCBE.[66] By the end of the summer the district hired Dr. Juan Rivera, a senior research linguist from San Antonio, as the Associate Director of Research and Evaluation and Dr. Juan Gonzalez from south Texas, an assistant professor of Spanish at Texas Woman's University and auditor of the district's bilingual program, as an Education Specialist to begin building the NCBE. At the same board meeting in August 1970 Rudy Rodriguez gained board approval to hire Dr. Ysleta Bryant as an evaluator and to contract Dr. Horacio Ulibarri for services as an auditor.[67] Most of the men and women hired to staff the NCBE were recruited from outside of the city; however, the following year Victor Vasquez, the reporter of the Fort Worth Mexican American leadership conference and Ph.D. student at TCU, became an educational specialist for the district. Vasquez was responsible for the "development, refinement, and norming of tests and questionnaries [sic] for national dissemination." In addition to his duties with NCBE, Vasquez was also responsible for the ongoing assessment of the needs of the bilingual-bicultural programs funded by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. All of these new hires provided the district with passionate educators who built bilingual education for Fort Worth and the rest of the nation.

Two years prior to the end of the federal grant in August 1972, the school board approved a resolution that committed the district to continue funding bilingual education. The goal of the resolution was to bring attention to the success and need for the program to district principals, teachers, aides, and to the community before the end of the 1973-1974 school year when the district had to assume the total cost. The resolution stated, "because of the deep involvement of the school district in this program and the need for stronger support and understanding by the lay

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[66] "Schools Receive Grant for Bilingual Research, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* June 26, 1970.

[67] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, August 26, 1970.

public and the professional educator, a policy is herewith presented concerning the position to be taken by the Fort Worth Public Schools on bilingual education." Based on this resolution the goals of bilingual education in Fort Worth included to "instill a sense of pride and identity in the students," with curriculum "designed to provide the educational motivation, the skills and social cultural pride that will grant success to the students in school and society." Bilingual teacher goals included developing and expanding their own bilingual skills, to commit to developing these skills in their students, and to consider "the socio-culture of the student and gear the teaching toward enhancing a strong, positive self-image in the child." The resolution ended with the goals of the district: financially support the program with local funds and to provide students with trained bilingual teachers and instructional materials. The board unanimously approved the resolution and made a "commitment to give total support to the bilingual program."[68] Although the district and the board, through their commitment to bilingual education, acknowledged their duty in providing this specific program to address the unique needs of their Mexicano students, they did not consider their needs in any other capacity.

While the bilingual program continued to grow throughout the 1970s, FWISD faced the consequences of building a segregated school system and fighting court-mandated desegregation orders for more than a decade. After ignoring the Supreme Court's desegregation order for the first few years after the *Brown* decision, FWISD faced a class action lawsuit filed by Technical Sergeant Weirleis Flax, Sr. and Herbert Teal on behalf of their children and all Black children in the district. In September 1959 principals at two all-white elementary schools denied the enrollment of both Flax and Teal's children. With the support of the local chapter of the NAACP, attorney Clifford L. Davis represented the plaintiffs in *Flax v Potts*. William Sears

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[68] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, August 23, 1972.

Potts, the FWISD school board president was the named defendant. Cecil Morgan, the FWISD attorney and former SBOE trustee who encouraged the state to leave desegregation decisions and enforcement to local entities, represented the district. Decisions in the *Flax* case forced FWISD to desegregate. However, for the next ten years the district created plans that led to slow and minimal changes in the racial demographics of their schools.[69]

In the summer of 1971, the school board considered two supplemental plans regarding student and faculty assignments after the judge for the United States Court of Appeals of the Fifth Circuit mandated the district make changes to comply with their desegregation order. The SBOE did not want to disrupt the education of white students even after the Court of Appeals mandate and discussed the possibility of obtaining a hearing before the Supreme Court. After agreeing that it would not be wise to appeal to the Supreme Court, Superintendent Truelson presented the school board with two plans the district developed based on "months of study, intensive investigation, and direction" from Morgan. The board then listened and responded to public comments and questions. Mr. Herrera (first name was not included in the board meeting minutes but was likely Eddy Herrera) asked "what is being done about Mexican-Americans," without any further discussion, Truelson responded, "they [Mexican Americans] were not included in the court proceedings.[70] The board voted on parts of the second plan that would cause minimal disruption for the majority of white students in the district. The court rejected their plan and the board met a second time a less than a week later. At this meeting, Martin Palacio, a member of the North Side community and a representative of the Mexican American

[69] Blake Gandy, "'Trouble Up the Road:' Desegregation, Busing, and the National Politics of Resistance in Fort Worth, Texas, 1954-1971, Thesis, Texas State University, 2020, https://digital.library.txst.edu/items/fd512c19-e8c7-4261-bb95-0b5b2a8e8bde/full; and Tina Nicole Cannon, "Cowtown and the Color Line: Desegregation Fort Worth's Public Schools," Dissertation, Texas Christian University, 2009, https://repository.tcu.edu/handle/116099117/4129.

[70] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, July 6, 1971.

Youth Organization stated that "attention needed to be given to the Mexican Americans of the school district," and that Mexican Americans "should be classified as a distinct ethnic group for the purposes of funds and faculty in order to prevent the total alienation of another community."[71] Again, from the board and superintendent's perspective, the concerns of Mexican American parents did not warrant any discussion or consideration. FWISD administrators who were fully aware of the presence and specific needs of Mexican Americans met for months of, in their own words, "study and intensive investigation," on how to provide all students in the district with quality education while satisfying federal district court desegregation orders and had not included Mexican Americans in their discussions. [72]

In an effort to keep control of their school district rather than allow the court to assign a third party to oversee integration, the board narrowly approved a busing system and unanimously approved the closure of two predominately Black middle-senior high schools in July 1971. The busing system created elementary school clusters and transported the students beginning in second grade to another school in their cluster. To ensure continued compliance with a seventy-four percent white and twenty-six percent Black demographic in each school, Black students had to attend their new campus for a minimum of three years while white students only had to stay for one year before returning to their neighborhood campus. Although the campuses were considered integrated with the addition of students from other neighborhoods, each classroom was geographically grouped to preserve racial segregation. According to the district, an even number of Black and white students were affected by the busing plan; however the numbers did

[71] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, July 12, 1971.

[72] As a group the US government classified Mexican Americans as white based on the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that ended the war with Mexico. The treaty granted citizenship to all the ethnic Mexicans living in the conquered territories. At the time of the treaty non-white groups were not eligible for citizenship. Based on this history courts have defined who is and who is not white at various times when they made judgements regarding a person's eligibility for citizenship.

not include how many of the white students were actually Mexican American. Every portion of the plan including the lists of faculty assignments were enumerated based on a Black and white binary. The only mention of Mexican American students in their official integration plan is a clarification regarding the placement of the Black students from the closed schools. The district assigned Black students from the closed schools to white schools with a significant number of Mexican American students.[73]

FWISD's integration plans did not satisfy any member of the community nor were they received well on the integrated campuses. The board's decisions that placed the majority of the burdens of integration on Black and Brown students made the lack of representation of their communities on the board more evident. During the next meeting in July 1971, Black community members made demands for the firing of Superintendent Truelson "because of his inability and his unwillingness to function and carry out the responsibilities of that position," and to change the methods for election of school board members to "be set up where the Black Communities will clearly have a geographical representative to the School Board," otherwise "they will no longer accept decision making without representation."[74] In January 1972, after one semester of operating integrated middle and high schools, El-Asa, who stated that he was speaking on behalf of all Black students at Ernest Parker Middle and North Side High School informed the board about issues on both campuses. According to El-Asa, instead of calling students' parents first, the administration called Fort Worth police officers who then arrested Black students at the middle school, held them at the police station for hours, then sent them to a juvenile detention center. He also described the situation at North Side as explosive, stating that, "[Black students] are being pressured and harassed by white students and teachers and that they are unable to relate

[73] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, July 12, 1971.

[74] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, July 12, 1971.

to any of the administrators at the school." Tom Anagnostis, a white student and president of the North Side student council stated that "blacks have refused to allow white or Mexican-Americans to take part in discussion of grievances."[75] The district was experiencing the effects of fighting desegregation for more than a decade and not establishing programs to ensure Black and Brown students had safe and welcoming spaces to learn.

In an attempt to ease the tension on campuses and to eliminate discrimination experienced by Black and Brown students, FWISD wrote a plan for a racial integration training program in 1972 with funding from the Emergency School Assistance Program (ESAP). This reactionary plan had four components: the establishment of a staff for the program and a "multi-racial" committee to serve in an advisory role, a focus on curriculum revision and professional development for campus personnel, programs developed for the community, and services for students. The district recruited nine members for the multi-racial committee. The committee included three white, three Black, and three Mexican American members with at least five members with children who attended the integrated schools. This committee, one of the few components of the racial integration program that lasted after the ESAP ended, began meeting prior to the racial training program in November 1971 and eventually expanded to eighteen members and became the FWISD Human Relations Advisory Committee (HRAC).[76] The district acknowledged a need to again revise the curriculum to "serve children from various ethnic backgrounds." The first curriculum revision under ESAP was an Afro-American Culture elective piloted at Paschal and Polytechnic High School with a planned update after one semester. Curriculum writers also began work on a Cultural Awareness program for elementary schools.

[75] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, January 26, 1972.

[76] Although this committee submitted reports to the school board throughout the 1970s and 1980s, FWISD did not file them with the meeting minutes and or preserve them for posterity.

The district reserved the majority of the funding for a teacher education program which aimed to provide white teachers training in how to relate better to their Black and Brown students. The district hoped to accomplish this lofty goal with a forty-hour program and planned to train over four thousand campus employees over a forty-two week period. Not every board member was convinced that these initiatives were necessary and voted against approval. Trustee Stan Harrell believed that teachers should learn to deal with students of different races through "direct contact and not out of a textbook," and that he "believed the schools could not justify spending almost a half million dollars of taxpayer money," on this endeavor. Even though the board approved the racial integration program most of the components were not fully actualized including the teacher training initiative or the plans that directly engaged students, parents, or the community. Although the school district administrators acknowledge the need for federally funded programs that they hoped would alleviate the racial conflicts occurring on their campuses, administrators had limitations to the amount of manpower they were willing to dedicate to solving these issues.

With funding from the ESAP the "Afro-American Culture" class was the first FWISD curriculum project that utilized an advisory board. According to Truelson in his foreword to the curriculum guide, the guidebook "reflects the desires of students, the aspirations of parents, the scholarship of professors, the practicality of teachers, and the expertise of specialists." At the same board meeting in the summer of 1971 when Black residents called for new methods for the election of trustees and the firing of the superintendent, Kwome N. Chipemberi, representing the United Front, a Black power organization which aimed to improve education for Black students, explained to the board that "he and others had adopted these names to show they were no longer the property of the white man." He expressed his concern regarding the lack of curriculum that included a Black narrative, provided a list of content demands, and informed the board that the

Black community "would closely scrutinize the school system's future performance."[77] A few months later in October district officials presented the Afro-American elective course to the board for approval. The district planned to pilot the course at Paschal and Polytechnic High Schools then evaluate after a semester. The course was developed by Billy Sills and Goldie West, the Social Studies and English consultants with the aid of an advisory committee that included Black educators and scholars. Board members Bobby Bruner and Stan Harrell did not want to approve the course because of the "group pressuring for the black course and other demands." Harrell voted to approve only after he was reassured that "this would not serve as an opening of the door to such further activities." Uncertain of the need for the course, Bruner voted against approval. Nevertheless, the majority of board approved the course.[78] FWISD sent the tentative outline, goals, and objectives to the Texas Education Agency who not only approved the course, but also suggested changing the name to "African Studies (Humanities)" making the course eligible for credit toward graduation.[79] The TEA believed that the curriculum submitted by FWISD met the qualifications for their American Cultural Studies course that focused on Black studies. The course focused on culture and not history. African Studies included a study of African art, dance, music, and "tribal life cycles," and Black American culture. The curriculum also had a list and biographies of "Famous Negroes," and Abolitionists. The writers divided the class into four units all with the title The Black Man with different subtitles: Culture Self-Definition, His Africanism, His Americanism, and Future Perspectives. Alluding to a commitment to expand the district's ethnic studies offerings, Truelson stated,

> "It is through courses such as this one that good human relations among the various ethnic groups can be furthered. As we become mutually cognizant of the past contributions each group has made to the mainstream of history, we become increasingly aware of the great

[77] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, July 12, 1971.

[78] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, October 27, 1971.

[79] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, February 23, 1972.

> potential each has for still greater gifts to civilization. And, as our mutual respect for one another grows, self-images become more positive."[80]

By the following school year, 1972-1973, FWISD offered a Mexican American Studies course. The course description stated that the Mexican American Studies would give students the opportunity "to study in depth one of the largest cultural groups in American society" and the course would "provide the means for gaining an appreciation of the contributing roles played by all minority groups and a sense of self dignity for those representing the group studied."[81] However, the district did not create a curriculum guide for the course and did not purchase a textbook for the course until 1979 leaving the burden for developing daily curriculum to the teacher.

With the increase of Mexican American elementary teachers due to the growing Bilingual Education program, the district, for the first time, included a handful of bilingual teachers to help develop an inclusive supplementary guidebook for elementary students. Like the African Studies course, the ESAP funded the work to build this guidebook. The supplement that aimed to highlight the multicultural presence in the United States. Titled, "Americans All," this supplement for kindergarten through fifth grade provided teachers with background information and suggestions on how to celebrate various holidays important to Black, German, Greek, Indian, Italian, Jewish, and Mexican Americans. Superintendent of Schools, Julius Truelson states in the forward that, "textbook writers have not always recognized the wealth of cultural backgrounds in our nation and in our state . . . Every child has the right to know, to understand, and to respect himself. This he can do only if his neighbor also knows, understands, and respects him."[82] However, in the "General Cultural Awareness" section of the introduction, teachers are

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[80] "African Studies (Humanities)," FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives.

[81] "A Social Studies Framework, Grades 1-12, 1972, FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives.

[82] "Americans All," FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives.

instructed to "stress the importance of citizens of the United States of America being Americans first, while being proud of particular racial and cultural backgrounds."[83] FWISD's curriculum department and Billy Sills's commitment to diversifying their course offerings, the approval of these courses by the all-white conservative school board, and Superintendent Truelson's many statements on the importance of allowing various ethnic groups the opportunities to see themselves reflected back in their school lessons are impressive; however, these district made guidebooks only sprinkled in the *contributions* of ethnic groups and did not change the traditional white supremacist narrative.

Similar to all the programs initiated by FWISD during the Chicano Era, the districts efforts to reform curriculum did not provide Black and Brown students with an education that would put pressure on the established racial hierarchies of the city. The contribution focused curriculum did not liberate students from a colonized mindset that white-centric narratives enforce by devaluing non-white histories and culture. The addition of bilingual education programs and the hiring of more Mexican American teachers was certainly progress, as was the acknowledgement that the district had problems from racial conflict that they were responsible for alleviating. However, the school officials put limitations on that progress. The curriculum continued to uplift white-centric narratives as the American story. Bilingual education was restricted to only a few campuses. The district hired the vast majority of Mexican American teachers for the bilingual program in elementary schools leaving middle and high school students without role models who reflected their own culture. The district left campus administrators without tools to deal with racial conflict on their campuses who resorted to punishing Black and Brown students with more severe consequences than they had with white students. This limited

[83] "Americans All," II-4, FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives.

progress offered by FWISD led to organized efforts by Mexicanos to resist and upend this continued inequitable education for their children.

"An educational process based upon a white, Anglo, Protestant, middle-class model has not only been ineffective for Mexican Americans and other minorities but also is a direct insult to the minority communities of Fort Worth."[1]

-IMAGE statement to FWISD School Board, 1974

CHAPTER 6 - CHICANO ERA EDUCATION IN COWTOWN: ORGANIZED RESISTANCE

After FWISD offered only limited progress in the first few years of the Chicano Era, Mexicanos in Fort Worth formed community organizations and established targeted programs in response to the school district's failures to provide quality education for their children. A couple years after the ad hoc leadership conference, Mexicanos in Fort Worth organized the Mexican American Education Advisory Committee (MAEAC). Led by World War II veteran Rufino Mendoza, Sr. and Eddy Herrera, a sociology professor at the University of Texas at Arlington and a program specialist with the Community Action Agency (CAA), MAEAC put pressure on the board and the school district to treat Mexican origin children as a separate ethnic group who required services and programs that were specific for their needs. This pressure eventually turned into a decade long federal lawsuit that forced FWISD to make a series of changes, including hiring and promoting more Mexican American teachers and administrators. In addition to MAEAC, several other community groups made the education of Mexicanos in Fort Worth their central focus. The Rosemont branch of the CAA opened an evening and weekend community school that included Chicano history lessons. Fuerza de los Barrios Chicanos, organized in the mid-1970s, sought to provide young people in the North Side community with safe spaces and opportunities to complete their education. Informal ad hoc Mexicano community groups and individuals also appeared before the school board and took their grievances to the newspaper to

[1] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, October 9, 1974.

demand the districts attention. Fort Worth Chicanos also established chapters of the organizations founded by José Angel Gutierrez in San Antonio and Crystal City, the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) and the Raza Unida Party (RUP). Although their numbers were small in Fort Worth their work in the city's barrios energized Mexicanos and led to the election of the first Mexican American city council member, Louis Zapata in 1977 and school board member, Carlos Puente in 1978. Puente was a high school dropout, Vietnam Veteran, and RUP state vice chairman. Even though the school board was more diverse than it had ever been, during Puente's tenure the majority of the members were still conservative and unwilling to make progressive changes that would give Black and Brown students equitable opportunities in school. By the mid-1980s, the federal funding that supported many of the initiatives of the community groups ended and FWISD leaders, much like its counterparts in city government, had successfully chosen their preferred non-white token representatives, granted minimal change to prevent any lasting uprising, and maintained the status quo.

By the early 1970s, Mexicano activists in Fort Worth had made the ideological transition from emphasizing their American citizenship and abilities to assimilate as evidence that they deserved access to all aspects of society to an expression of pride in their Brownness and willingness to point directly to the systems that regulated them an inferior position. Even though Mexicanos, both old and young, in Fort Worth adopted this Chicano ethos and some adopted the moniker, they never fully embraced the militant strategies to change the educational conditions of walkouts, sit-ins, marches, or protests the embodied the Chicano Movement. The population of Mexican Americans in Fort Worth grew steadily throughout the 1970s, but they never reached the majority at high schools that would give weight to these methods. Instead, Fort Worth Mexicano activists adopted methods that bridged both the strategies of Mexican American and

Chicano Generation. The small but influential Chicanos who organized RUP, MAYO, and the Brown Berets chapters in Fort Worth represented the radical front of the city's Chicano Movement. In a 2021 interview Jose "Joe" Gonzales, Lee Saldivar, and Eva Bonilla who were all leaders in RUP attributed the organization's 1972 and 1974 grassroots efforts to register voters and to encourage them to vote for their candidates as the beginning of an energized Mexicano electorate. Even though RUP candidates did not have success in local elections, the newly empowered registered voters did elect Zapata and Puente to the city council and school board, respectively. Puente was also an active member and leader of RUP. Saldivar also gives RUP credit for building solidarity among all the barrios across the city. This solidarity laid the ground for the organizing of the formal and ad hoc groups that confronted FWISD regarding the discrimination of Mexican Americans in their schools, as well as the groups who initiated their own programs to help Mexicanos succeed in school.

Bonilla recalled that RUP in Fort Worth was made up of a small but ambitions group of roughly three dozen men and women. She stated that the lack of funding made it difficult for the organization to survive.[2] Many of the RUP members were also members of MAYO and the Brown Berets. MAYO was active in issues that directly impacted Mexican American communities including housing and charitable endeavors. In 1970, MAYO demanded the Tarrant County United Fund, a precursor to the United Way, increase aid to Mexican American projects and to increase representation on their staff. Demonstrating both their size and their determination, Hope Villareal, representing Fort Worth's MAYO chapter told the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* that they "could rally outside support if needed to get action from the UF." She stated, "we have a lot of people interested in this . . .a lot of other MAYO people in other cities

[2] "La Raza Unida in North Texas," HOLA Tarrant County, March 2021, https://holatarrantcounty.org/projects/.

are interested and we will have their support if we need it."[3] The Fort Worth chapter of the Brown Berets supported their Dallas brothers during a major protest and march against the actions of the Dallas Police Department (DPD) after an officer murdered twelve-year old Santos Rodriguez. The Fort Worth Brown Berets anticipated violence from the DPD. They headed to Dallas with helmets and canteens, some that were filled with rocks, to defend themselves.[4] Although RUP, MAYO, and the Brown Berets did not have the numbers to make the same impact that they did in other major cities, Mexican American groups benefited from their presence and their membership continued to play vital roles in Fort Worth activism.

Gonzales, under his role as the executive director of Block Partnership, and organization that focused on improving poverty conditions, obtained FWISD's approval to begin a non-credit, after school course in Chicano Culture. He recruited a member of MAYO, Henry Castillo to teach the section on civics and social studies. At the time Castillo was an English teacher at Trimble Tech High School. Eddie Herrera taught the Chicano Movement, Janie de La Cerda taught the section on history, and Gonzales covered Mexican philosophers. Gonzales proposed the course to help reduce the dropout rate. He hoped the course would help improve the "self-image of the Chicano student." Assistant Superintendent Frank Kudlaty told the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* that "we're [FWISD] doing this [granting approval] to see what effect it will have . . . I think it's a worthwhile activity."[5] Kudlaty acknowledged that a need existed but was unwilling to dedicate the district's resources to finding their own solutions.

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[3] "UF Studying Demands by MAYO, Shields Says," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* September 17, 1970.

[4] "La Raza Unida in North Texas," HOLA Tarrant County, March 2021, https://holatarrantcounty.org/projects/.

[5] "Chicano Culture Course To Begin Here Monday, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* March 5, 1971.

Shortly after the Fort Worth ad hoc leadership conference in November 1969, an informal group of Mexican American parents and concerned citizens began meeting to discuss the conditions of FWISD and the discrimination their children faced at school. By the summer of 1970 the group decided to file a motion to intervene on the *Flax* lawsuit. Allowing a third party to intervene on an existing lawsuit confirms that the judge agrees that the intervenors also have a personal stake in the outcome of the case and their concerns and demands should also be considered. Judge Leo Brewster denied first their request. In May 1971, Rufino Mendoza, Sr. and Eddy Herrera founded the Mexican American Educational Advisory Council (MAEAC), formalizing the group. MAEAC followed district officials discussions regarding their desegregation plans and attempted to hold them accountable to the needs of Mexican American students. However, after ignoring the Mexican American community's concerns at board meetings MAEAC meet directly with the superintendent in April 1972. Seventy-five Mexican Americans met with Superintendent Truelson to discuss a list of grievances and recommendations. Eddy Herrera, along with the five other Mexican American members of the district's Human Relations Advisory Committee, discussed in the previous chapter, Manual Jara, Joe Arredondo, Jesse Cancino, Mrs. William Garcia, and Gilbert Gutierrez led the meeting. Herrera asked Truelson to hire more Mexican American teachers to match the percentage of Mexican American students, promote more Mexican Americans into administrative positions, hire more Mexican American counselors, train white counselors to be more "accessible and sympathetic" to Mexican American students, expand the bilingual program, add more federal programs that could help Mexican American succeed, ensure that classroom curriculum "reflect more of the culture and contributions of the Mexican American," add more curriculum that includes contemporary discussions of "racism, job discrimination, and 'political impotency,'" and to give more power to their committee. Herrera prioritized the hiring of a Mexican American

assistant superintendent and the commissioning of an "in-depth study of Mexican-American needs by an impartial 'third party,'" over the other demands. Herrera also stated that he believed the superintendent could "reasonably be expected" to take steps toward these goals within one month. MAEAC's demands are in line with the Chicano demands across the Southwest. Schooling for Mexicanos in Fort Worth, just like other Southwestern cities, created an environment that diminished their culture. MAEAC was asking FWISD to remedy this situation by making changes that would create a welcoming space that would allow their children to thrive.

Much like Commissioner Edgar, the white architects of education in Fort Worth were unwilling to recognize how a lack of Mexican American representation in all aspects of education negatively influenced Mexicano student success. Not only did Truelson think this deadline was "unacceptable," but he also believed the last two demands were not necessary and he would not consider them. He stated that the district did not have money to hire an outside company and that their own research department could "be relied on to present accurate findings," that an assistant superintendent works for "all pupils," and that when a position was available he would hire the "best person for the job," without regard to race or ethnicity. Truelson began his responses by condescendingly applauding the group of Mexicanos for "taking an active interest" in the educational issues of their children then claimed that the district was already "attuned" to their needs. According to Truelson, the district had taken steps to hire more Mexican American teachers, counselors, aides, and peer advisors to increase the less than six percent teacher ratio up to match the nine percent of Mexican American students and that they were "dedicated" to make it happen. He stated, "we do need to employ more and we will." Truelson also believed the district had "scratched the surface" and that they were "moving in the curriculum area." He told the group that teaching materials that "favorable reflect the Mexican-

American" only recently "became available." The district After addressing the group's other concerns, Truelson ended his response to the demands by making his own request and placing the blame for their children's school struggles on their own families. He told the group that "the school system is hampered in the education of Mexican-American children because too often their parents—those who can speak English—speak Spanish at home." He requested that the group help the school district by encouraging families who can speak English, to do so at home, and to "do more to encourage children to stay in school." Manuel Jara, an elder leader in the Mexican American community of Fort Worth and the chairman of the board of the CAA, ended the meeting "by expressing confidence in the administration."[6]

After several months of silence from the school board, MAEAC decided to file a new petition for intervention with Judge Brewster in the *Flax v Potts* integration lawsuit. MAEAC choose to intervene to ensure both the school district and the courts recognized Mexican Americans as a separate ethnic group. Both institutions had "lumped [Mexicans] with whites" for integration purposes. Louis Zapata, the future first Mexican American city council member, stated that, "our fear is that the school board might bus Mexican Americans into black schools and declare that they had accomplished the goal of desegregation." FWISD had already begun moving Black students into the schools with the higher percentage of Mexican American students, leaving the majority of white students undistributed and the two marginalized group[were left to struggle over resources. In addition to acknowledging Mexican Americans as a separate ethnic group, Ronald Fernandes, one of MAEAC's attorneys, added that they would "also be submitting guidelines for desegregation and proposals to the court for curriculum, teacher requirements and things in general to improve the educational system in the city for

[6] Kathi Miller, "Mexican-American Grievances Listed, School Board Gets Requests," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* April 11, 1972.

minority groups." Mendoza told the *Star-Telegram* that the lawsuit had the support of all Mexican American groups in the city. He stated that their students "are being left out of the school system," they have no counselors or administrators that look like them and that school officials are still punishing them for "just speaking their own language."[7] MAEAC also claimed that the district had not provided "educational programs which meet the needs of the Chicano children" and "as a matter of history" had not hired "Chicano personnel."[8] Invoking the radical identifying term of Chicano MAEAC members declared their pride in their ethnicity and their solidarity with the movement. Members of the bilingual education board and the human relations committee were frustrated that the district had not consulted with them before making their final integration plans.[9] By the 1972-1973 school year, FWISD had a few Mexican American men and women in decision making or advisory positions but did not consider their input necessary.

District administrators did not respond well to MAEAC's actions. In a thinly veiled threat, Assistant Superintendent of School Frank Kudlaty warned MAEAC that their lawsuit could end the bilingual program. Kudlaty meet with MAEAC in December 1972 as a representative of FWISD. MAEAC called the meeting to inform the community about the goals of the lawsuit and to solicit donations toward the financial cost of the lawsuit. After the district failed to meet MAEAC's demands or listen to the concerns of Mexican American parents who appeared at board meetings and asked the district to recognize their children as a separate ethnic group, MAEAC believe the lawsuit was necessary. The district's acknowledgement that Mexican Americans were a separate ethnic group was the first step to ensure the district created programs for the "special cultural and educational needs of Chicano children." Kudlaty informed the group

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[7] "Mexican-Americans Plan Intervention in Mixing Case," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* November 23, 1972.

[8] "Chicanos Seek Role in Schools Suit Here," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* December 1, 1972.

[9] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, December 13, 1972.

that if the intervention was successful then the judge may force the district to bus their children around the district so that each campus had a nine percent enrollment of Mexican American students. He stated that “such a scattering of the Chicano children would effectively wipe out the bilingual program.” Just four months prior to this meeting with MAEAC, the school approved a resolution pledging full support to bilingual education. The resolution stated that bilingual courses were beneficially for all children. Mexican Americans gained pride in their identity and white and Black students learn to appreciate the culture and language of their classmates. Mendoza informed the audience that Kudtlay’s warning was likely an intimidation tactic and that other Southwest cities had successfully forced the school district through the courts to identify Chicanos as a separate group without moving Mexican American children to different school or ending their bilingual programs. Parents expressed concern that the district’s integration plans were mixing Black and Chicano students. These plans effected the least number of white students as possible and violated the spirit of the desegregation law. Kudlaty assured the parents that this was not the case and they just “did not realize the full scope of the integration plan.” Parents also stated that they were not looking for “integration per se, but wanted more emphasis placed on the distinct needs of Chicano children” and for the district to hire more Mexican American teachers and administrators.[10]

FWISD School Board President Reverend John Leatherbury repeated Kudtlay’s warning to the local press a week after the meeting with MAEAC when Judge Brewster agreed to hear the MAEAC’s petition. He stated, “I think the Latin-American children are going to be hurt . . . if this is granted, they’re going to have to be treated the same as other people . . . and their bilingual

[10] “Chicanos Told School Suit Could End Bilingual Program,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* December 20, 1972.

program will probably go down the drain."[11] The district's threats did not stop MAEAC from following through with their lawsuit. After Judge Brewster granted the motion to intervene MAEAC requested data from the district. School attorney Cecil Morgan and Superintendent Truelson were dumbfounded by MAEAC's request and claimed that the task was "just impossible" because the district "has never kept records on the number of Mexican-American children enrolled."[12] This admission from the district that they had never considered Mexicanos as a separate group who had specific needs confirmed the necessity of the lawsuit. Morgan claimed that the request for the data was based on the "erroneous assumption" that Mexican students are segregated. He stated that "as a fact . . . the schools have never segregated Chicano children." However, the district did segregate Mexicanos into both separate schools and if necessary into segregated classrooms. Morgan told the *Star-Telegram* that MAEAC's request was "filed in bad faith or in such manner as to unreasonably annoy, embarrass or oppress the defendants."[13] After establishing the bilingual program, which reached only a small percentage of FWISD students and only a third of the Mexican Americans in the district, hiring more Mexican American teachers and for the first time Mexican American district level administrators to manage and coordinate bilingual education, FWISD officials were bothered that Mexicanos were not satisfied with the district's progress.

In April 1973, MAEAC presented the district and Judge Brewster a document titled "Position Paper on Equal Educational Opportunities" which included a list of areas of concern and recommendations. The paper listed the physical inequities at majority Mexican schools, the lack of Mexican American representation across district and administration faculty and staff, and

[11] Kathi Miller, "Brewster Will Hear Motion by Chicanos," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* December 27, 1972.

[12] "Chicanos Request for Data 'Too Much,' Truelson Says," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* February 13, 1973.

[13] "School System Attorney Raps Chicano Questionnaire," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* February 15, 1973.

the inadequate materials and curriculum available to Mexican Americans students. MAEAC stated that "curriculum [is] not designed to meet the special needs of Mexican American children." According to MAEAC, the district's materials including books and filmstrips presented "a stereotype view of Mexican Americans." They wanted the district to require teachers to "supplement teaching materials with factual materials that present the Mexican Americans in a more accurate, positive light . . . i.e., the jingoistic presentations of the revolutionary period in Texas." If curriculum was going to move beyond the MAEAC understood that while important, the lack of adequate facilities and representation in faculty in staff was only part of the issues facing their community. Several members of MAEAC attended the 1969 ad hoc leadership conference where participants traced the root of many of their community's problems to the public schools assimilationist curriculum.

In 1973, with the financial support of federal education programs through the Emergency School Assistance Act, Mexican-led non-profit organizations in Fort Worth stepped in to provide needed services to their communities. Concerned about the district's role in these programs the school board initially did not approve the group's proposals. The board approved the programs at the following board meeting after clarification that the district only had minimal commitments for these programs to function. The first approved program was the Rosemont Community School (RCS). Under the leadership of Eddy Herrera, the Community Action Agency (CAA) established the program to build trust between the community and the schools, to grow parental engagement in school issues, and to provide students more opportunities to be successful in school after the "adverse effects of the desegregation process." The CAA chose Rosemont Middle School as a site for the community school because of its increasing Black and Brown student population. The demographics in 1973 of the community surrounding the school was fifty-two percent white, twenty-eight percent Mexican American, and twenty percent Black.

They believed that the RCS "would facilitate greater interaction and awareness among the residents and students." The other Mexican American-led program approved by the board was the National Mexican-American Math and College Education Fund (MACE) tutoring and counseling services. Superintendent Truelson again reassured the board that this program would "operate totally out of the schools" and would not have any financial responsibility. The only expectation from the district was their cooperation in referring students who may need the services offered by MACE. MACE's goal was to provide struggling students who were below grade-level in math and reading with individualized tutoring and counseling. In their application, MACE justified the need for the program based on the "absence of Mexican American Counselors" and the "inferior education of minorities."[14] Through the school board's unanimous approval of these programs they acknowledged the need for these student and community services and their unwillingness to dedicate district resources to them.

FWISD school board members had previously demonstrated animosity toward Mexican community groups. Rufino Mendoza, Jr., representing the Police Community Service Division, requested use of the playground at Worth Heights Elementary School. The group of Mexican American children had previously used a piece of land in their neighborhood to play baseball. The city sold the land to developers and they were losing their baseball field. Mendoza requested to move the bleachers, lights, and all other equipment to the playground at Worth Heights at their own cost. The board told Mendoza that they would study his request and place it on the agenda at the next meeting.[15] The district's business manager reported to the board that he first explored possible alternative locations in the community to build a baseball diamond but did find a

[14] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, May 9, 1973.

[15] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, April 25, 1973.

suitable location. He also met with the principal of Rosemont Middle School who offered their campus as a new site for the baseball field but Mendoza declined because the kids would have to walk two miles to play. The city's Parks and Recreation Department representative, Mr. Campbell told the board that the city did not have any available space but offered to make an in-kind donation to install and maintain the baseball equipment at Worth Heights should the board approve. The business manager informed the board that he walked the grounds while he looked over Mendoza's drawn proposal for the location of the diamond at Worth Heights and he believed it would "be quite crowded." He hoped that Mendoza would have agreed to use Rosemont's grounds but "it was not to be." Mendoza then spoke and reaffirmed his and the groups need for use of Worth Heights. The board discussed the situation and believed this should not be their issue to solve, instead they stated that the city's recreation department should be responsible for finding the community a site for baseball. The discussion ended after Truelson asked Mendoza to check with his community about restricting their use to the summer months and removing and reinstalling the equipment as the school year begins and ends.[16] At the following meeting, Mendoza informed the school board that Truelson's plan would not work because the group did not have the capacity to remove, store, and reinstall every year. Reverend Leatherbury, the school board president then "expressed displeasure with the attitude of the Mexican-Americans, saying that the Mexican-Americans are in court because they want further integration and the people were here wanting a segregated ball field for their people." He also questioned the truthfulness of Mendoza's statement that the distance to Rosemont was a problem and that they lacked transportation. Leatherbury's comments and attitude toward Mendoza and those he represented, without interference from other board members, demonstrated the school

[16] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, May 9, 1973.

board's annoyance with Mexican Americans and their lack of desire to meet these children's needs. Mendoza then told the board that they would accept the offer to use Worth Heights over the next summer but if the district believed the equipment was in the way at the start of the school year then they would remove the equipment and would "forget about using the campus further."[17] The equipment stayed in place after the school year began. Although not a regulation size field, Mexican American children in Worth Heights had a place to play baseball. The Worth Heights field provided the opportunity for community member Ciquio Vasquez to begin a South Side Little League team in 1976.[18] The school board's hostility toward Mendoza and his group of Mexican American children's simple request made it clear to community leaders that they needed to continue to find their own solutions to their children's needs.

The Rosemont Community School opened its doors in September 1973, just a few months after board approval and quickly became a productive space for community formation and engagement.[19] According to Carlos de Anda, the school director, RCS allowed the community to dictate the course offerings. De Anda began his career with FWISD as a bilingual education evaluator. He was the director of RCS until it closed in 1980. In an interview in 2015, de Anda stated that the school received positive recognition and that "there has never been another community school like that." He also credited the relationships he built with other Mexican American, Black, and white community leaders to his time as the director.[20] In 1978 the Fort Worth Human Relations Commission named de Anda as the recipient of the humanitarian

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[17] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, May 23, 1973.

[18] For more on Vasquez's efforts in providing opportunities for South Side Mexican American children see Richard J. Gonzales, "This South Side Fort Worth icon used baseball to keep kids out of trouble. Here's how.," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* September 30, 2022.

[19] "Rosemont School Planning Open House on Thursday," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* September 20, 1973.

[20] Carlos Francisco de Anda, interviewed by Osmin Hernandez, October 17, 2015, Latino Americans: 500 Years of History, Fort Worth Public Library Digital Archives.

award. During his acceptance speech de Anda stated "we feel schools belong to the people, and they should make maximum uses of the buildings for themselves and their children."[21] The community school operated between 4:30 and 9:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday and on Saturday mornings. Throughout its tenure RCS offered the community classes in cooking, gardening, group exercise, career planning, sewing, parenting, and consumer education among hundreds of others. The school had classes for students ranging from preschool to adults. Although the courses were all non-credit, the school also provided academic courses in reading, math, conversational Spanish, Chicano Studies, and Black Studies. In addition to classes, RCS also provided spaces for health screenings for sickle cell anemia and other diseases, immunization shots, community picnics, and movie nights. Within two years, RCS used more than sixty percent of the building with more than a thousand men, women, and children enrolled in classes. Many of the instructors volunteered their services. Rosemont Community School was without question a positive addition to the multiethnic community. District officials recognized its success and in 1975 approved the CAA's request to provide the use of the building rent free after the federal government reduced the project's funding. After the completion of a research study in 1974 on the conditions of Mexican Americans in FWISD schools, the district recognized their needs and the community school provided some of those needs with minimal financial or physical commitment from the district.

FWISD's Department of Research and Evaluation compared the conditions of Mexican Americans students and faculty to those across Texas and the Southwest and made the research public in August 1974. In 1968 the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights began a six-year study on

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[21] Ann Ehrenburg, "HRC humanitarian award goes to director of Rosemont Community School," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* October 19, 1978.

the educational status of Mexicans Americans and published their final report, “Toward Quality Education for Mexican Americans,” in 1974. This is the same report Dr. Omar Garza used to make his plea to the SBOE to address the educational needs of Mexican Americans in Texas. Using the data reported by the Commission, the district concluded that Mexican American students and faculty in FWISD had “the same problems as in the Southwest as a whole but not nearly to the same degree” and that “they [district officials] are working to find ways to meet the shortcomings.” According the district’s report, as of 1973, Mexican Americans made up just over ten percent of the student body but just over two percent of the classroom teachers. The percentage of Mexican American students decreased by grade level from 13.2 percent in elementary, 9.6 percent in middle school, and only 7.3 percent in high school. Overall, only 53 percent of Mexican American students who enroll in school graduate compared to 86 percent of white students. With their dwindling numbers as they advanced in school, Mexican Americans did not make up the majority in any middle or high school. Even though only 13.2 percent of elementary students were Mexican American, they were the majority in seven elementary schools. Unfortunately, the majority of teachers at these schools were white and almost half of the teachers had less than four years of teaching experience. During the 1972-1973 school year only one principal had a Spanish surname, no assistant principals, or secretaries, and only a few cafeteria workers and custodians.

After releasing this report, Mexican American community members expressed their concern for the children and made demands. John Ayala, a North Side resident, began his comments by praising the bilingual program but was concerned that the district was only hiring Mexican Americans for these elementary schools but not recruiting Mexican American teachers for high schools. Tony Morales, the chairman of the national and state AGIF, who introduced himself as a former FWISD student who had first-hand knowledge of the issues plaguing

Mexican American students, stated that the report “did not reflect the problems but the education of the Mexican Americans is bad.” He warned the district about their violations of civil rights laws in their hiring practices and that “they did not want to go to court to get their demands met but would if necessary.” Rufino Mendoza, representing MAEAC, stated that he read the report and wanted to know the districts specific plans to address the problems. He also stated that he wanted to work directly with the district but would consider additional litigation if necessary. Reby Cary, the first Black member of the school board who had just defeated an incumbent in a heated election, stated that he believed the board should take steps to address the shortcomings made clear in the report and the first step should be for the district to recognize Mexican Americans as a separate ethnic group.[22] Dr. Gerald Ward, the deputy superintendent, qualified his statement by first praising the bilingual program then informed the board that the district was working on an affirmative action plan for Mexican Americans. The discussion of the research report ended with Truelson acknowledging that the district need to do more for Mexican Americans but the district first needed the “support and help” from Mexican Americans themselves.[23]

Truelson’s insinuation that Mexican Americans were not helping the district improve education for their community is completely untrue. He and the school board were unwilling to relinquish any power to community groups or committees whose sole focus was the improvement of education for non-white students. Earlier that summer a group of Black and Brown community leaders presented a plan to the school board to establish an official committee, a Commission on the Equal Education and Employment Opportunity. The group

[22] For more on the heated election between Reby Cary and Bobby L. Bruner see Peter Charles Martinez, “Ready to Run: Fort Worth’s Mexicans in Search of Representation, 1960-2000,” Dissertation, University of North Texas, 2017.

[23] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, August 28, 1974.

would be comprised of members who represent all races and ethnicities in the district who had the power to investigate issues of discrimination and make recommendations directly to the superintendent and the school board. The group would also monitor employment practices in an effort to maintain a proper balance of racial and ethnic representation, be a liaison between the community and the school board to aid in the understanding of board policy and serve as a review board for disciplinary action against both students and employees. The self-identified minority community leaders were concerned about the lack of hiring and promoting of Black and Brown educators and the disproportionate number of suspended Black and Brown students. During the previous school year eighty-six percent of the suspended students were non-white even though they only made up twenty-eight percent of the middle and high schools. Cary asked for the board to place the group's request on the agenda for the next board meeting. Trustee Shannon claimed that the school board "never suspended a child because of his race but only because of his actions." Members of the districts Human Relations Advisory Committee (HRAC) were present during this discussion and expressed their agreement for the need of an official committee. The district's HRAC members were appointed by Truelson, only reported to him, did not meet regularly, did not have definitive terms, and did not have any written rules or regulations and according to the minority community leaders were understood by the community as "tokens."[24] Cary stated that HRAC was "Dr. Truelson's committee," and that hardly anyone in the community knew about the group and those who did were not comfortable bringing complaints to their attention. Cary told the board that Truelson intimidated many Black community members. Trustee Harrell then said, "if they can't voice their complaints to the administration or can't voice them to the board then he didn't want to hear about it." Both Eddie

[24] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, August 28, 1974.

Herrera and Mrs. William Garcia stated their committee had done some good work but believed a formal group who was visible to the community and to the school board was necessary to build trust between all parties.[25] The Fort Worth chapter of the AGIF also endorsed the creation of a commission. Manuel Zepeda, the chairman of the chapter wrote to the school board members and stated, "we urge each member of the school board to adopt said proposal and begin its implementation accordingly."[26] The board agreed a study of the proposal was necessary before they could take any definitive action.

A few weeks later, amidst the debate on whether the district needed the commission to safeguard the conditions for Black and Brown students and employees, Deputy Superintendent Ward submitted an affirmative action plan for Mexican Americans. At the first September meeting in 1974 Ward recommended that the board approve the plan and give him authority to choose "responsible Mexican American individuals" to serve on a committee to assess the needs of their community and work alongside FWISD administrative staff to oversee the plan. Ward began his presentation by stating that this plan was a follow-up to the shortcomings made evident by the district's research on Mexican Americans. The district's plan to improve the education for Mexican Americans in Fort Worth public schools had seven parts. To aid in the increase of Mexican American teachers for the bilingual program the district proposed securing the employment of students in the BECA and COP bilingual training programs at local universities by providing them with a "letter of intent to hire" in April of their graduation year. This would gain a commitment from those students before they had the opportunity to apply elsewhere. Identifying and mentoring Mexican American high school students who wanted to become teachers, providing them with summer jobs on campus and scholarship opportunities was another

[25] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, June 26, 1974.

[26] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, August 14, 1974.

suggested method to increase Mexican American teachers. Additionally, Ward's plan suggested other departments assess their needs "in light of Mexican American representation," and establish their own goals and "realistically pursue them" to establish equitable representation. Ward suggested the district make bilingualism as a "priority skill" when hiring school secretaries, specifically for campuses with large Mexican American populations. In addition to secretaries, the affirmative action plan included the hiring of more Mexican American counselors. The plan stated that the need for counselors to work with Mexican American students is "self-evident." Ward suggested using both Emergence School Assistance Aid funds and local funds to make this commitment. He conceded that in the interim "non-counselor certified individuals who are highly interested in [Mexican American] students," could step in to fill this gap. To increase the number of Mexican American administrators Ward's plan consisted of "a planned and systematic approach designed to encourage advanced certification" for "all promising personnel . . . especially with Mexican Americans." Beyond staffing concerns the affirmative action plan included an emphasis on multiculturalism in-service training for faculty and staff. In an effort to prepare district personnel to work "more effectively" with Mexican American students and parents Ward suggested adding instruction in Mexican American "traditions, history, culture, and customs" into teacher in-service program. The final action item in Dr. Ward's plan was to continue to conduct research and evaluative data on the conditions of Mexican Americans in Fort Worth public schools.

A short discussion followed Dr. Ward's presentation that ended with the decision to table the affirmative action proposal. The board decided it was necessary to study the proposal, specifically the request for a needs assessment committee, alongside the future of the HRAC and the creation of a commission on equal education and employment. During the discussion, John Ayala and Juan Maldonado, concerned parents and residents of North Side, thanked the district

for their attention to these issues and appreciation of Dr. Ward's attendance at a Mexican American luncheon to discuss this plan. Ayala stated that their main concerns were who would be selected to serve on the needs assessment committee and whether the district staff would consider their input before making decisions. Maldonado expressed concern that the district and the board were "getting the impression that they [concerned Mexican American parents] are a group of vociferous individuals that derive pleasure from instigating conflicts." He reassured the school board and the administration that they are only advocating for their children and families to ensure equal education and employment. Trustee Cary criticized the proposal stating that the district should remove the words "affirmative action" and just call it a "plan" because his proposal had few action items, did not have a procedure for implementation or designate a person or department for monitoring the process. Even though Ward attended a luncheon with Mexican leaders to get their feedback and answer questions, Cary was concerned that the district did not create the plan with "minority input." Cary also believed any official district affirmative action plan should include all "basic minorities, Mexican Americans, blacks, and American Indians." Truelson defended the district decision to create a separate plan for Mexican Americans stating that each group has said many times that their needs are different. Trustee Elliott asked Ward if the Mexican group he met with was satisfied with the plan. Ward stated that he could not succinctly summarize their feelings because there were so many questions and that the majority "strongly favor[ed]" the creation of the commission and worried that a needs assessment group for this proposal may take away from the commission. Trustees Harrell, Trimble, and Elliott expressed frustration and disappointment. They both believed the plan would satisfy Mexican Americans and thought the administrative staff did well in writing the plan and were impressed with Ward's decision to attend the luncheon. Cary emphasized the need to work with the community rather than writing these plans without their input. He stated, "if the

people are involved in things that concern them, it will work." Truelson agreed that the staff who wrote the proposal should have consulted Mexican Americans but defended their decision because it "is hard to determine who is a leader in the community." Cary called for a vote to table the proposed plan. The motion passed unanimously.[27]

At the following meeting, Mexican Americans lost the hope for an initiative that could create lasting positive change for their community to the school board's desire to maintain complete control over the education of Black and Brown students. Even though Cary pointed out that the affirmation action plan was lacking clear procedures, a monitoring mechanism, and input from the community, the only portion of the plan in question at the meeting was the selection of a needs assessment committee. The board ultimately decided to establish a Human Relations Committee (HRC) that would provide "minority groups" with "opportunities to provide suggestions and recommendations, as well as have a method of investigating complaints." Over Trustee Cary's objections, the board decided that the committee only needed Black and Mexican American members. Cary wanted to have equal representation of Black, Brown, and white members, otherwise he worried that "without whites the committee people will look upon the black and Mexican Americans as trouble makers." Truelson stated that white representation was not necessary since "he had yet to have the first minority bring up any subject that has to do with anybody but a minority." Cary suggested each school board member select one Black, one Mexican American, and one white community leader to serve on the new HRC. Trustee Adams believed that was too many people and Trustee Shannon believed that if the committee was going to be tri-ethnic then it should be representative of the district's demographics. Cary responded stating that "he did not see the reason for this [membership representative of the

[27] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, September 11, 1974.

district's demographics] since the school board is not representative in such a manner." After not receiving support for his desire for a tri-ethnic HRC Cary stated that "he did not understand the other members' [of the board] 'hang-up' by not wanting whites on the committee unless there was some 'subterfuge.'" When other trustees asked him what he meant by subterfuge Cary said, "it would take too long to discuss." In the short discussion about the Mexican American affirmative action plan community members Jose Mata, John Ayala, Juan Maldonado, and Antonio Morales all agreed that the plan needed firm timetables. Morales added that the plan should include all minority groups. Maldonado believed the HRC could do the work of the needs assessment committee. At the end of the study session the board instructed Truelson to write a proposal for an official HRC.[28] At the next board meeting, Cary reluctantly voted with the rest of board for the creation of the HRC after his amendment to change the membership to include white representatives failed. The board agreed that they could revisit the membership after "a reasonable period of time" and if "a majority of the committee members asked it do so." The board also agreed to contact the HRAC members to ask if they want to remain on the board. The board would then select the rest of the membership at the next board meeting.[29] There was no mention of this Mexican American affirmative action plan at this or any other meetings. Even though Black and Brown concerned citizens successfully negotiated with the school board to create an official committee to handle issues of racial discrimination, the board maintained their power through the membership selection process.

With the establishment of the HRC in the fall of 1974, the district had successfully deflected any organized resistance at school board meetings; however, two years later in October 1976 Mexican American community leaders presented the FWISD school board with their own

[28] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, September 25, 1974.

[29] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, October 9, 1974.

written affirmative action plan. Michael A. Gonzales, chairman of the education committee of IMAGE, a national organization concerned with the employment of Mexican Americans in government jobs, informed that board that one hundred twenty Mexican American community members attended a conference on bilingual education. IMAGE and the Fort Worth Association of Bilingual Educators co-sponsored the meeting which they held at the Wesley Community center. He presented the school board with copies of their position statement and told the board the paper addressed a "variety of issues and concerns" regarding the education of Mexican Americans in Fort Worth and that he hoped the statement would aid the school board and district administrators in "better ascertaining the needs of our community and guide you in making decisions that profoundly affect the lives of our children." School board president Bill Elliott instructed the administration to provide the board with a response to the group's request and report back within four weeks. The position statement begins with the phrase *La Voz del Pueblo es la Voz de Dioz* (the voice of the people is the voice of God). In the introduction IMAGE summarizes the findings of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission 1974 report titled "Toward Quality Education for Mexican Americans, the state of Texas 1972 report, "Poverty in Texas," and FWISD's own assessment of Mexican American education from 1974. These reports demonstrate disproportionate number of students of Mexican descent who are not succeeding in school. They drop out at higher numbers, have lower achievement numbers compared to their white counterparts, and are unable to "relate to curricula and school system staff." In addition to the student experience, schools to do not provide a welcoming environment for the involvement of Mexican American parents and district administration and school boards have "systematically excluded" parents from the educational decision making process. The IMAGE report stated that these conclusions demonstrate the "unique and distinct education needs" of students of Mexican descent. It is the school district's responsibility to develop programs to meet those needs. Before

laying out the specific recommendations for the district, the authors of the report, without reservation, stated, "an educational process based upon a white, Anglo, Protestant, middle-class model has not only been ineffective for Mexican Americans and other minorities but also is a direct insult to the minority communities of Fort Worth."[30] This powerful statement was the closest a Mexican American group had been to accusing the district of operating a racist school system rather than a school system that just ignored the needs of non-white students. This extraordinary moment would not have been possible without the language of the Chicano Movement.

The following month, the school board again successfully side stepped a community-driven affirmative action plan for Mexicanos. During the October 1976 meeting, trustees received district administrator Ann Brannon's report with responses to all of the group's recommendations, listened to Gonzales read a suggested affirmative action plan from the president of IMAGE, Humberto R. Martinez who had reviewed Brannon's report. Martinez clarified why an organization concerned with the employment of "Hispanics" in government positions had taken such an interest in K-12 education. He stated that when someone asks for the organization's assistance in dealing with the denial of a job or promotion often times the issue has less to do with discrimination and more to do with their lack of qualifications. Martinez claimed that "while they are not victims of employment discrimination, they are still victims of discrimination going back to their school days." Martinez read Brannon's report and believed her ideas were a step in the right direction but lacked "new, aggressive, action oriented items" that would lead to positive change for Mexican Americans. In his statement, Martinez referred to the ideas to increase the employment of Mexicanos in the affirmative action plan submitted by the

[30] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, September 22, 1976.

district in 1974. Martinez stated that those ideas did not constitute an affirmative action plan. He submitted his own plan to the district that included definitive steps beginning with an assessment, outspoken internal and external support from management, accountability, recruitment, goals and timetables, and internal feedback. He added that the goals and timetables could be voluntary or if necessary "imposed by a court of law or federal agency." Truelson claimed just a couple years earlier that the Mexican American community had not supported or helped the districts efforts in improving education for their children. Deputy Superintendent Gerald Ward conceded in 1974 that the district should have included Mexican American community leaders in their decisions regarding an affirmative action plan. Truelson retired the previous year. At this meeting in October 1976 Ward, who succeeded Truelson as superintendent, not only did not endorse any parts of the affirmative action plan or recommendations, he also did not contribute to the discussion. Trustee Cary was the first to speak and stated that this was the second time Mexican Americans had asked for an affirmative action plan and the "board and staff continue to ignore it." School board president, Elliott stated that FWISD already had an affirmative action plan filed with the courts and that they are aware of all the issues this group raised and "will continue working in the various areas." Cary suggested referring Martinez to the HRC. Elliott asked the rest of the board and administrators present if anyone had an objects. After no one expressed any objections Elliott stated that the HRC "could look into this."[31] With those few words, FWISD school board and district leadership made another decision to not work with the Mexican American community. The district believed they were already doing enough for Mexicano children.

[31] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, October 27, 1976.

Even though the school board and district leadership dismissed individual Mexican Americans and organized groups time after time, Mexicanos did not give up fighting for their children's education. The Rosemont Community School and the MACE tutoring program continued to thrive through the 1970s. Both of these Mexican-led programs provided Mexican American and Black students and their families with support that the district refused to provide. In 1977 another non-profit organization, created by members of Raza Unida and MAYO, and led by Jose Gonzalez, Fuerza De Los Barrios Chicanos (Strength of the Chicano Neighborhoods), received funding from the ESAA and began operating in FWISD schools. Fuerza operated three programs. The first was an Awareness course elective that focused on students' "self, cultural, and career development." The goals for students enrolled in this course included better communication skills, develop self-pride and confidence, learn and gain pride in their culture and heritage, learn and develop respect for their classmate's culture and heritage, increase ethnic interactions, build life and work goals, gain knowledge about future career, college, or vocational opportunities, develop self-motivating attitudes, and to learn how to get and maintain a job. The course was taught by Fuerza staff. With this federal funding, Fuerza also operating an Alternative Suspension Program at Trimble Tech High School. In addition to managing suspended students in the school where they could stay current with their school work, this program also offered individualized counseling services from Fuerza staff to directly address the situation that led to the suspension. Fuerza also offered an after school program in World Cultures Awareness. Students who attended these sessions had the opportunities to learn from local artists and artisans about Ballet Folklorico, American Indian Craft and Lore, and Black Dance.[32] Fuerza provided Fort Worth Black and Brown students with cultural awareness that the

[32] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, February 9, 1977.

district denied them. Even though the school board on multiple occasions recognized the success of these programs, they did not value them enough to keep them operating after the ESAA federal funding ended in 1980.

Throughout the 1970s Mexicanos in Fort Worth engaged in several simultaneous strategies to force FWISD to initiate well thought out programs that directly targeted the needs of Mexican American students. MAEAC sued the district. Non-profit organizations created their own programs and sought federal funding. Activist groups wrote and advocated for affirmative action plans. While these efforts produced some positive change the FWISD school board more often than not fought against them. Mexican American leaders, just like their Black counterparts, recognized the need to have representation on the school board. Prior to the school board's reorganization into single-member districts, Manuel Jara was the first Mexican American to run for school board in 1962. Listed as "Manual Jara" in the meeting minutes, Jara ran against six other white men and women and lost to future school board president, Reverend John R. Leatherbury. Carlos Puente attempted to run in 1974 but the school board did not allow him on the ballot because he had not been a "qualified voter" for the previous three years and because he did not own property. In addition to running for school board, Mexican Americans fought alongside Black men and women to reorganize the election process. In a school board discussion about single-member districts in August 1975, Robert Jara appeared before the school board, noted that Chicanos did not have any representation on the board, encouraged the trustees to study the possibility of single-member districts and to submit a plan. Trustee Harrell informed Jara that the FWISD school board had "no authority to make any change." Cary contradicted Harrell and stated that the school board could make a recommendation to the legislature and he doubted that the state would deny their request. Reinaldo Rosas also urged the district to create a plan for single-member districts warning them that if they waited for a court to decide on how

the city should be divided for board representation then they would not have control over the division of the neighborhoods. Michael Utt, also advocating for Mexican American representation on the board, reiterated Rosas's warning and told the board that "all they are asking is for the board to present a positive attitude for single member districts."[33] In the school board election just prior to its reorganization three more Mexican Americans unsuccessfully ran for a seat, Maria Puente, Jessica Martinez, and Nick Trevino, Jr.[34] Mexican Americans in Fort Worth continued to contribute to the discussion and debate that led to adoption of single-member districts in 1977.

FWISD adoption of single-member districts in 1977 led to the election of the first Mexican American, Carlos Puente. Puente won a narrow race to represent the newly-organized District One that included the North Side community.[35] Along with Carlos Puente, the 1978 school board consisted of two Black trustees and four women, making the board the most diverse in the district's history.[36] Puente, who moved to the city in 1971, was an active member of the Fort Worth Mexican American community. He had previously served as the treasurer of the Fort Worth chapter of the La Raza Unida Party (RUP), vice chairman of the Texas wing of RUP, and member of the Tarrant County Human Relations Commission. In 1973, he organized Centro Aztlan, a service center in North Side to provide free assistance to low-income community members with notary, translation, and tax services.[37] Puente worked alongside Fort Worth Black community leader James Gaskin to lobby the Texas House of Representatives to consider their

[33] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, August 13, 1975.

[34] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, April 5, 1976.

[35] For more on Puente's narrow election see Peter Charles Martinez, "Ready to Run: Fort Worth's Mexicans in Search of Representation, 1960-2000," Dissertation, University of North Texas, 2017.

[36] Lynna Williams, "Can diverse school board work together? It's up to members now," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* April 30, 1978.

[37] "Service Center For Community Opens Monday," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* March 2, 1973.

redrawn single-district congressional map that would give Black and Brown Fort Worthians an opportunity for state representation.[38] The south campus of Tarrant County Junior College invited Puente and Eddy Herrera to speak to FWISD high school students as they toured the campus during “La Semana Chicana.” The theme of the week-long event was “Entiendeme, Soy Chicano” (understand me, I am a Chicano).[39] Puente volunteered at the Rosemont Community School teaching Chicano history, culture, sociology, and politics.[40] He worked with the local chapter of MAYO to paint a Chicano mural on the outside wall of the North Side branch of the Fort Worth Public Library. The colorful mural depicted a pictorial timeline of Chicano history beginning with an Aztec warrior and ending with a Mexican American student studying together with a Black and white student.[41] Just before he was elected Puente was the director of Neighborhood Action Inc. At the time of his election to the school board Puente was thirty-three years old, a graduate of both North Texas State University (now the University of North Texas) and the University of Texas at Arlington where he earned a master’s degree in Urban Affairs. Puente was also a migrant farm worker as a child, a high school dropout and a Vietnam veteran. One of his opponents in the school board election was Joe Avila, a pharmacist and longtime resident of North Side. Even though Puente was a relative newcomer to Fort Worth Avila decided to drop-out of the race so he and Puente did not split the Mexican American vote. Avila also believed Puente’s experience and education in electoral politics made him a better candidate.[42] Although Puente’s successful election to the FWISD school board was a major victory for the city’s Mexican American population, he only had one vote.

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[38] Bob Bain, “Minority Representatives Seek Redistricting Plan,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* April 27, 1973.

[39] “NTSU Speaker to Keynote TCJC’s Chicano Activities,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* April 29, 1973.

[40] “School to offer Chicano class,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* September 19, 1974.

[41] “Youths paint mural depicting heritage,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* August 31, 1975.

[42] Anita Baker, “Puente knows first-hand the problems of dropouts,” *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* July 2, 1978.

During Puente's tenure on the school board he certainly elevated issues important to the Mexican community of his district and the city, but more often he was reluctant to fully challenge the status quo. He described himself as not a "typical Mexican American politician" and disparaged the "traditional Chicano politician way of garnering support: 'Ah, let's get a keg of beer and have a daaaaaance.'" In a complete rejection of Chicano ideology, he described his politically ideology as a "mixture of citizenship and Christian-ethical principles – you work, and vote, and attend community meetings, and if your elected official doesn't do his job, you work and vote differently next time."[43] Just after his election, Puente, not taking advantage of the occasion to highlight the plight of Mexican children in FWISD, told a local newspaper that he thought "the Fort Worth school system is doing a good job, but it can do better in certain areas."[44] Puente's first opportunity to champion Mexican American issues arrived quickly. In June 1978, after five years of in action toward MAEAC's demand from the district Rufino Mendoza, Jr., representing MAEAC, presented the school board with the position paper they wrote and submitted to Judge Brewster in 1973. This time, Mendoza also submitted statements of support from the Texas Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), IMAGE de Fort Worth, Diocesan Commission of Mexican-American Affairs, and the Fort Worth chapter of the AGIF. Raymond Franco, a member of the executive board of ACORN wrote that they "support the direct implementation of the corrections outlined in this suit and urges the swift augmentation." Juan Rangel, chairman of IMAGE wrote that the history of education in Fort Worth for Mexican Americans had been "tainted" by inequality. Superintendent Ward told the board that he had already met with this group, formed a

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[43] Brian Howard, "Puente: board's man in the middle," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* January 6, 1980.

[44] Susie Ryan Phipps, "Puente First Mexican-American Elected, Once Junior High Dropout, He's on School Board Now," *Fort Worth News Tribune*, June 9, 1978, University of Texas at Arlington Special Collections and Archives.

committee, and that he will continue to meet "periodically and regularly."[45] Puente was absent at this meeting but told the *Star-Telegram* in August after a committee meeting with MAEAC and district administration that "implementation is the key." Mendoza stated that MAEAC was reigniting the lawsuit after hiring Geoffrey Gay, an attorney with the Tarrant County Legal Aid Foundation. During the meeting the school attorney, Cecil Morgan conceded the district must recognize Mexican Americans as a separate ethnic group, otherwise, "the courts will make them [FWISD]." Puente stated that he thought that "some [of the school board members] would be in favor" of making that recognition.[46] Four months later, Mendoza spoke again at a board meeting. Mendoza informed the board that a group of concerned citizens meet at a three day retreat to discuss the conditions of Chicanos in Fort Worth and Tarrant County. They divided themselves into groups to focus one specific topic. In addition to education issues, the participants discussed health, housing, media, employment, economic development, political issues, and the legal system. At the end of the retreat each group wrote position papers. Mendoza provided the board with the final reports and included again the April 1973 position paper. Puente participated in the retreat. He told the board that the education issues were not new concerns and had been discussed with the board and administrators previously. He stated, "the time now is for action on these particular items." Without any historical precedent and sufficient evidence to the contrary, Puente expressed confidence that the superintendent and board would take action.[47]

At the end of the decade, the district's attorney, Cecil Morgan, who had provided legal advice for more than two decades and had been the lead negotiator in the *Flax* case resigned. His resignation and the appointment of a new attorney provided Black and Brown community

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[45] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, June 28, 1978.

[46] Erna Smith, "'Implementation' school key, Mexican-Americans declare, " *Fort Worth Stary-Telegram,* August 29, 1978

[47] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, October 25, 1978.

leaders with a glimmer of hope that progress could finally me made in the lawsuit. In October 1979 Cecil Morgan told a racist joke that included the use of a slur to news reporters at the court house during a break from negotiations with MAEAC and the NAACP regarding the *Flax* lawsuit. The television networks reported the incident immediately which led to an onslaught of demands for the district to fire Morgan. According to Morgan, his joke was harmless and everyone laughed. All of the reporters told a different story. The reporters claimed that after drinking some water, Morgan inquired about a photographer from another station. He told the reporters that he always asked that photographer to never take a picture of him and NAACP lawyer Clifford Davis together. When asked why, Morgan asked the reporters if they "knew the difference between "a n----- and a pile of manure." Morgan presented his side of the incident in a statement to the school board. In his own words Morgan acknowledged telling "an old civil war story" about a farmer and his "load of manure and a little N----- boy." In the story, the farmer describes the contents of his wagon multiple times when stopped on the road. Each time he lists the manure first and at the end of the story the boy asked if he could be listed first at the next stop. The reporters asked what the point of the story was. According the reporters, after asking Morgan for clarification he replied, "it was to illustrate his desire not to be second to that damn Clifford Davis." After receiving the reports from the news station describing the incident, obtaining Morgan's statement where he defended his "harmless joke," reading almost forty letters from individuals in support of Morgan, and just over twenty letters from individuals and organizations including campus PTA groups and the FWISD Human Relations Committee demanding Morgan's termination, the school board met in special session on November 12, 1979. After a closed-door discussion the board reconvened in an open session and board president O'Neal read a statement. O'Neal stated that "without reservation [the board] does not condone any slur remarks" and Morgan's remarks were "in diametric opposition" to their goals

and did not “reflect the philosophy” of the board. The statement continued, “however, the majority of the board does not believe that the remarks in question warrant termination.” After the meeting adjourned Puente read a statement prepared by himself and Maudrie M. Walton that implored Morgan to “voluntary [sic] retire” from his service to the district. Puente and Walton stated that Morgan’s racist remarks “set back the cause of ethnic and racial harmony.” He concluded by warning Morgan that if he did not retire from service soon that he and Walton would “work diligently towards seeking his dismissal.”[48] Morgan resigned a few months later and new attorney, David B. Owen, took over handling the lawsuit negotiations and providing the district with legal advice. Less than a year later, the district and MAEAC signed a resolution.

Another major change in district leadership in 1980 also triggered new possibilities for positive changes for Black and Brown students. For the first time in their history FWISD hired a superintendent who was not homegrown. The board recruited him from outside the state. A reporter described his shock the first time he saw the new superintendent, “he was wearing his trademark sports jacket and slightly avant garde plaid shirt with contrasting white collar . . . a far cry from his predecessors.” Candoli’s difference went beyond just appearance according to this author, “not only was in the first outsider to hold the job, he was a Yankee, for pete’s sake, had never earned a teaching certificate from a Texas college, and even sported an ethnic name.” Unlike all the others he did not meet the unspoken requirements for the job. He was not protestant, a former football player or coach, or a member of the “old boy network.”[49] Candoli was a former superintendent in Lansing, Michigan and at the time of his hire was a faculty member at the University of Kansas. He prioritized the needs of special needs children and

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[48] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, June 28, 1978.

[49] Irvin Farman, “For a Nice Guy Who Gave It His All . . . Goodbye and Good Luck,” *Fort Worth News-Tribune,* March 28, 1986 University of Texas at Arlington Special Collections and Archives.

minoritized students and aimed to increase parent engagement in schools. The school board hired Candoli with a six to two vote with one trustee, who favored the other candidate, absent at the meeting. The press predicted that he would be the "most controversial superintendent in the history of Fort Worth public schools" and claimed that prior to his arrival the institution was "free of upheaval."[50] Candoli was not the lone Yankee in school administration for long. He hired Dr. Richard Benjamin and Dr. T.C. Wallace both from Michigan, and Eugene Gutierrez from Chicago Public Schools. Dr. Benjamin joined the administration and Dr. Wallace was named the Director of Personnel. Gutierrez was the district's first Mexican American associate superintendent. In a letter from a reader, Fred Laux, to the *Fort Worth News-Tribune,* Laux warned the city that Candoli had begun a "new good old boy" system and "the good people of Fort Worth need to know what is going on in the district." Afraid of the Black and Brown additions to district leadership, he claimed that the people needed to "restore justice, fairness, and impartiality to personnel promotions and recruiting."[51]

Shortly after the resignation of Morgan and the hiring of Candoli the district and MAEAC agreed on a resolution in the long-standing lawsuit. MAEAC's legal battle spanned an entire decade. Superintendent Ward voiced his frustrations with MAEAC when he stated that the district was "making definite progress" in the hiring of Mexican-Americans but that "the trouble is they want it done tomorrow." Lyndon Rogers, spokesman for MAEAC, believed that the promises made by FWISD were vague and that the committee "did not feel the administration has acted in good faith in accomplishing the goals of equal and quality education for Mexican-

[50] Mack Williams, *Fort Worth News-Tribune,* February 15, 1980, University of Texas at Arlington Archives (title of article is not included in the clipping).

[51] "Letters from Readers: Says 'Good Old Boy' System Replaced by "New Boy' System in Schools," *Fort Worth News-Tribune,* April 23, 1982, University of Texas at Arlington Archives.

Americans."[52] He also stated that FWISD knew exactly what needed to be done to remedy the issues. The members of MAEAC had reiterated their demands when they first intervened in the lawsuit in 1972, and they did so again in 1974, 1976, and 1978. In November 1979, MAEAC rejected a settlement proposed by the district. The FWISD panel proposed increasing the number of Mexican teachers to ten percent. Mendoza stated, "We're already 16.5 percent of the population. Even if they increase employment to 10 percent, within three years our population will be at 20 percent and we'll still be way behind."[53] In March 1980, the *Dallas Morning News* reported that the lawsuit had become a "waiting game," with both MAEAC and FWISD waiting for an answer from the other.[54] The wait ended in January 1981 when both parties agreed on settlement terms.

Even though the judge ordered the district to pay all of MAEAC's legal fees and MAEAC perceived the overall settlement as a victory, by 1981 the specific terms of the resolution did not fully address the needs of Mexican American students and employees. The judge's requirements that FWISD produce all distributed materials in both English and Spanish and provide all district staff with professional development trainings to aid them in understanding the needs of Mexican Americans certainly created a more welcoming space for Mexicanos as they interacted with the schools. The district agreed to meet with MAEAC at least three times a year to discuss the progress of the resolution's terms and to hear any new complaints or issues. The judge did not establish any specifics around this requirement. The most significant decree from the judge required the district to recognize Mexican Americans as a separate ethnic group, not white. However, without an official statement the district had already

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[52] Barbara Clark, "FW minority plan cited," *Dallas Morning News*, October 14, 1978.

[53] Barbara Clark, "Mexican-American committee rejects FW Panel's proposal," *Dallas Morning News*, November 4, 1979.

[54] Barbara Clark, "Desegregation case sparks waiting game," *Dallas Morning News*, March 1, 1980.

made this adjustment. District data was no longer regulated to a Black and white binary. District officials sought out tri-ethnic representation on various committees, and school board's district lines were adopted based on the needs of all three major ethnicities. The settlement terms that sought to remedy the lack of Mexican American representation in faculty, staff, and administration were not sufficient to match the steadily growing percentage of Mexicanos in Fort Worth. FWISD agreed to "affirmatively commit itself" to increase the Mexican American employees to eleven percent. At the time Mexican American employees made up just over five percent of the district. The judge allowed the district to reach this number by "attrition." The judge ordered the district to continue their "vigorous recruitment program" both in and out of state but they were not required to conduct a cluster hire of Mexican American teachers or staff members. Instead they only made new hires as "vacancies occur." The judge provided FWISD with four years before he would check their progress. One of MAEAC's first major demands was the hiring of an assistant superintendent who would oversee the programs and conditions of Mexican American students. According to the resolution, both the district and MAEAC agreed that the judge's order to hire a Mexican American assistant superintendent had been meet with the hiring of Eugene Gutierrez. Gutierrez was the associate superintendent for business. Even though Candoli's hiring of Gutierrez was a victory for representation, he was not responsible for any instructional matters.[55] Also, the school board only approved hiring Gutierrez after he met with and was endorsed by a group of powerful Fort Worth business leaders. The day after a four to four vote stalled the hiring of Gutierrez, school board president O'Neal and trustees Shannon, Lasater, and Bloxom escorted him to a closed-door meeting at the "posh" Fort Worth Club. Less than four hours after the city's business leaders "voiced unanimous praise" for Gutierrez, the

[55] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, January 28, 1981.

school board meet in an emergency session and voted seven to zero and Gutierrez became the school district's "highest ranking minority."[56] MAEAC also had previously demanded a Mexican American in a decision-making position in the personnel department. The resolution stated that both parties agreed this point had been meet with a Mexican American employed in an administrative position in personnel, a supportive role. One of the final statements of the resolution refuted any sense of victory. The judge stated, "the court makes no finding that any alleged discrimination or deprivation of equal educational opportunity either has or has not occurred in fact." After David Owen, the district's lead attorney read the resolution, Puente applauded the people who had "worked both sides—the school district and the intervenors" for their efforts in resolving the lawsuit.[57]

While MAEAC's lawsuit throughout the 1970s certainly pushed the school district to make positive changes for students and employees of Mexican descent, district administration and school board members successfully limited these changes. They choose their token Mexican American assistant superintendent, they negotiated terms for hiring that ensured that the Mexican community never reached equitable representation in schools and administration, and they did not admit to any wrong doing that MAEAC or other Mexican American community groups could use to demand further change. The resolution did not mention the expansion of bilingual education which was not available at the majority of FWISD campuses. As the Spanish-speaking population increased in communities across the district, campuses did not provide any language services for those students and parents. When Reverend George Sepulveda in 1983 asked the school board to add bilingual staff to the schools in the Polytechnic neighborhood, which was experiencing exponential growth of Spanish-speakers, trustee Elliott suggested district

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[56] Eric Harrison, "School board OKs Gutierrez by 7-0 vote," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* August 29, 1980.

[57] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, January 28, 1981.

administration develop a "bilingual office volunteer" program that could help those campuses in need of these services.[58] Even though the resolution required that all district program planning should consider the needs of all ethnicities, the resolution did not specifically force FWISD to address the increasing dropout rate of Mexican American children. Eight months after the settlement, Mendoza spoke to the press about the districts lack of concern for the success of Mexican American students and specifically their dropout rates. He stated, "if Anglos had 60,000 students and lost 30,000 of them, they'd say they have a problem. If we have 400 students at North Side High School and lose 200 of them, we have a problem." Mendoza also stated that Mexican American students who graduated were not educated or trained well enough to compete for jobs or continue into higher education. He attributed these problems to teachers and administrators placing Mexicano students in basic or vocational courses rather than challenging them with higher level academic classes because they did not expect the students to "excel or even succeed."[59] By 1980, Hispanics, the identifier used in the district's data, made up over 22 percent of the total first graders for a total of 1,231 students in Fort Worth ISD but only 10 percent of the senior class or 393 seniors. In that same year there were 2,326 white students in first grade and 2,129 white seniors. The black students only dropped from 1,833 to 1,284.[60] In other words, Hispanic students were overwhelmingly failing to complete twelve years of school. When Mendoza confronted the school board with data on these issues they did not take action. Instead, Trustee Bloxom credited the approval of a Fuerza de los Barrios project to open an alternative school that would provide recent dropouts with the opportunity to earn credits and return to school as proof of the districts "desire to respond to the problems" of Mexican

[58] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, October 25, 1983.

[59] Barbara Clark. "Hispanic fights for better schools." *Dallas Morning News,* September 27, 1981.

[60] "Student Population and Related Statistics, September 1981," FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives.

Americans.[61] This proclamation is a far stretch from the truth considering the school board did not approve the project until Fuerza reduced the number of credits students in the program could earn and opened the school to all ethnicities rather than a program that specifically targeted Mexican American students. The district did not operate or fund the alternative school. The district approved the acceptance of the credits and the rental of the former M.G. Ellis elementary school vacant building. Fuerza along with the National Council of La Raza who received funding from a Department of Labor grant managed the school.[62]

After the MAEAC settlement, Mexican American community leaders continued to hold FWISD accountable for their children's struggles in school even though the school board members, including Carlos Puente refused to initiate any programming that targeted one particular group. Just a couple years into his tenure, a once outspoken and proud Chicano who ran for his seat on the school board to represent Mexican Americans in the city, understood the limitations of his influence. Even though he supported Fuerza's initial proposal for an Alternative school for Mexican American dropouts in 1979, by the time the district approved the program two years later, Puente assured the board that the school the school that "open enrollment would be enforced." Puente stated, "it would be a misnomer to identify it as a school for Hispanics" and that the dropout problem effect "all students."[63] In February 1982 after the release of the scores of the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS), the first standardized test created by the state, Juan Perez, president of IMAGE, Pilar Pena, vice president of the Fort Worth chapter of LULAC, and Rufino Mendoza, Jr., representing MAEAC all expressed their concern for the dropout rates and low test scores of Mexican American students. Mendoza

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[61] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, September 9, 1981.

[62] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, May 27, 1981.

[63] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, May 13, 1981.

expressed confidence in Superintendent Candoli and his staff but told the board that they needed to provide the administration with more support. All three speakers offered their services in developing and maintaining a program that would assist the district in helping Mexican American students stay in school and perform better on tests. Trustee Walton added that she had the same concerns about the "Negro students." She stated that "she thought it was because they were not being taught properly." Board President O'Neal asked that the district present the board with an "indepth [sic] study . . . among all minority students." Puente then added that the "problem be looked at for all students—blacks, browns, and low-income whites." He also suggested expanding ROTC programs "as one way to improve retention and attendance." Puente ended his comments by commending Candoli for his efforts and stated that he was "doing a good job." President O'Neal closed the discussion with a statement that confirmed the board was not interested in pursuing any plans that focused on Mexican Americans, who needed the board and the administration's attention the most. O'Neal stated that any plans should maintain "a balance that the needs of one group were not met at the expense of another group."[64]

Although groundbreaking in judicially challenging the school district for the Fort Worth community, MAEAC did not solve the educational inequality that continued into the following decades. The most glaring omission from the 1981 resolution was a judicial decree to develop culturally relevant curriculum. Even though Mexican American individuals and groups asked for both new courses that focused on Mexican Americans and for materials that would supplement textbooks that negatively portrayed ethnic Mexicans, the district never met this demand. The districts 1969 "Much From Many," and 1974 "Americans-All" efforts fell well short of changing the status quo for Mexican students. Even if teachers incorporated the guides with fidelity in

[64] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, February 9, 1982.

their classrooms the content did not do enough, or any at all, to upend a curriculum that reinforced white superiority. In their defense, the teachers who spent twenty-four hours over the course of four separate Saturdays did not have the expertise or resources to rewrite and alter the narrative of generations of history. However, in both of these supplementary guides, the district officials stated that these resources were just the beginning. They hoped that they would add to these guides "as information and circumstances permit."[65] The 1960s and 1970s progressive social history movement, which pushed against traditional US history narratives, certainly provided additional information that could have aided in the districts stated goals. Since the 1980s, scholars across the humanities have highlighted the need for decolonizing the English classroom canon, rewriting the Eurocentric perspective of US history, implementing ethnic studies, and teaching culturally competent pedagogy. Fort Worth ISD did not make any attempt to meet these curriculum needs. The district continued to offer a Mexican American Studies elective course and in 1979 adopted a textbook for the course, *Mexican Americans: Past, Present, and Future* written by historian Julian Nava, a professor of history as San Fernando State College. However, Nava's writing of the Texas Revolution and U.S. – Mexico War perpetuated the myths that upheld American Exceptionalism. At the end of his discussion of the U.S. – Mexico War Nava wrote, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo provided for their [Mexicans who stayed and became American citizens] fair treatment and protection as new Americans."[66] The district adopted the textbook for a six-year contract, yet FWISD records do not indicate how long the district offered the course or how many students were enrolled. In 1983 the SBOE quietly removed both MAS and Black Studies from the list of courses supported by a textbook.

[65] "Much From Many: A Resource Book for Secondary Social Studies Teachers," FWISD Billy W. Sills Center for Archives.

[66] Julian Nava, *Mexicans: Past, Present, and Future,"* (American Book Company, 1969), 6

Considering the district had not invested in a curriculum guidebook for MAS, without state funding for a textbook it is unlikely that the district used local funds to support the course.

Even though public schooling in Texas for Mexican Americans certainly improved over the course of the twentieth century, the white architects of Mexican American education in Fort Worth, much like other major cities across the Southwest, built and maintained an educational system that safeguarded their supremacy in society. On federal, state, and local levels, Chicano era activists pushed governments to initiate studies focused specifically on Mexican American children. These publicly available studies uncovered the extreme inequalities that existed for Mexicanos in schools and led to more action from the community. Both the State Board of Education and local school boards initiated limited programming that aimed to placate those advocating for major changes.

By the mid-1980s with the rise of standardized testing in Texas, the conservative cultural shift in the US that ended federal funding for low-income communities, and the colorblind ideology that no longer considered the history of systemic racism as a factor in policy-making, the state and FWISD's concern for culturally relevant pedagogy came to a halt. Rather than considering the cultural needs of their students the district created curriculum that reflected the state's testing culture. Mexican American groups, including MAEAC lost the little authority they gained through the 1970s. After the school board offered MAEAC a seat on their Citizens Advisory Council in 1982 MAEAC representatives rarely appeared at board meetings to demand the districts attention toward matters affecting Mexican American students. Mexican Americans continued to implement programming to address their communities educational needs but their reach and influence was limited without the financial support from federal funding. Even though the Mexican American population of the district grew steadily for the following two decades

they held only one seat on the school board until the late 1990s. Arturo Pena, who was elected after Puente choose not to run again in 1984, noticed that the textbooks up for adoption in 1985 did not "cover any of the contributions of the Spanish-speaking Americans, especially to the history of Texas."[67] His statement did not prevent the school board from moving ahead with the adoption process. Without teachers and administrators who looked like them, a district that prioritized their needs, or curriculum that included their histories and celebrated their culture, Mexican American children struggled to find success in a city whose leaders allowed only limited progress. While Fort Worth's school board in the last few decades of the twentieth century demonstrated a responsibility to educate Mexicanos unlike their predecessors, they also exhibited their ability to regulate Mexican Americans to a subordinate role in society. A few Mexicanos navigated these inferior educational opportunities by accepting the perceived benefits of assimilation that essentially erased their browness but opened doors to a lower-tier of leadership accepted by the conservative white oligarchy in Fort Worth who maintained their power over education in the city.[68]

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[67] Fort Worth Independent School District Board Meeting Minutes, October 22, 1985.

[68] For more on the tiered levels of leadership in Fort Worth see, Sherrod, Kate. "Who Runs Fort Worth." *D Magazine*. November 1995. https://www.dmagazine.com/publications/d-magazine/1995/november/power-who-runs-fort-worth/.

"When I entered the school system I began to wonder where my people were in the context of history. Aside from learning that my people were conquered, I began to receive messaging I was not welcome in the country. I was called a beaner, wetback, and illegal from time to time. . . I read and memorized material explicitly dehumanizing my community, such as the depictions of lazy, criminal Mexican 'bandits' in Texas. On top of that, I was quizzed and tested to prove I had learned the material. There was a lot of internalizing as well as growing self-doubt."[1]

-Dr. Jacinto Ramos Jr., FWISD School Board President, 2022

EPILOGUE - A NEW OPPORTUNITY

In 1992, Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at the Center for Mexican American Studies at the University of Texas in Austin, Angela Valenzuela, conducted an ethnographic study at Juan Seguín High School in Houston. She observed and interviewed students, teachers, administrators, and parents over the course of the school year to determine why US-born Mexican youth struggled academically and did not display a passion for school in their secondary education. Valenzuela stated that her study "reveals that U.S.-born [Mexican origin] youth are neither inherently antischool nor oppositional. They oppose a schooling process that disrespects them; they oppose not education, but *schooling*."[2] She argues that the environment at Juan Seguín High School devalued the culture and language of Mexican origin students. The bilingual classes aimed to teach English by ridding students of their Spanish rather than the original intent of bilingual education to develop children fluent in both languages and cultures. Their curriculum had a cultural bias against Mexicans and the school did not have a relationship with its community. All of these actions by white educators, created a campus where the students felt as though their teachers did not care whether they failed or succeeded. Dr. Jacinto Ramos Jr., quoted above, who served on the FWISD school board from June 2013 until he resigned in May

[1] David Colón, Max Krochmal, and Contributors, "Latinx Studies Curriculum in K-12 Schools: A Practical Guide," (Fort Worth: TCU Press, 2022), xi.

[2]Valenzuela, *Subtractive Schooling*, 5.

2022, had a similar experience in Fort Worth public schools during the same time period as Valenzuela's study. He attributes his struggle to develop a positive self-image to the inability to see himself reflected back in the curriculum and an environment that did not welcome and celebrate his brownness. The opportunities for curriculum reform afforded by the Chicano era educational activism that pushed the white architects to give into some demands, were long gone by the turn of the century. Instead, in the new age of testing accountability, curricula across the state is determined by the standards approved by the conservative SBOE. However, a new movement for inclusive curriculum and ethnic studies courses led by Black, Mexican American, Native American, and Asian American activists, allies, scholars, educators, parents, and students is still fighting today.

Curriculum writers and teachers began to use a revised set of TEKS in the 2011-2012 school year that, for the first time included references to Mexican Americans in US history.[3] However, the handful of Mexican American people and events in the standards are sprinkled into the traditional narrative and do not provide an opportunity to challenge or trouble the white-centric story of the US. I began teaching eighth grade in FWISD in 2011, the year one of my Latina students, hoping to connect with her nation's history, asked me if any Mexicans signed the Declaration of Independence. The curriculum I taught that year, based on the revised standards, began the history of the United States in 1607 on the east coast in the Jamestown settlement and made no mention of the Spanish settlements of St. Augustine or Santa Fe. Native Americans first appeared in the curriculum as adversaries of the white colonists and Spanish and mestizos were introduced as white colonists moved west. The textbook adopted in 2016 to

[3] For the full story on the TEKS revision process and the media circus that ensued see, Erekson, *Politics and the History Curriculum*.

support these standards stated that “Americans [white settlers] looked West to what they saw as a vast wilderness, ready to be taken.”[4] Neither the textbook nor the district-created curriculum included any text or documents to clarify or refute that belief. The voices of Mexicans and Natives already living in the areas that became the United States were completely missing from the book or the curriculum. Instead, this traditional narrative holds that the westward expansion of the US was “a destiny, blessed by Providence, to cultivate unsettled lands and to bring religion, democracy, and the free market to ignorant Indians and Mexicans, made manifest by the rugged, masculine, and gallant white adventurous pioneers.”[5] The Texas revolutionaries were repeatedly referred to as heroes except Juan Seguin and Lorenzo de Zavala, who were integral to the Texas Revolution story but were not mentioned at all. Mexican Americans have made educators aware of how this omission and narrative of the Texas Revolution that paints Mexican origin people as the villain and white people as heroes in the story of Texas as problematic since the 1950s. Yet, that is the version of history students in Texas continue to learn. The settling of California negated the indigenous and mestizo presence. The immigration discussion in the second half of the nineteenth century was limited to China and Europe, leaving out the movement along the southern border that contributed to the infrastructure of the Southwest.

FWISD social studies curriculum writers proved their ability to incorporate critical thinking skills and content beyond the examples provided by the standards with their district created Learning Experiences (LE), or lesson plans. Unfortunately the only opportunity provided by the TEKS to write an LE that included a Mexican perspective was a lesson on the U.S –

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[4] Deborah Gray White and William Deverell, *United States History: Early Colonial Period Through Reconstruction,* (Orlando: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing, 2016), 354.

[5] Cecilia Sánchez Hill, “Disrupting the Master Narrative: Mexican Americans in the Borderlands,” *Journal of Social Studies and History Education* (2022 Special Issue), 4-5. https://www.uhd.edu/documents/academics/public-service/urban-education/jsshe/sanchez-hill-2022-article-1-jsshe.pdf.

Mexico War. The TEKS state that students are expected to "explain the causes and effects of the U.S. – Mexico War and their impact on the United States."[6] The LE created by the curriculum writers asks students if the United States was justified in going to war with Mexico. To help students answer this question, teachers guided students through five primary sources, which included varying perspectives of war. This LE provided students with a deeper understanding of the war including the slavery motive. However, the lesson still ignored the voices of the ethnic Mexicans living in the lands that became the United States, as did the rest of the TEKS, textbook, and curriculum for the first half of US history.

The second half of US history taught in the eleventh grade was certainly an improvement from the first half but still did not afford Mexican American students or other marginalized students with a narrative that emphasized their presence and perspectives in the story of the United States. The standards in 2011 included a few Latinx people: Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Hector P. Garcia, Sonia Sotomayor, Medal of Honor recipient Roy Benavidez, and Lionel Sosa, a Mexican American marketing and advertising executive who served as a media consultant for Reagan and both Bush administrations. It is worth noting that the 2018 update removed Garcia and Sosa. By the time the SBOE revised the standards in 2011 board members conceded that more people of color should be added to the traditional narrative. Although most of the people the SBOE added to the standards are essential to history, the SBOE strategically chose individuals who they believed exemplified American Exceptionalism.

The SBOE also included important events in Mexican American history, unfortunately the writers of the standards only dropped these topics into the narrative without any context.

[6] TEKS for Social Studies, Adopted 2010, "Proposed Revisions to 19 TAC Chapter 113, Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, Subchapter B, Middle School," 26, https://tea.texas.gov/academics/curriculum-standards/teks-review/social-studies-teks.

Mexican repatriation is included in the discussion of the Great Depression without including the labor demands they fulfilled in the first half of the twentieth century. The Chicano Movement is mentioned as an example of other civil rights movements alongside American Indian and women's movements. However without any Mexicano voices in the decades leading up to the 1960s there is no context for the movement. Chicano Murals is listed as an example of a cultural movement in art but again the movement lacks meaning without an earlier discussion of the Mexican American experience. The revised standards included an expectation for students to "describe how litigation such as the landmark cases of . . . *Mendez v. Westminster, Hernandez v. Texas, Delgado v. Bastrop I.S.D., Edgewood I.S.D. v. Kirby* . . . played a role in protecting the rights of the minority during the civil rights movement." Each of these judicial fights are meaningful to the history of Mexican Americans in the United States but students again will have no context for their significance. That is it. Mexicanos are not discussed in any other moments in US history. Even though Mexican Americans earned the most Congressional Medals of Honor during WWII they are not explicitly listed as examples of groups who provided "bravery and contributions" to the conflict. The standards do provide educators with the opportunities to include Latinx people in their curriculum and classroom teaching at other times when the standards state "and ethnic minorities" or "participation of minorities" as examples.[7] However, the revised standards included numerous required examples, that reinforce the white-centric narrative, that test makers could use to write questions. Within a few years of testing, district officials had enough data to determine the content they deemed most important based on the frequency of appearance on the state standardized tests. Also without encouragement and

[7] TEKS for Social Studies, Adopted 2010, "Proposed Revisions to 19 TAC Chapter 113, Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, Subchapter C, High School," 2-15, https://tea.texas.gov/academics/curriculum-standards/teks-review/social-studies-teks.

support from the state, local districts were less likely to spend their time and resources to developing inclusive and cultural relevant curriculum.

The establishment of revised standards in Texas coincided with an organized and aggravated assault against the highly successful Mexican American Studies (MAS) program at Tucson Unified School District in Arizona. Tucson's program that began in the late 1990s was one of the earliest efforts to provide public school students with a structured MAS course that exemplified both culturally relevant content and student-centered pedagogy. The course engaged students through projects where they worked collaboratively with each other, the community, and their families. Teachers also encouraged MAS students to think critically about the traditional historical narrative they learned and how that narrative misrepresented or ignored Mexican American history. Researchers found that students in the Tucson MAS program overwhelmingly embraced their "education and became advocates for their own learning." Once their schooling included their ancestors' narratives and gave them an opportunity to make sense of the world around them, Mexicano students were motivated to engage with their teachers, fellow students, families, and community. In one study, researchers found that one hundred percent of the students in the MAS program graduated from high school and eighty-five percent enrolled in college. After more than two decades of progress, Arizona Attorney General Tom Horn targeted the program claiming that ethnic studies was divisive and that the course created "a hostile atmosphere in the school for the other students, who were not born into the 'race.'"[8] He introduced legislation to ban ethnic studies in the state in 2008, 2009, and in 2010 when the Arizona governor signed HB2281 into law. MAS teachers and their administrators, in defiance

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[8] Curtis Acosta, "Dangerous Minds In Tucson: The Banning of Mexican American Studies and Critical Thinking In Arizona," *Journal of Educational Controversy* 8, no. 1 (January 1, 2014), 5, https://cedar.wwu.edu/jec/vol8/iss1/9.

of the law, continued to offer and teach the course until 2012 when the school board voted to end the teaching of the course. The school board went a step further and also banned all the books used in the course from classrooms. David Stovall, a professor of educational policy studies and African American studies at the University of Illinois described the ending of Tucson's MAS program as "dubious at best." He stated that the program's closure "reflects a process of white supremacy embedded in policy retrenchment and the politics of fear" and that "the mere fact that students have made a conscious decision to stand for justice regarding their education through research and action sends chills through the veins of those in power."[9] Even though a student-led lawsuit against the banning of ethnic studies resulted in the 2015 Arizona supreme court declaration that the denial of access to MAS violated the students' first amendments rights, the core concepts of the course that exemplified culturally relevant pedagogy with a social justice focus have not returned.[10]

Ethnic studies scholars in Texas, aware of the backlash against MAS in Arizona, plotted their own path toward providing all students with a curriculum and pedagogy that reflected the experiences of Mexican Americans. The National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies Tejas Foco (NACCS) pre-K-12 committee began strategizing and after several unsuccessful attempts the SBOE placed the discussion for ethnic studies courses on the agenda in the spring of 2014. NACCS and several other organizations including the Texas chapter of the NAACP, the Texas Latino Education Coalition, Librotraficante, and the Texas Freedom Network who represented numerous educational activists groups, wanted the SBOE to approve ethnic studies

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[9] David Stovall, "Foreword: Committing to Struggle in Troubling Times," in *Raza Studies: The Public Option for Educational Revolution,"* eds. Julio Cammarota and Augustine Romero (The University of Arizona Press, 2014), x.

[10] Echeverría, *Aztlán Arizona;* Alice E. Ginsberg, "A Conocimientos Movement to Integrate Mexican American Studies into Texas Public Schools," Samuel Dewitt Proctor Institute for Leadership, Equity, and Justice, Rutgers Graduate School of Education, April 2021, https://proctor.gse.rutgers.edu/publications/research-reports.

courses as official high school electives and to begin the process of developing standards for each course. An official course with board approved TEKS gave textbook and curriculum writers and publishers the blueprint to develop and submit a product to the SBOE. Instead, the board attempted to placate those demanding ethnic studies by making MAS, African American Studies, Native American Studies, and Asian American Studies available to school districts if they wanted to add them to their master schedule as an innovative course. Innovative courses did not have TEKS and school districts carried the full financial burden for developing and operating the classes. An innovative course was similar to the American Culture Series of courses approved by the SBOE discussed in chapter four and available to local school districts from the early 1970s to until the mid-1980s. Both sets of courses were unsupported and optional. School district administrators had to bear the burden of developing curriculum and finding and purchasing a textbook if they choose to teach the course in their district. A newly-elected board member who represented the Austin area, Marisa Perez (now Perez-Diaz) stated that the board action was "not what we [advocates for ethnic studies] were hoping . . . but it's definitely a step in the right direction." However, this time ethnic studies scholars and advocates did not allow the school board to continue to ignore their demands. Mimicking the same objections from Republican leaders in Arizona, board member Patricia Hardy, who lives in Fort Worth and represents the surrounding areas, did not believe the ethnic studies courses were necessary. She stated, "we're not about Hispanic history; we're about American history . . . we're not about taking each little group out and saying, 'you're the majority, so we're going to teach your history,' we're Americans, United States people." Gary Bledsoe, a representative of the NAACP told the media that "ignorance is a breeding ground for racism." He continued, "we must say that Texas history

is our history, including Latino Texans" and "that story has not been effectively and accurately told in our education system."[11]

As advocates continued to push the SBOE to authorize the writing of standards they began preparing teachers, writing their own curriculum, and developing and teaching their own innovative ethnic studies courses. Unlike the grassroots efforts during the 1970s, more secondary school teachers are advocates of MAS and have lived experience with the content. The activists fifty years ago were not in positions to reach students and teachers at the level they are now. Lilliana Saldaña, a professor of MAS at the University of Texas at San Antonio created and is the director of the MAS bachelor's degree program. Saldaña recognized a need for training current educators how to teach MAS since many did not have the opportunity to major in the field nor did their teacher preparation programs include deep discussions of or practice with culturally relevant pedagogy. The week-long MAS Teacher's Academy began in the summer of 2015 and has been held every year since. Saldaña stated that "there's definitely a need to ensure that we have teachers who are qualified to teach MAS, teachers who have foundational knowledge in the field of Chicana/x/o Studies and who are rooted in social justice and culturally sustaining teaching/learning approaches."[12]

School districts and individual high school teachers dedicated their own labor to the development of MAS courses. Houston Independent School District administrators spent their own time and resources to write a set of MAS standards for their teachers. Douglas Torres-Edwards, a veteran educator who was the primary author of the standards stated that "to

[11] Aamena Ahmed, "SBOE Opts for Compromise on Mexican-American Studies," The Texas Tribune, April 8, 2014, https://www.texastribune.org/2014/04/08/activists-support-mexican-american-studies-class-a/.

[12] Alice E. Ginsberg, "A Conocimientos Movement to Integrate Mexican American Studies into Texas Public Schools," Samuel Dewitt Proctor Institute for Leadership, Equity, and Justice, Rutgers Graduate School of Education, April 2021, https://proctor.gse.rutgers.edu/publications/research-reports.

understand our experience as Texans and Americans more deeply, we must study our history more deeply, and Mexican-American studies is a great way to start doing so."[13] Donna High School teacher Juan Carmona began teaching his own MAS course in the Rio Grande Valley area less than thirty miles from the border. Carmona developed his own curriculum and lesson plans. Like the Tucson program Carmona's course did not just provide students with relevant content for his Mexicano students, but he also utilized pedagogical strategies that gave his students opportunities to dive into community-based projects. These projects empowered students to learn their family's histories and to develop positive perspectives of themselves, their families, and their ancestors. They learned about important roles their family members played in shaping local and state history through their labor and activism. Araceli Manriquez who taught a MAS course in San Antonio began her course with a discussion about identity. Inspiring students to learn about their own roots helped them find their voice and take ownership of their learning. In traditional social studies classrooms, the content that does not include Mexican American perspectives and pedagogy that forces students to solely demonstrate their ability to memorize people, places, and dates, does not provide a space for students to wrestle with why the world around them operates as it does. In a MAS classroom, teachers give students the opportunity to problematize and think critically about historical events and people. Students use their own lives to make sense of the history and work collaboratively with their classmates and the community to complete tasks. Andres Lopez, another MAS teacher in San Antonio, and one of the first to develop a course focused on Mexican American literature stated that his classroom was the first place his students read stories with characters that "speak like" their own families. Creating this

[13] "State Board of Education creates ethnic studies class based on HISD's Mexican-American Studies course," HISD News Blog, April 20, 2018, https://blogs.houstonisd.org/news/2018/04/20/state-board-of-education-creates-ethnic-studies-class-based-on-hisds-mexican-american-studies-course/.

space allowed his students to "realize that the stories of their own families and cultures are valuable and worthy to study." The work of these teachers in developing their own curriculum is commendable but they should not have to carry such a heavy load in addition to the teaching.[14]

In 2016, FWISD Director of Social Studies, Joseph Niedziela used district funds to create an African American Studies course and a Latino/a American Studies. Niedziela had the support of Superintendent Dr. Kent Parades Scribner and school board President Dr. Jacinto Ramos, Jr., the first Mexican Americans to be in those positions, demonstrating the power and importance of representation. These were men motivated by both a professional and deeply personal desire to provide an inclusive curriculum for all students. Niedziela created these courses under TEA's Innovative course rules. According to TEA, innovative courses must be "academically rigorous and address documented student needs."[15] After completing my master's thesis that focused on Mexican American history and attending the second year of the MAS Academy in San Antonio, Niedziela invited me to help write the curriculum for the Latino/a American Studies course. I worked with two curriculum writers, Xavier Pantoja and John Fernandez. The simple action of organizing a team that included both content and pedagogy experts had already surpassed the efforts of all previous district administers regarding the writing of curriculum that centered the Mexican American perspective. At the time I was a middle school social studies instructional coach for the district. Our first step was to divide up and discuss numerous monographs that were recommended by the MAS Academy and used in other programs across the state. We also studied the HISD MAS standards. We discussed whether we should create a MAS course or

[14] Alice E. Ginsberg, "A Conocimientos Movement to Integrate Mexican American Studies into Texas Public Schools," Samuel Dewitt Proctor Institute for Leadership, Equity, and Justice, Rutgers Graduate School of Education, April 2021, https://proctor.gse.rutgers.edu/publications/research-reports.

[15] "Innovative Courses" (Texas Education Agency, February 5, 2024), https://tea.texas.gov/academics/learning-support-and-programs/innovative-courses.

broaden the narrative to include other Latinx groups. Considering FWISD's growing non-Mexican Latinx population we decided that a Latinx course would better serve the district's students. The three of us had not been trained as ethnic studies scholars but our course followed the principals of culturally relevant content and pedagogy based on our lived experience, our time as classroom teachers in FWISD, and our district professional development. We began the course with a discussion of identity, the history of ethnic studies, and an overview of the Latinx community in Fort Worth. Although the course was heavy on the historical side considering we were all history teachers, the LEs we wrote for the teachers provided them the opportunities to engage their students with collaborative projects and to think critically about the world around them. The first semester the district made the course available two teachers on two different campuses chose to teach both ethnic studies electives. These two teachers alternated the courses each semester. We provided them with professional development specific for the ethnic studies courses.

The following summer we reevaluated the course and made some changes. This time I worked with Xavier Pantoja and Elias Velvarde, a social studies teacher who planned to teach the elective at Paschal High School. The course has grown over the years and now has over seven hundred students enrolled in thirty classes at eight high schools.[16] The creation and maintenance of this elective is already a vast improvement by the district administrators and board members in their dedication to improving the education experience of Latinx students in FWISD. The MAS elective available to students from during the 1970s and early 80s did not have any district curriculum nor did the textbook offer a critical view of traditional US history. The district also did not offer any professional development to interested teachers. However, this

[16] FWISD Social Studies Department

course alone will not change the negative effects of schooling for Mexican American students in Fort Worth nor will similar ethnic student electives across the state and nation.

As powerful as ethnic studies courses can be for the students enrolled in them, the courses do not reach the majority of students. Without including the perspectives of Latinx people and other ethnic groups into required US history and Texas history courses, educators continue to uphold the white-centric narrative as the story of America. The majority of Latinx students will continue to not see themselves reflected back in their curriculum and non-Latinx students will continue to perceive their Brown peers as foreign and un-American. Social studies educators must teach the Latinx experience in Texas and the United States in required courses. Historian Philis Barragán Goetz, writing about the power of MAS stated that, "a decolonized space in the margins can also be a liberating force in the center."[17] Allowing the traditional white-centric narrative of American history to persist without creating space for critique in secondary school classrooms guarantees a continuation of white supremacy in the United States. This creates an environment where a reaction to eleven-year-old, San Antonio born, mariachi star, Sebastien de la Cruz, dressed with pride in his traje de charro, and passionately singing the national anthem is to attack Cruz on Twitter by calling him a wetback, beaner, and illegal with the hashtags #yournotamerican and #gohome.[18] Labeling Cruz as not American solely based on his pride and celebration of his Mexicanidad is a modern-day effort of white colonizers to continue the extinction project of their ancestors in eliminating non-white people from the land and from the American story.

[17] Barragán Goetz, *Reading, Writing, and Revolution,* 169.

[18] Laura [VNV] Barraclough, *Charros: How Mexican Cowboys Are Remapping Race and American Identity* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), 1.

FWISD challenged the white-centric narrative taught in its district's social studies classrooms. In 2018, Niedziela, again using district funds, contracted scholars to develop a K-12 Latinx studies curriculum overlay that provided teachers the content and resources to disrupt the master narrative in their classrooms (the district hired a team of African American scholars the previous year for a similar task). On September 11, 2018 the school board unanimously approved a contract for just over eighty-six thousand dollars with TCU's Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies (CRES) department. I was part of the team hired to write the Latinx studies overlay. According to the contract the district and the school board agreed that a curriculum overlay would contribute to the district's primary mission of "preparing ALL students for success in college, career, and community leadership." Specifically, the "infusion of multiple historical and cultural perspectives into the core curriculum," would meet the district's goals of providing "every student with equitable access to high quality, culturally and personally relevant instruction, curricula, support, facilities, and other educational resources." The board and district also acknowledged that this content was necessary for all students, not just those of Latinx origin. The contract stated that "through exploring multiple perspectives, students will cultivate critical thinking and literacy skills transferable to life beyond the classroom," and "become equipped to better understand themselves and foster authentic relationships grounded in mutual understanding."[19] These were grand goals and commendable for a district whose leaders had historically ignored their responsibility to educate Mexicanos, segregated Mexicanos into inferior buildings, and denied Mexicanos teachers and administrators who understood their needs.

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[19] FWISD School Board Meeting Minutes, September 11, 2018.

The writing of the curriculum overlay guidebook began quickly after the board approved the contract. We began the process by holding community forums and teacher focus groups to gauge what district stakeholders hoped to get from this new curriculum. We also had an opportunity to audit the current social studies courses, not only to suggest where to infuse the overlay, but also to highlight where the learning experiences painted a version of history that misrepresented or completely left out Latinx people. The social studies curriculum writers used our audit to make adjustments to the core curriculum. The Latinx overlay was available to FWISD teachers the following school year. We then began offering professional development that focused on methods for using the overlay in the classroom. Our sessions covered the content in the curriculum and pedagogical skills to help teachers engage students in their classrooms. The entire process was supported by Niedziela who stated that "it's an absolute necessity that we have this type of curriculum in place and we create opportunities for conversations that don't ordinarily happen and provide a structure and a safe place for those conversations to happen."

The first semester the curriculum overlay was available Elias Velvarde began using it and creating space in his world history class for his Paschal High School students to safely discuss why the world around them operates as it does. When teaching the concepts of migration, demographic change, and how new populations adapt to their environments to meet their needs, he facilitated student learning through an investigation of a local mall likely frequented by his students. La Gran Plaza, located just a few miles from Paschal, was once Seminary South, a shopping center with high end retail stores that was tailored for a white upper-middle class and is now an enclosed mall with stores that cater to the mostly Mexicano population both generational Mexican Americans and newly-arrived immigrants. Velvarde stated that his lesson and the

overlay "lets the students know that they are part of history."[20] Again, the district and board's decision to invest in this Latinx focused curriculum is a notable improvement from its minor investments during the twentieth century, but the existence of the overlay guidebook is not enough to make a positive difference for FWISD students. The district must continue to support professional development for teachers and hold teachers accountable to implementing this content into all K-12 social studies classes. Just as important, school board members and district administrators need to uphold their commitment to providing equitable education and curricula to all students, especially in the face of the most recent conservative demands for patriotic narratives in social studies classrooms that do not allow a critical investigation of the nation's history.

Ethnic studies advocates are fighting these conservative demands at the state level. In 2016, Cynthia Dunbar, a far Right former school board member, published a racist textbook for MAS and submitted it to the SBOE for approval. Ethnic studies scholars and advocates quickly organized a #RejectTheText campaign. NACCS Tejas Foco K-12 Committee organized a study of the book and compiled a lengthy report. The textbook contained more than one hundred forty-one "substantial errors" and according to Dr. Valerie Martinez, a professor of history at Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio, over nine hundred lines with mistakes.[21] Dr. Saldaña, who also served on the committee that reviewed the textbook, stated that, "the entire text, in my assessment, is written from a White supremacist, Euro-American perspective."[22] The

[20] Stella M. Chávez, "Fort Worth Program Brings Latino, African American History Into Classrooms," *KERA News,* September 17, 2019, https://www.keranews.org/education/2019-09-17/fort-worth-program-brings-latino-african-american-history-into-classrooms.

[21] "Cynthia Dunbar's Absurd Defense of Her Offensive Mexican-American Studies Textbook," Texas Freedom Network, September 7, 2016, https://tfn.org/cynthia-dunbars-absurd-defense-of-her-offensive-mexican-american-studies-textbook/.

[22] Alice E. Ginsberg, "A Conocimientos Movement to Integrate Mexican American Studies into Texas Public Schools," Samuel Dewitt Proctor Institute for Leadership, Equity, and Justice, Rutgers Graduate School of Education, April 2021, https://proctor.gse.rutgers.edu/publications/research-reports

book's reference of undocumented Mexican immigrants as "illegals," its claims that "crime and exploitation can circulate unabated" in immigrant communities, and its efforts to paint the Chicano movement as a project to "destroy this society," are a few examples of the textbooks authors' racist depictions of Mexican Americans.[23] Dunbar defended the book. She believed the book did not have factual errors but rather just differences of perspectives. None of the authors had expertise in Mexican American history or culture. Dunbar purposefully did not want any experts on the topic "because she wanted an unbiased textbook."[24] David Bradley, a conservative republic member of the SBOE from Beaumont who did not want the course in the first place did not believe there was anything wrong with Dunbar's textbook. He stated to the media that "the left-leaning, radical Hispanic activists, having pounded the table for special treatment, get approval for a special course that nobody else wanted . . . now they don't like their special textbook . . . I bet they want everyone to also get an A for just attending . . . the one thing we can't fix in this world is unhappy people."[25] His comments are indicative of the false assumption that the established narrative of US and Texas history does not privilege the white American perspective over all others. Nevertheless, the committee's thorough report proving the massive errors in the text and the effective "reject the text" campaign forced the SBOE to do just that. The board unanimously rejected the book as "beyond repair."[26]

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[23] Julie Chang, "Textbook for Mexican-American studies called racist – Proposed book for state high schools inaccurate and offensive, critics claim," *Austin American Statesman,* June 13, 2016.

[24] "Cynthia Dunbar's Absurd Defense of Her Offensive Mexican-American Studies Textbook," Texas Freedom Network, September 7, 2016, https://tfn.org/cynthia-dunbars-absurd-defense-of-her-offensive-mexican-american-studies-textbook/.

[25] Julie Chang, "Textbook for Mexican-American studies called racist – Proposed book for state high schools inaccurate and offensive, critics claim," *Austin American Statesman,* June 13, 2016.

[26] Alice E. Ginsberg, "A Conocimientos Movement to Integrate Mexican American Studies into Texas Public Schools," Samuel Dewitt Proctor Institute for Leadership, Equity, and Justice, Rutgers Graduate School of Education, April 2021, https://proctor.gse.rutgers.edu/publications/research-reports.

With every step forward the SBOE created additional obstacles for ethnic studies activists. After years of contentious debates and advocacy work the SBOE approved TEKS for the MAS course in 2018 based on the standards written by Houston ISD educator Torres-Edwards. FWISD students, organized by Orlando Lara, the associate director of TCU's CRES and a contributor to the Latinx curriculum overlay, played an important role in pushing the SBOE to approve the standards. These students, who were also members of My Brother's Keeper, a non-profit organization that helps young men transition from childhood to adulthood, spoke before the SBOE on several occasions and explained the importance of non-white representation in their social studies classes. Dontavious Sims, a senior at the Young Men's Leadership Academy, a FWISD high school, told the board, "if I know the truth about my history and your history then we will not repeat what happened in the past." Miguel Argumedo, a senior at Paschal High School expressed a desire to see his heritage in his classroom curriculum and explained to the board that "if we learn to love ourselves then we can love another person."[27] Unfortunately when the SBOE approved the MAS standards they voted 11-4 to change the course name to Ethnic Studies: An Overview of Americans of Mexican Descent. SBOE member Bradley proposed the name change and stated, "I don't subscribe to hyphenated Americanism."[28] The name change satisfied opponents of MAS and other ethnic studies courses who claimed these classes were divisive. The conservative members of the SBOE wanted to demonstrate their power and control over the schooling of Texas children by getting the final word in this multiyear fight.

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[27] Diane Smith, "There is a national push for Latino studies. Fort Worth schools are leading the way," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram,* September 20, 2018.

[28] Julie Chang, "Mexican-American studies course Ok'd – But not under that name; board rejects 'hyphenated Americanism," *Austin American Statesman,* April 12, 2018.

Ethnic studies activists across the state quickly mobilized a campaign against the name change. Lara organized the Ethnic Studies Network of Texas, which held its first meeting in Fort Worth and was hosted by CRES at TCU. The coalition of advocates who appeared before the SBOE in protest of the name change included over forty scholars of Mexican American Studies. Board member Marisa Perez-Diaz took offensive to the proposed name change. Emphasizing that her Mexicanidad makes her identity and her experiences in the US vastly different than the white board members she stated, "we're all made of the same clay, not the same mold . . . my colleagues around this board room identified me . . . my identity is my own . . . we identified thousands of children across Texas today and took that power from them."[29] For many advocates, the removal of their self-identifying Mexican American label was another modern-day attempt to strip them of their control and to place them into an inferior position in society. Angela Valenzuela, who conducted the ethnographic study at Juan Seguin High School in Houston and had been an advocate of the MAS course and curriculum for decades, told the media that she "would not want her name associated with it [the course] under its new name" because "her mother would never forgive her." Valenzuela believed the decision by the board to change the course name "harkens back to Jim Crow and the scars it left . . . 'that is all we were allowed to be then [an American of Mexican descent] because it was Americanization full throttle.'"[30] While no longer fully identifying with the moniker of Chicana or Chicano the activists today incorporate much of the ideological principles. Even though they identify as Mexican American they embrace their indigeneity and believe the path to liberation is through decolonization rather assimilation. The board agreed to a compromise and voted to change the

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[29] Julie Chang, "Mexican-American studies course – wins final approval – but in partisan vote, state panel splits over what to call the course." *Austin American Statesman,* April 14, 2018.

[30] Juan Castillo, "Why remark on 'hyphenated Americanism' led to outrage," *Austin American Statesman,* April 22, 2018.

name of the course to "Ethnic Studies: Mexican American Studies," after hearing from more than forty scholars who convinced the board that the previous title "didn't reflect the identity of Mexican-Americans nor an established area of study."[31] Beginning with the 2019-2020 school year, more than fifty years after the SBOE approved the teaching of a MAS course, Texas students could now enroll in a course that was supported with state approved standards that accurately portrayed the Mexican American experience in the United States.

Within two years, a new conservative push for protecting the patriotic narrative in social studies courses threatened MAS along with the approved African American Studies course and the planned American Indian and Native Studies, and the Asian American Studies courses. After the New York Times published the *1619 Project,* which aimed to reframe American history by "placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of our national narrative," an organized backlash against teaching anything other than the traditional white-centric account of US history led to new legislation in state houses across the country. Conservative groups began a campaign to control the teaching of race and racism in the classroom. The collective conservative fear of using race as a lens to view history, because it could empower students and lead them to be critical of the world around them, steered legislators in Texas to write new bills that ensured educators only taught their students that the United States was an exceptional nation. Specifically, the bills state that educators can only teach that the history of "slavery and racism are anything other than deviations from, betrayals of, or failure to live up to the authentic founding principles" of freedom and equality.[32] Both HB 3979 and SB 3 proposed during the eighty-seventh legislature and signed into law by Governor Greg Abbott in 2021 aimed to restrict and regulate classroom discussions of race and racism. Under

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[31] Jonathan Silver, "'Mexican American' name unanimously Ok'd," *Austin American Statesman,* June 16, 2018.

[32] S.B. 3, 87th (2) legislature, 2021, https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=872&Bill=SB3

this legislation, that uses undefined language, teachers could not be forced to discuss "controversial issues" in their social studies classes and if they choose to engage their students in these issues then the law required them to "strive to explore the topic from diverse and contending perspectives without giving deference to any one perspective." This unclear mandate led to a North Texas administrator telling teachers that if they have a book about the Holocaust in their classroom then they should also have a book that is told from the opposing perspective in order to be in compliance with the new laws.[33] The new laws also made it illegal for educators to teach anything that may cause children to "feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress on account of the individual's race or sex," ignoring that public school curriculum has made non-white children feel inferior to their white peers for more than a century. This specific item aimed to restrict the teaching of a historical narrative from the perspective of marginalized groups to protect white children from feeling ashamed of the actions of their ancestors. With these bills, lawmakers are continuing the efforts of the twentieth century white architects of education to preserve white supremacy through public schooling.

The struggle to provide curriculum that liberates non-white students, provides them with the safe space to think critically about their world, and to form a positive perspective of themselves, their families, and their ancestors is ongoing. A coalition of ethnic studies advocates organized a #DefendTheTruth campaign to prevent the passage of H.B. 3979 and S.B. 3. Even though the laws did not outlaw the teaching of ethnic studies courses they certainly have limited the ability of teachers to instruct their students with the pedagogical principles of the field and the inherent opportunity to critic the master narrative of US and Texas history. The SBOE has also pushed back against the progress of other ethnic studies courses. After a successful pilot of

[33] Sharon Pruitt-Young, "In one Texas district, teachers were told to give 'opposing' views of the Holocaust," NPR, October 15, 2021, https://www.npr.org/2021/10/15/1046389474/texas-holocaust-opposing-critical-race-theory-southlake.

the American Indian and Native Studies course at Grand Prairie ISD and the writing of TEKS by Native American elders, ethnic studies scholars, and educators the SBOE removed the discussion of a permanent course from the January 2024 agenda. These restrictive laws that seek to control and limit the empowerment of students of color threaten the future of ethnic studies courses and make it improbable that teachers will feel safe in challenging or disrupting the white-centric narrative in mandatory history courses. Nevertheless, the coalition of advocates for the education of Mexican American children is strong and enduring.

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Internet Archive (https://archive.org)

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Texas Education Agency (https://tea.texas.gov)

Texas Freedom Network (https://tfn.org)

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Texas Tribune (https://www.texastribune.org)

Texas Women's University (https://twu.edu)

Washington Post (https://www.washingtonpost.com)

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Education

Ph.D., History, Texas Christian University, May 2024
M.A., History, University of Texas at Arlington, August 2016
"¿Mi Tierra, También? Mexican American Civil Rights in Fort Worth, Texas, 1940-1990s"
B.S., History with Secondary Certification, Texas Wesleyan University, May 2012

Publications

"Latinx Palimpsest: Remaking a Colonia on the Edge of Aztlán," with Max Krochmal, chapter for *MetropoLatinx*, University of Chicago Press, in progress

Latinx Studies Curriculum in K-12 Schools: A Practical Guide, with Dr. David Colon, Dr Max Krochmal, and other contributors, TCU Press, December 2022

"Disrupting the Master Narrative: Mexican Americans in the Borderland," *Journal of Social Studies and History Education*, Fall Issue 2022

Awards/Honors

Bette Tate Beaver Service Award (awarded by the Texas chapter of the National Association for Multicultural Education to the core team of the Ethnic Studies of Texas), April 2022
Graduate Teaching Award, TCU History Department, April 2022
Outstanding Student Service to the Department of Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies, 2019
Diversity in Research Award, TCU AddRan College of Liberal Arts, fall 2018
Chair for Teaching Excellence in Humanities, FWISD, 2018
Finalist, Secondary Teacher of the Year, FWISD (district-wide), 2017

Conference and Academic Presentations

"Latina/o History is US History: Social Movements and Self-Proclaimed Identities, 1960s-1970s," National Council of History Education, Cleveland, OH, March 2024
"Brown Erasure: Mexican Americans and Teaching History in Texas, 1930s-1990s," TCU CRES Justice Conference, Fort Worth, TX, March 2024
"Cold War Curriculum and the Rise of the Mexican American Generation," History of Education Society, Atlanta, GA, November 2023
"Alternatives Suggested by Dr. Omar Garza: Abolish the State Board of Education," Western History Association Conference, Los Angeles, CA, October 2023

Invited Papers, Keynotes, and Presentations

"Finding Your Voice," Hispanic Heritage Month, YWLA, Fort Worth, TX, September 2023
"Historians of Latino Americans Tarrant County," History Panel for Leadership Fort Worth, September 2023
"Schooling in Fort Worth: A Brief History in Black and Brown," Tarrant To & Through Partnership advisory training, July 2023