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Mexican American Studies is a field that has been overlooked for decades. However, at this moment because of changes in demographics, politics, and business as well as other areas there is an increased interest in our community. So that at the very moment when there are more questions about Mexican Americans and Latinos there are few sources to find answers.

Most media outlets can provide short answers to deep questions, but there are not enough places where we can engage in deep discussions about identity, race, culture, and other issues that not only influence one group of Americans but all of us. This issue is compounded by the fact that these questions have been brewing for decades. The answers have been brewing too; however, there has been a disconnect between the folks who have cultivated the field of Mexican American Studies and those who now want to know more about the culture.

This book is part of the answer.

On mainstream media outlets listeners and viewers will find stories about Latinos or Hispanics. However, most Americans are not completely sure of what the difference is between both words. At the same time, most scholars have moved on from the debate about which is preferable, the term “Latino” or “Hispanic”? Regardless, few media outlets and no entertainment outlets delve into the nuances of the meaning of those terms and other terms that encompass the identity of our community.

Today, over 50% of the 5.2 million Texas public school students are Hispanic.

The state itself is almost 40% Latino, according to the Pew Research Center.

However, there is so little practical information about the Latinx community that most people don’t understand the difference between the three terms I used to describe us in this sentence and in the previous
two sentences: Hispanic, Latino, Latinx, and let’s add Chicano, Tejana, Mexican Americans. And there are more.

Basically, most folks don’t have a basic understanding of what to even call us.

This book will help explain that. Of course, there is not one magical term to refer to us, just as no single person can be reduced to one word or label, but it is time to profoundly incorporate us into the American Imagination.

By now, most people are so used to hearing about the growing Latino demographic that they no longer pay attention to the statistics. A lot of people are used to and may even be tired of hearing that a large state like Texas is over 40% Latino.

The Mexican American Studies Toolkit series is designed to provide high school teachers with the most up-to-date approach to contemporary issues in Social Studies, History, Rhetorical Analysis, Ethnic Studies, and more.

This series combines the research of leading scholars on topics that have permanently shaped the Mexican American identify in academia, alongside the art and activism that brought that work to the attention of the nation.
Moreover, *The Mexican American Studies Toolkit* also addresses issues that are prevalent today, and provides the tools for teachers to engage students through social media and multimedia as well as the classic media of books.

Finally, *The MAS Toolkit* is designed by scholars, teachers, writers, and activists who not only understand the research and its influence on modern issues, but who also know how to thrill and educate students in the classroom.

*The MAS Toolkit* series marks the next era in multicultural, multi-media education.

As such, this book lends itself for use in Special Topics: Social Studies–Mexican American Studies, Mexican American History, Texas History, and dual credit versions of those courses for high school students earning college credit. This also serves as a focused reader to supplement English Composition I and English Composition II and dual credit versions of those classes as well.

*Tony Diaz*
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tony Diaz, El Librotraficante, is a political analyst on “What’s Your Point” Fox 26 Houston. He also hosts the weekly bilingual radio program “Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say,” which covers Latino Literature, Art, and Politics on KPFT 90.1 FM Houston. His essays have appeared in the Houston Chronicle, Texas Observer, Fox News Latino, CNN.com, the Los Angeles Times, and Huffington Post Latino Voices, among other publications.

Diaz founded “Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say” (NP) in April of 1998 in Houston, Texas. NP began as a monthly reading series featuring nationally renowned authors and new writers from the community. The group grew to include the weekly radio program, “Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say,” which has aired on 90.1 FM KPFT, Houston, Texas, since 2001; the Latino Book and Family Festival—the largest book fair in Houston and one of the largest in Texas; the NP MFA Initiative which cultivated more Latinos with Master’s Degrees in Writing than the University of Houston Creative Writing Program, and many other programs. The Nuestra Palabra Collection is housed at the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, part of the Special Collections Division of the Houston Public Library System. “Nuestra Palabra” radio show broadcasts are archived at the University of Houston Libraries and Special Collections.

Nuestra Palabra formed the basis for the Librotraficantes. Diaz made national and international news when he led the Librotraficantes in defying Arizona’s ban of Mexican American Studies. He along with four veteranos of Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say: Liana Lopez (aka Librotraficante Lilo), Bryan Parras (aka Librotraficante HighTechAztec), Laura Acosta (aka Librotraficante La Laura), and Lupe Mendez (aka Librotraficante Lips Mendez) organized the 2012 Librotraficante Caravan to smuggle banned books in Tucson back into Arizona. The Librotraficantes began underground libraries across...
the Southwest and joined a national movement to put into check Arizona's ban of Ethnic Studies. The group has gone on to continue defending Freedom of Speech, Intellectual Freedom, and promoting Ethnic Studies.

Diaz currently resides in Houston where he is the Director of Intercultural Initiatives at Lone Star College–North Harris and a professor of Mexican American Studies. He is the author of the novel *The Aztec Love God*, the editor of the anthology *Latino Heretics*, and is included in *Hecho En Tejas: The Anthology of Texas Mexican Literature* as well as other publications.
There’s an old joke that goes something like this: If you look up the word “dictionary” in the “Dictionary,” will it say “It’s the thing you’re holding in your hand”?

That’s the old version of the joke since today folks are 50% as likely to look up words on the online version of, say, the Merriam-Webster, which defines itself as, “a reference source in print or electronic form containing words usually alphabetically arranged along with information about their forms, pronunciations, functions, etymologies, meanings, and syntactic and idiomatic uses.”

A dictionary can be just a list of words.
That is not thrilling.

A Social Studies or History book can be just a list of names and dates.
That is not thrilling, and that is not enough to begin understanding the hearts and minds of Mexican Americans.

Some scholars might believe that these texts are not supposed to inspire or thrill. They may even argue that the dictionary is in fact, by its own definition, a list of words.

Noah Webster aspired to create more than that.
The Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines “dictionary” as “A reference book containing words usually alphabetically arranged along with information about their forms, pronunciations, functions, etymologies, meanings, and syntactical and idiomatic uses.” That version of the book is no longer “New” as the title touts since it was published in 1983.

What is more interesting is the definition of itself also limits the role of the book itself. That definition seems to suggest that a dictionary is simply a list of words. That can be useful, but that does not inspire interest.
Also, that is not all the father of the American Dictionary imagined for his brain child.

There are other hints at the greater purpose imagined for the work. Here is a quotation from the section titled “Noah Webster and American Lexicography” in the *Webster’s II New Riverside University Dictionary* from 1988. The stated purpose of The American Dictionary is: “to dissolve the charm of veneration for foreign authorities which fascinates [sic] the mind of men in this country, and holds them in the chains of illusion.”

That sounds powerful.

Of course, it may be difficult to imagine how that might be accomplished through just the listing of words. This textbook won’t provide you with a specific answer to that. However, *The Mexican American Studies Toolkit* does exemplify an attempt to achieve Webster’s greater goal. This is not just a list of words, this is not simply a list of dates, this is not just a listing of people. Like Webster’s book, *The Mexican American Studies Toolkit* will dispel the illusion that Mexican American history and culture is foreign. Mexican American History and culture are American History and culture, as are other fields of Ethnic Studies. As with the dictionary, this book is the latest update necessary to dispel illusions.

Webster wrote the dictionary to cultivate America’s own heritage. This standard which we have the luxury of now taking for granted did not once exist, just the United States did not once exist, just as the thirteen original American colonies expanded to the fifty states.

And yes, to allude to the joke that opened this section, the Dictionary that we know, and take for granted now, was not the dictionary that first appeared to pave the way for itself.

The Merriam-Webster website states that in “1806 Webster published A Compendious Dictionary of the English Language, the first truly American dictionary.”

Now you may ask, why in the world does *The Mexican American Studies Toolkit* reference Noah Webster? Was he Chicano? Noah Webster was not Mexican American. However, his work is important in the evolution of the American identity because he codified the language of the United States. Webster wrote the playbook for the American version of English. Before that, the version of the language spoken by the queen
was considered watered-down and inferior as spoken by the inhabitants of the rebel colonies in America.

The early version of “The Dictionary” was self-published.

The role of language and the role of books are so powerful in American history that one biography is titled: *Noah Webster, the Forgotten Founding Father: Noah Webster’s Obsession and the Creation of an American Culture* by Joshua Kendall.

Reading Chicano history, several of the pioneers of the field became activists in college. The same can be said of Noah Webster.

Noah was among the early graduates of Yale, attending during the American Revolutionary War. He was not from a very wealthy family. They were wealthy enough that his father sold some land to cover the costs for Noah to attend Yale. However, his father did not appear to have enough money to send his younger son to college, too. Webster’s brother instead became a soldier and would die on the battlefield.

Noah married well. So, college did for him what it does for others—it introduced him to a circle of mentors, friends, and even rivals—who would further his intellectual and business enterprises. He could develop the network of people to help him sustain the writing of his book, the publication, and the activism required to get his book—this American dictionary—into the public.

Let’s make something clear.

Today, the American dictionary is a household name. At the time, it sounded like a crazy idea. America was a young nation. “Real” culture was considered to come from England, and “real” dictionaries came from Britain and codified the Queen’s English. In addition, just like modern-day activists, Noah worked on many projects at once. That is one of the reasons it took him over thirty years to create.

In the process, Noah also created other industries, and shaped American letters—figuratively and literally.

Modern-day publishing issues include protecting copyrighted material in the social media era. That sheds a little light on what the publishing world may have been like during Webster’s time when America did not have any copyright laws. As a result, Noah Webster was a major champion of such laws. He wrote and spoke so well he could write legislation, and his circle of family, friends, and peers were in positions to pass his laws prior to the publication of his American Dictionary.
His first “hit” was his best-seller *American Spelling Book*. However, again, don’t think of a spelling book in terms of today’s world, especially now that students will “Google” definitions and spelling on their phone. Webster’s spelling books also addressed language, reading, and in a roundabout way, culture. The book was based on what we would today call “Critical Thinking.”

In other words, simply finding out what letters to string together is not the most powerful application of the art and power of language. Profound knowledge is attained through an understanding of the role of language, and thus words, in the development of a person’s and a nations’ identity.

It is safe to say that not only did Webster know that, he lived it. That might explain why he helped with the early stages of Amherst. He gained income and notoriety from his spelling book, but he also had higher goals for his work and his nation based on the power of language.

That’s why this section started with an examination of the word that could be seen as the source of words—the dictionary—but is merely a powerful guide that charts the course of American thought, culture, imagination, and values, among other things.

To put this simply, “The Dictionary” didn’t always exist. Where would you look up the word “dictionary” before it existed?

Someone had to write the first dictionary.

It is fascinating to revisit this American evolutionary period after our revolutionary period and compare the views and self-image of Americans and compare it to the situations Chicanos were in during the Civil Rights movements, or Mexican Americans after World War II, or other stages of American History.

Webster’s mother’s side of the family claimed lineage from the settlers on Plymouth Rock. His father’s side of the family was related to a former governor of Connecticut. They were not incredibly wealthy, but they did have social capital.

Noah was proud to be American, at the same time, this was defined in contrast to the British view of the world, and then a defining of what it meant to be American, as America itself was being shaped.

Webster was very firm in his identity which played out in his work. This was unique at the time. This was even considered radical. Since his great work took over three decades to write, there are accounts of well-known figures of the time either gossiping to others that Webster
was wasting his time or not up to the task. There are also documented accounts of famous American figures discounting him. Of course, Webster’s biography also points out that he had characteristics that were at least annoying and, in some cases, it appeared he suffered from depression and was obsessive compulsive.

Looking back, even those negative attributes could serve him well in compiling a work that would take audacity and meticulous detail. Such is the power of a great education. Thinkers learn how to adapt to but also change the world they have been delivered.

Webster’s outrageous goal was to codify language to cultivate an American identity, which was lacking at the time.

It is also important to point out that Webster, although he would become a household name, did not make a lot of money from his work and had to also complete monumental tasks as he prepared his largest master work for publication. This too is similar to how modern-day activists and writers must juggle several projects and several jobs at once to pursue their unconventional goals in fields that may not yet have become industries or recognized or have even attracted a market.

Webster, the man who would write what we call The Dictionary, would organize lectures in different towns and charge admission; he would sell subscriptions for his upcoming publications; he would ask for loans; he would teach. Of course, he was also civically engaged and helped create the educational institution Amherst.

He must have had an iron discipline. There are traces of these personality traits that had a positive influence over his work; however, there were negative aspects as well. He was disliked. He was considered arrogant, and he “burned a lot of bridges.”

Also, it is important to point out that he was also in this important position because he was a male. Thus, he could attend Yale, speak in public, egg on other officials. He was white. Slavery was in effect at the time in the South. He did look down upon it, but the point is that Webster’s circle of friends was free and elite, even if Webster was not rich in monetary capital at the time, he was wealthy in cultural capital.

On the other hand, he saw this privilege only too well. He lorded his intellectual pedigree over his self-taught contemporaries such as Benjamin Franklin.

We like to think of history as all about logic. However, we must consider the role of emotions in a history that has almost expunged the
grumpy, stuck-up, stubborn, obsessive Webster who lodged himself into the history of the nation he loved only by using those same traits to forge the works that would take “American English” from a derogatory phrase to the *lingua franca* of the world. Webster was aware of all the stereotypes and ill will toward “American” anything. He did not buck to the negative views. He instead insisted on a more unified English language.

Why bring this up in an introduction to *The Mexican American Studies Toolkit*?

Just as at one point in American History, American English was not considered “real English.” Now it is.

Not only that, American English has flourished in a nation that launched the Technology Age. American English is the default language of the Internet, and even before that, because of historical and economic developments, American English was already considered the *lingua franca* of the world, in other words the default language of the planet.

Listen to the ghost of Webster’s stubborn spirit shout that American English is real English. Modern American, especially in states such as Texas, California, New Mexico, Arizona, and others, need stubborn spirits to logically and artistically and steadfastly prove that the wayward words of one-time refugees and rebels are valid now, too, for the good of the nation.

And with that spirit, we invoke that same spirit to say, this book is about American History and Culture.

Mexican American History is American History.
Chicano History is American History.
African American History is American History.
Asian American History is American History.
Native American History is American History.
Women’s History is American History.

*The Mexican American Studies Toolkit* has arrived as a map for history, social studies, government and other courses to navigate their way through this era of the constant updating of America.

Enjoy.
UNIT I

INDIGENOUS ROOTS

Where Are the Aztec Books?

Imagine the largest bookstore in the United States. Powell’s City of Books, based in Portland, Oregon, touts itself as the largest independent bookstore in the world.

Its “about us” page mentions that it employs over 500 employees for five stores in Portland and has over two million books in stock.

Now, imagine, walking into one of the Powell’s City of Books locations, choosing twenty books at random, taking those books home with you, and then being asked to assess the nature of our civilization based on those twenty works.

What if you were in the comic book section and picked up twenty comic books? What if you picked up ten comic books, and then passed through the gardening section and picked up ten gardening books? What picture of our civilization might future scholars form? If instead, you were given a day to choose twenty books that would best convey the “story” of our civilization, our history, which books would those be? How much of our story could you tell? How much would be left out? How much could be figured out by generations of us in the future?

Some parts of the task might be impossible. Of course, you could begin making some conclusions. How would you proceed to gain a more profound picture of what we thought, our values, our passions, our daily lives?
Now imagine going 500 years into the future and those twenty books being the only books that could be used to decipher hints about our culture, our beliefs, our dreams, our art, our families.

This scenario is similar to the state of Aztec books. Less than twenty Mexica codices exist. Codex is the name for the books of the Aztecs.

And you will soon find out that even the phrase “Aztec books” is not precise.

The Aztecs believed they originated from “Aztlan.” They also linked themselves to a grand legendary civilization called the Toltecs. To put that into context, the Mexica existed 500 years in our past, and the Toltecs existed over 500 years in their past.

The Aztecs called themselves the “Mexica.” Keep in mind that term is the English version of the Spanish version of the sound first heard by Hernan Cortez and his men over 500 years ago, when they first made contact with the indigenous inhabitants of Mesoamerica. Nahuatl is the original language of the Mexica and people of the region.

Prior to the Spanish arrival, the language of the Mexica had never been translated into Spanish or any European language or vice versa.

So literally no one on the planet had the language to put into words this encounter.

Let’s try to put into context the magnitude of this meeting.

Some of the metaphors used to describe this encounter suggest the importance of this meeting. Europe called the land and the civilizations here the new world.

Of course, those words have become clichés to us, what British writer George Orwell called dead metaphors.

To breathe life into the language and this subject, we need to adopt new words.

On the other hand, intellectuals and writers like Orwell insist that we must continue this process throughout life. In other words, even in our native language, even in our own home, even in our own thoughts, we are evaluating, re-interpreting, re-imagining.

That is the best way to approach our study of the Indigenous roots on Mexican Americans. Because even our words, which we might think are solid, still sway.

And once we observe how words melt, we then begin to melt more and more of them.
QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

1. What are some possible differences between a Mexica Codex and a Spanish book?
2. What are some similarities?
3. What are some differences and similarities between a Spanish book of 1523 and books you have read today? Why are there differences?

Twenty Books

If you were chosen at random and given a gift card to pick any twenty books from the largest independent bookstore in the United States of America, which books would you pick? (Never mind that you never visit Portland, home to Powell's Books City—the largest independent bookstore in the nation as of this writing).

What if you were in the fitness section, and what if you enjoyed martial arts, and what if you grabbed twenty books, each having to do, one way or the other, with boxing, mixed martial arts, Jiu jitsu, Shotokan karate, judo, and wrestling?

Now imagine that it turns out those books would be saved and placed in a container so that 500 years later our descendants can attempt to figure out who we are based on those works.

You might say that it wasn’t fair. You didn’t know you were compiling a figurative “fingerprint” of our culture.

How much easier is the challenge if you know the goal ahead of time?

The Mexica did not know that would be the case.

How Do You Build a Skyscraper?

There are fewer than twenty codices still in existence from the Mexica. After the conquest of Mesoamerica, the Spanish, especially friars, began to compile more artifacts of the Mexica.

In the years just after the full clash of cultures, there were more indigenous and Spanish who learned each other’s language.

Several Mexica wrote “books.”
This is both good and bad.

One of the fundamental beliefs that form the foundation of the United States is the separation of church and state. Entire empires and civilizations were created on the premise that religion and government are entwined.

Even in the United States, both often overlap. And when that overlap comes into conflict, parameters are reviewed in the courts.

Even in our day and age, with some personal issues, it is often difficult to be able to precisely separate the strands of an issue based on the ethics of beliefs and values, the emotions that are triggered, and the cold, analytical facts of an issue.

Along those lines, when the Mexica looked at the Sun Stone, they didn’t see what we see.

You can see it in person at the Museo Nacional de Antropologia in Mexico City.

Of course, you have most likely seen many different versions of it, on book covers, on art, on lowriders, on home decorations, as home decorations, on restaurant walls, as souvenirs, on t-shirts.

However, for hundreds of years, the Sun Stone had disappeared from the face of the earth.

Just like the libraries, the art, the pyramids of Mexico and of the region were toppled and destroyed, and then, in some cases replaced or covered over, the Sun Stone suffered the same fate.

In the clash of civilizations, in the war of the worlds, forces first met as warriors. Europe won the war. For that reason, the history and the views of that moment are European in nature.

The Spanish conquistadores saw the meeting of culture as the continuation of battles between empires.

We don’t exactly know how the Mexica and others saw the fight. Their history was not taken into account. It was vilified and erased.

Of course, there are many other details left out of the picture. For example, the Mexica were the intellectual and military leaders of the region at the time. They also had many other rivals who they overcame or who they were in competition with for prominence.

Without a doubt, a culture that is capable of creating the Sun Stone also had intellectuals, poets, visionaries, who went by other names.

Their work festered in the rubble.
Over time, historians and artists and other intellectuals, and common folks, have deduced that Cortes and the conquistadores defeated the Mexica by allying with the other groups that were competing with the Mexica for prominence. Another theory examines the role that illness played in the decimation of the indigenous populations. That view rests on the fact that the Europeans had developed an immunity to illnesses that the Mesoamericans had not been exposed to.

One of the newest theories is put forth by Andrés Resendez in his book _The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America_. He tracks old laws, business transactions, court cases, and archived oral accounts to uncover the way tens of thousands of indigenous were enslaved even after Spain abolished slavery.

This alludes to the possibility that other indigenous groups united against the Mexica not just for emotional reasons of, say, revenge, but also for the purpose of profiting from capturing women, children, and warriors for slaves. The book documents how slave labor was required to work the labor-intensive industries of the time as well as to prepare the terrain for Spanish garrisons, then farms, then haciendas.

It may have very well been Mexica reduced to slave labor by their former indigenous rivals who had to hack away and reduce to rubble the monuments they had venerated just a short time before. It may have very well been fellow Mesoamerican rivals who knew where the Mexica would run, where they would hide, who led slave traders to them. Based on this theory it may have been former indigenous Mesoamerican rivals who knew to direct the slave force of fallen Mexica to use the last of their energy and were forced to take down the Sun Stone they revered and to bury it with their own hands to make their defeat thorough and more profound.

And yet, the Sun Stone would not remain buried.

The Mexica empire fell in the 1500s. Mexica libraries, art, and temples were razed at that time, too, sometimes serving as the foundations for Spanish structures. It was almost 1800 when the Sun Stone was uncovered under the Zócalo in the heart of Mexico City, which also was the center of the Mexica's civilization.

Just this aspect of the story, literally uncovering lost history, touches on many of the issues that we will tackle.

Logically speaking, why did the Sun Stone survive? Why wasn’t it thoroughly destroyed? Was it too difficult to break? Was it by chance
that it fell under enough debris to be hidden and preserved over time? Was the Sun Stone carefully buried, carefully hidden by Mexica who hoped that the future would have a fuller picture of them as told by their Sun Stone?

Other questions arise. We seem to be surrounded by Sun Stones, called “Aztec Calendars” by souvenir shop owners. Was the image of the Sun Stone sacred? Could only some people possess the Sun Stone? Was that a status symbol? Was it a sign of power? Did that change over time? To put this into a modern context, think of this. Just a few years ago, if someone owned a cell phone, they were considered wealthy or important. Right now, just about everyone in America owns one.

How does the Sun Stone work? Of course, that question reflects our worldview where our smartphones have specific, not religious function. However, 500 years from now when our descendants have moved on to vastly superior technology, they might look back at us and claim that we worshipped these chunks of cheap metal because everyone had one. Our spines were curved, our eyesight destroyed as we sacrificed all our time and energy to worship these small, flat, plastic sticks.

What do our questions and our answers say about us?

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

1. Your very own time capsule: Decades ago time capsules were popular. An entire class of a middle school would gather one special item to be buried in a box and to be uncovered ten years later, or upon graduation, or some other parameter. If you were to create your own time capsule for a weatherproof box that was only 3 feet by 3 feet by 3 feet, what items would you put in there? Share your answers out loud with a partner.

2. Your twenty books: Attempt the challenge set forth in this section. What are twenty books that you think could give an accurate snapshot of the current state of the United States of America for our descendants 500 years from now? Don’t focus so much on the nature of the exact list, what are some of the difficulties of such a task? The Mexica’s version of the book was a codex. How might the American definition of a book change in 500 years? What are some other reasons that this challenge is challenging?
3. What are ten other facets of our current civilization that should be considered to convey a more accurate picture of who we are?

4. Only art can save us: In the first column, list three specific items that meant one thing to you five to ten years ago, but don’t mean the same to you now. Label the second column either “5 years ago” or “10 years ago.” (Feel free to consult a parent or older sibling.) In that column write what the item meant to you at the time. Be as specific as possible. Perhaps it was something you really wanted, perhaps it was a gift, perhaps you made it. In the third column, list what the item means to you now. Why are there differences if any? Some aspects change, but there might be some things that are still important to you. Why? What would you include in a fourth column, marked “graduation day”? What would you write about each item then?

5. This chapter also referred to the Aztec Sun Stone as the “arguably greatest work of art in North America.” Let’s continue the argument. List the ten greatest works of art in North America. Place them in order. What is difficult about this process? Why is your number 3, number 3? Would you be able to include a number 11? Did the Sun Stone make your list? Why or why not?

6. This chapter points out the power and limitations of artifacts and the power and limitations of art. This is logical, especially in that both are products of their time which also influences the need, if any, for them. However, on an emotional level, how might the Mexica have been offended to find out that we considered their Sun Stone art? On the other hand, who might be offended by the fact that the Sun Stone is touted as the “most important work of art” in North America? Can we ever truly know complete logic behind the making of the Sun Stone and what it meant to the Mexica? Where do an artistic interpretation and a logical interpretation meet?

7. How is your iPhone the greatest work of art in North America?

8. In 100 words, write what you know about the Aztecs. You may add what you think their daily life was like. Did they go to school? What were their schools like? Choose a partner. Read your answers to each other. Combine your answers for a 100-word response. Choose which of you will share your answer with the class.
Aztec 2.0

There are fewer than twenty original Mexica codices in the world. However, after the fall of Mesoamerica, and after the installation of the Spanish military, church, and government, efforts began to recover some of that past. There are about 500 “books” compiled by indigenous peoples typically for the Spanish clergy. Again, they were “written” after the height of the war between the cultures and for different purposes and audiences, depending on who ordered or wanted the work.

There were some very practical reasons. Even the first Spanish conquistadores needed to understand what the Mexica they encountered were saying.

On the other hand, this clash between civilizations was the stuff of legends, and there were many different stories, oral histories, news accounts, and boasts creating a chaotic sea of myths, legends, lies, and facts.

To wrap our heads around this issue, how many books do you have in your house? Be honest: 3, 20, 500? In 500 years, what would just those books reveal about our current civilization?

Should we count magazines? Should we the count e-books you own? What would that change, if anything, about our cultural profile?

Now, explain how to build skyscrapers.

Can you? Can any of the books in your house explain that?

Five hundred years from now there may remain evidence of the skyscrapers we can currently walk into. There may be pictures and other records of them. Some may have even been preserved. But if only the books in your house right now were all that remained to possibly explain how they were constructed, would that provide an accurate step-by-step process?

That is like the situation we now face.

You can visit the amazing temples of el Templo Mayor in Mexico. You can climb to the top. You can also do so in Peru.

There are books that discuss the mathematical precision evident in their construction and their placement.

However, over 500 years later, it is not quite clear exactly how the pyramids we can scale were exactly built. Not the twenty original texts
we have from the full splendor of the Mexica high civilization, nor the 500 subsequent recapitulations after the conquest, convey the details.

However, it stands to reason that the very fact that we can scale, while on vacation, the creations of ancient architects and engineers seems solid proof of their intelligence and genius. Logically, the pyramids are there. They required advanced math. Thus, the Mexica knew advanced math.

The Mexica are not always portrayed in history as mathematicians, engineers, professors, and writers, or those who transcribed thought, history or artists. It is safe to say that that image of the Mexica is not the most prevalent.

Logically that does not make sense. What emotional reasons might prevent a different picture, if any, of the Mexica?

These are key questions because we don’t have to go far to understand how emotional responses can cloud logical decisions about a people. In the most obvious cases these are called stereotypes. In the most profound cases, often hard to address, view of other people or cultures are based on deep-rooted values, sometimes unexamined beliefs that we may not even realize that we hold.

Examining these deep-rooted views helps us gain a better understanding of the events, the facts, the issues that lead up to the history we know and the history we don’t know. The field of social studies helps us examine these aspects to get a better idea of the historical facts that lead up to our idea of history.

This is not to say that there is no place for emotions in these fields of study. On the contrary, people read because they love books. Scholars love history. Students may be attracted to a certain era over another.

Writers, poets, and artists breathe life into artifacts. We need that too. However, the true goal of a well-rounded education is to be able to balance our emotions, our values, and our reasoning to better understand our place in the world.

These intellectual powers are also the gifts that inspire and instruct us to tell our stories. And in the end, that is what social studies, history, and education are all about: telling our stories.
The Sun Stone continues to capture the imagination of people across the world. This is a coloring book for the next generation.

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The twenty-day signs included in the *Aztec Calendar Coloring Book* (8 ½” × 11” format) are black and white computer-enhanced line drawings of the Aztec symbols representing Crocodile, Wind, House, Lizard, Serpent, Death, Deer, Rabbit, Water, Dog, Monkey, Grass, Reed, Jaguar, Eagle, Buzzard, Movement, Flint, Rain, and Flower. The simple, graphic designs of these symbols are perfect for coloring with crayons, markers, pencil colors, or oil pastels. It is a great artistic and linguistic tool that can be used by children of all ages, including adults, and it makes a fun, creative, and educational gift.


**FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

1. Summarize 3 main ideas, one each from the sections “Twenty Books”, “How Do You Build a Skyscraper?” and “Aztec 2.0”. Choose 2 partners. Read your answers out loud to the other members of your group.

2. The group should decide one main point for each section. Chose one member to keep notes and list your main ideas. Choose someone to read the list out loud to the class. The third member of the group should draw the cover of what you imagine an Aztec Codex might look like or be about. Decide on a title. The presenter will share your findings with the class.
Only Art Can Save Us

The simplest definition of ekphrastic poetry is poetry about works of art. That is like saying that a poem is a string of words, with line breaks that rhyme.

Both are more than that.
However, we do need a starting point.

Our starting point is the Mexica Sun Stone, Nobel Prize-winning Mexican Poet Octavio Paz and the poem he wrote in 1957 titled, “Piedra De Sol” or “The Sun Stone.”

Scholars, historians, mathematicians, and others have studied the Sun Stone and have yet to reveal exactly what it means. They examined the different logical ways by which the Sun Stone might convey meaning, or add to logic we are familiar with based on the logic we know.

These capacities can include telling time, marking time, perhaps recording history, perhaps recording values.

These are all valid concerns.
Of course, these approaches will be exhausted.
The poem illustrates that and guides us on how to get past that.
So, for example, one could argue that it would take just as accomplished a poet to write the poem and title in Spanish as it does to accurately and profoundly translate the poem into Spanish.

Granted the preliminary step is straightforward. Identify equivalent words in English, so as to call the poem something, to initiate the process of conveying the poem in another language. The first and most practical concern may be to simply get the job done.

This is analogous to finding the Sun Stone again in the first place, and then logically quantifying its appurtenance and any other obvious facets.

Again, this is an important step so that the issue can even exist.
However, we do, at some point, exhaust the obvious.

At that stage, we may then analyze all the evidence before us and try to imagine all the logical ways they may function together, or they may work together.

However, at the deepest level, we shall then begin to question the actual meaning of words.
These are the moments that we truly begin to interpret the values we take for granted and the values that we may be facing.

This is where the art comes in, now that we must trust and follow our emotions, as emotions touched the hand that created the Sun Stone, the rock chosen to sculpt it, the image chosen to render, the size.

Translating the title into Spanish is an example of this.

First, what is the Nahuatl translation?

The word Sun Stone in Spanish already carries with it cultural implications, allusions, way more than the two words carry in the literal translation into English.

For Americans, the Sun Stone might be the “Aztec Calendar” that is brought up for a paragraph every year in a school book or during Hispanic Heritage Month.

For students in Mexico the words allude to the massive display in the most important museum in their country, which was lost for almost three centuries then found.

Fittingly, Octavio Paz also wrote the book The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico in which delineates his view, assessment, of the facets that make up the personality of the Mexico of his generation. That definition is the most useful to put his poem “Sun Stone” into context because that poem comes from the pen of the same author who Mexicans would recognize as a leading writer in their nation, representing them through the world as a man of letters, and author of the most-read tome about their personalities and character of the time.

Yes, all that is bound up in the translation of the title of one poem.

It stands to reason that the title of a poem is just the title of a poem. However, it should also be clear that there are other factors that touch on emotional reasons as well as unspoken values that must be triggered for one of thousands of poems, or a work of art, to stand the test of time. If a work does not “capture our attention” it risks becoming just a list of words arranged by line breaks, perhaps rhyming.

The story behind the poem could end right here.

But we won’t let it.

Instead, we will complicate the telling of stories and the telling of histories.

The Sun Stone was a mainstream work for its time. In other words, it was important enough to require the dedication of important resources
at the time. The right artists were commissioned. The right tools were employed. The right elements were acquired on which to carve.

Such works are also testaments to the power and wealth of a rule or a people. They are telling the world that they have an abundance of resources to invest time, energy, people, and genius into such works.

Obviously if a people are starving, or at war, such things are not possible or even make sense.

So, for those reasons, it is safe to say that in one sense the Sun Stone was a public work.

Likewise, Octavio Paz, born in 1933 and died in 1998, was part of mainstream Mexico and the elite.

This touches on some value judgments that sustain only certain writers getting published and only certain voices being heard.

This is not to vilify or condemn Paz. This makes readers keep in mind that we are not discussing translating the title into nahuatl, the language of the Mexica.

What did they call the Sun Stone? Logically, that would be the correct name.

Furthermore, the issue of translation might take on a different significance for Chicano scholars in the United States. They might be among the Americans who have read Paz’s books, and they most likely had particular insights into his treatment of Mexican Americans in his chapter on pachucos.

Some scholars have earned their doctoral degrees examining just the few sentences above. We don’t have that much time, but we can hint at the complexities involved by alluding to the fact that the word “pachuco” brings up the notion of the hybrid language of Spanish, or the pidgin language Caló, which was favored by the Zoot Suit wearing Mexican American youth of the time who Paz disparages in his essay.

All these nuances are called into effect in a profound analysis of this poem by a mainstream Mexican writer about one of the mainstream relics of the Mexica.

If we don’t examine the nature of the context, then we don’t realize that the voices of the Mexica, South of the Mexico–United States border, some of whom remain, and the Chicanos, to the north of the border, are shut out.

This is not to condemn Paz. This is to not condemn the Mexica and Chicanos to silence.
On the other hand, that tunnel vision does lead to the powerful poem Paz wrote to get behind, or get into the Sun Stone, and to get into the mind of his people and generation, which he does potently.

If the title, as straightforward as it appears, traffics in so many nuances, the actual lines of the work do even more.

Here are just two lines: (The forward slash represents the line break in the poem.)

\textit{tus pechos dos iglesias donde oficia / la sangre sus misterios paralelos,}

These lines are potent because the exact definition of the words changes in English and Spanish. There is a different context in Mexico or the United States.

Here is one way to imagine the importance of art.

This is the poetry of the elite or the top 1% of Mexico. Although he may not be among the top 1% of wealth, he is the top 1% in credibility, legitimacy, reputation, and literary awards which we can sum up in cultural capital.

His work fits the highest definition of literature in Mexico, and thus has been preserved and disseminated. Thus, here we are discussing it.

Of course, Paz does his job well.

In this case, the process of comparison and analysis, and the process of dissecting this poem for the purposes of revealing something about history, culture, is the high form of social studies.

“The parallel mysteries of your blood.”

This art, this poem, reveals so much more about identity than simply defining a category on a census sheet. This also conveys the nuances of identity particular to a people. And at the same time, the potent use of the imagery of blood is universal. Every person on earth bleeds red. But not every person is read the same.

This poem is a vehicle to decipher aspects of the Mexican identity into English, to then add nuances of, say, the Chicano or Mexican American identity.

It makes sense that Paz would be the most precise about his own stance. However, he also writes so powerfully that his words touch the emotions, values, and logic of others.

Even these approaches to analysis themselves are supported by the fact that Paz addressed “parallels.” Logically speaking, parallel lines can
run side-by-side into infinity and never touch. And there can be many lines parallel at once. In this case, this poem can address many binaries that can be complimentary or contradictory.

Paz evokes the Mexica history of his nation, as well as the modern-day Mexico of his time. He also alludes to the ancient religions and rituals of the Mexica, and the traditions and values of the church. Finally, on a broader scale, his words expand to encompass the binaries of the United States–Mexico border, and then too the Mexican American identity.

All this from one poem.

However, we address this poem to bring attention to the other aspects of society that art can reveal and breathe life back into.

Artifacts are objects that help us see an era. Art helps us feel. Those insights also force us to realize that some of the issues, desires, drives, fears, passions of the past, are not so removed from our own.

This approach also argues to keep as many aspects of a culture as possible to give a full picture for the future.

**PREVIEW**

1. The upcoming section “Dance of Generations” addresses modern day people celebrating the ancient art of the Mexica. Look at the cover of the “Aztec Coloring Book”. Write 100 – 250 words literally describing the shapes and images that you can make out. Write 3 possible explanations for what those images might mean. Don’t be afraid of guessing incorrectly. Just go for it.

2. Choose a partner to read out loud the first 6 paragraphs from the next section titled “Who Gets to Tell Their Story?”. Write 50 words attempting to guess what that section might be about. Again, don’t fear guessing incorrectly. Your only enemy is the blank page.

3. Danza Azteca Taxayolotl interprets Mexica ceremonies that are over 500 years old. Write 250 words answering the questions: a.) Why do you think modern folks are interested in art from long ago? b.) Are the danzantes interpretations of the Mexica Dances correct? c.) How can artists interpret any art from long ago?

4. Share your answers with a partner. Choose someone to present your answers to the larger group.
Who Gets to Tell Their Story?

The Sun Stone on display at a national museum of Mexico, and a poem by Octavio Paz published in a major magazine both represent the epitome of mainstream art of their time.

This is neither bad nor good. This observation is not a value judgment. This observation is logical. Only those forms of art or artifacts are likely to stand the test of time.

However, there are many other ways to tell a culture’s story, and there are many other facets that can convey the values, views, or passions of a culture.

Another point of view may consist of simple observations from everyday life.

To tell the story of a people, we need to hear from the people.

However, sometimes they are kept from that act.

This is sometimes done overtly, or even violently. This might be done through rules meant to keep some people from expressing themselves, or speaking freely. Other times, a web of rules, policies, practices, and views can combine to subtly, yet effectively keep a group from telling its story.

So, for example, during the height of the war between Europe and Mesoamerica and just after the initial fighting, the Mexica were in no position to archive their stories, or relate their point of view of the occurrences of that time.

At minimum, the Mexica were fighting for their lives. Or, if they were not, they were perhaps enslaved, or fleeing. If they were on the run, they were more concerned with sheer survival.

It is only years later that the remnants of the Mexica and concerned Spanish clergy begin to document the story of the Mexica as best they can. These post-colonial codices number in the 500.

Again, there are many ways to silence a people.

Perhaps in our era with the advent of social media and other ways to archive stories, including blogs, vlogs, YouTube, it is hard to imagine that some people do not have a voice.

There are many ways to silence people. This can be done by starving them, this can be done by ignoring them, this can be done by silencing them, this can be done by diminishing their work, this can be done by
vilifying their work, this can be done by destroying their works, or never letting their works see the light of day.

On that note, this textbook will convey facts as professed by the most recognized thinkers of our time, but this book will also archive the story of common people, writers who are up and coming, and writers who are not as well-known as they should be.

There should be obvious parallels to what we are teaching.

However, we are also exercising the consciousness that tells us to preserve all stories, more stories, and to inspire more stories, to form a better picture.

This will take the form of oral histories, letters to the editors, essays, newspaper accounts, and other approaches.

The oral history project that archives the stories of Mexican American and Latinos during World War II draws a lot of parallels to the post-colonial recapitulation of Mexica codices. There are several obvious comparisons, but of course, there are many differences.

One interesting thing to view is all the work that it took to get this many stories, from this generation, preserved in this form, for this many people.

In the introduction to the book *Legacy*, Maggie Rivas Rodriguez explains all the steps involved. She mentioned how computers and web servers were used.

Obviously, those weren’t available during the pre-Columbian era.

However, this project was able to capture over 500 stories. Which is about the same amount of post-colonial codices.

On the one hand, these similar numbers may just be happy coincidences. On the other hand, it is powerful to see the amount of work and the number of resources it took in our day and age to save that many stories. We can just imagine how much work it took 500 years ago—without Microsoft Word.

Also, to point out the pros and cons of one approach is not to judge one approach as good and another as bad. We want to examine logically all the facets involved, and we want to understand the values and approaches implied, or unspoken, or taken for granted, to keep growing.

As our level of thought and education expand, another example of a nation’s prowess becomes clear.
The power and wealth of a nation is more overtly demonstrated by the great towers and monuments it builds and by the great art it creates. Perhaps we have entered an era where a great civilization will have an abundance of resources and an abundance of education to allow more and more of its people to tell their story.

On that note, as you read this textbook, keep in mind that it is based on the view that you must tell your story, too.
It’s a Sunday morning on the east end of Houston, Texas, fourth largest city in America. As the sun slowly rises, carloads pull up to Moody Park. Over a dozen people convene, each one unloading drums, feathers, atls, skirts, mantels, beads, and other instruments, garments.

The cars are modern-day Houston fare: pickups, sedans, and smart cars filling up the parking lot, just like many other parks in large cities.

However, in this day and age, as other parks fill up with parents and children preparing for baseball or soccer matches, Moody Park is host to rituals, art, music that goes back over 500 years, even tens of thousands of years.

This morning, like many mornings before it, Danza Azteca Taxcayolotl is convening for their weekly Danza. They have over a dozen members, and they are part of a network of danzantes all over Houston, all over Texas, all over the United States, and across several other countries.

Although there are danzante groups all over the world, the countries with the most people participating are Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and the United States.

In the simplest translation, Danza means “dance” in Spanish, but the words are also shaped by culture, laws, customs, art, and history.

This ties into the indigenous component of Mexican American History.

Both the United States and Mexico have deep indigenous roots that are not well understood or examined by everyone.

So, for example, even the name “Texas” has indigenous roots.

Of course, Texas has had at least Six Flags ruling over it, but also was formerly part of Mexico.

Before addressing the complications of the definitions and the confluence and complications of time periods, eras, and categories, let’s examine who art is—a “cultural accelerator.”

Diaz Bernal Del Castillo chronicles in his first-person account titled “The True Conquest of the New World” how the Spanish Conquistadores tore down the pyramids of Mexico and destroyed the books and libraries of the Aztecs, more accurately referred to as the Mexica, as they called themselves.
Today, we can say that the Danzantes on the East End of Houston are celebrating the art of a culture at least 500 years old, because we know that the Spanish arrived in Mesoamerica in 1512.

Again, we use the term “art form” to fit into our modern-day understanding of “dance.” But we are also speaking from the point of view of a government that believes in the separation of church and state. We can also question the role of art in our day and age.

This brings up different questions regarding the role of art in society.

That brings us back to Danza.

We as American can understand how parents, professionals, teachers, and students have dedicated their time and energy to learning more about Danza, on their own time, using their own resources. We may know other folks who dedicate the same time to other activities such as football or baseball.

However, it may be more difficult to fully understand all the nuances of a form of dance that also may have had religious and profound cultural implications during the height of the Mexica Empire.

We won’t be able to touch on all those aspects in this textbook, and some folks might have to pursue doctoral degrees to gain more understanding.

However, as a cultural accelerator, art is powerful because as members of Danza Azteca Taxcayolotl don their costumes, tune their instruments, and then share a full presentation, the audience can see, feel, and hear the vestiges of the sights and sounds that the Mexica, centuries ago, would have felt. And even they too might not have been fully aware of all the influences of this art form, but they could feel the form, as we do, too.

This is the power of “art” in our day and age.

We will try to untangle the words that separate the original experience from the words we have to explain it. However, even without those precise terms, over 500 years later, there are community members in the fourth largest city in America experiencing Danza.
Lost History

In this book, we will examine the evolution of terms used to describe identity at different moments in history. This approach also points out the historical factors, among other influences, that shape the meanings of those terms.

There are, however, missing parts of the story. So, for example, the United States has its own history with its indigenous origins. The same can be said with Mexico. However, those experiences also overlap because the borders that today define both nations are only as old as those nations themselves.
So, for example, you can say that the United States came into existence in 1776 when it gained its independence from England. However, the actual land itself was here a lot longer before that. We don’t have complete records of that time.

The same can be said of Mexico.

The book *The Fire and the Word: A History of the Zapatista Movement* compiles writings and talks by Sub Comandante Marcos and includes a long list of groups Indigenous to Mexico. Most people in Mexico are not familiar with them even though some, like the Toltecs, existed as far back before the Mexica as the Mexica did from us.

Likewise, most Americans are familiar with tribes such as the Dakota, Hopi, and Comanche, but there are entire parts of history lost to us as well.

There are at least as many tribes in the United States as Mexico.

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**The Other Slavery**

So, for example, a recent book titled *The Other Slavery: The Untold Story of Indian Enslavement in America* by Andrés Reséndez examines the plight of Indians (which is the term used by that book) who were enslaved even after slavery had been abolished in the United States.

This book is designed to address Mexican American heritage. It should now be clear that although the term “Mexican American” is well-known, and in this day and age, even obvious, fully examining all the factors that lead up to this identity requires delving into identity issues of other groups as well.

The book *The Other Slavery* touches on the experiences of the indigenous, African Americans, Mexicans, Spanish, and Americans.

There aren’t enough pages in this book to fully address each aspect. However, this book is intended to inspire an entire generation of scholars, thinkers, educators, writers, and artists who will delve into these areas to seek more information. These are also very exciting fields to enter into as a scholar to conduct research that had not been exhausted and which reveal the different ways that we have all influenced each other over time.
QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

1. Why do you think the Spanish Conquistadores destroyed the books of the Mexica?

2. Since there are not many remnants of the art and culture of the Mexica, do you think the Danzantes are following the correct steps of the dances performed by the Mexica at least 500 years back? Why or why not?

3. Do you think Danza Azteca Taxayolotl is concerned with 100% accuracy of movement from the original Danza? Why or why not?

4. Why do you think adults would use their time and energy to not just perform Danza, but to learn about its origins, especially if it might take more work than, for example, looking up contemporary artistic movements?

5. Is there anything for non-Chicanos, non-Mexicanos, to gain from attaining more knowledge of Danza, or perhaps attending a performance of Danza?

6. Had you heard about Danza before? Who? Why is this movement not so well known?

Danza Azteca

On any given Sunday, Danza Azteca Taxcayolotl convenes at sunrise in the morning shade of Eastwood Park in Houston, Texas, the fourth largest city in America.

To the untrained eye, they are simply practicing movements passed down from the Aztecs, in costumes reflecting that past. To the initiated, however, they are doing so much more.

They represent a very practical and powerful response to a difficult question: If history and culture are understood through the examination of facts, figures, and works from the past, how can you understand that past if those parts have been burned, buried, or neglected?

This is what happened in the case of the Mexica, commonly referred to as The Aztecs. Their art, books, and history were destroyed over 500 years ago.

If the cold, hard artifacts can’t be recovered, perhaps the spirit, the emotions, the visions of the past can.
Danza Azteca Taxcayolotl’s artistic interpretation of sacred dances becomes living, breathing interpretations of history. Such practices are respected when they are carried out by scholars and poets with acceptable degrees, publications, and awards and when their investigations concern Grecian Urns. Do similar achievement by “ordinary people” carry the same weight? Perhaps true history is the constant refinement of acts, figures, and ideas redefined based on new information and new practitioners of art, history, and culture?

If not, how can you understand a history that has been erased? Who can champion their past if they don’t know it exists?

This raises several questions:

— Without this alternate point of view, can the real story of history be told?
— How does this influence our present?
— There are some things that will be impossible to recover from a strictly logical point of view. What can be recovered, if anything?
— If we can’t guarantee that anything is gained from reviving these movements from the past, why do it?
— Finally, once determined people are on a path, who can stop them?
Danza Azteca Taxcayolotl

The name of the group is Nahuatl for “Many coming together with One Heart for a mutual purpose.”

Javier Herrera is the leader of the group, also referred to as the First Palabra. He is a high school social studies teacher, community organizer, and Aztec Danzante.

The group began in 2007 and has grown from a few people to twenty folks. Previously members were all single, college-age students. Now the group has elders, kids, and everything in-between.

“The ceremony goes back as far as humans do,” Javier said. “When you look at the centerpiece of the ceremony, the ‘altar’, you find the four elements of life; air, fire, water, and earth. Ever since the moment humans began to understand their relationship with the natural and supernatural worlds, I believe this ceremony has existed.

The main similarity between what we experience today with what was experienced 500 or more years ago we are both working with real energy created in the ceremony, and there is a strong sense of unity with all those participating in it as well.

The main difference between the two is there was a lot of wisdom lost because of the invasion. I believe that this lost wisdom could really help us reach our true potential.

I will continue to do this for the rest of my life. This is not a hobby or a phase. This is a way of life that I will pass on to the next generation.

I would like students to learn where they come from. Once they know where they come from I never want them to forget. That is why I do what I do, to serve as a constant reminder of, not who we were, but who we are. No matter where we live, we will always be the same—People of the Sun.”
The drum is a Teponaztli, a hollowed-out log that can play two distinct tones. The images carved on the drum are of Mayan musicians. Some people might be surprised that a Mexica ceremony would include Mayan figures; however, this acknowledges the cross-cultural respect that existed before and exists today as seen in the sharing of knowledge and instruments. In fact, this drum type is shared across several cultures including Hawaiian and African cultures.

**DESCRIBE AND ENERGIZE**

1. Write 100 words describing the shapes and objects on the drum.
2. Energize those images with 150 words describing what’s happening, name the figures, why they are doing what they’re doing, what might they be saying to each other or thinking.
3. Read out loud what you wrote.
4. Listen to what others wrote. Choose one detail or description from someone else’s response. Write it on your sheet. Below it add 50 words building on what they wrote.
5. Be prepared to share with your peers.
Mari’s traje is made of leather. Trajes can be made of many different materials and colors. There is a basic pattern to follow but the symbols are individualized to represent the elements that make up the person wearing the traje.

The use of the Spanish term “traje” distinguishes the clothing worn during this Mexica ceremony in contrast to simply wearing a suit or a uniform or a costume. We may not focus on such linguistic distinctions or nuances; however, this meticulous approach to every aspect of the Danza ceremony inspires participants to a more profound understanding.
Monica Villarreal is an interdisciplinary, Chicana artist, Danza Azteca dancer, community organizer, and activist who holds a master’s degree in digital media studies.

She has been involved in danza for eleven years. Her group, Danza Azteca Taxcayolotl, meets at least twice a week to practice. Many of their gatherings are open to the public.

However, spectators should keep in mind that this is a spiritual practice for them.

This is a way of life that can be fulfilling, but it is not easy.
Monica said, “It’s difficult to gather knowledge from our past because our libraries were burned. A lot of what we know today is re-interpreted from prayer, spiritual work, teachers, knowledge passed down through elders who passed it down from generation to generation.”

It has to be re-created.

Some things can never be recovered. All the books that were burned—they are gone. All the people killed in the wars—people who were artists, historians, leaders. Many elders have passed away, and their stories were not archived.

That’s why we must strive to document this knowledge and wisdom. What we wear isn’t an outfit or a uniform. It’s spiritual regalia. We are in a spiritual battle, and this is our armor in a sense.

“In the beginning, it’s hard to find feathers, but once you become part of the movement, you learn where to look and who to go to,” Monica said.

Of course, in our modern era, we are using synthetic material that wouldn’t be worn in an actual war, but we use them as a way of symbolizing the colors, the armor used by the Mexica.

We are fighting for what was taken away from us: our beauty, our history, our culture. This is a way of taking all that back.

Once you know where to look and how, you’ll see that there are lots of ceremonies any given week, everywhere in Texas, in California, all over the U.S. and even more so in Mexico.”

On the back of Monica’s head dress is the symbol for water. Her wristbands are flowers.

The small shells on her wrists are cascabels.

The shell is a hand-held rattle called an “ayayote” and is made from a tree.
El Día de los Muertos, or “Day of the Dead” is a celebration; a time when families honor their deceased relatives by cleaning and decorating cemeteries, making elaborate altars, holding vigils, and preparing traditional foods. At first glance, this holiday may sound much like the United States custom of Halloween, after all, the celebration traditionally starts on October 31 and the festivities are abundant with images related to death, specifically images of skulls. But the customs have different origins, and their attitudes toward death are also not the same. In the typical Halloween festivities, for example, death is something to be feared but in el día de los muertos, death is something to be celebrated.

**Duration of Día de los Muertos**

“Day of the Dead” is celebrated between October 31 and November 2. During those days, the people remember and honor their deceased loved ones and though that may sound gloomy, it’s not; in fact, it’s the opposite. This is a festive and colorful holiday where family members visit cemeteries; decorate graves; decorate altars; present offerings; share foods, drinks, and candies; and spend time with family and friends.

**Origins of Día de los Muertos**

The origins of this holiday can be traced to Mesoamerican observances dating back hundreds of years and to a month-long festival dedicated to the Aztec goddess (Mictecacihuatl) known as the “Lady of the Dead.” After the Aztecs were conquered by Spain and Catholicism became the dominant religion, the custom of celebrating the dead became intertwined with the Christian commemoration of “All Saints’ Day.”
Beliefs of Día de los Muertos

The belief behind “Day of the Dead” is that spirits of the dead return to the earth to be with their families between October 31 and November 2; first the spirits of babies and children and then those of adults.

Day of the Dead Altars

Altars are an essential component of this holiday. Spirits are greeted with offerings of food and other things that the person enjoyed in life; laid out over an altar in the home and/or at their graves. It is believed that the spirits consume the essence and the aroma of the foods that are being offered. Other items placed on the altar include sugar skulls, often with the person’s name inscribed on top, special bread that is made for this celebration, and marigolds which bloom during this time of year and which lend to a special fragrance. Lastly, a photo of the departed can also be placed on the altar.

Day of the Dead Foods

“Day of the Dead” foods usually include mole, chicken dish with dark chocolate and peppers; atole de leche, a hot drink made of milk with corn, rice, sugar, or cinnamon; pan de muerto (bread of the dead), an elaborately-decorated rich coffee cake decorated with meringues made to look like the bones of a skeleton. Other edible items consist of skull-shaped candies and sweets as well as sodas, beer, wines, and liquors.
**Day of the Dead Cemeteries**

In the cemeteries graves are lavishly decorated because it is believed that the dead return there first. In some instances, flower petals are laid in paths from the cemetery to the home so that spirits will be able to find their way. In other instances, it is customary to spend the whole night in the graveyard. When that happens, the people make a party of it; with foods, drinks, candies, and music.

**Day of the Dead Symbols**

Other “Day of the Dead” symbols include death figures; *paper mache* skeletons and skulls; and flowers such as the “flower of the dead” or the “lion’s paw.” Also included are *copal* or incense which burn day and night and which produce a sweet aroma; along with toys, trinkets, and paper cutouts. In some locations, the day is celebrated with plays, games of all sorts, and parades. The goal of all these things, of course, is to convince the spirits of the departed that they are loved and missed.

**Conclusion to Dia de los Muertos**

At present, the “Day of the Dead” continues to evolve as the mixing of cultures and customs from around the world highly influence this tradition. In the United States specifically has this holiday seen change, especially since Halloween festivities are associated more now so than ever before with *Dia de los Muertos*. And as the American tradition of “Hallows’ Eve” becomes more prevalent throughout other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean it won’t be long before we see masks and costumes sold in the markets alongside sugar skulls and *pan de muertos*. Whatever the case, “Day of the Dead” has certainly become one of the biggest holidays in Mexico. But more than being specific to one nation, today this kind of celebration can also be found throughout the United States, Latin America, Europe, the Caribbean Islands, as well as in the Philippines.
Honoring *Dia de Los Muertos* at Casa Ramirez Folk Art Gallery

Macario and Chrissie Ramirez own Casa Ramirez Folk Art Gallery in Houston, Texas.

The site serves as a destination for shoppers, a base for community activists, and an informal cultural center, too.

In the last capacity, Macario is a former journalist who marched on behalf of Cesar Chavez, and who has made it a point to honor his past and to educate others about the long and often overlooked history and traditions of Mexican Americans.

His exhibits have extolled the legacy of *vaqueros*—the original “cowboys” of Texas; he’s organized and hosted grassroots civil rights campaigns, and exhibited and cultivated the work of local artists who have gone on to national fame.

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*Day of the Dead teaching ofrenda altar in Casa Ramirez’ classroom dedicated to Macario Ramirez’ father Jesus Ramirez.*  
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However, one of his passions has been to honor and properly convey the legacy of *Dia de Los Muertos*.

He offers free classes about the traditions and history of Day of the Dead, and their annual street procession to mark *Dia de Los Muertos* is now one of the city’s major events, with thousands in attendance for the kickoff as well as to view the annual exhibit of *altares*.

The photographs on these pages show some of the altars on permanent display to honor the Ramirez family.

When asked why he puts so much time and love into preserving this tradition, he said:

“I don’t want us to lose our wonderful culture and its traditions and celebrations that together give us our rich heritage. *Dia de los Muertos* is becoming recognized as a way for all Americans, whatever their origin or culture, to honor departed loved ones and to appreciate that part of our lives.”
This altar pays tribute to Virgen de Guadalupe with a hand-carved wood statute from Mexico in the front of Casa Ramirez Gallery. Her feast day is December 12 and artists are invited to submit work in her honor for display and sale.
The Ramirez family altar in progress, to both sets of parents, in celebration of Dia de los Muertos, Day of the Dead, installed each year in remembrance and in celebration of ancestors and other loved ones.
WRITING FLOW

1. How does this cartoon compare and contrast Day of the Dead and Halloween?
2. Have you celebrated either event? If so, what did you do?
3. Write 150–250 words about ways that you might celebrate Day of the Dead respecting the traditions it symbolizes but also adding your own perspective.
4. Draw what an ofrenda that you might make would look like. Share your responses with a peer.
The 5 Stages of Grief You’ll Go Through When Realizing There’s Now “Día de los Muertos Beer”

Gustavo Arellano

This essay first appeared in the OC Weekly Wednesday, October 30, 2013. It’s reprinted with permission from the author.

I was strolling down the booze aisle at Cost World Plus in Santa Ana when I came across the following package. At first, I thought it was one of the store’s many cheesy Halloween gag gifts, something more appropriate to Spencer’s than a merchant with a surprisingly robust selection of ethnic sweets, treats, and booze. But upon closer inspection, it was a real thing.

OY VEY. While Día de los Muertos (“Day of the Dead” for those of you who don’t habla) is increasing in popularity across the United States, the tradition is also increasingly being co-opted by corporations looking not so much to appeal to Mexicans but to grab hipster dollars that think anything Día de los Muertos is cool for reasons Mexicans have never quite understood. The Día de los Muertos fad has riled many a Chicano, and as I stood there fuming, I went through the Kübler-Ross model—better known as the five stages of grief popularized through American pop psychology—right then and there. Yes: Yo soy tonto.

5. Denial

As I said earlier, I first thought it was a joke. In Mexico, Day of the Dead is not a drinking holiday. Sure, a lot of altars might have a bottle of tequila or mezcal to honor the dead—but it’s for them, not for the living. But upon inspecting the packages, with its sexualized dead people (ew . . .) and colorful font around IPAs and other styles of beer, I realized it was real.

4. Anger

Why, beer company: WHY? Hipsters already have more than enough beers—why cheapen Día de los Muertos by hawking your cerveza with
its name? Who do you think you are—Disney? Do they hold nothing sacred? They’re already invading public Día de los Muertos events dressed in Halloween costumes, even though Day of the Dead ain’t Halloween. And they’re starting to appropriate Día de los Muertos motifs for EVERYTHING—albums, clothing, fashion, films, club nights.
3. Bargaining

Then again, maybe Día de los Muertos beer is a good thing. Any publicity is good publicity for Day of the Dead, right? Kind of how like I make excuses for Taco Bell and Chipotle for serving as scouts to whet the appetites of wasichu before they learn about better dishes to come once Mexicans reach their area of the country? So hipster Day of the Dead beer will similarly turn on Americans to better Mexican beers, thereby making us more accepted in this country? Right? Right? Yeah, right . . .

2. Fear

Sigh . . . having such things as Día de los Muertos beer only further cheapens Mexican culture, which makes it harder for Americans to accept Mexis as part of this country, keeping us as perpetual playthings (see: Cinco de Mayo, tequila, the Most Interesting Man in the World). Day of the Dead beer is proof that the work of Mexican writers and activists to keep Día de los Muertos a sacred holiday free of usurping is not only not happening, but was doomed from the start. Sigh . . .

1. Acceptance

O, yes: Día de los Muertos beer is a real beer, and I guess the only good thing about this is that it’s a Mexican brewery that is making the beer: Cervercería Mexicana, located in Tecate. And that is what finally made me accept the reality of the beer. I didn’t buy a case—don’t drink the nectar of nitwits, you know? But I do know that a lot of nitwits will buy this beer, good or not, which means at least some Mexicans will get rich off Mexican alcohol—and the beat goes on . . .

Gustavo Arellano is the editor of OC Weekly, author of the syndicated column “¡Ask a Mexican!,” and Taco USA: How Mexican Food Conquered America.
IT'S COMING TO TRADEMARK YOUR CULTURA!

MUERTO MOUSE

OPENS NATIONWIDE ON DIA DE LOS MUERTOS

May 11, 2013

This week the Disney Corporation planned to trademark one of the most beloved Mexican holidays, Dia de Los Muertos, or the Day of the Dead. Their plans were derailed by thousands and thousands of outraged people in social media, and me.

Thanks to the urging of those on Facebook and Twitter, I was moved to create a visual response to the Disney desmadre and PR disaster by drawing “Muerto Mouse,” a fictional movie poster that captures that company’s disastrous attempt to claim trademarks for the day we remember our dead relatives and ancestors. (The holiday only has origins from around five to ten thousand years ago, give or take a thousand years.) Muerto Mouse, a giant calavera mouse, is depicted destroying a city in his quest to “trademark your cultura.”

Due to further popular demand, and coverage by Pocho.com, the Guardian UK, CNN, FOX, NBCLatino, CBS, you name it (this image went viral like crazy).

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More Than Hispanic Heritage Month

Most schools are aware of Hispanic Heritage Month; however, since the observation is scheduled right when school resumes, many institutions are caught off guard and don’t have enough time to plan events to commemorate it.

With that in mind, this guide provides additional dates and figures for everything from one-day lesson plans to major school-wide presentations. This guide also provides dates and figures that can inspire activities throughout the school year.

March 31: Cesar Chavez’s Birthday
March 31: Selena’s Legacy
March: Women’s History Month
Week 1: Ana Castillo. Look up her works on the annotated list of authors banned in Arizona.
Week 2: Sandra Cisneros: Genius Mac Arthur Grant Recipient. Look up her works on the annotated list of authors banned in Arizona.
Week 3: Emma Tenayuca, labor organizer, labor leader, and educator.
Week 4: Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the United Farm Workers Union.

April: National Poetry Month
Week 1: Jimmy Santiago Baca: Look up his works on the annotated list of authors banned in Arizona.
Week 2: Juan Felipe Herrera: 2016 and 2017 U.S. Poet Laureate.
Week 4: Carmen Tafolla: 2015 Texas Poet laureate. Look up her works on the annotated list of authors banned in Arizona.

September 15–October 15: Hispanic Heritage Month
Week 1: Sonia Sotomayor: First Latina United States Supreme Court Justice.
Banned Book Week: September 24–September 30: Commemorate it with a display of books from the outlawed Mexican American Studies K–12th Grade Curriculum from Tucson Unified School District. Research quantified that students who took the courses performed better in other classes and were more likely to graduate than students who did not. For more information refer to Unit IV “The Struggle for Ethnic Studies” and Unit VII “Only Art Can Save Us: Maps to the Heart and Soul of Mexican Americans.”

March 31: The End of a Legacy and the Beginning of One

March 31 marks, among other things, the birthday of Cesar Chavez, co-founder of the United Farm Workers Union.

It also marks the date that Tejana legend Selena Quintanilla died.

March 31 poses a fascinating picture. It is also the last day of Women’s History Month.

Is it sheer coincidence? After all, there are only 365 days in the year to pick from.

Regardless of destiny or chance, what do we do as a society with these facts?

One answer has been to ignore them.

Cesar Chavez Day has not been embraced nationwide, yet.

Another approach is to study what creates a national holiday. Of course, there are some obvious steps. Hispanic Heritage Month is recognized by the government, but even HHM is not celebrated everywhere. This demonstrates that to make something official is a logical step, but that does not necessarily create the emotional attachment that might animate people to spread the mandate. This also may not be enough to create a profound belief in the act, so that people incorporate the mandate into their way of life. In the larger picture, this may never happen, and as a Democracy, we would avoid at all costs forcing people to embrace views or practices. Yet, some views and practices become ingrained into our way of life.

Understanding the extremes of ignoring and imposing and the steps between both form a part of an educated view of life. Critical thinking is a way to explore this.
March 31: The Legacy of Selena

March 31, 1995, marks the day Selena died. She was born April 16, 1971, in Lake Jackson, Texas.

Selena earned the awards, milestones, and recognition required to be acknowledged as a musical superstar on a commercial and professional level. These include sales of her recordings, attendance at her concerts, and accolades from the music industry. These examples form the logical evidence for her popularity; however, other stars have done the same. In fact, some superstors of the past may have even, for example, sold more albums, yet, they may no longer be remembered. So, concert attendance by itself is not to create a legacy.

Selena’s life, however, has also been institutionalized. Movies and television specials have been created about her life. Her work is taken a step further by scholars and academics who write about her music, her life, and people’s reaction to both. Of course, there are many magazines and news stories about her. Those are vital in the career of a musician. These writings differ because scholars and professors gather material and share it in such a way that archives or saves the legacy of a person beyond the professional or commercial accomplishments of the time.

Also, that type of writing about Selena leads to her work being taught in classrooms.

So, for example, students can study Selena. That is a major step in arching the legacy in a figure. Of course, this textbook, and the passage you are reading, provide insights into why Selena’s legacy merits study. This passage breaks down some of the factors that have brought her life to light.

Her work is also studied as art and literature.
The book *Hecho En Tejas: An Anthology of Texas Mexican Literature* includes the lyrics to the song “Como La Flor” by Selena. It lists the English translation as “Like the Flower.” That book also contains the poems, short stories, and essay of the leading Texas Mexican writers in the nation. The fact that Selena is included in that anthology adds her to the list of writers for her art, not just for her commercial success. That excerpt also opens the way for teachers and professors to bring her work into the classroom to study the lyrics. With today’s technology, it is then easy to find videos and recordings of her work to supplement class discussion.

The Queen of Tejano has also made it into museums. Her awards, costumes, and many other personal items are exhibited in The Selena Museum in her hometown of Corpus Christie, Texas, at her family’s studio Q-Production, where she recorded her music. There is also a Selena statue in the overlook of the Gulf called Mirador de La Flor, an allusion to her song. This makes sense because Corpus was her hometown. However, Selena is represented in the collections of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History located in Washington, D.C.

The Smithsonian is our national museum. This elevates Selena’s legacy from simply commercial success and regional appeal to a national importance. The museum’s website lists its purpose as: “We help people understand the past to make sense of the present and shape a more humane future.”

Now, Tejano music, the Queen of Tejano, and the Mexican American experience are recognized as part of that understanding.

That brings us to the emotional component of Selena’s legacy. People loved Selena. They still do. It is difficult to logically pinpoint if that love is what made the hits possible or if that love led to the academic analysis of her life and work. Does that research cultivate that love that people still feel for her?

Can love ever really be explained? What place if any does love deserve in an historical analysis?
Typically, a social studies or history textbook may attempt to remain extremely logical and avoid wandering near the emotional causes or responses to an era or a figure. That terrain was relegated for the Literature Department.

However, with the advent of Mexican American Studies, research in the field is so overlooked that at first it blended different disciplines just to exist. Today, because of so much progress in the field, an interdisciplinary approach is the best way to explain different aspects of the Mexican American experience.

This textbook appeals to several facets to create a deep understanding of the Mexican American experience as an essential understanding of what it means to be American.

For example, this textbook will provide an excerpt from an expert such as former judge Lupe Salinas who is a law professor at Texas Southern University, but you will also read a Letter to the Editor by Hilda Martinez, a private citizen and resident of Baytown, Texas, who was moved by Selena’s death.

The power of this approach is epitomized by the fact that including Selena in high school courses allows teachers to bring in multimedia components that are entertaining, and students also get to bring in stories from their parents or family members who might know what it was like to attend a Selena concert. Bringing these strands together is a powerful way to develop critical thinking skills.

On that note, here then is a letter to the editor that reflects the deep love that so many fans felt for Selena. It was published just two weeks after her death and sheds more insight into the role the singer played in the lives of so many in the story of America.
It took a while to decide whether to write this letter or not. The reason being that by the time The Baytown Sun readers read this letter they may have heard all they want to hear about Tejano star, Selena.

But, just maybe it is not enough. What I have to share is a perspective as a fan looking in from a distance, yet so near to the heart of Selena Quintanilla Perez.

I did see her perform three times in Houston. I saw her at the ‘94 and ‘95 rodeos and at this year’s New Year’s party held at the George R. Brown Convention Center.

At the convention center, Selena performed, smiling radiantly as she belted one song after another tirelessly and effortlessly. She waved to the audience teasingly, acknowledging and welcoming them, thanking them for being there. Though her costume was revealing, there was nothing vulgar or distasteful about her demeanor. Selena was at ease strutting on the stage entertaining her fans, her adoring fans.

I had never personally heard a Hispanic female singer sing with a voice of so much power, talent, soul and love. I had never been in awe of any entertainer before Selena. She truly had all the qualities of a superstar yet to be. It was as though when I saw her at the convention center that I was witnessing a historical event, the launching of a star.

Selena’s talent brought her much deserved fame nationwide and internationally. She was royal blood, blessed with so much talent, “la Princesa de” Tejano music.

Her songs celebrated our Tejano music, a hodgepodge of Americana beats, and the Mexican-American culture. Lyrics in her songs were about love, rejection, joy of life, values, dance, laughter, and most importantly her songs were about empowerment.

It matters not now, the countdown on the launch pad has been aborted. Selena is gone. What does matter now is the impact, the legacy she leaves for all the Hispanic youth and everyone in-between who admired her, sang with her, and dreamed of reaching new heights like Selena, especially the young Hispanic women.

What a legacy this young woman left in her short 23 years of life for “la gente.” She will live forever in my heart as I know she will be remembered by our proud community of Latinos.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

1. How special is my day? The Birthday Problem: Websites such as Khan Academy all the way to the Math Department at Cornell University write about the “Birthday Problem.” This states that there is a 50% mathematical probability that two students in a class of twenty-five students will have a birthday on the same day. Try it. Write down how many students are in the class. Have everyone in the class write their birthdays. Do any match? What other factors if any might increase the chances of students in your classroom having the same birth date? Or what factors were at play? Do the people with the same birthdays have anything in common?

2. March 31 marks the birthday of Cesar Chavez, the legacy of Selena, and the last day of Women’s History Month. What do those days have in common? How are they different? Should they be celebrated together or separately?

3. Look up information on Cesar Chavez Day. What states recognize it? Can you find any events organized in his honor where you live? Were they well attended or well publicized? Why do you think they were or were not?

4. Look up information about any events organized to commemorate the life of Selena in your area. Where there any? Why or why not? Where were events organized? Why do you think they were held there?

5. Look up three events organized for Hispanic Heritage Month within fifty miles of where you live. Could you find any? Did you hear about them? Why or why not? Would you attend them? Why or why not?

6. If I could . . . Pretend you were given a budget. How much would you need to host the ultimate Hispanic Heritage Month event? What would you spend the money on? What time would it begin? Where would you hold it?

7. Look up the dates for African American Heritage Month, Asian American Heritage Month, Women’s History Month, and Native American Heritage Month.

8. Quantum Demographics is the notion that once a person is exposed to information about their specific culture they possess the intellectual framework and wisdom to build bridges to other cultures. Choose two of the above listed heritage observations. Create a poster for an event that combines elements of both heritages.

9. Get additional information on Cesar Chavez or Selena. Create a video to inspire more people to get involved in acknowledging both or just one of these figures next March 31.
Dolores Huerta at the Delano Strike in 1966.
© George Ballis/Take Stock/The Image Works
Dolores: The Tip of the Pyramid

Cesar Chavez is one of the few figures from Mexican American history that is more widely known. When folks who do know of his work think of him, they lament his death and they recall the great works of the United Farm Workers Union.

This is perfectly appropriate. Of course, not enough people know about Cesar Chavez, and not enough is taught about our history.

However, the other co-founders of the United Farm Workers Union are still alive. Dolores Huerta gave up her job as a school teacher, put her family’s financial well-being at risk, and dedicated her life to building the first national union for farm workers, some of whom were not United States citizens, did not speak English, and most of whom were poor.

The United Farm Workers Union staged its legendary boycott of grapes in California in 1966 to bargain for better working conditions and benefits for farm workers. At the time, workers who picked crops could not count on water close by, were subjected to being sprayed with toxic pesticides, and were paid unfair, extremely low wages. Their march from the farm fields of Delano, California, to the state capital of Sacramento covered over 300 miles and drew national and international attention to their cause.

Fifty-five years later the full story is being told with the release of the documentary film “Dolores.”

I had the pleasure to interview Dolores Huerta after the Houston premiere of the film as part of the 2017 Annual Houston Latino Film Festival during Women’s History Month six months before its national release.

Before we examine the nature of the film, we should also put this documentary into context.

I get scared just before watching any movie about an icon I look up to. I fear that perhaps the work does not do justice to the man or woman.

I am so glad the film “Dolores” was potent.

I think, however, there are two very important lessons to take from this film.
The first thing to keep in mind about the film “Dolores” is that it is just the tip of the pyramid. The film is a powerful documentary that provides a potent overview of civil rights icon Dolores Huerta. It does so in a very engaging way, and it also brings up a lot of important moments of untold history. But, of course, the focus of the film is Dolores Huerta, so there is not a lot of time spent on specific moments of history, except as it illustrates key moments of her narrative. However, that should serve to inspire further research. These clips are just the tip of the pyramid that should inspire us to keep digging with a group, in a class, or on our own time. You must become the cool nephew or niece, uncle or aunt, who shares fascinating insights into Mexican American history. Find a class, start the class, or conduct research on your town—and share it.

The second important lesson from this film is that we have overlooked the great acts of Dolores Huerta for almost sixty years. It is time to extol her and give her her due.

The Rock Star and the Activist

Here is the recipe to make a film about a Chicana activist icon.

Co-create the first national union for farm workers. Wait fifty-five years. Then a rock star named Santana should invest over a million dollars to get the film made. Then a director who is related to a famous Chicano actor should make the film. And then premiere it at the Cannes Film Festival.

Take out, and then begin to serve.

The simple fact that the film “Dolores” exists makes it part of a national conversation about identity and civil rights.

This is also a unique opportunity to see how a film does or does not capture the American imagination.

Will this film have commercial success?
Will “Dolores” receive acclaim for its production or style?
Will scholars extensively study this film?
What will be the role of this film in ten years?
Will this film simply gather dust?
Primary Source: Interviewing Dolores Huerta

Mexican American Studies is a fascinating field because some of the major figures are still alive, and the field is still growing—which means that new leaders are also emerging and new milestones are occurring.

On the other hand, these same benefits are part of the challenges of working in a new field. The paths to history are not clear, may not be dry, and can also be fading.

However, there are certain practices that professors and scholars follow that can increase the odds of research standing the test of time in different ways—even if it is the actual test of time. Consider the codices left over from the era of the Mexica, commonly referred to as the Aztecs. Those less than twenty texts were not carefully selected or curated. They are studied because they exist. They withstood the test of time and did not disappear.
You can gain a good understanding of those procedures by reading the introduction to *A Legacy Greater Than Words: Stories of U.S. Latinos & Latinas of the World War II Generation* edited by Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, Juliana Torres, Melissa Dipiero-D'Sa, and Lindsay Fitzpatrick. The editors provide a thorough explanation of the detailed process they utilized. They also clearly explain their purpose as two main goals: (1) The editors wanted to provide the public with summaries to the full-length interviews collected over time; and (2) They wanted to gather an abundance of information, but also an abundance of accurate information to pass on to the institutions that would keep the information for the public.

These goals then guide the approaches the researchers undertake.

So, for example, the members of the projects looked up discharge papers from the folks they interviewed to provide another layer of proof to confirm the dates and locations referred to in the oral histories. This is not to cast doubt on the stories or to dispute facts. On the contrary, this is to prevent any such disputes. This also takes advantage of having access to primary sources. Primary sources refer to firsthand accounts. This means that researchers and interviewers have direct access to the person telling the story. This is powerful because the dates, times, and views are not filtered by the interests or views of another person who may be conveying only parts of the story based on their interests or goals.

This is like your good friend telling you what your best friend said about an event. Your good friend may not even pay attention to every detail of the story because he is interested in only the parts that have to do with him, but if you speak to your best friend directly you can not only get the whole story, but you can also ask follow-up questions.

Those are some of the advantages of having access to primary sources.

The reality of primary sources is that they are sometimes overlooked. So, in the case of the World War II veterans, their stories were overlooked and were not properly preserved by the published world, by everyday business, sometimes even by the person him- or herself, and when a person did tell his or her story, perhaps only that person’s family cared—if at all. Now that we are over six decades removed from the
actual events, it is obvious that more of those veterans may be deceased, so it is important to get their stories now while we still can.

Also, researchers can review the accounts of the subjects and ask follow-up questions and clarify different aspects, which adds to a more complete account.

Those accounts with their complete files are then kept at the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin. And then we wait.

It is difficult to know when the research, when the stories will have the most influence. However, with the passage of time, and the passing of access to primary sources the information that survives becomes more valuable.

Thus, any single work that remains from the Mexica empire in their style of books known as a codex may not have been the most important work in its day and age. In fact, the rules of that era may not have even considered that work worthy of study. Yet here we are, five centuries later, and that work is almost all we have. So, it is important to us.

The same can be said of the 500 codices compiled in the post-colonial era.

Also, from our point of view and how we keep track of time and lend importance to dates, it is likely that those 500+ accounts will gain even more significance on the 100th anniversary of World War II. That may seem like a long way into the future; however, it’s taken sixty years to create the system to capture the stories. That’s already over halfway to the 100-year mark.

Anyone can have the mind of a scholar. However, not everyone can dedicate their time and energy to tracking down, archiving, and spreading research. However, in our day and age, with the advent of the technological era, the nature of capturing, storing, and distributing history, culture, and art will change, and scholars who adapt will thrive.

In the transition period, traditional methods for accuracy, validation, and even organizing will be disrupted.

This change too will change the role this information plays in our lives.
In social studies, as sociologists we study the factors that lead to the points of views, the values, the important moments of a place and time.

In the past, these were remote moments in time that happened only to the elite in society.

Today, high school students can become the scribe of their family by simply recording stories as told by their grandmother and saving them to a v-log. A middle school student in Houston, Texas, can build a website just for his family stories and family pictures which his grandmother in El Salvador can access and which his aunt in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, can print out, so that suddenly there are hard copies, too.

At the very least, one more family is inspired to tell its story, to share their voices with one another. That could bring the family together. The students involved would be learning to use technology and social media to convey narratives—the all-important building blocks to excelling at school, and the entire family gains the sense of confidence that comes with believing that your story matters.

Again, we are dealing with fields where findings occur fifty to sixty, or more, years down the line.

Websites and v-logs will sharpen the ability of young people to read, to write, to develop critical thinking skills, and problem solve. Also, those students, those young scholars, will get positive feedback from family members who are impressed by their work. These are all steps in building the confidence and self-esteem that is essential to succeed in the academic world, the business world, the art world, and the world in general.

These are the first steps in long, great careers spent dreaming, thinking, working, and succeeding.
Asking Dolores: Teatro Campesino and the Ethnic Studies Ban

During most film screenings, one must not talk back to the screen. It’s annoying.

However, during film premieres, if the actors or directors and filmmakers are present, it is exciting to be able to have direct access to them to ask them questions about the film.

That was the case with the Houston premiere of Dolores during the 2nd Annual Houston Latino Film Festival March 24, 2017.

The festival organizers arranged to have Dolores flown into Houston, Texas, and I interviewed her on stage after the screening.

I won’t ruin any of the surprises in the film.

But, because we have access to a primary source during the Chicano Civil Rights Movement, I can share with you her insights about additional information.

Also, the film should be treated like an introduction to inspire further research.
The film quickly brings up and makes notes of major moments in the Mexican American Civil Rights experience, but it can't dwell on those because they are not the main point of the story.

I can address some of those, because they are many, and they draw attention to this field of study and the contribution of Mexican Americans to American history.

One of the narrators of the film is playwright Luis Valdez who with his Teatro Campesino performed plays in the fields for farm workers in order to entertain and inspire them and teach them about the cause at hand. Perhaps one of his most well-known projects was his work on the film *La Bamba* about Mexican American rock star Jimmy Valenz, who died an early death.

However, like most Mexican American figures of the time, he was not a household name, despite all of the great works he is responsible for. To provide further context, one of his first major works was the play “Zoot Suit” which dramatized the real-life court case that resulted after the Laguna Beach Riots, dubbed by the media as the “Zoot Suit Riots,” and dubbed by some scholars “The Navy Riots.” In a nutshell, during World War II groups of Chicano youths who dressed in Zoot Suits and youth in the military came into conflict. The resulting violence led to headlines and court cases which vilified the “Zoot Suiters” and by extension Chicanos. The original play was a huge hit in Los Angeles and even played Broadway before it became a film.

It is powerful to hear a legendary figure such as Luis Valdez say that once he met Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta he was ready to follow them. He admits that it was not easy for him to be a follower, but he was inspired to serve the cause they were creating.

Of course, even as we speak about the greatness of certain figures, there are humbling aspects to their trajectory.

So, it is fitting that as the film “Dolores” premiered in Houston, some fifty-five years after the initial events, so to the play “Zoot Suit” was being performed, to great acclaim, at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles on its fiftieth anniversary. To further shed light on the fascinating place of Mexican American Studies in our day and age, the play “Zoot Suite” was also published as a play by Arte Público Press, located in Houston, Texas, a few miles from the theater where the movie was shown.
It took half a century for the Dolores Huerta story to be told the right way, and it took fifty years for America to gain a better appreciation of the play “Zoot Suit.” However, we are all blessed to be in the position to experience and extol both, and then act on the knowledge and inspiration created by these works.

This is important to keep in mind because in the field of Mexican American Studies we are in the unique position to not only study history, but to also shape it. This field of study is based on theory and practice that is playing out in the real word.

The book *Zoot Suit* was also one of the books on the Mexican American Studies Kindergarten to 12th grade curriculum in place at Tucson Unified School District before it was outlawed by Arizona legislators. So, it was also one of the books that we as Librotraficantes smuggled back into Arizona as part of our 2012 Librotraficanente Caravan to defy Arizona’s prohibition of Mexican American Studies, and one of the books we passed out to community members and put in stock at the Under-Ground Libraries we started along the way.

The Ethnic Studies Ban is brought up in the film in several ways including interviews with Curtis Acosta, who was one of the original Mexican American Studies teachers at Tucson Unified School District, implementing the now-outlawed curriculum.

At this stage, I am going to interject in a very obvious and untraditional manner. I will do so in order to change the nature of textbooks in order to accommodate the special stage of Mexican American Studies where we recover history, as we make history, and as we set the course for the future of the field of study. This is unique to our field. Other books can adopt the more traditional styles of textbooks because they are not addressing a field that is as dramatically in flux.

A scholar’s, a writer’s, a director’s approach to these issues shape how they create their work. In the case of the film *Dolores*, Curtis Acosta is simply acknowledged as an Ethnic Studies Instructor, but his input is compelling and key to the main story. That means his insights are archived, and then those statements form the basis for further research. The film then becomes a part of a larger movement to uncover the past, archive the present, and prepare for the future.

In the case of this textbook, I as the lead writer and main editor of the textbook have chosen to directly address the reader to point out
these important aspects of Mexican American Studies and to also devise a style that can adequately incorporate the different strands of information at our disposal and necessary to tell the full story of our time.

Ironically, even with the advent of the technology, and the different social media platforms at our disposal, a textbook can examine the context of work and walk students through it in a way that other formats can’t. For example, in a video or on a blog, there may be different links to additional information. That’s good, but because we may not know what you clicked before one dose of information or what you clicked after, it is not always possible to explain how each element fits in. We expect that explanation from a book.

This textbook contains an entire section on the Ethnic Studies ban in Arizona.

This is vital because this also is a powerful example of all the theories we study in History, Social Studies, English, Rhetorical Analysis, and so many other classes, at work in the real world.

As of this writing, the court case against the banning of Ethnic Studies in Arizona is scheduled to be heard, once again, at the Arizona Supreme Court. This is a very powerful way to show students how the legislative process functions, the balance of power, and how the judiciary system functions in the real world.

As a matter of course, it appears likely that after the Arizona Supreme Court hears and then decides on the court case regarding the ban an appeal will be filed, regardless of if the law is upheld or struck down. The case would then continue to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, where it was heard before. You can view the oral arguments for that case and receive updates by clicking on the link at www.Librotraficante.com and www.TheMASToolkit.com.

At that stage, the parties involved can live with the ruling or appeal the case to the United States Supreme Court (SCOTUS). The SCOTUS does not have to review the case. If it does not, the ruling by the 9th Circuit will stand. If it does, the SCOTUS decision would make the final decisions.

This process can take up to ten years.

The film Dolores can be experienced and enjoyed by non-Mexican Americans who are introduced to the figures, dates, and issues important to Mexican American Studies for the first time. Every viewer can
simply enjoy the movie and take away some important facts about the Chicano Civil Rights Movement and the United Farm Workers Union.

The film wisely gives audiences what they expect from going to the cinema.

What is exciting is that the film also provides glimpses of a living and thriving history that is there if someone chooses to keep digging.

**More History**

The films show many flashes of Mexican American History that currently only practitioners of MAS may recognize. For example, there is a short clip of video showing the chaos that erupted in Los Angeles during the Chicano Moratorium August 29, 1970, which was organized for many reasons, including opposing the Vietnam War. The film clip shows tear gas being thrown into the crowd and police attacking participants.

I asked Dolores Huerta about that clip. She said, “We didn’t attend the Chicano Moratorium because Cesar Chavez had received death threats. I don’t want to feed conspiracy theories, but that’s was we didn’t attend.”*

However, at that same event the violence that broke out between participants and law enforcement led to the death of leading Mexican American journalist Ruben Salazar, a former columnist for the *Los Angeles Times* who had worked himself up to the position of news director for KMEX, the only Spanish language television station in Los Angeles at the time. This was a very powerful position. Although currently we may be accustomed to large cities having more than one Spanish language television and radio station, as well as having Chicanos on English-dominant stations, this was not the case then. Salazar was key to covering issues about the community that most likely would not get covered.

In this context, too, this adds credence to the UFW’s concern for the safety of its members.

I asked Dolores about any additional violence that may have occurred. She said, “There were five UFW activists who had died advocating for the cause and whose deaths were never solved or tried.”*

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The film, because of its structure, can delve further into these issues, but it does establish a base for further study.

The film also touches on the Librotraficante concept of Quantum Demographics. This is that idea that if a person is exposed and fulfilled with their history and culture then they have the wisdom and intellectual framework to build bridges to other cultures which may seem disparate.

The film refers to this concept with the term “intersectionality,” meaning the points where alternate paths meet.

That is exemplified in Dolores because several non-Chicanos and non-Latinos appear in the film.

Just one example is the African American civil rights icon Angela Davis. She alludes to how the different branches of the civil rights movement were not born separately and did not work apart, but had a lot in common. Her participation in the film is testament to that, and in terms of continued discussion there are fascinating areas of common ground for the Black and Chicano experience especially when it comes to the era of the Zoot Suit.

This film is a powerful example of how a work of art can also inspire intellectual pursuits.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

1. Had you heard of Dolores Huerta before? Where? When? If you did not ever hear of her, why do you think that is the case?
2. This section provides a summary of the film Dolores and provides insights into how the film fit into the context of Mexican American Studies. What does the film gain from being examined from that point of view?
3. The author uses the phrase “Tip of the Pyramid.” What does that phrase mean to you? Does it have a different meaning than the phrase “tip of the iceberg”? Why or why not?
4. Look up additional information about Dolores Huerta. Find ten facts about her that you find interesting. Create a poster based on one or all of the facts to let more people know about her.
5. Activists are still working toward a national holiday in honor of Cesar Chavez. Should Dolores Huerta have her own holiday? If so, what day should it be? Create a video to either advocate for such a holiday or to promote the first observation of Dolores Huerta Day.

6. Had you heard about Luiz Valdez before? Look up ten interesting facts about him and Teatro Campesino. Why do you think he is not more well-known? Why did he not have a larger role in the film Dolores? Create a poster promoting a showing of a play by Teatro Campesino.

About Houston Latino Film Festival

The Houston Latino Film Festival is produced by a nonprofit Latino arts organization dedicated to developing, promoting, and increasing awareness of Latino culture among Latinos and other communities by presenting a variety of art and films to the Houston area.

During the festival, films are screened from all over Latin America, Spain, Portugal, and the United States. The programming represents the great diversity of themes and genres of the Latino and Hispanic film-making. The multi-day festival also features opportunities for the audience to participate in discussions with the directors at the screenings as well as a series of special events highlighting the diversity of the Latino culture. The year 2016 marked the sold-out inaugural year of the Houston Latino Film Festival.

Our Mission

The Houston Latino Film Festival is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating and enlightening the communities of the South Texas region about other cultures and issues through film and video while also recognizing the contributions of the artists who are dedicated to the craft of independent film-making.
**Festival Organizers and Founders**

**David Cortez—Operations Director**
David has a B.A. in Media Production and a minor in Global Business from the University of Houston. He is currently working on his second short documentary film. He oversees operations, volunteers, and workshops during the festival.

**Pedro Rivas—Program Director**
Pedro grew up in Houston, Texas, and graduated with a B.A. in English–Creative Writing from the University of Houston. He enjoys a great story whether it’s told in literature, music, theater, and especially film. He attempts his own hand at storytelling with poetry, short stories, and recently screenwriting. He oversees film programming and assists with festival planning.

**Dave Cebrero—Festival Director**
Growing up in Alief, Texas, Dave enjoyed much of his time working on traditional media art. In high school, his interests in storytelling heightened as he learned to make short animations on his computer. After graduating from the University of Houston with a BBA, he left for New York City where he learned the technicalities of film-making and worked on several film crews. He’s currently writing his first feature film.
Introduction

Chicano, Tejano, Latino, or What? What Do We Call You?

Some people enroll in Ethnic Studies courses because they would like an answer to that question once and for all. Some courses just serve to complicate the question even more.

We are going to do both.

Although this seems like a straightforward question, answers will differ over time because of historical reasons, political reasons, and even geographical reasons.

Moreover, folks who want one simple answer are often looking for only a logical response. However, that can get complicated because the term can also have emotional ties.

That’s why some books stay away from the topic. After all, any logical explanation can seem dated or incorrect after time because of changes in emotional attachments to the term.

However, we are going to take head-on this task and provide a logical basis for students to begin navigating the passion, pride, and sometimes confusion of questions of identity.

In the case of this book, we are directly addressing the evolution of these terms through the Mexican American experience. However, these issues are alive in all of us.

And the fact that we are in the United States allows us the values of freedom of speech, and intellectual freedom to explore these issues in ways that some other nations might not. We also have undergone
specific historical and political moments that have shaped this process as well.

At the end of the day, let’s keep in mind that everyone wants to be respected as an individual while studying, working, and growing in a country that must cater to millions of people at once.

It might seem hard to keep both of these goals in mind at once; however, this is something that art is very good at doing. With that in mind, we are going to start this process with some art which will provide a foundation for our definitions for some of the terms that address the title of this chapter, “So What Do We Call You?”

If these seem like very distant ideas from each other, this is something that art can accomplish. So for that reason, we will experience some art, discuss, and then turn to some practical definitions.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

The images in the photo titled “Labels” will remain fixed longer than the exact words we use to explain the contents or meaning of this picture. That allows viewers to tap into different emotions or reactions that are inspired by the work. That is influenced by what we as individuals have experienced, the history and changes that have gone on around us—some of which we may not be aware of, and our own preferences, interests, or dislikes. With that in mind, the following discussion will help understand how language, identity, and history work hand-in-hand.

1. In 100–250 words describe the photo “Labels” focusing on at least three specific aspects. Try more if you can. What do you think is one of the main statements (or the main statement) of the work?
2. You may refer to the following questions to add to your response above, or you may tie these other aspects into your thoughts for further discussion.
3. Which terms do you recognize?
5. Are there any terms that you use?
6. Do you identify with any of those labels? Read your responses to your partner.
7. Which word would you add?
8. Choose two words that seem to be the most unrelated. Why are they included in the photo? Read your answers to the class.

9. Choose two words that are closely related. When might they be used differently? Listen as the terms are read out loud. Which words sound familiar?

10. Why does the artist use some terms that might be considered offensive?

**HOMEWORK**

The meanings of each of these terms has changed over time.

The United States has grown from thirteen original colonies to fifty states. However, even with its borders static the body of the United States continues to change. Which political forces, changes, elections, or other factors may have influenced the definition of one or two of the terms in the photograph? Look up three possible moments in time that may have influenced the definition of those words. How might they mean something different in the future?

The photograph “Labels” provides an artistic exploration of different terms that have come to describe the Mexican American experience. An artistic approach also provides a means for a more emotional response to such terms. Typically, glossaries and dictionaries provide a very straightforward approach and logical definitions of some of these terms, which can serve as a point of reference. Combining approaches leads to more in-depth discussion, which will expand the definitions for more profound analysis. This section adds satire, art, and attitude to provide more heart and insight than a typical “search” for these terms.

**Librotraficanente Dictionary**

*Librotraficanente*—A book trafficker, or a book smuggler. The Librotraficanentes began in response to the banning of Mexican American Studies in Arizona. However, Librotraficanentes are experts in community organizing, art, literature, reading between the lines, and devising new rules that work better for the community. The Librotraficanente Dictionary...
doesn’t begin with the letter “A” because “Librotraficante” is the first word in “Librotraficante Dictionary.”

**American**—A person born in the United States. This sounds basic; however, some folks born in the United States are not given all the rights and privileges that go along with that. That’s why this book even exists.

**Chicano**—A woke Mexican American. You can be born Mexican American, but you must claim the term Chicano. Chicana, Chican@, Xicano, Xicana, Xican@: These are variations in the spelling of Chicano, which each reflect different responses to grammatical rules, norms, and customs along the lines of the implications of the use or non-use of the hyphen when referring to Mexican Americans. Likewise, some grammatical rules require foreign words to be italicized. Chicano is American. Don’t italicize it. If your teacher gives you a hard time about it, italicize it to get an “A” on the essay that no one will read, then get your diploma. The goal is to write your own book italicizing what you want and even taking the accent mark off letters in your Spanish surname if you want.

**Hispanic**—A particular Mexican American writer from the eighties used to “blow the minds” of audiences by pointing out that Nixon made the word “Hispanic” by giving it to the United States Census Bureau. Every word is like a pair of pants for your thoughts. Someone made it. Someone bought it. If people don’t buy them, pants still get made by different brands and labels. Google the old arguments about the word, but complicate them by asking if people from Spain fit the definition. Do people from Brazil fit the term? Here’s the most fun question: Is America a Hispanic nation?

**Latino, Latin@, Latina, Latina/o**—The more contemporary version of “Hispanic.” Currently debate exists about the differences between the two terms. Some distinctions focus on the relationship of the label and the use of the Spanish language. However, if studied profoundly enough, both terms lead back to the speaking of Spanish. The correct usage rests on self-identification.
Latinx—This is the most recent term introduced to the discussion of American identity. Its most prominent aspect is the letter “x” at the end. Once users figure out how to correctly pronounce the word, if they are familiar with Spanish, they realize that the “x” overrides Spanish gender rules for words. Previous attempts to override those grammatical rules have led to versions such as Latino/s and Latin@s. The version of the term using @ has fallen out of favor since the “@” has moved on to bigger and greater things with its prominent role in social media. As of this writing, millennials have embraced the term the most. It now faces an uphill battle of capturing the imagination of more Americans who may not have access to the full explanation of what the term signifies. The term is exciting because it is a chance to define ourselves. Pushback comes from the fact that change comes slow. It has more currency with folks via social media. Older generations may have not even heard the term. Also, if an individual is emotionally invested in identity terms such as this, they may resist any new term.

Librotraficante Dictionary—What you are reading right now.

Mexican—A person born in Mexico. This also applies to any country of origin. So this could also refer to El Salvador or Guatemala, etc. Of course, Mexican nationals also self-identify by regions or cities. For example, D.F. for Distrito Federal of Mexico (aka Mexico City, or Monterey, etc.). Exceptions to the rule are Chicanos who call themselves Mexicans. They can. They just can’t vote in Mexico, and you can’t deport them.

Mexican-American—This term refers to a person born in the United States, but who also is a descendant from Mexico, because their parents are from Mexico or because their great-great parents were from there, and so on. This term differs from the next version of the term because this has the hyphen between the two words. This is the origin of the term “Hyphenated American” which refers to people who are born in the United States but still identify, or are identified automatically, because of their last names or their appearance, with the country they are descended from. Think of the hyphen as a bow tie. Consider if you want to wear one.
**Mexican American**—This term is distinguished from the above definition because it does not include the hyphen. This reflects the generation of thinkers who embraced the word, and the identity, but saw the use of the “hyphen” as alienating, like not wearing a bow tie.

**Tejano**—A Mexican American born in Texas, the greatest nation in the United States. Some Tejanos have lived here for five generations or more, leading to the saying, “We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us.”

**Tejana, Tejano/o, Tejan@**—These are variations in the spelling of Tejano, which each reflect different responses to grammatical rules, norms, and customs along the lines of the implications of the use or non-use of the hyphen when referring to Mexican Americans.

**Texican** (also Texas Mexican)—A Tejano who wants to emphasize the Mexican influence in his or her identity as in the “HECHO EN TEJAS: An Anthology of Texas Mexican Writers.”

**United States-ian**—You know that’s not a word.
**Which Word Is Right: “Hispanic” or “Latino”?**

Any glossary that attempts a “logical” definition of terms that describe identity is already at a disadvantage because of the historical, political, and even geographic factors that influence peoples’ relationship to a label.

Even our list of definitions alludes to the Census Bureau adopting the term “Hispanic” in 1970. The most current version of the Census now incorporates the term “Latino.” Of course, upon further study and examination students may wonder if Chicanos existed before Mexico and the United States existed? If the term “Chicano” is based on self-identification, can a non-Mexican American become Chicano?

Studying Ethnic Studies helps people understand the nuances involved in the forming of identity and culture. This prepares you to successfully understand how a multicultural, multimedia society functions. This can be useful for educational purposes, for business, and for artistic and philosophical reasons, too.

Of course, at some point, all of us just want to be respected as individuals and at some point we just want a basic answer.

On that note, here is a short essay on how to use the terms from our list in everyday life.

These terms have a different influence regionally.

In Texas, “Hispanic” is the term preferred by Tejano Baby Boomers. This is the term they pretty much grew up with, and which the United States government used to count or keep track of and track our community.

For example, the Texas State Board of Education states that 51% of the 5.2 million public school students of Texas are Hispanic. When I refer to this statistic I will use the term “Hispanic” because that was the term used to count this sampling.

This term is also convenient because it does not change according to gender.

So for example, “Hispanic men are now lagging behind Hispanic women in terms of education attainment.”

The term “Latino” is preferred by Latino Generation X’ers, such as myself.
For example, “Latinos now constitute over 40% of Houston’s total population.”

The complication is that the term does change according to gender, when referring to women.

For example, “Modern Latinas find themselves serving the traditional roles of moms, but also taking on jobs once reserved for Latino men.”

Or, “Latina CEO’s are rare and far between. However, there are not that many Latino male CEO’s.”

Of course, the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” can both refer to folks from several countries such as Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Argentina, Chile.

In Houston, there is also many Central Americans from El Salvador and Guatemala.

However, most of the Latino population is Mexican or Mexican American, about 66%.

And in Houston, yes, 40% of Houston is Latino, but one in three Houstonians is Mexican or Mexican American.

**Advanced Moves**

In Texas, Mexican American Studies is a major issue, and Texas has played a big role in the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement.

So a lot of folks do self-identify as Mexican American.

**Even More Advanced**

“Chicano” is the term that refers to Mexican Americans who are socially and culturally aware and involved.

You will hear a lot more about Chicanos in California than in Texas.

In Texas, typically you just need to note if someone self-identifies as Chicano. Otherwise, they might not even be aware that they are Chicano. Some Tejanos may even erroneously think there is a negative connotation to being “Chicano.” (That’s a longer story.)

But here’s the main point:

I, Tony Diaz, do self-identify, and am very proud to be Chicano, and I advocate for the rights of Latinos.
The following essay plays with the idea of cultural identity, and with the notion of what it means to be a man.

To get into the mindset of the piece, write down three sentences that are the definitions for being a “man” in our day and age. Then read the essay.

**All Educated With No Place to Go**

Tony Diaz

I thought I was a hyphenated American because I chose to call myself a Mexican-American. But looking at my resume, I realize I earned the designation because I’ve worked as a free-lance journalist, a teaching-assistant, and an assistant-editor.

That must be why I am on un-employment.

Always a bridesmaid, never an executive. That’s my story. Employers don’t want to pay me to be an editor, a professor, or a president because they think I’m too easy to hire. I’ve been around. But really, I’m trying to settle down.

Back during that naïve spring quarter before I finished graduate school, my fiancée was anxious to set a wedding date.

“How about a year after I’ve been working full-time,” I said. I thought I could use 52 weeks to get adjusted to my new job, make sure our grad school chums and my work chums got along, get my finances straight, play the lottery.
Well, the fall quarter just ended. I’ve got three unemployment checks left and I’m hassling her to come with me to the justice of the peace, so I can be covered by her university plan. (She’s a teaching-assistant and has a year and a half left with the hyphen.) Slowly but surely, she’s warming to the idea.

Since I earned the degree in May, all I’ve been able to do with my master of fine arts is visit museums and say, “Yes, that art’s fine. That’s fine too.” And I still have to show people my degree for them to believe me. Earning just a bachelor’s degree might have meant I’d be single forever.

We wanted to have the wedding out here in California, but some of my relatives in Texas were wary of visiting since Proposition 187 passed. I told them not to worry. As long as they mispronounced the Spanish names of towns they’d be just fine. “San-Joe-Say,” I told them to practice. “Sand-Lewis-Abyss-Po.”

My parents are very supportive (grocery money when we really need it), but I can see the desperation in their eyes even though they try to hide it behind their tears. “All those diplomas,” my poor mamacita cries in Spanish, “Kindergarten, eight grade, high school, regular college, graduate school, and still, still you’re not married.”

I’ve had three graduations more than anyone in the family, but I’m also the only one to have to have three part-time jobs that don’t add up to 40 hours a week. I’m an intellectual migrant worker.

When I was still in grad school (remember that naïve spring quarter?), folks told me I wouldn’t have a problem finding a job; I’d not only have a master’s degree, but I spoke Spanish too.

So far, being bilingual has meant only that I can read the back of the unemployment insurance claim form as well as the front. And to the folks at all those cocktail parties who told me that it was a “hot time to be Latino,” I must admit that it seems our Nielsen ratings are suffering.

But I’m keeping the faith. Instead of scrambling for twenty-five job leads next week, I’m going to hustle fifty. Instead of six hours sleep, I’ll settle for five. (That’s still a luxury. My father never slept until he turned thirty.)

I know that soon I’ll come across my dream employer’s want ad for the position I perfectly satisfy. She’ll write, “Looking for a writer who can handle day after day of exciting challenges and irregular hours, high
pay and a thrilling environment. Unpublished preferred. Who wants this post?”

If only she’d give me a ring, I’d shout, “I do! I do!”

What it trickles down to is that some guys are married to their jobs. I’m just trying to get a commitment.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

1. What is the main point of this essay? What is the author saying about identity, not just being American, or Mexican American, but also about being a man?
2. Look up the term “irony.” Write out the definition. What is the difference between a writer being funny and a writer being ironic? Why would a writer choose one over the other? Why would a writer choose to use humor and emotion to explore identity instead of a more straightforward, obvious approach?
3. Look up “Proposition 187.” What was this issue about? How does that influence the essay? What other historical or political factors might influence this essay?
4. There are a list of definitions preceding this essay. How are some of the terms used differently in the essay? How does the essay alter or add nuances to the definition/s?

Take the Cultural Quiz

The Rules

This is a quiz to create a baseline for your knowledge of Hispanic, Latino, Chicano, or Mexican American culture. The main point here is not to pass or fail the quiz. This process helps readers gain an understanding of how cultural ideas develop. So there’s no need to cheat. And you may not use your phone to look up answers. Just go for it.

On a separate sheet of paper answer the following questions:

1. Name five Latino writers.
2. Name five films by or about Chican@s
3. Name five Hispanic national leaders.
4. Name five Tejan@s PhDs.

**Bonus Question**

The Hispanic National Bar Association is a nationwide group of lawyers and judges. How many members are in the group? __________

**Some Answers for the Cultural Quiz**

- How many answers were you able to provide?
- How many answers were your peers able to provide?
- Who provided the single most answers?
- Which category had the most answers?
- Which category had the fewest? Why do you think that’s the case?
- Again, don’t worry if you did not score a 100%. Also, don’t worry if you scored a 50%. And if you could not provide even one answer don’t worry about that either. This time.

On the other hand, if you are using this book for a class you took, you are most likely interested in the information. Yet, somehow the information was kept from you.

- Why is that the case?
- Did any one thing or any one factor keep you from that knowledge?
- Why might it be important to have access to this information?

**Getting the Answers**

This book will, of course, help you get these answers.

This book will also help you gain even more knowledge about identity, and this textbook will also help you navigate the changing terrain of identity.

Of course, the last question was the most difficult.

- What about that question made it the most difficult? What might be some of the purposes of making that question so hard?
- And since that question was hard, here are some answers.

Conferences are a great way to further information because a lot of people with common interests, values, and sometimes even work, gather all at once to take an in-depth look into their area of expertise.
One such conference is the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies established in 1972. Their website: www.NACCS.org. The group’s mission, as listed on their website, is: “To advance the interest and needs of the Chicana and Chicano community. To advance research in Chicana and Chicano Studies. To advance the professional interest and needs of Chicanas and Chicanos in the academy.” NACCS has grown so large that the group now also consists of nine regional groups called “Focos” which have their own caucuses, and some even organize their own regional conferences ranging from the Pacific Northeast Fono with its “Community Caucus” to the Tejas Fono with its Indigenous Caucus.

If you had attended the Tejas Fono, you might have met the following Tejanos to help answer question number 4 from the Cultural Quiz.

**Question #4 on the MAS Texas Cultura Quiz:**

**Name 5 Tejan@ PhD’s**

1. Dr. Sonia Hernandez, PhD, Texas A&M
2. Dr. Norma A. Guzmán, PhD, Texas A&M University–Kingsville
3. Dr. Grisel Cano, Houston Community College
4. Dr. Adriana Tamez, Houston Community College Board of Trustees
5. Dr. Lydia French, Houston Community College
6. Dr. Melinda Mejia, Houston Community College

**Bonus brilliance:**

Some Tejano PhD’s:

Dr. Tatcho Mindiola, Center for Mexican American Studies, University of Houston

Dr. Nicolás Kanellos, Arte Público Press
Data for the Real World

Dates, definitions, and overviews are important information. However, they are also the building blocks for interaction in the “real world.” In other words, these are the building blocks to interact with your community. This interaction can range from a report for your class, a presentation at a conference, a letter to the editor, an appearance as a guest on a radio or television show, or memes or posts on social media.

The definitions and overview about culture, identity, history, and society in this book will ebb and flow with changes in history. These terms are not static. However, by applying these concepts to projects that you can use to interact with your community, you gain a better understanding of the terms and concepts, and at the same time influence your surroundings.

The following essay appeared as an Op-Ed, or opinion editorial in the Houston Chronicle. It’s based on the cultural quiz that was given earlier in this book. How do you think the author will adapt it to fit the audience of newspaper readers?

Why do you think the author wanted to reach that audience?

Keep those answers in mind as you read the piece and look for words, phrases, and examples that support your answers.
Mexican American Studies Day, May 1, 2015

Tony Diaz

Cinco de Mayo is not Mexican Independence Day, which some folks mistakenly confuse it for.

This is just one of many misconceptions about the fastest growing demographic in Texas that Mexican American Studies Day will help shed light on. And there’s a lot more at stake than just creating a version of Latino Trivial Pursuit or an exercise on creative Googling.

For example, the first day of my Mexican American Literature course at Lone Star College I give my students a quiz. Here are the questions:

1. Write the name of five Latino authors.
2. Write the name of five films by or about Chican@s.
3. Write the name of five National Latin@ Figures who are not in the entertainment industry.
4. Write the name of five Tejan@s with PhD’s.

Number 4 is the most difficult, and most students can provide two or three answers for number 3, but typically the only national Latino figures students can name are in the entertainment industry, and even then, most can’t name five.

I give this same quiz at talks around the city and around Texas and the results are usually the same.

This may not seem like a big deal, but it is.

The fact that most sophomores in college in Texas can’t name five Latino authors, and the fact that most students can’t name any national Latino leaders are all linked to the dropout rate.

In his book, How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character, Paul Tough compiles decades of research to understand why students drop out of school. He provides several eye-opening factors, but he also points out one very basic finding. If students feel as if they don’t belong at an institution, it is a self-fulfilling prophecy.
He doesn't focus on only Latino students; he brings up data for the University of Texas for low-income students, many of who are minority, and in the UT statistics many of which are from Houston. (He points out that only about 40% of lower income students will graduate within four years. Keep in mind that UT takes the top 7% of students graduating from Texas high schools. It would stand to reason that if things are tough for the heads of the class, graduation can be even more elusive for number 8–100.)

He points to different programs that address this issue with different interventions, some simple, some more complex. But here are some basic approaches that overlap with the outcomes of Mexican American Studies Courses, with the creation of culturally relevant student groups and curriculum. If schools introduce students to peers, teachers, and topics that they can relate to, schools create an environment conducive to learning for more students, especially lower income, and/or minority students.

I’ll dramatize this with another quiz question that I like to add to my cultural quizzes. I want you, dear reader, to play along, too.

There is a group called the National Hispanic Bar Association that is comprised of Latino lawyers and judges from around the country. How many members are in the group?

I would like you to guess. Go ahead, think of a number. Write it down.

When I do this in person, I even allow students in the room to form groups to help each other. When I speak to families, I tell parents and children to advise each other.

From rooms full of students, and sometimes adults, most of them Latinos, I have seen numbers as low as double digits—yes, as low as 35 to 99. The highest number I recall seeing is 35,000 provided by a very confident young man who ignored his family members who told him that was too high. The average guess is about 3,500.

I even turn a blind eye when someone sneaks glances and starts tapping on their phone trying to look up the answer—because you can’t. (Well, at least prior to this is essay being posted online.)

The highest guesses occur when I add to the explanation of the quiz the fact that my good friend Benny Agosto Jr., a partner for the Abraham, Watkins, Nichols, Sorrels, Agosto & Friend in downtown Houston, was the former president of the group.
Benny told me that there are 100,000 members. They’ve got forty-six affiliates throughout the nation. The current president is a Latina named Cynthia D. Mares.

Let this sink in.

If our young are not shown that we are leaders, they can’t imagine themselves as leaders either. And the gap between our reality and our perception of our own self-worth is massive. Latinos are performing at the power of 100,000, but most of us can’t imagine our power past 3,500.

But we can do something about this.

According to the Cabrera Report, students from the Tucson Unified School District who took Mexican American Studies courses were more likely to finish school. Not just that, MAS students were 108% more likely to graduate than non-MAS students. MAS students passed standardized math tests and standardized English tests at 114% to 140% more than non-MAS students.

I should point out Mexican American Studies is currently outlawed in Arizona under AZ House Bill 2281. Did you know that?

You also might not have known that a 17-year-old Tucson High School student named Maya Arce challenged that law and the oral arguments were heard in January at the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco.

You might wonder why a state would prohibit courses that are proven to help students, in this case Mexican American students, succeed? Great question.

Judge Richard Clifton, of the U.S. Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit, ventured a theory. “... it seems to me to strengthen the argument that the state’s regulation is intended with discriminatory intent to hold back a given group of the student population.”

You can celebrate MAS Day by viewing C-SPAN’s recording of the case. Simply Google “Maya Arce vs. John Huppenthal.”

The ruling is due any day, and I believe the most un-American law in America will be overturned. In the meantime, while Arizona tries to ban the material, Texas is liberating it. The Houston Independent School District just approved a MAS Special Topics course that can be implemented in every Houston high school.
Juliet Stipeche, an HISD board of trustee member, will join us at the Houston Observation of MAS Day, to be held at Austin High School, Friday, May 1, 2015 at 3pm. Austin High School is currently the only high school in Houston teaching MAS.

That same morning, Texas Senator Sylvia Garcia will give the statewide proclamation for MAS Day from the Senate Floor of the Texas capitol. I’m honored to join here there. You can too. If you visit, www.MASDay.org, you will find ten other ways to celebrate MAS Day at your school in your community. There are also ten MAS Facts that you can share.

Finally, what do I, Senator Garcia, and HISD Trustee Stipeche have in common? We are not only advocates for Ethnic Studies, but we are also examples of how MAS inspires youth to succeed and to pursue the American Dream through Education.

That’s really what Mexican American Studies Day is all about.

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

1. Why did the author decide to adapt the cultural quiz presented in this textbook for a different format for the newspaper?
2. Who is the intended audience for the cultural quiz in this textbook and who is the intended audience in the Houston Chronicle?
3. What new insights do you have about the cultural quiz after reading this essay?
4. What new observations do you have about your original score?
5. What would you add to an essay about taking the cultural quiz?

FOR ADVANCED STUDY

Write your own op-ed about the cultural quiz. Are there questions you would add? Are there questions you might change? Can the quiz be improved? What needs to happen for the day to come so that everyone who takes the Cultural Quiz earns 100%? Will we still need the Cultural Quiz then? Why or why not?
Legally Defining Terms

In an earlier section, we examined terms used to identify Mexican Americans and noted that definitions had a logical component, but they also had an emotional component. Now we are going to look at the way in which court cases have been used to define some of these terms of identity.

This moves beyond simply the dictionary definition of a term, or denotation, and the connotation of the word, or its common usage. In the past, the meaning of a word was set by different dictionaries that attributed a word’s meaning, its usage in printed material such as books and newspapers and magazines. That process has been permanently altered with the rise of social media which allows words to come into existence and usage in different ways and at different speeds.

Ironically, it’s a challenge even for dictionaries to adapt to the new way that words work even though most of the traditional dictionaries have incorporated websites, blogs, videos, and social media.

The entire field of Mexican American Studies is an example of the difficulty of this process.

Going back to our list of definitions for terms that identify Mexican Americans, that list represents a logical listing of those words.
However, the emotional nuances and implications are more challenging to pin down. Our answer to that has been to add artistic representations of the Mexican American experience.

However, both the logical and emotional nuances of a word are influenced by what happens in a country, a state, a city, or a neighborhood. Sometimes it takes decades or generations to understand the full context of an event. Sometimes it takes generations to understand the full impact of an event.

Other times, the entire world finds out about an event faster than we have ever known in history.

Of course, this does not mean that there are no landmarks to static points to guide us or order us in what to do. This just means that those hard-and-fast rules are more important than ever and under more scrutiny.

The American legal system directly influences the definition of terms in concrete ways. This is also unique to the United States because our laws are based on precedents, so that new rulings are influenced by previous rulings, which then influence future rulings. This is not the case for nations that follow the Napoleonic code, such as many South American countries like Chile.

This has a very direct impact on the Mexican American experience.

Let’s begin with a basic example. Legally speaking, if someone is born in the United States they are born an American citizen. This seems straightforward. However, complications occur when American citizens do not feel as if they are being treated the way all other Americans are treated.

Of course, the emotional aspects of this issue may find their way into words sooner than a legal review of the issue or practices in question.

Note these issues will find their way to court, for a variety of reasons, and if they do, the process is set up to attempt to keep in context the emotional aspects of an issue as represented by a specific case which then under goes an extensive review of several facets of the evidence or arguments for both sides of the issue.

This section will examine this aspect.
Here is an example.

Some news pundits might believe that Mexican Americans can’t suffer examples of racism because, technically speaking, Latinos are not a race.

However, legally speaking, Mexican Americans are a protected class. We will examine the work of Tejano Civil Rights Lawyer James De Ando and Gus Garcia, both Tejanos, who were the first Mexican Americans to try a civil rights case. That case led to Mexican Americans receiving the same protected status under the law as African Americans and women.

On the other hand, Mexican Americans are the only branch of the Latino family tree that are specifically defined or protected under this law. Most other policies are governed by social customs and habitual practices, as in the example of the term “Hispanic.”

The term “Hispanic” gained more use when it was added by the Nixon administration to the 1970 Census. That term has evolved to the term Latino. However, as some Latino households may note when the discussion arises every ten years during the census, now there is a box for Latino under “Ethnicity” but under race there are just two choices “White” or “Black.”

The term Hispanic, therefore, has guided public policies and programs since the 1970s. This cross section of rules influencing people and budgets adds to the confusion some people feel when talking about the Mexican American or Latino experience.

However, for those who learn how to navigate this system, they soon are able to understand the different nuances and appreciate the best times and best use of each term, even as they change.

For example, a Chicana professor leading a lecture on the growth of the Latino demographic, may cite the fact that 52% of current Texas public students are Hispanic and use the term “Hispanic” because that was the actual word used as public officials conducted the count.

This statement is a correct usage of the terms used to define the Mexican American and Latino experience; however, a deep understanding of the full impact of the words also provides more meaning. This book is intended to provide with that scope of meaning.
QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of creating legal definitions for the term Mexican American? Hispanic? Latino?
2. How do legal definitions help?
3. What is left out of the legal definitions?
4. Why does the census ask Americans to self-identify if they are black or white? Why do you think the census asks Americans to self-identify their ethnicity?
5. This section mentions legal cases that influenced the definition of some terms, which then influenced use of those terms, as well as their meaning. Name three political and historical issues that also influenced the use of these terms.

The Legally White, Socially Brown Latino

Lupe E. Salinas

In 1897, the question of race and color arose in a Texas federal court when a Mexican resident alien petitioned for naturalization. The federal government objected to the Mexican's eligibility on the basis that only white persons and African Americans qualified. In observing the applicant's skin color, the judge commented that the applicant Rodriguez appeared to be a nonwhite person. The judge granted the petition, notwithstanding his skin color, since the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 bestowed citizenship upon other Mexicans.¹

The Rodriguez naturalization decision did not ameliorate race relations between Anglos and persons of Mexican descent. Racial conflicts continued since many Anglos viewed Latinos as nonwhite, since Indian blood dominates in the populations of the Latin American nations. Others, like early civil rights attorney Alonso S. Perales, claimed that

Latinos are members of the white race. Both racial claims are, in their own way, correct. Latinos, in fact, include all major “racial” groups, i.e., white, yellow, brown, and black. Regardless, how anthropologists classify Latinos does not resolve the conflict. Instead, the objective test centers on how the dominant white society treats other ethnically or racially identifiable groups.

Historically, Mexican Americans and other Latinos have identified themselves as *La Raza* (literally “The Race”; figuratively “The People”). Contrary to the claims of politically driven groups, this does not classify Latinos as racists. While the term *La Raza* to some extent suggests separatist principles, the attitudes and actions of this population hardly indicate a desire to avoid integration into American society. For example, although racially restrictive covenants barred African Americans and persons of Mexican descent from purchasing land in Anglo residential areas, Latinos desired homes in these neighborhoods. They simply were not permitted by law until the Supreme Court voided the racially restrictive covenants imposed by whites.

In addition, Latinos signed up for military service and served loyally and valiantly, a fact that speaks volumes about the desire to be “American.” Even though business establishments, such as restaurants, excluded this ethnic group, and school boards assigned their children to segregated “Mexican Schools” (Rangel and Alcala 1972, 308–10), Latinos volunteered to represent their country. Many hoped this would convince their “fellow Americans” that they were as patriotic as whites. Latino military service proved to be outstanding. In World War II, the Texas military delegation received fourteen Congressional Medals of Honor. Latinos accounted for six, or 43 percent, of these recipients (Garcia 1952). In the 1940s, when these coveted medals were awarded, Latinos remarkably accounted for only 11 percent of the entire Texas population (Gibson and Jung 2002).

Furthermore, Latinos involved themselves politically to further their dreams of a better America, one in which they would have the ability to elect representatives of their choice. Unfortunately, Latinos did not encounter many electoral successes until recent times, when President Obama personally acknowledged to a newspaper editorial board that a reelection victory would, in great part, result from the Latino vote (Dunham 2012, A5).
In earlier days, many Latinos purchased their poll tax to vote, but those in control oftentimes excluded or discouraged them in one way or another. First, the racial discrimination they experienced generally alienated Latinos from the political process. Second, election administrators, almost exclusively of Anglo descent through the 1960s, imposed voting obstacles, such as the poll tax. In some parts of Texas, the Democratic Primary operated under the custom of a White Man’s Primary where only “white citizens” could vote. Specifically, in some counties, the rules did not allow a “Mexican” to vote unless that Latino was of “full Spanish blood” (Perales 1937, 2:93), a factor that nullified most Latino voters. After all, the Mexican population consists of approximately 60 percent mestizo (Caucasian and Indian) and 30 percent Indian blood (Gopel 2005, 802).

The predominantly Indo-Mexican population provides the basis for the prejudice this community has experienced since the conquest of previously Mexican territory. As early as the 1850s, this Anglo superiority obsession led to the exclusion of a prominent Mexican American citizen from testifying in a California trial. Manuel Dominguez served as a Los Angeles county supervisor and signed the California constitution. When he appeared as a witness, the Anglo lawyer successfully voided his potential testimony on grounds that Dominguez had Indian blood (Pitt 1966, 202). Half a century after both the defeat of Mexico and the injustice against Dominguez, the legal issue surrounding the racial status of persons of Mexican descent continued to surface. In re Rodriguez involved an application for American citizenship by a Mexican person. The court acknowledged that by the terms of the treaty ending the war in 1848, thousands of Mexicans had been included “into our common citizenship.” This case presented the first opportunity for a court to determine if a Mexican-descent person qualified under the law for individual naturalization. Since only white persons qualified for naturalization, the government’s lawyer contended that Rodriguez’s color made him ineligible. The judge acknowledged that a “strict scientific classification of the anthropologist” would probably not classify Rodriguez as white, but the judge instead focused on the treaty provisions related to Mexicans who remained in the previously Mexican territory. Article VIII declared that these Mexicans may either retain the title and rights of Mexican citizens or “acquire those of citizens of the
United States.”⁷ Those Mexicans who failed to assert citizenship affirmatively “shall be considered to have elected to become citizens of the United States.”⁸ Under these circumstances, the judge decided that Rodriguez possessed the requisite qualifications for citizenship.

Thus, Mexicans in particular, and Latinos in general by extension, very early in U.S. history began to encounter adverse treatment as a race or class apart from the white race. The Mexican experience in history, particularly as it relates to racism, has been so intense that the word Latino or Hispanic often connotes “Mexican.” The anti-Mexican rhetoric in our media and historical literature has been quite extensively documented by Bender (2003, 135) and others (Delgado 2009; Montejano 1987; De Leon 1983).

**Latinos’ Social Construction as a Separate and Distinct Class**

Undoubtedly, since the early Latino presence in the United States, the European-descent Caucasian population viewed Mexicans and other Latinos as other than white.⁹ Perhaps in defiance of that discriminatory treatment or as a means of self-protection, the Mexican-Latino community formed ethnic-based groups, which suggested that *La Raza* views itself as a separate and distinct racial group. These groups include the League of United Latin American Citizens (lulac) in 1929, the American GI Forum (a Latino veteran’s association) in 1948, the National Council of La Raza (nclr) and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (maldef) in 1968, and the La Raza National Bar Association, currently known as the Hispanic National Bar Association (hnba), in 1972. These groups share the common goals of advocacy and/or litigation for the Latino claim to equality and to the benefits of “whiteness.”

The term *La Raza* gained popularity with the publication of a 1926 book entitled *La Raza Cósmica* (The Cosmic Race) by José Vasconcelos, a former Mexican secretary of education. Vasconcelos described how the mixed races would become the universal race of people. The term appeared as early as 1855, when journalist Francisco P. Ramirez, in an editorial, expressed his disgust at the Anglo mistreatment of his *raza* (Kanellos and Martell 2000, 89).
Alonso S. Perales, one of LULAC’s founders and a crusader for justice, referred to persons of Mexican descent as La Raza while simultaneously advocating for Caucasian race status for his fellow Latinos (Perales 1974, 8–9). Perales obtained his law license in 1925, when Texas and the Southwest had only a few Latino attorneys. During his years as an attorney, Perales wrote two books, and for several years he authored a column in La Prensa (The Press), a San Antonio newspaper, in which he provided Latinos with advice on social, religious, legal, and political matters. Both books addressed the rampant “racial” discrimination against La Raza, a term that seems to contradict his unswerving assertion that the white race includes persons of Mexican and Latino descent (Perales 1937, vol. 2; Perales 1974, 5).

Fueled by his observations and experiences in Texas, Perales sought to create a strong organization that would serve as “a bulwark for the protection of all our Racial brethren.” Perales initially collaborated with educator J. Luz Saenz. The two men eventually joined forces with State Representative José Tomás “J. T.” Canales of Brownsville, Texas, one of the state’s first Latino attorneys, in laying the foundation for the creation of LULAC. Perales’s dream included the creation of a group that would protect the welfare of “our Race in Texas” and would labor “unflinchingly” for the good of “our people.” Perales and his two partners agreed on one specific objective: they did not want a group that would merely impress political bosses and public officials with the primary goal of securing a favor and/or jobs in city government or in the courts (Perales 1937, 2:101–16).

In 1927, Perales moved his law practice to the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas and began to deliver lectures on behalf of “our Race” and to advance the “intellectual, economic, social and political status of Mexican-Americans in particular, and the Mexican Race in General.” Soon after his move to McAllen, Perales met with Professor Saenz and attorney José T. Canales and created the League of Latin American Citizens, the precursor to LULAC as it is known today. Two years later, Perales and his companions encountered others with whom to collaborate in the effort to pave the way for the merger of the three active Latino groups. Initially frustrated with the obstructionist position taken by James Tafolla Sr., who refused to agree to a merger, Perales told Ben Garza of Corpus Christi, Texas, that no one man should stand in the way of progress for Latin Americans (Perales
1937, 2:102–3, 112–13). Eventually, the three groups convened in Corpus Christi on February 17, 1929, and merged under the name “United Latin American Citizens.” At a later time, the organization added the word “League” to the name (LULAC n.d., “LULAC History”).

In apparent gratitude to Garza’s breaking rank with Tafolla, and in paving the road for the critical merger, Perales urged Garza to accept the position of inaugural president general of LULAC. Perales, content to have been a founder of the organization, wisely sacrificed service as the first LULAC leader. Garza initially resisted since he considered his limited educational attainment an obstacle to successful leadership. However, Perales and his immediate founders expressed complete confidence in him. Perales’s references to *La Raza Mexicana* (the Mexican Race) suggest the inference that Mexican Americans consider themselves as nonwhites. Throughout his career and his efforts to obtain justice, Perales utilized the term “the Mexican race.” In 1930, Perales complained in an appearance before a committee of Congress that some sponsors of an immigration quota bill described Mexican people as an “inferior and degenerate race.” He responded by stating that, as a “Mexican by blood,” he was “just as proud of my racial extraction as I am of my American citizenship” and denied that “the *Mexican race* is inferior to any other race.” He continued his comments to the committee by describing himself as “one of the founders” of LULAC and explained that the group’s objective is to develop “within the members of our *race* the best, purest, and most perfect type of a true and loyal citizen of the United States of America” (Gottheimer 2003, 157; emphasis added).

Notwithstanding his frequent references to the Mexican or “Latin” race, Perales asserted that Mexicans constitute members of the white race. This view reflects the legal construction. The history and the discriminatory treatment of Mexican Americans, in contrast, reflect the social construction. Perhaps these two perspectives explain the seemingly contradictory postures taken by Perales “in defense of his *raza*,” as he entitled his first publication.

Many professionals and other persons consider the use of the term “race” in relation to Mexican nationals as a misnomer. Unquestionably, from an anthropological view, the concept of race is limited in
categorical classifications of dominant groups of people. From a sociological view, however, the manner in which distinct peoples interact can state volumes as to how a group is regarded. For instance, while legal construction might incorporate persons of Mexican descent into the white race, the dominant population group, comprised mostly of Anglos, might disagree. Certain actions taken by Anglos effectively categorize persons of distinctly Mexican descent into a nonwhite category. Although legally white, Mexican Americans encounter discrimination on the alleged basis of their being members of a "Mexican race."^{11}

When U.S. Senator John C. Calhoun objected in the 1840s to adding a “mixed blood” group to the American population via citizenship, he initiated the marginalization of what is today our nation’s largest ethnic minority. Unfortunately, Calhoun’s attitude epitomized the mean-spirited actions to which Latinos have been subjected. For many years, Latinos did not qualify for certain activities, such as voting, attending integrated schools, buying land in areas designated for “whites only,” and even burial in public cemeteries reserved for whites. In that context, Latinos’ mixed blood and swarthy complexion provided Anglos with the motive to exclude them from any white status. Regrettably, these private and public racist attitudes have made their way into our criminal justice system.

Overt racist practices have decreased and in many cases been eliminated, but the subtle political and official decisions that disadvantage Latinos are often difficult to classify. Mob violence, police excessive and deadly force, and lynchings of Latinos occurred in the nineteenth century. Abuses at the hands of state and federal law enforcement agents continued into the twentieth century and incredibly continue to appear in the twenty-first century. For example, in May 2010, Border Patrol agents in San Diego tasered and kicked undocumented alien Anastasio Hernández-Rojas. The physical abuse led to Hernández-Rojas’s death after a few days on life support (Archibold 2010; Florido 2012).

Notwithstanding the hardships faced by the early Latinos (Mexicans) in a land they once owned, in 1848 they assumed the status of a conquered people (Acuña 1972, iii), a concept found in the early jurisprudence of our nation’s Supreme Court.^{12} The nation’s highest court
also declared African Americans, whether slaves or free persons, to be “subordinate and inferior” in 1857, about the same time the nation was adjusting to the racially distinct Latinos who remained in the newly conquered U.S. territory. Most Mexicans stayed and experienced the adversities of life in a land where the European white population detested the “mongrel race” of “colored” people (the mestizo Latino population) (Weber 1973, 135, 137). Whites spoke these words of hatred against Mexicans and Latinos quite sincerely and passionately, attitudes that carried into the 1930s and later (Taylor 1934, 36, 325–29).

What could bring people to such levels of hostility? Apparently, the hatred engendered by the atrocities of the Mexican army at the Texas battles of Goliad and the Alamo in 1836 exacerbated the prejudice. The massacres of the Texas rebels resulted in the war chant “Remember the Alamo,” a phrase that incredibly appeared on a placard in 2006 at a rally opposing immigration (Carrera 2006). Pointing to the Alamo and Goliad incidents as an explanation merely avoids the reality that anti-Mexican bias already existed in the 1820s (Lowrie 1932, 120–24).

More recently, the extreme dislike has further incited young people to engage in violent attacks against Latinos, with the attackers expressing specifically their hatred for “Mexicans.” Unfortunately, all U.S. Latinos—persons descended from countries where the Spanish language dominates—are in jeopardy of being viewed as “Mexicans.” This stereotypical grouping is not a contemporary phenomenon. Referring to the gold rush era, mostly from 1849 to 1852, a prominent historian remarked that whether a person was from California, Chile, Peru, or Mexico, or residents of twenty years’ duration, or immigrants of one week, all Latinos “were lumped together as ‘interlopers’ and ‘greasers’” (Pitt 1966, 53). The term “greasers” has unfortunately been used by racists to describe the Mexican population (De Leon 1983, 87–102).

In 2008, anti-Mexican prejudice precipitated hate crimes against several Latinos (one Mexican and two Ecuadorians). In one of these cases, for example, seven teenagers purportedly set out on a mission in November 2008 to get “a Mexican” in Patchogue, New York. What resulted from this conspiracy was the death of Marcelo Lucero, an Ecuadorian immigrant, from a beating and stabbing (Reyes 2008, 9A). At least two other Latinos died during the same year from racially motivated attacks (Fernandez 2010, A26).
The Supreme Court’s Equal Protection Doctrine Involving Latinos

The Supreme Court decision in Hernandez v. Texas discussed the manner in which the dominant Anglo society treated Latinos in a small Texas county. Hernandez alleged discrimination against Latin Americans, claiming that persons of his ethnicity were deliberately and systematically excluded from the grand jury and the trial jury.14 Notwithstanding the history of racial discrimination against Latinos, Texas cases historically classified Latinos as members of the white race15 and dictated that the Fourteenth Amendment Equal Protection Clause knew only two classes: one white and one black.16

In order to prove Latinos were treated as other than whites, the Hernandez lawyers presented evidence of a dominant community attitude that selectively referred to Latinos as “Mexicans,” rather than indicating they were whites. In addition, the district assigned Mexican children to a segregated school for the first four grades. At least one restaurant advertised “No Mexicans Served.” Conclusively, the lawyers discovered that the courthouse had two men’s toilets, one unmarked, and the other marked “Colored Men” and “Hombres Aquí” (Spanish for “Men Here”).17 As stated by Chief Justice Earl Warren, “no substantial evidence was offered to rebut the logical inference to be drawn from these facts.”18

The chief justice authored the unanimous opinion recognizing Latinos as a unique group distinct from other whites. Warren observed that when the proof establishes the existence of a “distinct class” and when authorities treat that class atypically and unreasonably, then the Constitution has been violated.19 Among 6,000 persons who had been selected for jury participation in a twenty-five-year period, the commissioners had failed to select a single Latino.20 As the Court concluded, “the result bespeaks discrimination, whether or not it was a conscious decision on the part of any individual jury commissioner.”21

The Hernandez case epitomizes the typical case of an allegation of a violation of civil rights. On the other hand, a civil rights litigant will seldom possess a “smoking gun” or other highly incriminating evidence. Typically, a lawyer has to resort to the trial tactic known as impeachment. In this fashion, the attorney attempts to develop for the judge or the jury the most credible explanation as to how the action prejudices a racial minority.
Hernandez perhaps fits in between the overt racist case and the covert disparate case of discrimination. In Hernandez the Court had a substantial amount of circumstantial evidence upon which to conclude that the officials acted with discriminatory intent. For instance, the Court had the evidence of a segregated toilet reserved specifically for blacks and Latinos while only the European whites presumably had access to the unmarked toilet. This proof assisted in the contradiction of the county officials’ claims that they had not engaged in systematic exclusion of Latinos on the basis of ancestry.

The Social Construction of the “Mexican Race” in the Pre-1954 Era

What was the state of community relations prior to the Hernandez decision? In order to answer this query, we must return to 1848, after the deliberate “Manifest Destiny” decision to control the territory from coast to coast. Indications of the future racial conflicts appeared in the 1820s when Anglo immigrants from the South and the Mexican resident population of Texas tried to coexist. The Anglos, or whites, objected to the use of Spanish in the education of Anglo children. They also encountered conflicts with the Mexicans’ Catholicism, prohibition of slavery, and racial characteristics (Lowrie 1932, 120–24).

Mexicans have a significant amount of Indian blood (Liu 2012, 804). Literally speaking, however, a Latino or Mexican “race” does not anthropologically exist. According to the U.S. Supreme Court, the disparate treatment of Latinos and other similar ethnic groups can nonetheless be viewed as “racist” in nature. The dominant Anglo society historically treated Latinos as if they were a race other than white. In addition, lawyers, sociologists, and historians have chronicled the “racial” self-identification among Latinos (Perales 1974; Perales 1937, vol. 2). For example, during the early twentieth century, Latino community leaders often described themselves as raza and Latin Americans. Attorney Perales appeared before a committee of Congress in 1930 to speak against aspersions by legislators who asserted the racial inferiority of Mexican-descent persons, and he staunchly defended the Mexican “race” (Gottheimer 2003, 157).

In the course of his professional career, Perales adamantly insisted on the legally white status of Mexican people. Coincidentally,
officials during the 1930 Census classified Mexican-descent persons as a separate race. In the section labeled “Color or Race,” census workers in Victoria County, Texas, listed “Mx,” the abbreviation for Mexico and Mexican (U.S. Department of Commerce 1930). Officially, then, the term “Mexican Race” historically described all persons of Mexican ancestry, presumably even persons with light-colored skin and blue eyes. Socially, the evidence is replete with documentation that the dominant society viewed Mexicans and other Latinos as other than white or Caucasian (Aziz 2013).

Perales, who spoke and wrote English and Spanish with similar ease, used the terms *raza* and race frequently and interchangeably. He nonetheless vigorously advocated against discriminatory practices against Mexican Americans “and other descendants of the Caucasian Race” (Perales 1974, 8–9). Perales vehemently asserted during the 1920s until his death in 1960 that as members of the white race, Latin Americans could not legally be subjected to school segregation and exclusion from the voting process (Perales 1937, 2:93). Racism against Latinos at official levels during this era should not come as a surprise. After all, prominent whites, like Senator Calhoun, provided a foundation for this racist sentiment. Calhoun objected to the inclusion into the American nation of racially inferior Mexicans, pointing out that Spanish America failed when it treated “colored” people as equal to the white race (Weber 1973, 135, 137).

**American Treatment of Mexican Agricultural Workers and Mexican Americans**

Notwithstanding the dislike by white people of those persons considered nonwhite, Anglo business owners encouraged persons of Mexican descent to enter as farm workers and laborers. Their presence of course depended on economic conditions and urgency in picking the crops. Many farm and ranch owners benefited from Mexican labor. The desire for this agricultural assistance even resulted in a Spanish label (*braceros* from the word *brazo* for arm) for the workers program that allowed the importation of Mexican labor in a time of labor shortage due to World War II.

Not all was peaceful with the presence of Mexican laborers. Discrimination prevailed in many sections of Texas and the Southwest. In
order to appease the Mexican government, the governor of Texas created the Good Neighbor Commission (Cortes 1974, “The Good Neighbor Policy”). In May 1943, the state legislature adopted a resolution in response to the complaint by the Mexican government of the discriminatory treatment of Mexican agricultural workers. The resolution recognized Mexican Americans as Caucasians in order to entitle them to the use and enjoyment of white-only accommodations (Delgado and Stefancic 1998, 178).

The Texas legislature acted reluctantly, but they realized that the failure to cooperate could result in the loss of vital Mexican labor during the war. Latino civil rights leaders wanted more, but efforts by attorneys Perales and M. C. Gonzales, with the aid of a San Antonio state legislator, to enact a nondiscrimination public accommodations law failed miserably. When the representative presented the bill, white legislators laughed derisively at the idea of having Mexicans and other Latin Americans classified as Caucasians (Salinas 2012, 84).24

Depictions of anti-Latino prejudice in the pre- and post-World War II era of Texas can be found in the movie and novel Giant by Edna Ferber. One movie scene involves a restaurant owner telling the Anglo Benedicts he is willing to serve them, but not the Mexican woman (his daughter-in-law) and her “papoose.” Adding credibility to this Hollywood incident, Perales documented countless affidavits of exclusions of Latinos from restaurants and other public accommodations (Perales 1974, 137–213). A similar incident involved Staff Sgt. Macario Garcia, on whom President Truman had bestowed the award of the Congressional Medal of Honor. Garcia entered a restaurant in Richmond, Texas, only one month after his face-to-face meeting with Truman. Dressed in his army uniform, Garcia asked for coffee, but the owner stated he did not serve “Mexicans” (Perales 1974, 156–57; Olivas 2008, 1394). This exclusion practice sent the same message contained in a notice distributed by the Lone Star Restaurant Association that tersely stated: “No Dogs, Negroes, Mexicans” (American Experience 2009).

In addition to restaurants and other publicly accessed facilities, a vast part of Texas operated segregated educational facilities. McAllen in South Texas, with its predominant Mexican population, and Alice,
closer to Corpus Christi, like other parts of the state, operated segregated “Mexican Schools” (Rangel and Alcala 1972, 313 n. 41).\textsuperscript{25} Litigation to end school segregation occurred in small towns like Hondo, Taft, and Driscoll (Salinas 2003a, 166–68) and in large cities like Austin, Corpus Christi, and Denver, Colorado.\textsuperscript{26}

Alleged scholars have perpetrated racist claims about the inherent inferiority of minority Americans. For instance, in the 1920s, Roy Garis, a Vanderbilt professor, testified before the U.S. Congress as an assumed expert in the field of eugenics.

He asserted that whites should not have to compete with Mexican “peons” for jobs (Rosales 2006, 264, 326–27). Half a century later, other “experts” joined Garis in their anti-Latino advocacy. Ophthalmologist John Tanton, a cofounder of the group U.S. English (DeParle 2011; Gallegos 1994, 14; Crawford 1992, 3), participated with Roger Conner, then executive director of the Federation of Americans for Immigration Reform (fair), in Arizona to win the 1988 English-Only referendum. In a memorandum, Tanton criticized the Latinos’ high birth rate and their importation of political corruption to the United States (Salinas 2007, 918).

Harvard political science professor Samuel P. Huntington followed Tanton’s extremist views by publishing a book expressing concerns about the growing Latino population, the changing face of America, and the “clash of civilizations.” Huntington emphasized that language and religion constitute “central elements of any culture or civilization” and expressed the apprehension that U.S. civilization is changing radically as a result of the growth of the Latino population. Huntington added that Mexicans in particular will pose a problem for the United States, since the nation’s population will reach 25 percent Latino by 2050 (Huntington 1996, 8, 57, 59, 204).

Notwithstanding his academic credentials, Huntington warned that America’s Mexican Latinos will almost certainly experience “revanchist sentiments,” explaining that Mexican demographic expansion in the twenty-first century could threaten American military expansion from the nineteenth century (Huntington 1996, 206). This jingoist language only accentuates the Latino threat claim and disadvantages an already socially burdened group. Admittedly, such pessimism about our nation’s
future also helps to sell books. The anti-Latino and anti-immigrant sentiments in the 1996 Congress led to the passage of two harsh immigration acts. The despair and attitudes intensified by Speaker Newt Gingrich further served as a catalyst for Huntington’s book of doom.

Huntington’s incredible claim that U.S. Latinos of Mexican descent will avenge the 1848 taking of Mexican land represents an exercise in hyperbole. If Huntington insinuates that the loyalty of Mexican-descent Americans can be negotiated by Mexico, he either disregards history or is oblivious of the blood that so many Latino citizens and immigrants shed so that he and others can enjoy the freedom to deliver such extremist and irresponsible comments. Huntington further cautioned that Mexican-descent immigrants need to become “Americanized” or these immigrants will make the United States a divided bilingual, bicultural nation (Hall 2004). Another Harvard scholar recently regressed to the 1920s eugenics logic by asserting that Latino immigrants cannot compete intellectually with white immigrants. He accordingly urged that future immigration policy should utilize IQ tests to determine who obtains admission (Matthews 2013).

U.S. Latinos, as a group, have suffered widespread discrimination. On the other hand, many Latinos have fortunately never suffered discrimination. This group consequently fails to empathize with efforts to seek equality and fair treatment. Many within this latter group adamantly assert that they are “Americans” and refuse to identify with activists seeking justice. In many cases, a light-skinned complexion has helped make life more “American” for them. In addition, others avoid the more blatant and negative treatment that Mexicans in particular have suffered. This group prefers to avoid the stigma that the term “Mexican” conveys. Besides the label American, they prefer an alternative, euphemistic label like Hispanic, Latin, or Spanish-speaking American.

In spite of what Spanish-surnamed Americans prefer to be called, the terms Latina and Latino represent perhaps the best depiction of the different nationalities. In the 1970s, the federal government adopted the term “Hispanic” as the most correct term to classify the various nationalities of the Spanish-speaking countries (Dry 2009). Chicanos and others disliked the term “Hispanic,” primarily because it was imposed by the government. The term does not enjoy complete or universal support.
among persons from Latin America. Once the political dust settled, the term “Latino” became the more popular term among social scientists and historians to describe people from Mexico and other parts of Latin America. More specifically, in this book, the author prefers the additional descriptive term “U.S. Latino.” The author, in utilizing this term, seeks to include all Latinos who actually reside in the United States. Since the early 1900s, this group has included not only citizens and resident aliens but also undocumented persons. Of the 11 million estimated unauthorized U.S. residents, Mexican Latinos account for 52 percent, or 6 million persons, with an unknown number of Latinos and migrants from other nations (Passel, Cohn, and Gonzalez-Barrera 2013).

The ethnic group’s self-assessment, and the treatment of that group by the dominant population are two methods of gauging that group’s standing as a racial subculture. Additionally, government agencies and the courts have treated and classified Mexican Americans and other Latinos as a separate, identifiable group. For instance, the Civil Rights Act of 1964,\(^\text{28}\) by incorporating the term “national origin,” impliedly provided protection for ethnic groups such as Mexican Americans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans, the most predominant Latino groups in the early 1960s.

**Conclusion**

Much of this great nation’s history is tainted by the realities of racism. As a nation, we obviously need to move forward. In order to move forward, however, we need to acknowledge and take into account our negative history in any official solutions or plans. We cannot continue to employ the so-called “ostrich defense” and act as if we are blind to the actual impact our policies will have on ethnic and racial groups that have not been favored by the majority white population and their governmental representatives. The following court decision, unfortunately, portends problems in healing our racial differences.

*Schuette v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action,*\(^\text{29}\) decided in early 2014, exemplifies this official clash with opportunity inequalities in American society. In *Schuette,* the U.S. Supreme Court permitted a Michigan voting majority to ban affirmative action in college admissions. Justice Sotomayor issued a forceful dissent, one in which she
questioned the collective majority’s abdication of their responsibility to interpret the racial consequences of the decision to ban affirmative action.

The justice, an admitted beneficiary of affirmative action policies, stated: “Race matters. Race matters in part because of the long history of racial minorities’ being denied access to the political process.” She acknowledged that “race also matters because of persistent racial inequality in society—inequality that cannot be ignored and that has produced stark socioeconomic disparities.” To the author and others close to him—who frequently heard as they made it through high school and college that Latinas and Latinos represented unlikely academic success stories—“race matters because of the slights, the snickers, the silent judgments that reinforce that most crippling of thoughts: ‘I do not belong here.’”

Sotomayor questioned her colleagues’ view that “examining the racial impact of legislation only perpetuates racial discrimination. This refusal to accept the stark reality that race matters is regrettable. The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to speak openly and candidly on the subject of race, and to apply the Constitution with eyes open to the unfortunate effects of centuries of racial discrimination.” She concluded by stating that judges should fulfill their oath to guarantee equal protection and “not sit back and wish away, rather than confront, the racial inequality that exists in our society. It is this view that works harm, by perpetuating the simple notion that what makes race matter is acknowledging the simple truth that race does matter.”

As Justice Sotomayor recommends, Americans need to be attentive and avoid actions that have a discriminatory impact. With a few exceptions, the days of overt, outright discrimination are gone. Prejudice at times is more subtly hidden from public view and becomes part of the equation in not only legislative promulgations but also judicial decisions. In this process, private racist attitudes manage to evolve into American public law and policy (Salinas 2007).
Endnotes

1. In re Rodriguez, 81 F. 337, 351 (W.D. Tex. 1897).
4. Ibid., 348.
5. In 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment granted citizenship to all persons born in the United States, effectively extending citizenship to all recently freed slaves.
7. Ibid., 351.
8. Ibid.
9. Clifton v. Puente, 218 S.W.2d 272 (Tex. Civ. App.—San Antonio 1948); Matthews v. Andrade, 198 P.2d 66 (Cal. App. 1948) (“No person or persons of the Mexican race or other than the Caucasian race shall use or occupy any buildings or any lot”).
10. The three groups included the Order of the Sons of America (Ben Garza), the Knights of America in San Antonio (M. C. Gonzales), and the League of Latin American Citizens (Alonso Perales, J. Luz Saenz, and J. T. Canales).
11. See, e.g., Matthews v. Andrade, 87 Cal. App. 2d 906, 198 P.2d 66 (1948) (“No person or persons of the Mexican race or other than the Caucasian race shall use or occupy any buildings or any lot”).
12. Johnson v. McIntosh, 21 U.S. (8 Wheat.) 543, 588 (1823) (“Conquest gives a title which the Courts of the conqueror cannot deny, whatever the private and speculative opinions of individuals may be, respecting the original justice of the claim which has been successfully asserted.”).
15. See Sanchez v. Texas, 243 S.W.2d 700 (Tex. Crim. App. 1951) (“Mexican people are not a separate race but are white people of Spanish descent.”).
18. Ibid., 480.
19. Ibid., 478.
20. Ibid., 482.
21. Ibid., 481.
22. See Saint Francis College v. Al-Khazraji, 481 U.S. 604 (1987) (Despite the fact that Arabs are considered Caucasians, Al-Khazraji alleged discrimination based on race and could maintain his discrimination claim).
23. The 1930 enumeration, dated April 28, 1930, includes census information about the author’s paternal grandparents, including his light-complexioned and blue-eyed grandmother, Dolores Garcia de Salinas, who is listed as of the Mexican race.
24. The predominantly Anglo membership in the House of Representatives met the offer of the bill with “laughs, murmurs of disapproval and a few shouts of dissent.” News article, “Mexican’ Bill Introduced,” April 15 [year not included], Alonso S. Perales Papers, University of Houston, box 9, folder 30.
25. The McAllen ISD Board Minutes, vol. 2:11, February 18, 1919, discuss the building of a “new Mexican School,” obviously acknowledging the existence of a previous segregated school.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

1. Page 82 contains the photograph titled “Labels” by Monica Villarreal. What are some of the terms in that piece that directly come into question in this essay by former Texas Judge Lupe S. Salinas? What are some terms from the photo that are indirectly addressed?

2. Why do you think defining these terms is important?

3. Why do you think defining these terms is challenging?

4. There are several civil rights organizations and community organizations mentioned in the essay. List three. Have you heard of them before? Choose one for further research. Find three additional sources that discuss the work of the group.

5. Choose one of the court cases discussed in the essay. How might you have argued the case if you were the lawyer for the case? Do you think it was difficult to do so? What might have you added? What might have been some risks involved?

6. Imagine that one of these cases must be retried and this time more witnesses must be called. Imagine that you are one of the witnesses called to either defend the issue or argue against the issue. What are three points you would bring up from your own life experience to argue the point either way?

7. What are some reasons that these cases are not well-known by the public? Imagine that today’s social media platforms existed at the time of these proceedings. How might you have covered them?
MECA with New Lights
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Mexicans Ain’t White: The Gus Garcia Story

Tony Diaz

Spoiler alert: The life of Civil Rights lawyer Gus Garcia doesn't have a happy ending, but the true story of our people lies between the echo of the gavel at the Supreme Court hearing, where he brilliantly defended our rights, to his last breath alone, penniless, on the streets of San Antonio.

The fact that he is not a household name is no surprise to us. We register on the American Imagination in three phases. First, we are invisible. Then, we are vilified. Then, we are accepted, but only as a consumer group.

We are never imagined as Intellectuals. This step is key to fully entering the American Imagination. But we are at a point in history where we can achieve this, and the story of Gus Garcia is powerful and tragic enough to get us there.

However, in order for his life story to be told correctly, it will take a senator, an actress, and thousands of book runners.

Enter the Lawyer

With his brash and brilliant rhetoric, Gus Garcia became a lead lawyer on the first Mexican American legal team to win a United States Supreme Court decision. Mexican Americans did not legally exist before that. We were either ignored, thus our omission from history books, or we were vilified, as demonstrated by the “No Mexicans Allowed” signs existent at the time. As a matter of fact, a book by Michael A. Olivas about the case is titled after one of the signs displayed in the courthouse: “Colored Men and Hombres Aquí.” The Spanish let Mexican Americans know which bathroom they were allowed to use.

That 1954 landmark case—Hernandez v. Texas—established Mexican Americans as a protected class and served as a vital precedent for civil rights.

The pioneering legal team was comprised entirely of Tejanos, but Garcia was the star. His audacity and oratory gifts saved the day when
Supreme Court justices bombarded the lawyers with the ignorant questions that plague us to this day.

The Justices asked: “Can Mexican Americans speak English?” and “Are they citizens?”

It was Gus Garcia who set the tone of the proceedings with his now famous reply, “My people were in Texas a hundred years before Sam Houston, that wetback from Tennessee.”

The case was decided within ten days of the Brown v. Board of Education decision. This was a vital era for civil rights.

But maybe we still don’t exist. Fifty-nine years later, there is not one Mexican American Studies building at any Texas university (mind you, Garcia’s own home state) that I can walk into and study the oral arguments he gave to the Supreme Court. The Justices even granted him extra time, a rare feat, a further testament to his skill.

I am intrigued by what he could have said. What evidence did he present, which metaphors did he use, which rhetorical strategies did he utilize for his legal argument that swayed the United States Supreme Court to finally recognize us and ensure that we would be granted all the rights and privileges guaranteed by the Constitution? Or, maybe, since we still struggle for our rights, his was a soliloquy, heard only by himself, beautiful sound and fury signifying nothing.

Gus Garcia’s brilliant speech—like his contributions to America, like our contributions to America—are lost to history. Few records exist about his life. We do know that Gus Garcia’s life went into a downward spiral after that landmark case. He suffered from alcoholism and mental illness. He died homeless on the streets of San Antonio.

Garcia’s fall from such great heights is a tragedy worthy of a Shakespearean play, or, today, a movie script.

Imagine what it must have felt like to walk the halls of the United States Supreme Court as a victor only to return to Texas to face the very discrimination you fought against. No national media lauded his work the way that Brown v. Board of Education, decided less than two weeks later, would be lauded. He is our Thurgood Marshall.

And when he did get interviewed, he would have to answer the same haunting questions again, and again, and again, as we do: “Do Mexican Americans speak English?” “Are Mexican Americans citizens?”
Imagine winning a Supreme Court case one day then bartering legal services for food the next. No major law firms would hire a Mexican American. We are not white. The system considers us white when it suits its purposes. Guadalupe San Miguel chronicles this in his book *Brown Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston*. During the 1970s, the “Houston Independent School District circumvented a court order for desegregation by classifying Mexican American children as ‘white’ and integrating them with African-American children—leaving Anglos in segregated schools.”

During the Trayvon Martin case the media’s description of George Zimmerman as a White Hispanic just barely touches the complexities of this issue and demonstrates that while the Chican@ intelligentsia is on quantum physics when it comes to identity, the mainstream media is still doing basic math.

Of course, we must also take some of the blame for history overlooking the tragedy of Gus Garcia.

*A Class Apart*, the documentary about the *Hernandez v. Texas* case has a very telling line. The narrator alludes to Garcia having spent all the funds that the public donated to pay the costs of the trial. Gus Garcia is mocked for having the audacity to ask for money to hire a publicist.

I wish they had. Maybe then high school students would be taking tests on the facts of the life of Gus Garcia and the *Hernandez v. Texas* case—right now.

I’m sure he rubbed people the wrong way, I’m sure some thought he had a big mouth, some thought he was arrogant, and I’m positive there were many who saw that hubris and thought, “That Mexican don’t know his place.”

We must not run from his dark side just as we must demand that our nation recognize his brilliant and important work. Garcia is not the one-dimensional character we get from Hollywood and TV.

We have been denied a profound depiction of our people.

Now, we as artists and intellectuals must make our history come to life. That is vital for the next phase of the Chican@ Renaissance. Only art can save us.
Enter the Actress

I am not the only one intrigued by the Gus Garcia story. Eva Longoria bought the rights to executive produce the film adaptation of A Class Apart. The documentary focuses on the case Hernandez v. Texas, but the life story of Gus Garcia is even more fascinating. Longoria has been criticized recently for her portrayal of Latinos in her recent show Devious Maids. However, she also made headlines when she earned her master’s degree in Mexican-American Studies. A brilliant film about the life of Gus Garcia, if done right, with just the right timing, could be the inspiring, potent art to propel the Chican@ Renaissance across genres, across demographics, across history.

Enter the Senator

We will make up for lost history starting now. With the help of yet another Garcia who is blazing her own trail in history, Texas Senator Sylvia R. Garcia, we are proclaiming July 27, 2013 the first annual Gus Garcia Day. Senator Garcia is writing the legislative proclamation, and it will be delivered in Senate District 6, her home district, also the base for the Librotraficante Movement. Gus Garcia’s 98th birthday party will have thousands of guests.

Senator Garcia stood with us as we formed a Texas-wide coalition to defeat Senate Bill 1128 authored by Texas Senator Dan Patrick and its companion House Bill 1938, authored by Texas Representative Giovanni Capriglione, which would have effectively eliminated Mexican-American Studies.

Senator Sylvia Garcia stated, “Now more than ever, it is important to honor our past leaders and remember the struggles for equality, so that we can be ever more vigilant in the attacks against the gains we’ve made.”

Enter the Book Runners

We became book traffickers when Arizona banned Mexican-American Studies. We organized the 2012 Librotraficante Caravan to Smuggle the Banned Books Back into Arizona. We have been defying attacks on ethnic studies ever since.
Now, our history is under attack in Texas, our own backyard. Governor Rick Perry vetoed $1.5 million for Mexican-American Studies at the University of Texas, Gus Garcia’s alma mater. Texas legislators have proposed Anti-Ethnic Studies Bills. These are among several recent Far Right Republican offenses against our culture. But Gus Garcia provided us not only with the legal tool to defy this oppression, his life story will inspire us to rise. We demand that our history be documented.

We will not allow Texas to become the next Arizona. We will defend our history from the classroom to the courtroom.
Schoolchildren in Texas visit an amusement park called “Six Flags.” That’s the shortened name. The longer name is “Six Flags Over Texas.”

The name becomes a useful tool to begin examining the past of Texas and to gain a better understanding of its history.

The name refers to the six flags of the sovereign nations who claimed, and ruled, Texas for a time.

The phrase is used for stores, amusement parks, businesses.

It’s catchy. It also is the first step in teaching students that the sovereign nations were not spontaneous and evolved over time.

Anytime the phrase is used, it’s a convenient time for parents or teachers to quiz kids.

Now, in the case of Texas, those earlier flags are:

Spain (1519–1685; 1690–1821), France (1685–1690), Mexico (1821–1836), the Republic of Texas (1836–1845), the Confederate States of America (1861–1865), and the United States of America (1845–1861; 1865–present).

This is a handy way to begin the process, but after some study, some of the limitations should become apparent.

The first of the flags is the Spanish in 1519. This is the same year that the war between Europe and Mesoamerica begins.
Who dwelled in Texas before 1519? Where are their flags? Did they have flags? What other ways were there to define those who called that land home?

This is not to judge, or sue, Texas for honoring only six flags. This is to acknowledge that the excitement students experience as they learn about some of the five other sovereign nations that once claimed Texas, does not have to end.

The six flags are just the tip of the pyramid.

Tip of the Pyramid

For the purposes of this textbook, the phrase “tip of the pyramid” is replacing the cliché “tip of the iceberg.”

The “iceberg” phrase is the type of cliché George Orwell warns against in his essay “Politics and the English Language.” Now clichés in and of themselves are not terrible things or dangerous. However, if our entire language is filled with dead metaphors, this can be a sign that we are not thinking deeply enough.

If our speech becomes a string of tired expressions, this can be a sign that we are not engaging our minds to the fullest capacity on different issues.

At its fullest measure, the phrase “tip of the iceberg” should have caused a pang of fear. In a nation that had just suffered the loss of the Titanic, the idea of icebergs lurking under the surface of the ocean may have been a potent warning.

Legend holds that the ship hit the tip of an iceberg. There are other theories as well, but that fact that the “iceberg” theory seemed the most plausible reflects the role of ships at the time.

Of course, those of us who have never been on a boat might not fully understand the line. We might not know the fear of a boat rocking too much. Perhaps it’s like a plane losing pressure and dipping so low that you feel your seatbelt grab you. But again, most people, even if they have flown and even if they frequently fly, don’t know the true fear of rocking to and fro, not sure if you are subject to the wind, or if a small dot on the slick sheet of water hides a massive ice mountain.

That’s part of the danger, too, that there is such a massive piece of rock, or small land, whose tip can pierce the ship as it punches the boat.
hard with all the weight beneath and then the ship runs the risk of running into the rest of the weight hidden underneath.

There are many reasons to replace the tired metaphor of old history with an exciting new metaphor that speaks to our time.

There are several levels to our metaphor, and referring to the tip of the pyramid is a powerful way to also remind scholars, students, and artists to think deeper to find the roots of all our indigenous pasts.

For example, it is not incorrect to say that the Spanish flag was the first to be planted on Texas, but what we leave out are the symbols of the Mexica and other indigenous groups used to mark their nations, their peoples.

Also, our practice of marking land with borders and with flags to stake our claim reflects the belief that we can own the land. That’s evolved into the deed a homeowner possesses to show they own the house and the land it sits on. That’s an attractive theory that is put into question when a local government forces a homeowner off their land through eminent domain because they need to build a highway through there.

The beautiful Sun Stone was hidden for centuries.

It would be found by mistake, and it would take astute workers to pause in their digging to document the site.

Our tip of the pyramid could be part of Mexico’s history sticking out.

If you recognize the tip of the pyramid, this is a great reason to begin digging, and you will find more and more cultural treasure.

On that note, let’s keep digging.

The “Texas Handbook” online and the website and exhibits for the Bullock Texas State History Museum reveal that even the names of the state has indigenous roots. The Caddo were here before the Europeans. One theory states the Caddo greeting was “Taysah” which the European ear evolved into the name “Texas.”

Of course, it is easier to document the influence of the Spanish because Hispanic surnames grace the names of towns and streets, but even that is overlooked.

One example of this is the fact that the beach city of Galveston, on the gulf coast of Texas is named after the Spanish explore Galvez. The town bears a version of his name “Galveston.”

We also don’t have to go too far back to enjoy modern-day Mexican American contributions as one of the popular pocket beaches is
Carmona pocket beach, named after a Tejano. Most folks tanning on the beach may not realize they are enjoying Mexican American history.

The Bullock Museum states that indigenous roots and people go back at least 11,000 years. The museum’s interactive timeline lists names such as Comanche, which you may have heard of before, but it also goes back to the year 1200 and the era of the Lipan Apache.

The Oklahoma Historical Society website features “14 Flags Over Oklahoma.” One of is the Choctaw Nation flag. The current flag alludes to the sixty indigenous groups living in the state. It is inspiring to see a state attempt to fully acknowledge its past. Of course, this is just a short list of interesting facts that tell the story of Oklahoma, but each item sheds light on an interesting aspect of the state’s past that ties into other histories that don’t always see the light of day, but which are there, waiting for attention.

However, there are many hints of past contribution right under our noses.

The book *The Anthology of Hispanic Literature* by Dr. Nicolás Kanellos from Arte Público Press in conjunction with Oxford University Press chronicles some of the work from The Recovery Project which has been locating, cataloging, and archiving Spanish language newspapers published in the United States and then forgotten.

Their work brings out some major findings about the literary legacy of the Spanish, Mexicanos, Mexican Americans, and Latinos. The book documents how the first European language printed on the continent was Spanish when the Spanish brought printing presses to Mesoamerica.

Furthermore, *The Anthology of Hispanic Literature* chronicles how there were Spanish language newspapers as early as 1800 and in such diverse places as Philadelphia and New Orleans, not cities we today imagine as Latino hot beds. These facts are powerful counterpoints to English-Only campaigns.

These findings force us to remember the history we do know to make connections to the new information we are learning to form a more accurate view of the world.
Librotrafican tes march in Austin for Ethnic Studies.
Left to right, Jesus Archuleta, Tony Diaz-El Librotrafican te, Sonya Rose Hernandez, Eloy Gonzales, 2nd row: Mario Castillo.
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U.S. History Ignoring Spanish, Mexican Contributions

José Antonio López

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As many of us learned in elementary school, March 2, 1836, is Texas Independence Day. Oddly, Texas is no longer independent since in 1845 (only a short nine years later) Anglo immigrant insurgents who illegally declared Texas’ independence from Mexico traded their independence to join the U.S. as a slave state.

And contrary to what we were taught in grade school about the 1836 Texas revolt, the independence journey began in 1810. As such, the birth of Texas independence undeniably comes with a Spanish-Mexican pedigree. Yet the struggle for liberty’s formula leaves this out and is typically ignored in mainstream Texas history.

Sadly, much more of U.S. (and Texas) history is left out of textbooks. For example, at the national level, both Roanoke and Jamestown, representing the earliest English settlements in what is now the United States, already had Spanish footprints.

Likewise, in Texas, most people don’t realize that Sam Houston’s endeavors for Texas independence took over a work in progress. Tejanas and Tejanos had already done the heavy lifting, sacrificing and dying for Texas independence. For example, on April 6, 1813, Texas’ first president, José Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara, proclaimed the first Texas Declaration of Independence to jubilant Bexareños outside the Spanish Governors Palace. He signed the first Texas Constitution a week later.

As such, the significance of March 2 “Texas Independence” is—at best—only an episode in a much older chain of events.

The fact is that in rendering overall U.S. history, the roles of Spanish people, places and events, when mentioned at all, are typically distorted, discarded or dismissed.

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So, it is with Francisco Vásquez de Coronado (1510–54), a strong courageous leader who figures prominently in the early history of both Texas and the United States. Still, he is often mocked in U.S. history books for what mainstream historians perceive as an outlandish quest, searching for the mythical city of Quivira.

Likewise, students in U.S. classrooms learn about the Spaniards’ lust for gold, search for imaginary places and brutality toward Native Americans. Rarely are they tutored about Spanish explorers’ positive impact in U.S. history.

Based on slanted lesson plans, students are most likely to recall unflattering details, not positive attributes. In fact, the English, Dutch, French and U.S. colonists own a significant share of brutal treatment toward Native Americans.

The fact that Spanish royal and religious leaders forbade ill treatment of indigenous people is well documented. They labored endlessly in attempts to avoid it but were generally hampered by the great distance involved. Many of the more ignoble violators of human rights were arrested, charged with crimes and fairly punished in Spanish courts.

So, a summary of the life of Vásquez de Coronado is in order. To start, here’s a little-known aspect of his story: Throughout his life, Francisco never used the last name of Coronado by itself. He used one of two last names, Vásquez or Vásquez de Coronado.

Vásquez de Coronado developed the first detailed exploration reports and the first glimpse of the people, vegetation and terrain of the Southwest (New Mexico), the Texas Panhandle, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Kansas. Attesting to their accuracy, his travel logs were used for years as authoritative documents for later explorers and settlers.

As with other explorers of his day, Vásquez de Coronado was fascinated by a prevailing myth of a mysterious island called Antilia, far into the Atlantic Ocean. Ancient maps even included the site. Supposedly, the Muslim invasion of Spain had caused seven Portuguese bishops to load all they owned in boats, and they sailed off and resettled far away in the sea. As such, when Columbus reached Española in 1492, European experts believed he had reached the Island of Antilia, and so named the group of islands. That name—the Antilles—remains to this day.

Most, if not all, 15th-century Europeans believed in the Antilia legend and the Strait of Anián, along with other legends. When famous explorer John Cabot first landed on the upper eastern shore of America,
sailing for the king of England, he named the land “Seven Cities.” He believed he had found Antilia.

In initiating his 1539–40 journey, Vásquez de Coronado, governor of Nueva Galicia, was also hoping to equal the good fortunes of Hernán Cortés and Francisco Pizarro by finding another Aztec empire in the north. After dispatching forward parties, the explorer was encouraged by promising reports. He split up his large expedition, totaling nearly 400 military men, families, more than 2,000 Native American allies, and large herds of horses, cattle and sheep.

This is verified as the first massive movement of Europeans into New Mexico. At times, contact with hostile natives was vicious. Even so, Capt. García López de Cárdenas, leading one of Vásquez de Coronado’s subgroups, was among the first Europeans to see the Grand Canyon.

In 1541, the Spanish traveled through a grassy area they equated with a never-ending sea (Llano Estacado) in northern New Mexico and the Texas Panhandle. Of special note to Texans is the fact that on May 29, 1541, Father Juan Padilla, a priest in the Vásquez de Coronado expedition, offered the first American Thanksgiving Day religious ceremony in the Palo Duro Canyon in the Texas Panhandle. A historical plaque identifies the site. Although Vásquez de Coronado and Hernando de Soto visited the same region at the same time in Kansas and Arkansas, they missed each other by about 300 miles. Three intrepid Spanish explorers were the first Europeans to travel in today’s middle United States—Vásquez de Coronado, de Soto and Juan de Oñate. Thrown from his horse in 1542, Vásquez de Coronado was greatly limited by his injuries. He returned to Mexico City where his health worsened.

Francisco Vásquez de Coronado died in 1554 at the young age of 44. Most explorers in America seem to have Spanish rather than English names. When you understand this, you understand that they have earned their place in history. The strong foundation of the authentic story of the U.S. rests on logs and cartography prepared by Spaniards Alonso Alvarez de Piñeda, Estéban Gómez, Lucas Vásquez de Ayllón, Pedro de Salazar, Fortún Jiménez, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, Bartolomé Ferrer and so many others. They merit but rarely receive their fair share of recognition, respect and equal treatment with Anglo Saxon characters in U.S. history books.

It’s time to render U.S. and Texas history in a seamless manner. Mainstream U.S. historians must learn to enfold vital Spanish contributions
to our nation’s founding. In Texas, pre-1836 Spanish-Mexican people, places and events must no longer be arbitrarily edited out of Texas history just because they don’t fit the Stephen F. Austin and Sam Houston models.

Likewise, the Texas State Board of Education must stop using 1836 as the Texas history baseline.

**Mexican American World War II Veterans**

Mexican American World War II veterans are a unique generation.

Their role during what America called “The Great War” was vital. Yet, their contributions to that cause are often overlooked.

Mexican American World War II veterans could not logically be called un-American. However, they were often not treated like full-fledged Americans. The difference is that they were not going to put up with that.

Because of their numbers, because of their role in the war, and because of social changes brought on by World War II, veteranos could respond to discrimination in ways that previous generations of Mexican American could not or dared not.


However, they were also clearly the victims of discrimination. The difference would be that this generation would note it, react to it, and

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**Matichenes at Day of the Dead Procession**

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attempts to stop it. The discrimination they endured would get archived. The discrimination of past generations did not.

The life of Private Macario Garcia is a powerful metaphor for that generation.

On any given day, thousands of Houstonians will drive on Macario Garcia street, some on their way to the Macario Garcia Courthouse, but most people don’t know his story even though his story has been told.

Several scholars have written about him, and he is even featured in “War and Peace” Episode Three of the film series “Latino Americans” by filmmaker John Valadez, which aired nation-wide on PBS, and toured nationally for community screenings.

“Latino Americans” recounts how Macario Garcia was the first Latino recipient of the Medal of Honor, yet he was still denied service at a diner in his home state of Texas.

That by no means was the first time that a Mexican American was denied service in Texas. Historical accounts are full of references to signs on businesses in the Deep South prohibiting service to Mexicans or Mexican Americans, but the discrimination that Private Felix Longoria faced takes discrimination into the afterlife.

The difference—this generation could and would do something about it. Chronicling the discrimination is part of the process.

Private Felix Longoria died in action in the Philippines; however, he was denied a funeral and wake at the funeral parlor in his hometown of Three Rivers, Texas.

*Hecho En Tejas: An Anthology of Texas Mexican Literature* edited by writer Dagoberto Gilb includes correspondence from that time. These letters include the letter dated January 10, 1949, when veterano Dr. Hector P. Garcia wrote to then Senator Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) to address the fact that a World War II veteran has been denied burial “based solely on his Mexican ancestry.” The book includes telegrams in reply from LBJ to address the situation.

Again, John Valadez chronicles the saga in the film *The Longoria Affair.* The issue made national news at the time and propelled the senator and Dr. Garcia and his group, The G.I. Forum, into national fame.
They would continue to team up to fight for civil rights, leading up to the signing of the Civil Rights Act.

Their collaboration also alludes to the unique power of Texas Mexicans.

That's hinted at not only by the two Tejanos involved in this case but also by the Anglo politician, LJB, who would go on to become United States President. The film points out that early in his career LBJ taught at a Mexican School in Cotulla, Texas.

These are factors that contribute to the long list of men, women, and organizations that would shape the path the civil rights movement would take in Texas.

To delve into this further, veteranos who served in the military then had greater access to college degrees, especially through the GI Bill, housing through Veteran benefits, but they also had the moral high ground in that they had proven themselves as Americans by serving the nation, by bleeding for the nation, and in some cases dying for their country.

In her book *Mexican Americans & World War II*, Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez writes “Mexican American did have more Medals of Honor than any other ethnic group.” Furthermore, Mexican American veterans learned how to fight—figuratively and literally.

They also learned how to organize by working in small groups and in the largest group the nation has to offer—the military.

They also crossed state lines to learn from other Mexican Americans, from Italians, from African Americans.

They also got a better view of the struggles of others such as black soldiers, white lower class soldiers, and they also got to see how other minorities were or weren’t treated in other nations.

They also got to see how they were received in countries outside of the deep rural south.

For many reasons, because of Mexican American veterans, America would never be the same.
The greatest honor for any generation is to have its story told in their words, from their point of view. The generation of Mexican American World War II veterans has reached that point. Below are just 4 of the over 500 stories chronicled from people of that era as meticulously chronicled and archived through The U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project Group.

These entries are from A Legacy Greater Than Words: Stories of U.S. Latinos & Latinas of the World War II Generation 2006 edited by Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, Juliana A. Torres, Melissa DiPiero-D’Sa, Lindsay Fitzpatrick, archived in collaboration with Voces Oral History Project at UT-Austin School of Journalism and are reprinted with permission.
Guerra, Henry Martinez

From the fields of West Texas to the beaches of Normandy, Henry Guerra fought adverse conditions to succeed. He spent much of his young life under the scorching Texas sun, picking cotton, spinach, and radishes, and later participated in some of the most gruesome battles of World War II.

Guerra left school to help support his family. A year later he was drafted and in November 1940, he was inducted into the Army as an infantry soldier. After training at Camp Bullies, Texas, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and Camp McCoy, Wis., Guerra was then deployed to Europe, landing near Belfast, Ireland. He landed on Omaha Beach on June 7, 1944, the day after D-Day.

He remembered hearing the order from Eisenhower over the radio, and was preparing to invade France. As they approached the shore, soldiers were told to keep their heads down, but some disobeyed orders to gaze out toward the shore.

The troops saw explosions and carnage everywhere as they approached the beach.

Normandy, however, was only the beginning, and Guerra continued fighting with the 38th Infantry Regiment until the war’s end.

Guerra kept a journal detailing his service. Though filled with horrific, graphic images of death and destruction, a Bible passage urging faith and love is on the cover. Memories of the war haunted him well into his civilian life.

He was discharged in June 1945, with a Purple Heart, three Bronze Stars, and a host of other medals.

He returned to Texas and earned his GED. He then began his career in civil service. He worked as a storekeeper and later as an industrial engineer.

Juarez, Anastacio Perez

From the cotton fields of Staples, Texas, to the battlefields of Europe, Anastacio Juarez’s life led him to all corners of the world, but his heart always remained with his family. During his service, he regularly wrote letters to his future wife, Rafaela Navarro, and kept a photo of her tucked in his wallet as he trudged through Italy and France.
Drafted in January 1942, Juarez trained in Missouri, Louisiana, and New Jersey before he set sail for Europe. He remembered having to overcome a deficiency in English to succeed in the military. During his basic training, Juarez spent thirty days practicing commands after dinner, so he could keep up with other soldiers. His unwavering dedication paid off, eventually, earning him the rank of corporal.

Juarez’s and the 177th Signal Replacement Company—attached to the 3rd Infantry Division—invaded the South of France in Aug. 15, 1944. Juarez reached the beaches and jumped into the water that reached his neck. Even with the mounting fear and uncertainty during the frenzied invasion, Juarez was always mindful of his patriotic duty. “I can’t tell you that we were never afraid, or that a person doesn’t cry,” he said. “But you do what you have to do.”

Juarez was discharged on Oct. 8, 1945, and returned to the States. He married Rafaela, and the couple had eight children: Mary Alice, Susana, Josefina, Ramon, Gilberto, Rosemary, Irma, and Eduardo. Juarez stressed the importance of education to his children, and all eight pursued post-secondary degrees of certifications.

When he returned to Texas, Juarez chose to stop farming, instead taking a job at Kelly Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. There he worked as a mechanic for ten years, and later spend twenty years as an aircraft sheet metal worker.

**Gonzalez, Pablo B.**

A strong faith kept Pablo Gonzales focused and steady during the hectic fighting at Normandy. He remembered the shock of guns firing and soldiers dying, something his previous training left him unprepared to face.

“In maneuvers, people do not get shot, but with the battalion, you hear guns going off,” he said. “The main thing on my mind was my faith in God. I thought if these college kids and gueros (whites) were ready to sacrifice their life for their country, then I was ready, too.”

After his older half-brother enlisted, Gonzales’ mother was reluctant to have another son join the armed forces. Gonzales decided to wait to be drafted, despite his desire to enlist. In December 1942, he was called to serve. He soon left for Boston and finished training in England, before charging the shores of Normandy.
He fought in the Battle of the Bulge and for his efforts in that battle, earned Silver Star. His unit defended a bridge against German Panzers and successfully destroyed four tanks.

On January 28, 1945, Gonzales earned the rank of sergeant and became a tank destroyer commander.

“It was an honor as a Mexican to become a tank commander. It made me feel prouder,” he said.

He was discharged on October 31, 1945, and left the service with a Purple Heart for wounds he sustained in Holland.

Returning home to Michigan, Gonzales began working for General Motors. He married Nicolasa Contreras in 1946. The couple had seven children. After his retirement, Gonzales was involved in the music industry and was an active member of the American Legion Post 500, having served as post commander eight times.

**Gonzalez, Julian**

Proud of his dual heritage, Julian Gonzalez wrote “Viva Mexico” on the playground during elementary school, but also jumped at the chance to serve his adopted country during WWII. His military journey led him through the ranks and around the world, from the castles of Belfast, Ireland, to the shore of Normandy.

Gonzalez was initially motivated by emotion; he remembered his reaction to Pearl Harbor. “I was real mad, and, I don’t know, I was excited” he said. “I wanted to go in and fight.” Gonzalez arrived in Ireland in October 1943 and began a grueling seven-month training session to prepare for the invasion of Normandy.

Landing at Omaha Beach one day after D-Day, Gonzalez’s regiment was assigned to destroy hedgerows in the French countryside, as the hedges provided excellent cover for German snipers. As a staff sergeant, he led his men through dangerous, mine-ridden field as they disabled sniper points. He often charged ahead of his men, hurling grenades at enemy targets to ensure the safety of his soldiers.

He eventually sustained major injuries when he detonated a land mine coming back from a patrol. He lost toes and shrapnel riddled his leg. He was treated by doctors on the front line and sent to England to recover. He later received the Distinguished Service Cross, the military’s second highest honor, for his service.
At war’s end, Gonzalez returned to south Texas, where he met and married his first wife, Severa Treviño. Gonzalez began a career in home remodeling. Following the death of Severa from tuberculosis, he married Rose de Rosa, and helped raise her two children. The couple later had three children of their own: Nancy, Chris, and Larry.


Dr. Jesse Esparza, Texas Southern University

The struggle for educational equality has been a common plight for both the Mexican American Generation and the latter Chicana/o Generation. Although their methods differed, the goals were similar. The efforts of the Mexican American Generation were responsible for initiating many of the educational reforms that Chicanas/os continued to fight for during the 1960s. In other words, many of the concerns of the Chicano community were like those expressed by the Mexican and Mexican American communities since the turn of the century.1

This essay seeks to explore the identity formation of both the Mexican American and the Chicana/o Generations. The main argument is that identity underwent a slow, gradual change, that is, it evolved from Americanist to non-Americanist. This slow gradual change consisted of a shift from a Mexican American ideology to a Chicana/o ideology. Current scholarship on education and educational reform proves useful...
for examining identity and identity formation within ethnic-Mexican communities. This essay, then, explores the educational reform efforts of both generations to create a better understanding of identity formation.

The Chicano Movement is viewed as a point of transitioning; one consisting of a shift from community inaction to increased mobilization. This statement, while accurate, is narrowly focused, meaning, the Chicano Movement represents something more than an increase in community activism, it also represents a shift in community identity. The transition within the CM, then, is not in the level of increased activism but more on the evolution of identity. The ethnic-Mexican community, for example, underwent an evolution. This evolution consisted of a shift from “Mexican Americanist” to “Chicano.”

The generation of the World War II era believed in a Mexican Americanist identity, meaning, they considered themselves as true Americans and upheld American values and traditions. Most of these individuals were born and raised in the United States and became involved in civil rights activities before the 1960s. Their involvement is proof that they were conscious of the injustices they faced as a community and were politically involved in trying to remedy some of those injustices. This generation held certain notions of cultural pluralism. They believed in and struggled for integration and practiced the politics of accommodation, that is, they used conventional efforts like litigation for social change.

The generation of the 1960s, however, differed in their use of protest methods and political actions. Most embraced the ideas expressed by the Chicano Movement and rejected those of the Mexican American Generation. For example, they questioned earlier forms of activism and the ideology that that generation espoused. Most Chicanas/os opposed the previous generation's methods of social reforms, meaning, they criticized the moderate reform efforts and opted for a more rapid change.

Activists during the 1960s, for the most part, broke away from the politics, culture, ideologies, and forms of protest of the older generation. “Chicano and Chicana activists, for instance, were skeptical of the Mexican American Generation’s dependence on the politics of accommodation or the use of traditional methods of struggle,” many of which, they felt were ineffective. Instead of using the politics of accommodation, Chicana/o activists favored the use of oppositional politics such as marches, demonstrations, and other forms of civil disobedience.
Those who pledged allegiance to Chicana/o identity tended to reject the Mexican American Generation’s ideas of cultural pluralism, their notions of whiteness, and their bourgeois lifestyles in general.\textsuperscript{8} They replaced those ideas with notions of Chicana/o cultural nationalism, more specifically, with the ideas of \textit{indigenismo} and cultural pride.\textsuperscript{9} This latter generation viewed itself as being different from Anglos, unlike the Mexican American Generation who viewed itself as white and as sharing similar values with Anglo Americans.\textsuperscript{10} The Chicana/o Generation dismissed the Mexican American Generation’s notions of white and whiteness.

Identity, then, whether Mexican American and/or Chicana/o was not monolithic nor was it limited only to middle-class citizens or students and other youth. Instead, it comprised of “a set of complex . . . contradictory and evolving ideas, perspectives, and outlooks.”\textsuperscript{11} In the words of Ernesto Chavez, identity is a continuous process, something that develops over time and that is never stable, but that constantly changes and evolves.\textsuperscript{12}
Mexican American Identity

Since World War II, Mexican Americans saw themselves as white and began identifying themselves as part of the American culture. The war acted as a catalyst for change, in other words, as veterans returned from overseas, they questioned the racism from the society they defended and began demanding a better way of life. This demand, however, did not mean a rejection of Americanism. As the Mexican American community challenged discrimination, it also embraced the basic values and ideologies of the very society it criticized. The Mexican American, then, did not reject her/his Mexicaness but embraced, instead, American values. They emphasized the American part of their Mexican American identity.

As a community, they were aware that they were victims of American racism. Despite this, however, they still adopted an identity like white America. Members of this community ignored their indigenous roots. In many cases, this occurred out of a fear of being categorized as “colored” and thus exposed to similar discriminatory policies experienced by African Americans and other minority groups. Mexican Americans believed that by concealing their racial backgrounds they would be able to minimize and/or avoid existing racial hostilities.

The basic idea then, was that Mexican Americans were true Americans and should therefore make conscious efforts to assimilate into mainstream society. Assimilation was the key instrument for avoiding racial hostilities. It was often used as a tool for achieving equal footing. The reason behind this conscious effort to assimilate grows from this generation’s upbringing. Mexican Americans had been socialized into accepting American values, that is, they had been manufactured into becoming better U.S. citizens. A large number of them had come to adopt notions of Americanism. Ideas of U.S. citizenship, Americanization, and accommodation were common themes expressed by the Mexican American Generation. Assimilation into American political and cultural mainstream had become the most effective way for responding to the oppressive conditions facing their communities.

By the late 1950s, however, this began to change. Many Mexican Americans, who often identified themselves as white or as part of the white race, began noticing the successes of the black civil rights
movements and understood that many of the problems they faced grew out of racism and notions of skin color.\textsuperscript{24} This encouraged some Mexican Americans to abandon their claim of whiteness and to adopt instead an identity that was more representative of their ethnic origins.\textsuperscript{25} The community no longer supported complete assimilation, instead, it began to demand acceptance into mainstream America on its own terms, that is, “with the recognition that they were indeed of Mexican descent.”\textsuperscript{26}

Another reason for the abandonment of whiteness was that it sometimes backfired. In Houston, for example, the Mexican American community traditionally viewed itself as white. But as their notion of whiteness was being challenged and as school districts used those notions to circumvent desegregation orders, many of the community members began to reject whiteness and adopt, instead, a new ethnic identity.\textsuperscript{27} The Houston Independent School District, under orders to desegregate its schools, classified Mexican Americans as white and integrated them with African American schools leaving Anglo schools primarily white. Community members, enraged by this back-door maneuver, demanded that the schools and courts recognize Chicana/o / Mexicanos / Ethnic-Mexicans as a separate and equally important ethnic group.\textsuperscript{28}

By the 1960s then, many members of the Mexican American Generation departed from traditional ideas of Americanism, more specifically, they rejected assimilationist practices and adopted new forms of strategies that emphasized their Mexicaness.\textsuperscript{29} Despite the fact that many modified their assimilationist methods, some still emphasized achieving social reform by working from within the confines of the existing political systems.\textsuperscript{30} This generation, however, should not be dismissed for their political ideologies but should be recognized, instead, for its efforts. It was their sense of Mexican Americanism and their fight for educational right, after all, that became important precursors to the Chicano Movement.\textsuperscript{31} In other words, the Mexican American struggle for change set the stage for later activism espoused by members of the Chicano Generation.\textsuperscript{32} They had a tremendous impact on the Chicano Movement. In addition to laying the groundwork for social change, the Mexican American Generation was also responsible for developing an educational reformist agenda.\textsuperscript{33} As a result, the objectives of the Chicano Generation rarely differed from those of the previous one. What
distinguished the two was the use of cultural nationalism by the younger generation instead of assimilationist and/or accommodations methods. This cultural nationalism defined the Chicana/o Generation’s identity.\(^{34}\)

**Chicano Identity**

Chicana/o identity consisted of a new consciousness, one that rejected assimilationist and accommodationist views. This new consciousness, often called *Chicanismo*, emphasized Chicano nationalism—a pro indigenous identity that promoted Chicano culture, that criticized U.S. institutions and policies, and that used militant forms of activism.\(^{35}\) *Chicanismo* also rejected the Mexican American Generation’s views on U.S. ideals, that is, it stressed a distaste of American values and rejected the use of cautionary methods of the older generations.\(^{36}\) This new identity, however, created problems for Chicanas/os. The Chicano Movement, in many ways, had become a quest for a different identity, one that had been lost because of the socialization processes of U.S. institutions and in large part because of the actions of the Mexican American Generation.\(^{37}\) The goal, then, was to create a new identity, an identity that acted as an alternative to the one designed by the previous community.

This new identity would emphasize their indigenous past. It would emphasize their non-white status.\(^{38}\) It also represented acts of defiance as opposed to acts of accommodation.\(^{39}\) Chicana/o identity was unique because it influenced what came to represent the first time that youth collectively organized and shaped oppositional movements against those in power.\(^{40}\)

Before 1960, the efforts of LULAC and the American G.I. Forum, and various other Mexican American-based organizations led the charge in developing programs that improved the educational conditions of ethnic-Mexican children.\(^{41}\) These middle-class organizations were responsible for improving the educational needs of Chicana/o students. Their efforts, however, did not go far enough. The organizations aimed at changing the individual and not the institution. They attempted to Americanize the youth instead of trying to change and/or eliminate the discriminatory society in which that individual lived.\(^{42}\)

In the following years, however, other Chicano-based organizations whose ideologies and methods of protest differed from that of the
previous generation began to emerge. Of importance was the rise of students within these organizations. Students are famous for approaching educational and social change from a radically different perspective. Not only did Chicanas/os reject the ideology and identities of the Mexican American Generation but also the forms of protests they used generated faster results. Walkouts resulted in immediate change as opposed to the slow process of litigation.43 For the most part, young Chicanas/os began questioning the ideals and values, and in some cases, the actions of the Mexican American old guard.44

**Role of Chicano Youth**

School demonstrations occurred during a time of social unrest. Conditions of the late 1960s for Chicanas/os, more specifically for the youth, played a huge role in the radicalization and politicization processes. At a time when massive student demonstrations occurred all over the globe, thousands of Chicana/o students walked out of their schools in protest of the inferior quality of education.45 As a result, the 1960s was marked by street politics, student movements, and mass protests.46

The anti-war movement, the assassination of Martin Luther King, and the black civil rights movement all acted as some of the factors that influenced students. More importantly, 1968 was the year of international student uprisings.47 With demonstrations occurring in other parts of the world, Chicanas/os back in the United States were becoming convinced that they too were to be part of a larger movement. They believed they were part of “an international revolution in the making.”48

During the early part of the 1960s, community activism was narrowly focused but by the latter part of the decade, it began to increase and take on different forms.49 Activism increased due in part to the historic changes taking place. Issues like poverty, unemployment, poor housing and education, the development of grass-roots mobilization within the community, the litigation efforts of Mexican American-based organizations like LULAC, and the black civil rights movement all contributed to the new surge of Chicana/o activism.50 These developments raised issues of racial discrimination; they introduced new forms of protests, and they created different types of challenges to use against oppressive institutions.
Chicana/o youth not only expanded their ideas of radicalization but also came to represent the most powerful sector of the Chicano Movement. Youth became the new leaders of the Movement. Young Chicanas/os began to organize and speak out against discrimination. They held conferences that promoted cultural awareness, they encouraged an increase in activism, they initiated efforts to increase awareness of the issues that affected them, and they were instrumental in the conscious raising and political organizing of students and other community members. The youth also established various Chicano-based organizations on campuses throughout the nation.

Mexican American activists of the 1940s and 50s did not resort to using oppositional politics for protecting their community; instead, they adopted ballot-box methods and utilized organizational strength to create changes. During the 1960s, however, as the levels of activism increased, Chicanas/os, while still using similar ballot box methods and organizations, became more aggressive in their forms of resistance.

A hidden force behind the student movements and the larger Chicano Movement is the activities performed by Chicanas. Although the Movement was male-dominated, many women began assuming...
leadership roles and responsibilities. Because of their participation, they began erasing existing gender boundaries. Chicanas who participated in the high school walkouts, for example, were actively involved in various forms of protests and grassroots movements. They demonstrated similar patterns of resistance and shared leadership roles with their male counterparts.

This type of resistance gave women the space for challenging the Establishment. Chicanas played many different roles in the demonstrations. They held elected positions, provided testimonies at hearings, and helped organize additional participants. Others were involved in the actual implementation of the boycotts, that is, they helped organize students. They were members of various Chicano-based organizations; they mobilized the community, negotiated with school officials, devised many of the student demands, initiated numerous rallies and demonstrations, and picketed the school boards like the mothers of Houston who held a strike outside the district’s office.

For the most part, Chicanas provided different kinds of support during the boycotts. On campuses, for example, they were involved in the struggles for implementing programs designed to alleviate some of the instructional hardships they suffered. They also engaged in the recruitment efforts of additional Chicana/o students, faculty, and staff. Chicanas are credited with influencing the direction and dynamics of the Movement, more specifically; they are recognized for participating in pickets and protest marches, for acting as teachers in huelga schools, for providing food and housing for movement leaders and volunteers, for encouraging the continuation of the boycotts, and for generating popular support for the Movement in general.

The involvement in the demonstrations heightened their awareness of the oppressive schooling conditions and encouraged them to aggressively fight for an improved educational system. The school walkouts allowed many women to create their own institutional and community spaces. Many could exert their own agency—the ability to survive and resist oppressive institutions in society. This agency moved beyond the borders of institutions and communities, it transcended into the larger society.

It is clear then, that women were involved in various ways during the demonstrations. The problem, however, is that there is little scholarship that focuses on how and why women participated.
historiography is notorious for excluding the experiences of Chicanas. Women’s stories have remained unrecognized and unappreciated and “aside from the absence of women within the history of Chicano education . . . virtually none of the . . . literature deals with Chicanas nor provides an appropriate theoretical framework to understand their [involvement].”65

Currently, there are numerous perspectives from which to study the Chicano school walkouts. Historians have studied these events from a perspective of protest politics and internal colonialism, to student and youth movements, and although their perspectives vary and offer an array of historical interpretations, none of them include a gender analysis.66 Chicano history remains male-centered, that is, the roles of the males have been romanticized while those of la mujer go unrecognized.

As the most powerful sector of the Chicano Movement, Chicana/o youth are responsible for increasing the level of community mobilization and activism throughout the southwest.67 They are also credited with reconnecting the community with its Mexican/Indigenous roots.68 By rejecting assimilationist practices and embracing cultural nationalism, Chicanas/os were able to instill pride of their mestizo heritage among community members.69 For the youth, being Chicana/o meant being proud of their Mexicaness, it also meant that they had a responsibility to talk to other community members about Chicanismo.70 The goal was to talk to others about their culture and instill in them a general sense of pride.71 Chicana/o youth were not just about politicizing the community but about culturally awakening them and generating pride in being of Mexican descent as well.72

**Conclusion**

Ethnic-Mexicans, before the emergence of the Chicano Movement, expressed pride in both their citizenship within the United States as well as in their Mexican heritage. Because of the growing patriotic idealism following World War II, many Mexican Americans came to expect more from America.73 The United States had become their home, meaning there was no intention of ever returning to Mexico.74 By the 1930s and 1940s, for example, many Mexican Americans, while working to find some sort of balance between the culture of their parents and their own,
expected to be treated like Americans. “Faced with dualities and paradoxes as Mexican Americans, this generation actively sought the meaning of being American and its place in U.S. society.”  

As they pursued the American dream, many underwent a process of acculturation and/or Americanization. It is for this reason that the Mexican American Generation is often identified as reformist and not revolutionary. This generation was made up primarily of middle and working-class members who were determined to improve the social conditions of their communities. For the most part, this generation used methods of accommodation/assimilation in their fight for social right. As the 1960s approached, however, individuals within the Mexican American communities began abandoning their American identity. Many ethnic-Mexicans found themselves battling with notions of self-identity. Some struggled in their attempts to reclaim their lost identities. It was this transition—the searching for one’s roots in *lo Mexicano* that came to dominate the beginnings of the Chicano Movement.  

It's important to remember that the term Chicano was not very popular prior to the 1960s, and not until the emergence of the Movement did it come to symbolize a specific ideology that emphasized Mexico’s indigenous past. The term represented a resurgence in cultural awareness. It allowed Chicanas/os to undergo a process of rediscovering their indigenous roots. Like their black and Anglo counterparts, Chicanas/os changed their physical appearances, political ideologies, and their levels of militancy. Their politics consisted of criticism of the dominant society for its long history of oppression and violence against their communities. Likewise, they became critical of the Mexican American Generation often accusing them of selling out.  

During the latter part of the 1960s, Chicanas/os were growing impatient with the pace of social change and began voicing their concerns. Their adoption of a new identity became an important influence on the rise of activism that defined the decade. What was once a derogatory term used to describe lower-class Mexicanos had now been adopted and transformed into a term that represented an act of self-assertion. It came to represent the community’s attempt to redefine itself. At the same time, however, many individuals of the Mexican American Generation disagreed with the rhetoric and ideologies espoused by Chicana/o activists. The concept of a Chicano Generation does not
equate the demise of the Mexican American Generation. Certainly, the ideologies of the earlier generation were still in existence during the 1960s. A consensus about the type of terminology used to describe the community was never achieved.\textsuperscript{86} Students favored the term Chicana/o while middle-class community members continued to think of themselves as Mexican Americans or as simply Americans.\textsuperscript{87} The 1960s and 1970s, then, witnessed an internal debate between those who identified as Mexican American and those who identified as Chicanas/os.\textsuperscript{88} Both sectors of the community disagreed over issues of culture, identity, methods of activism, and political ideologies.\textsuperscript{89}

During the 1970s and early 1980s, however, the popular term used by the ethnic-Mexican community was no longer Chicano, instead, the new term had become Hispanic.\textsuperscript{90} Major corporations and governmental agencies constructed this term as a political tool.\textsuperscript{91} Politicians created this label in hopes of replacing the Chicano term. Hispanic, in other words, was applied to the Chicana/o community to pacify it. Despite its origins and intentions, however, the term won acceptance within the ethnic-Mexican communities, especially among those who had disapproved of the militancy of the 1960s and who had rejected the term Chicano.\textsuperscript{92}

With the decline of the Chicano Movement and with the approaching politics of the Hispanic identity, or other regional identities like Tejano for Mexicans in Texas, the ethnic-Mexican community witnessed a return to more moderate forms of activism.\textsuperscript{93} Many Chicanas/os abandoned the beliefs, values, ideas, and symbols of the Movement and became immersed, instead, in the pursuit of a new lifestyle, that is, in the pursuit of material wealth.\textsuperscript{94} As a result, the levels of activism decreased. For example, students left many of the proactive organizations they belonged to and joined other organizational structures that resembled fraternities and other fraternal orders.\textsuperscript{95}

In many ways, the Mexican American Generation was responsible for laying the foundation for a new era of protest. The efforts of this generation influenced the politics of the 1960s Chicano Movement. What separated the two generations was that the latter one moved away from cultural pluralism and adopted, instead, a sense of returning to the pre-Columbian past.\textsuperscript{96} This new emphasis equaled a rejection of the American experience. Both generations, however, are more similar than they are different. Their similarities connect them, meaning,
that we cannot examine one without examining the other. The Mexican American and Chicano Generations are interrelated; one grew out of the other making them dependent of each other. “Both attempted . . . to confront and challenge the historically exploited positions of Mexicans in the United States [and although] neither . . . fully succeeded . . . each [generation], advanced the struggle.”

There is no consensus on label usage. Labels such as Mexican American, Spanish American, Hispanic, Hispano, Chicana/o, and Latina/o are the preferred labels among smaller percentages of the Spanish-speaking communities. For the moment, the label Chicana/o appears to be the favorite, especially among the academics and politicos. The current need within Mexican American and Chicano history is the need to re-examine the terms used to identify ethnic-Mexicans. The terminology currently used such as “accommodationist,” or “assimilationist” confines us to narrowly define the identities of ethnic-Mexicans. There is a flaw with the existing “us” versus “them” model used to distinguish the two generations. In some cases, the generational approach to understanding identity also poses problems. There is no one model that can clearly identify a generation; certainly, a combination of two or three can prove more useful. Until then, the historiography will remain inaccurate in that it will be confined within its own linguistic parameters.

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In the past, we had only anecdotal evidence about the positive influence of culturally relevant course work.

So perhaps a young woman from Chicago named Sandra Cisneros might be the first of her family to attend college, might be the first of her family to even imagine pursuing a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing at the Iowa Writers Workshop, in a state where Mexican Americans visited to pick groups not to write novels. She goes forth to write her book *House on Mango Street* which goes on to inspire thousands of readers.

Maybe later there were more stories like that. More stories about young Chicanas and Chicanos unsure of their place in the academic world who were bolstered by finally reading a story that reflected their family, their neighborhood. Perhaps they shared the books that touched them, maybe they told others how they were inspired even if they told only their family, maybe among friends.

Other times the stories are so potent. The alternate universe avoided is so raw that others must take note. Take, for example, the memoir *A Place to Stand* by Jimmy Santiago Baca which chronicles how the protagonist goes into jail illiterate, but through sheer will teaches himself how to read instead of completely breaking down in prison. He emerges on the path to become one of the leading poets of our day.

Both of those works are powerful in their own ways, but they are additionally moving for students who are inspired to continue studying in an educational system that on its best days simply ignores them and on its worst days tries to obliterate them.
Neither book is as well-known as it should be.

Both books were part of the K–12 Mexican American Studies Program at Tucson Unified School District (TUSD)—until the program was outlawed.

Before we had only ourselves as examples that culturally relevant novels, short stories collections, and poetry collections could change our lives, but the six years that the TUSD MAS Program existed delivered to us cold, hard proof.

In January of 2016 a study by the Stanford Graduate School of Education demonstrated that students who took a pilot Ethnic Studies Course were truant less and earned higher grades. They also increased the number of course credits they earned to graduate. The Cambium Audit, commissioned by officials who wanted to dismantle the TUSD MAS Program, verified a 98% graduation rate for students in the Mexican American Studies courses, who would otherwise be considered “at risk.”

The report titled “Missing the (Student Achievement) Forest for All the (Political) Trees: Empiricism and the Mexican American Studies Controversy in Tucson” conducted by The Center for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Arizona documented how the more MAS courses students took the higher their chances of graduating. Their performance increased in other courses and standardized tests. The project is referred to as the Cabrera report after Dr. Nolan Cabrera the lead author of the study. That research will prove pivotal in the court case and is referred to often during the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals Oral Arguments.

Why then, you may ask, would Arizona ban a course of study that was proven to help students excel in school and to graduate?

Why then, would high school students sue the state of Arizona to get the courses back?

Why then would professionals become Librotraficantes, or book traffickers, to defy that ban?

Why doesn’t every state of the union adopt Ethnic Studies if it works?

Will Ethnic Studies be banned nationwide?

Read these pages and you decide.
Chicano Studies can trace its origins back to the late 1960s and early 1970s as part of the Chicano Movement. It concerned itself with the study of Chicana/os, Latina/os, and Mexican Americans, drawing upon a variety of fields, including, but not limited to, history, law, political science, sociology, the arts, and critical theory. It is the result of the efforts of a group called the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF). This was a cohort of students that launched a strike at the University of Berkeley in 1969 which ultimately resulted in the establishment of the first Ethnic Studies department in the United States. The TWLF was composed of the Mexican American Student Confederation, the Asian American Student Organization, the Native American Student Union, as well as the African American Students Union. That same year San Francisco State University students established the second Ethnic Studies in the country following a strike there by the TWLF.

Central to Chicano Studies is something called the “Plan de Santa Barbara” which is generally considered to be the manifesto for implementing courses and curricula for Chicano Studies. Drafted in 1969 at the University of California, Santa Barbara, the Plan emphasized the need for education especially in higher education as well as community empowerment. For this reason, many Chicano Studies programs place great value on community involvement in addition to traditional forms of education and research.

At present and in many universities across the United States, Chicano Studies is linked with comparative ethnic studies and other Ethnic Studies fields such as Black Studies, Asian American Studies, Native American Studies, and now more recently Immigrant Studies and Queer Studies.

The goal of Chicano Studies is not to engage Latinos as a separate ethno-racial group in America, but to talk about them as a part of the...
larger American experience. Mexican Americans and other Latinos have always studied themselves but the major thrust for Chicano Studies came within the context of the civil rights struggle. During this period, Mexican Americans demanded that colleges and universities address the pedagogical needs of Mexican American students who the schools were failing.

The formation of the United Mexican American Students (UMAS) in California and the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) in Texas were major catalysts also in the development of Chicano Studies. The Blowouts, a massive student boycott to protest unfair conditions, also moved the development of Chicano Studies programs across the United States.

By the mid-1970s, Chicanas challenged the masculine domination of the field, making gender issues central to the concerns of the academic community. The National Association for Chicano Studies, the major professional organization for Chicana and Chicano Studies committed to preserving the core values of democratic participation, transparency, accountability, and faculty, student, and community engagement in Mexican American Studies in the United States, changed its name to The National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS), underscoring that Chicanas were equal partners in Chicana/o Studies.
And the need for Chicano and Chicana Studies have increased ever since. In 1970, there were about 9 million Latinos of which 5.5 million were of Mexican extraction. Today that number is around 45 million.

Some of the schools outside of California to establish Chicano Studies included the Center for Mexican-American Studies at the University of Texas in Austin; the Mexican-American Studies Program at the University of Texas in San Antonio; Chicana/o Studies at the University of Texas in El Paso; the Center for Mexican American Studies at the University of Houston; and the Center for Mexican American and Latino Studies at Houston Community College.

At first there were problems with Chicano Studies. Those included having a small number of faculty in colleges and universities to teach it. Or it was always under attack and criticized and accused of producing radicals; extremists. Chicano Studies was also often submerged under African-American Studies and never as its own independent and autonomous discipline. And lastly, many departments would refuse to give credits to the students who took classes offered in Chicano Studies or those classes were designated as electives. While this continues to be a problem on campuses across the nation, there have been major improvements.

More recently, however, the discipline has yet again come under attack by a conservative establishment who believe that Chicano Studies, and all the programs that fall within it, is dangerous and un-American and should, therefore, be banished. The belief is that these courses teach hate and resentment and encourage the overthrow of the government. Ground zero for this movement is Arizona which placed a ban on Ethnic Studies, although they only went after the Mexican American Studies Program and left other programs like African American Studies Program and left other programs like African American Studies un molested.

In 2010, the Governor of Arizona, Jan Brewer, signed House Bill 2281 which prohibited a school district or charter school from including in its curriculum courses that “promoted the overthrow of the United States Government,” “promoted resentment toward any race or class,” “advocated ethnic solidarity,” and courses “designed for a certain ethnicity.” Schools found to violate this bill would be liable to lose state funding as a public institution.

As a result, the Mexican-American studies program as taught by Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) came under scrutiny and was
found to be in violation of the law by Tom Horne, state superintendent at that time, even though an independent audit (paid for by the state of Arizona) was conducted, and found the program was not in breach of HB 2281. Nevertheless, with pressure from Superintendent Horne, District Superintendent John Huppenthal ordered the disbanding of the Mexican American Studies Program at TUSD. The state also ushered in a ban on several books they deemed dangerous and set a new precedent on censorship, freedom of speech, freedom of expression, and the right to a free and balanced education.

But from this ban came a wave of protest from Chicanos and non-Chicanos who unleashed several demonstrations. Among them was El Librotraficante, Tony Diaz, educator, and activist out of Houston, Texas, who launched and led a caravan of banned books to Arizona and “smuggled” them back in.

In the Lone Star State, the Texas State Board of Education voted several years back 11–3 to add elective courses to include “Special Topics” in Social Studies that included Mexican-, African-, Asian-, and Native American Studies. The school board for the Houston Independent School District (HISD), the largest school district in Texas, also voted to approve Mexican American Studies as an elective counting it towards graduation. In doing so, HISD joined other Texas school districts in approving the plan, as well as the Texas Association of School Administrators.

Statistics from the Texas Education Agency for 2012–2013 school year shows that Latinos comprise 51.3 percent of Texas public school students. Supporters of the Mexican-American Studies course pointed to these numbers to make their case that the state’s curriculum should be more reflective of its student body. Moreover, they argued that Chicana/o or Mexican American, and now more recently Latino Studies improves student retention and graduation rates from high school. And the benefits they say is that it also increases college entrance and then also improves student retention and graduation rates from those institutions as well.

While it is difficult to determine the future of this program, the reality is that the need and demand for it will continue to be there especially since the number of Chicanas/os and Latinos continue to grow exponentially.
QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

1. According to the essay, what were some key components of the “Mexican American Generation”? According to the essay, what were some key components of the “Chicano/a Generation”? Why were there disagreements from members of both generations?

2. Look up three more definitions of the term “Mexican American.” Write them down. Were they difficult to find? What are the differences between each? What seems to be the basic definition?

3. Some sources add a hyphen between the words, as in Mexican-American. Why do some sources use it, and why don’t others? Under which conditions might one be correct and not the other?

4. In the final paragraphs, the essay uses the term “Hispanic.” Look up three additional definitions for the term. How do they differ? How are they the same?

5. Why might folks who identify as Mexican American embrace the term Hispanic? Why might they take issue with the term? Why might some folks who identify as Chicano embrace the term Hispanic? Why might some take issue with the term?

The Librotraficante: Defying Arizona’s Anti-Ethnic Studies Law

In 2012, Arizona enforced a ban on Ethnic Studies by walking into classrooms at the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) and confiscating books by some of our most beloved authors. TUSD students reported the incidents via social media and told the world they wanted their books back. This caught the attention of members of the nonprofit literary organization Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say (NP), in Houston Texas.

The group began to investigate the issue and report on it during their weekly radio program Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say On the Air on 90.1 FM KPFT, a member of the Pacifica Network.

Founded in 1998 by writer, activist, and professor Tony Diaz, NP has a history of organizing major literary and cultural events in Houston through their monthly showcases; mega book fairs; and workshops for community members, teachers, and administrators. It turned out
that the Ethnic Studies ban was enforced on only one school district in the entire state of Arizona. The law targeted the K–12th Grade Mexican American Studies (MAS) Program at Tucson Unified School District, in place for six years, with a track record of increasing student achievement.

It turned out that in the course of that work, NP hosted or interviewed most of the authors in the MAS Program curriculum at TUSD—now outlawed in Arizona.

Five veteran members of Nuestra Palabra convened to defy Arizona’s prohibition. Having dedicated themselves to promote Latino literature and literacy the group members profoundly understood how damaging Arizona’s policy would be for Mexican American communities across the nation. This was especially true in light of the fact that Arizona’s anti-immigrant law SB1070, also known as the “Show Me Your Papers Law,” spread to other states. Arizona’s Anti-Ethnic Studies Law had to be kept in check.
Together, the five NP members possessed over fifty years of experience in community cultural organizing. In eight weeks they dreamed up, planned, and conducted the 2012 Librotraficante Caravan to smuggle back into Arizona the books banned in Tucson.

The six-city caravan received over $20,000 in book donations to create four underground libraries across the Southwest and to call attention to Arizona’s Anti-Intellectual law. This kicked off a national movement that has kept Arizona’s Ethnic Studies Ban in check and spread Ethnic Studies courses to other states.

The Librotraficantes remain champions of Freedom of Speech, Intellectual Freedom, and Performance Protests, opposing polices that would suppress Ethnic Studies, and championing the implementation of Mexican American Studies.


**Librotraficante Founders**

**Tony Diaz, El Librotraficante**

Diaz founded Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say on April 22, 1998, in the party hall of Chapultepec Restaurant, in Houston, Texas. He is a writer, activist, and professor. Diaz is the first Chicano to receive a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from the University of
Houston Creative Program. Diaz’s novel *The Aztec Love God* was called “relentlessly brilliant.”

His non-fiction work ranges from powerful oration to provocative prose. His essays have appeared in *The Houston Chronicle, The Texas Observer, The Los Angeles Times, The Huffington Post Latino Voices*, among other publications. His awards include The 2016 Hispanic Heritage Award from The Mexican–American School Board Members Association (MASBA); 2014 Best Latino Activist Using Tech Innovation and Social Media from #LATISM; the 2012 Mexican American Bar Association of Texas Foundation Service Award; Banned Books Hero 2012; the 2012 Robert B. Downs Intellectual Freedom Award; the 2009 Elvira Cordero Cisneros Award given by Sandra Cisneros’ Macondo Foundation, among others. He lives in Houston, Texas, where he co-hosts the weekly radio program Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say On The Air on 90.1 FM KPFT, and he is a political analyst on Fox 26 Houston.

**Liana Lopez**

Lopez is a member of Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say since 2002, aka Librotraficante Lilo, is a multi-platform communications professional with experience developing, managing, coordinating, and producing successful media events from online projects to convention exhibitions.

She produces and co-hosts *Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say* on 90.1 FM and www.KPFT.org (Pacifica Radio) in Houston, Texas. The weekly broadcast highlights local, national, and international authors, playwrights, composers, politicos, activists, and artists.

As an independent writer, reporter, and photographer, her work has been published in the *Houston Press* and *Phoenix New Times* (Village...
Voice Media), 29-95.com (Houston Chronicle), San Antonio Current, Democracy Now!, YES! Magazine, Truthout, Free Speech Radio News, Ms. Magazine, and various other publications. She is a recipient of a Houston Arts Alliance Emerging Artist Grant for a multimedia/photography project based on her travels through post-revolutionary Nicaragua. She has curated and exhibited her work, and the works of other artists, in Houston Artz (2011), Roots of Rebellion (2010), Houston Vanguard (2010) that was also part of the bi-annual Fotofest International exhibition in 2010, Shooting Apartheid (2013). Her most recent photography exhibition showcased South Africa’s “post-democracy” era and was commissioned by the Art Institute of Houston. www.LianaLisa.com

**Lupe Mendez**

Mendez is a member of Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say since 1999 (aka Librotraficanete Lips Mendez), is a Poet/Educator/Activist, CantoMundo Fellow, a Macondo Fellow. He works with Nuestra Palabra to promote poetry events, advocate for literacy/literature, and organize creative writing workshops that are open to the public. He is the founder of Tintero Projects and works with emerging Latinx writers within the Texas Gulf Coast Region, with Houston as its hub. His publishing credits include prose work in Houston Free Press, The Kenyon Review, Norton’s Sudden Fiction Latino: Short Short Stories from the United States and Latin America, and poetry that appears in Huizache, Luna Luna, Ostrich, Revista Síncope, Pilgramage, Border Senses, The Los Angeles Review of Books’ newest channel, Voluble, and Gulf Coast Literary Journal. He earned a Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from the University of Texas @ El Paso, December 2015.
Parras is a member of Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say since 2001 (aka Librotraficante HighTechAztec), is a Houston filmmaker and photographer who specializes in documentation of environmental and social justice movement stories throughout the South and Southwest. He was awarded a Gulf Coast Fellowship for Community Transformation (2008–2010) for his video work and media workshops with grassroots organizations and advocates.

Parras also served as a Managing Advisor for the Gulf Coast Fund and recently worked as the Lead Field Coordinator for an NIEHS research project (GC-HARMS) looking into the impacts of the BP drilling disaster. He is co-founder of t.e.j.a.s. (Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services) and works actively as a regional correspondent and advisor with Bridge the Gulf Project.

In collaboration with Mothers for Clean Air/Houston, he co-directed and edited a youth-driven video-voice project about air quality in east Houston entitled, “Wish You Were Here: Stories from the
East Side” (2007). Parras holds a B.S. in psychology and philosophy from the University of Texas at Austin. He co-produces a weekly radio program—Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say—for Pacifica Network station, KPFT (90.1 FM) and is a trained facilitator of Agusto Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed techniques.

**Laura Torres**

Torres is a member of Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say since 1999 (aka Librotraficante La Laura), is an educational professional with strategic leadership experience in program development, management, curriculum design, career and technical advising in secondary education and public schools. She has experience in program evaluation, enrollment data, hiring credentialed instructors, and capacity building strategies. She also possesses a strong ability to forge alliances and build constituencies with business and industry, school districts, local colleges, and community organizations.

She has served as part of the Nuestra Palabra Educator Outreach team for the Edward James Olmos Latino Book and Family Festival. She is a fifteen-year volunteer for the National Hispanic Institute and is currently a Board Trustee. She is Past President of Communities in Schools-Baytown. In addition, she has volunteered for the Hispanic Educational Access Committee at Lee College, as well as serves as a Puente Mentor. She has been recognized by various organizations for her work: 2013 MANA Outstanding Houston Area Educator, 2009 Baytown Sun’s- Unsung Hero, 2008 National Hispanic Institute Distinguished Alumnus, 2005 Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Greater Baytown Educational Advocate of the Year, 2005 Texas Association of Mexican American Chamber of Commerce—Rules of Engagement, “60 People Who Will Make a Difference,” and 2000 Educator of the Year—Nuestra Palabra.
**The Caravanistas**

This is a list of the caravanistas who rode on the 2012 Librotraficante Caravan to Tucson. The map of the six-city caravan is available at www.Librotraficante.com

Tony Diaz “El Librotraficante”
Liana Lopez Librotraficante “LiLo”
Lupe Mendez Librotraficante “Lips”
Bryan Parras Librotraficante “HighTechAztec”
Laura Razo Librotraficante “La Laura”
Augustin Laredo Librotraficante “El Guti Q”
Cecilia Balli, embedded journalist for *Texas Monthly*
Megan Feldman embedded journalist for *The Daily Beast*
Belinda Acosta Librotraficante “la prensa,” embedded journalist for *The Texas Observer*

Gloria Rubac Librotraficante “La Gloria”
Brandon McGaughey Librotraficante “High-Tech Hybrid”
Jacob Shafer Librotraficante “Sound”
Diana Lopez Librotraficante “DLO”
Dennis Castillo Librotraficante “Youngblood”
Delia Perez Meyer Librotraficante “La Hashbrown”
Adam Efren Lopez Librotraficante “Pancho Flopez”
Susie Moreno Librotraficante “La Mom”
Harbeer Singh Khabardaar Librotraficante “Indio”
Joceyln Viera Librotraficante “yolibrotraficante”
Zelene Suchil Pineda Librotraficante “Rebelené”
Tony Garcia Librotraficante “Crusher”
Ruben Castilla Herrera Librotraficante “Buddha-zas”
Blas Espinosa Librotraficante “Blaze”
Victoria Corona Librotraficante “Hasta la Victoria”
Paolo Mossetti Librotraficante “El Italiano”
Gabriel Carmona Librotraficante “El Commandante”
Branden Selman Librotraficante “Pelo-Chin”
Librotraficante “Mustang”

Compiled by: Claire M Massey MA–Librotraficante Britana Chicana, a doctoral candidate ABD at Saarland University, Germany.
The history of the Chicano Movement is the history of dynamic civil, political and cultural resistance to oppression, and the seeking of societal change through collective empowerment and community action. The writings and histories of those who were the young of the Movement in the 1960s and 70s, who are the elders now, has provided frameworks and templates of resistance for new generations of Chicana/o activists. In school classrooms in Arizona these revolutionary blueprints were utilized in a groundbreaking Mexican American Studies (MAS) program that saw graduation rates in Tucson soar from the program’s implementation in the late 1990s, to its dismantling in 2012.1 The program was brought to an end when it was ruled to have contravened state law, HB2281, and it was in response to this attack upon Mexican American studies that in Houston, Texas, the Librotraficanente Movement was born. In the words of Tony Diaz, El Librotraficanente: “I didn’t ask to be a Librotraficanente. Arizona legislators made me one when they dared to make our history contraband” (Diaz, “Maida Asofsky”).

In the spring of 2006, Dolores Huerta was asked to address the students of Tucson Magnet High School in Arizona. The students, a majority of Latinas/os, had been participating in walkouts protesting the congressional implementation of the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act, a legislation viewed as vehemently anti-immigrant. Huerta had been invited to suggest alternative methods of protest, which she did by proposing to the students a postcard campaign to the Senate Republican National Committee, on the theme, “Republicans Hate Latinos.”2 Huerta’s choice of wording was to become the catalyst for far-reaching changes to the face of education in Tucson. Upon being made aware of Huerta’s protest motif, Tom Horne, Tea Partier, and the then Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction, began what I call a “cultural silencing.” Horne initiated a campaign of attrition against the Tucson

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Unified School District’s (TUSD) Ethnic Studies program, warning that the MAS program in particular, had been infiltrated by “a small group of radical teachers, anti-capitalists, anti-Western civilization, anti-free enterprise, teaching the kids that boundaries are artificial” (Herrares). Citing anti-Americanism and sedition, Horne and a group of Republican legislatures designed a bill to bring an end to MAS. In May 2010, HB 2281 was signed into state law.3

Ethnic Studies in Tucson had been initiated in the 1990s by local grassroots efforts to help reverse negative educational and socioeconomic trends within Latina/o communities. The curriculum had questioned prevailing national identity discourse, countering Anglo majoritarian myths of the founding and functioning of America, and of what it means to be an American. The program’s bibliography included the writings of the canon of Chicana/o, African American, and Native American literature (see Appendix). In January 2012, despite two years of legal and community resistance, Tucson’s local school board, faced with the prospect of losing state funding, ordered the program’s books removed from all classrooms, with teachers in the affected schools advised, in the planning of future curricula, to stay away from any books where “race, ethnicity and oppression are central themes” (Biggers 182). In the words of Bryan Parras, one of the five founding members of the Librotraficante movement: “And so that says something about this program, right? It says something about what the power of these books really can do. And yes, [the authorities] are scared; they are scared of folks reading these books, because they empower you” (NacFilm Theory).

The Librotraficante Movement grew from a literature and literacy group, “Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say,” founded in 1998 in Houston by writer, educator, and activist, Tony Diaz.4 Through workshops, showcases, and book festivals, Nuestra Palabra re/claimed space for the stories of a myriad Latina/o communities in the Houston area and beyond. Chicana cultural theorist Tara J. Yosso argues such counterstorytelling, “strengthen(s) traditions of social, political, and cultural survival and resistance, nullifying the majoritarian narrative of reality” (10). For Diaz, raised in Chicago, the son of migrant workers, the power of traditions comes as no surprise: “[W]e knew we were rich in cultural capital, in passion, creativity, and we work hard—crazy hard. These are all characteristics that have helped our community survive” (“Los Librotraficantes”).
The term “Librotrafican tes,” translated into English as “book smugglers”; reflects the prevailing discourse of illegality in the United States, as Chicano/a and Latino/a communities continue to be intrinsically tied to rhetorical borders, negative narratives on immigration, and to the movement of alleged “illegal aliens.” Although the phrase “illegal alien” is slowly being removed from print, with the Associated Press stylebook no longer sanctioning its use, it remains tattooed to a national narrative—a narrative transmitted through media with distorted racialized assumptions of Latinas/os, reflecting and legitimizing what Foucault terms as a society’s “regime of truth” (131), “truth” being understood here as the “commonsense” of Eurocentric majoritarian myths of American identity and belonging. In naming themselves “traffickers,” the Librotrafican tes usurp this marker of foreignness, and in doing so shatter what Chicano theorist, Juan Bruce Novoa sees as, “dark, grotesque mirrors. . . . images offered by the Other as indexes of value” (Bruce Novoa 98).

On March 12, 2012, the Librotrafican tes headed west in a caravan, a travelling collective of many of the individuals who had worked with and supported Nuestra Palabra over its then thirteen-year history. Each of the book-smugglers was given a name, created by Lupe Mendez and sanctioned by the other four movement founders. This naming played into the performativity of the caravan, into the subversion of the majoritarian discourse marking Latina/o il/legality, for “[i]n the face of decades of pejorative labeling, this naming, this re-coding, was a necessary emotional act” (Massey 65). The names were to be given to the authorities if these “traffickers,” these “cultural coyotes,” were caught: Tony Diaz El Librotraficante, Liana Lopez Librotraficante LiLo, Bryan Parras, Librotraficante High Tech Aztec, Laura Acosta La Laura, Lupe Mendez Librotraficante Lips. This naming ritual can also be interpreted as a symbolic recognition of all the schoolchildren whose Spanish names had been anglicized in the Americanization programs of the early twentieth century.

As the caravan travelled across Texas, New Mexico, and west to Arizona to return the books of the censored bibliography to the students of the MAS program, the caravanistas re/connected with Chicana/o heritage in the contested borderlands of the Southwest, seeking out and being sustained by communities on the frontline of neoliberal attempts at their social, political, educational, and cultural immobilization. The
Librotraficantes in alliance with local community activists, founded “underground libraries,” planting the banned bibliography in Houston, San Antonio and El Paso, Texas; in Phoenix and Albuquerque, Arizona; and post-caravan, the libraries spread further afield, opening in Louisville, Kentucky, and in New York City. It can be argued that by banning the bibliography the Arizona legislature effectively created clandestine literature, through its actions “publishing” the very materials it sought to remove. However, these fresh-off-the-press heterodox publications had already been established as the very canon of the prohibited. Two works of award-winning writer, poet, and filmmaker Sherman Alexie were on the Tucson reading list: *Ten Little Indians* and *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fist Fight in Heaven*. In an opinion piece for *The Huffington Post*, Alexie declared himself

“...strangely pleased that the folks of Arizona have officially announced their fear of an educated underclass. You give those brown kids some books about brown folks and what happens? Those brown kids change the world. In the effort to vanish our books, ... Arizona has actually given them enormous power. Arizona has made our books sacred documents now.”

The term “caravan” is derived from the Persian, *karwān*, denoting a company of merchants or pilgrims traveling together for trade and safety. The Librotraficante *karwān* followed in a Chicana/o tradition of the free-will movements of the collective: Chávez and the farmworkers forming a human caravan from Delano to Sacramento; “Corky” Gonzales leading a caravan from Colorado to The Poor People’s Campaign in Washington, DC; the National Chicano Moratorium march, and the student walkouts in 1968. These histories of resistance guided the journey of the book smugglers’ movement, for as critic Chela Sandoval argues: “Those not destroyed [...] develop modes of perceiving, making sense of, and acting upon reality that are the basis for effective forms of oppositional consciousness in the postmodern world” (Sandoval 34–5). For the Librotraficantes what was “not destroyed” was the lingering of familial and community historical trauma and cultural memory, enabling then “a mapping of the borderlands through perceptive understandings of the mechanisms of state, social, and economic repression,
a historical understanding contained in Tucson's banned bibliography smuggled by the caravanistas back to Arizona” (Massey 66).

It is a “historical understanding” that frames what the Librotraficantes term, “Quantum Demographics.” This operational tactic seeks the breaking of epistemological borders, through “[u]nderstanding your own culture so profoundly that you are fulfilled enough, wise enough, and knowledgeable enough to seek out bridges to cultures that may seem far removed from your own” (Diaz, “Quantum Demographics”). The Librotraficante Movements call for Quantum Demographics acknowledges, as sociologist Manuel Castells asserts, that “a movement develops not only in relationship to its own society, but also in relationship to a world-wide social system” (Castells xviii). This framework creates space for the Librotraficantes to reveal relationships of multi-ethnic and labor solidarity often neglected in the telling of the Civil Rights Movement; to counter media representations of twenty-first century social protest against nativism, anti-immigration, and police brutality; “to build bridges unpalatable to neoliberal right-wing politicking but which provide passage for a myriad of American voices” (Massey 67).

As César Chávez and Dolores Huerta in the past joined forces with the Delano Manongs to form the United Farmworkers Union, so the Librotraficante Movement seeks to create a dynamic resistance framework that acknowledges the power of the cross-cultural collective, through not only the recognition of commonalities and the celebration of difference, but also through an open dialog with one’s own culture. This framework also seeks to acknowledge that it is time for alternative strategies for the disenfranchised: “One generation had Affirmative Action, another generation had Multiculturalism. We have Quantum Demographics” (Diaz).

In January 2013, the Librotraficante Movement received the Robert B. Downs intellectual Freedom Award from the I School of the University of Illinois. The award is “given annually to acknowledge individuals or groups who have furthered the cause of intellectual freedom, particularly as it affects libraries and information centers and the dissemination of ideas” (U of Illinois). That same year the Librotraficantes protested in Austin against HB 1938 and SB 1128, two education bills which if implemented would have disqualified Ethnic and Women’s Studies programs at state universities from eligibility as core history requirements for
graduation. In 2014, the Librotrafícante Movement joined a statewide coalition supporting Texas State Board of Education (TxSBOE) member Ruben Cortez’s (D-Brownsville) proposition calling for a Mexican American History elective in the state’s schools. With the 2014 Texas Education Agency schools report showing a student demographic of over fifty percent Hispanic, the drive to represent those students was never stronger. Cortez’s proposition was only partially successful, with the majority Anglo Republican board voting only to allow local school districts to choose whether or not to implement Mexican American history classes into their curriculum. The board did, however, request that publishers submit proposed course textbooks by 2016. TxSBOE ruling opened the door to the production of materials and curriculum that would be more fully representative of the student body. However, with Texas the nation’s biggest market for textbooks, and with schools required to purchase only books pre-approved by the board, the drive to introduce critically conscious pedagogy would require further determined pedagogical and grassroots organizing. Across the state teaching workshops were implemented to guide educators on how to introduce and to develop Mexican American Studies (MAS) in their classroom with scholars, academics, and educators compiling and shared resources and instructional material. It was not only MAS educators however who sought to fill an educational gap. In 2016, the Librotrafícantes, again as part of a coalition of Chicana/o and Latina/o academics, civil liberties and community organizations, took part in a statewide campaign which successfully prevented the implementation in Texas schools of Mexican American Heritage, a social studies textbook, “fraught with errors” (Zamora). The volume, produced by a small press in Virginia, contains multiple fractious narratives critically whitewashing Mexican American history; one part of the text reads, “Chicanos adopted a revolutionary narrative and wanted to destroy this society,” another argues that Chicana/o claims to land and heritage were based on “cultural and political solidarity, not legal or historical grounds” (Angle and Riddle 415).

In 2014 Tony Diaz argued, “Texas is the center of the universe for what will become a multicultural, multimedia era. And within that attention I know that Texas would set the course for what publishers do, and that would dictate what books are published throughout the...
nation . . . Without a doubt we set the market” (Houston Matters). With an anti-immigration Trump presidency rolling back civil rights, and a Texas governor vowing to cut funding to any state universities or cities that offer sanctuary to the undocumented,\(^{11}\) that “market” may prove to be another assault on Ethnic Studies. However, through community engagement and the development of new critical practice, Librotraficante activism offers a creative antidote to toxic politicking. As right-wing legislatures seek to engrain Anglo majoritarian power in the restoration of outdated and inequitable legislature, it can be argued that Houston’s critical “cultural emergency response team” has never been more ready.

**ENDNOTES**


2. For the full audio go to: http://quill.tusd.k12.az.us/doloreshuertaadress.


10. See: http://masfortexas.org/resources.

WORKS CITED

Voices: The American Dream
Through Our Books

Tony Diaz

People often ask me why I’m so passionate about books and education. I am usually shocked that more people aren’t.

I have to keep in mind that not everyone has had their life changed through education, and not everyone has had to fight tooth and nail for it.

In my case, books have made the American Dream a reality.

My parents were migrant workers. I’m the first of my family to not only go to college but to attend graduate school. In one generation—through books and education—my family has gone from the farm fields to the national stage, where I have had the honor of representing my community and advocating for Latino literature and history in our classrooms.

I have a gift for language. I get it from my mom. She never went to school, but she taught herself how to read. She would keep all of our family spellbound when she told stories about her life in Mexico or in the fields, or about the misadventures of family members navigating their new life in Chicago.

I knew language was powerful, because as early as third grade I was translating English into Spanish for my father. I remember salesmen looking down at him, judging him because he needed me to understand. That’s when I learned. I would remind a clerk that he didn’t speak Spanish, so he too needed me to make a sale.

Language helped me protect my family. Language helped me defend myself. Maybe that’s why I always wanted to be a writer.

My first poem was published in sixth grade, over the lunch hot menu touting “Sloppy Joe Burgers” at St. David’s Catholic School on the south side of Chicago. Overnight, teachers who had ignored me knew my name and would walk up to me to talk about my writing. Same me, same school, different universe, all from one poem.

From NBC Latino by Tony Diaz. Copyright © 2017 by Tony Diaz. Reprinted by permission.
You would think that with this love and fascination for reading and writing I would have been reveling in books by and about Mexican Americans. The truth is I was never exposed to them.

I didn’t read a novel written by a Latino until I was a junior at De Paul University, taking a Creative Writing Course with Professor Ted Anton, a graduate of the University of Iowa’s Writers Workshop. He would ask me why I didn’t write about my family, my story. I remember wondering if that was even allowed since I had never seen that in a book.

Professor Anton handed me *Down These Mean Streets* by Piri Tomas. That was the first book I read that switched back and forth from English to Spanish, to Spanglish to slang, then back, in a fast, furious, and poetic pace. It was set in the rough urban sprawl of New York that looked and smelled like the South Side of Chicago. It was packed with crazy confrontations and barriers. If we can just survive the weekend, the book showed, we can get to school on Monday to keep fighting.

Books are dangerous—and crucially important. They make us dream big and believe we can deliver.

It worked for me. In 1994 I became the first Chicano to earn a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing at the University of Houston’s Creative Writing Program. It was there I first met in person and chilled with a real-life Chicano author, Dagoberto Gilb, when he had become the first Chicano to win the Pen/Faulkner prize as well as a ton of other awards that year.

In 1998 my first novel *The Aztec Love God* was published. That same year I founded the group Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say (NP), to promote Latino literature and foster literacy. NP would go on to host the release of Dagoberto’s book *Woodcuts of Women*.

But years later, in January of 2012, that book, along with Dagoberto’s book *Magic of Blood*, were among the eighty-four works confiscated from classrooms in Tucson, Ariz., after Mexican American Studies had been prohibited in that state.

That’s when I and other members of Nuestra Palabra first became Librotraficantes or book smugglers. During our March 2012 Librotraficante Caravan we took banned books back into Arizona.

This last week I was part of a statewide coalition that advocated for the Texas State Board of Education to implement a Mexican American studies elective to get more books into the hands of our youth. There
were many who shared stories about what our literature and history has meant to them, and how it has changed their lives.

And the first person to testify was—you guessed it—Dagoberto Gilb.

We went to Austin looking to implement Mexican American Studies (M.A.S.). We came back with the Texas Plan that allows us to control the content of our courses, yet still have the courses recognized and advertised as electives by the state. It also allows us to get the textbooks needed for not just Mexican American Studies, but also African American, Asian, and Native American Studies.

I see this event in Texas as part of a journey, a direct route from our underground libraries in community centers to the upper echelons of the textbook publishing world, with hundreds of stops in classrooms along the way.

Why am I so passionate about education and books? Art changed my life. I believe that through broader imaginations, we can update the American Dream for everyone.

Questions for Further Discussion

1. Are books important? Are books about and/or by Mexican Americans important? Why?
2. Earlier you took the Cultural Quiz. How many authors were you able to name? How might this essay shed light on why more authors are not household names?
3. The author, Tony Diaz, self identifies as Chicano. How is this essay a “Chicano” essay? How is this essay a “Latino” essay? How is this essay an “American” Essay? How is this essay a “Human” essay?
4. Name a book that influenced you. Write 250–400 words (or more) on why you remember the book.
5. This essay is a personal narrative about a moment in the life of Tony Diaz. What is a key moment in your life that you remember? Write 250–400 words (or more) about it.

The essay by Tony Diaz provide anecdotal evidence about the power of culturally relevant material and courses, such as this.
What follows is an essay about scientific research that now backs up this assertion.

The Librotraficante Caravan: A Multimedia Showcase

The Librotraficantés grew out of the literary non-profit Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say (NP), founded in 1998 in Houston, Texas, by writer, activist, and professor Tony Diaz.

NP’s mission is to promote Latino literature and literacy. The group started with a monthly reading series that featured nationally published authors and local writers. The group grew by leaps and bounds adding in 2001 a weekly radio program on 90.1 FM KPFT, and in 2002 organizing the largest book fair in Texas, at the time, the Houston Latino Book and Family Festival at the George R. Brown Convention Center attracting over 15,000 people that year, and 30,000 at its peak. This also created a base to attract writers, thinkers, activists, and volunteers.

All these facets would come into play when, in 2012, Arizona enforced a ban on Mexican American studies at Tucson Unified School District, and walked into classrooms, during class time and began boxing up books by our most beloved authors in front of our youth, during class time.

In response to this, Tony Diaz and four other members of Nuestra Palabra: Liana Lopez, Bryan Parras, Lupe Mendez, and Laura Acosta, organized the 2012 Librotraficante Caravan to smuggle the banned books back into Tucson, and the next phase of the NP Movement was launched.

Although NP grew out of traditional media-books, the organization was used to adapting to fit the needs of the Mexican American and Latino community through conventional and new methods. This skill proved useful during the advent of the social media era. Veteran members of NP first found out about the ban in Arizona through social media and online sources as the issue was not making much national news. Students in Tucson had been letting the world know about their plight.
The Librotraficantes were first able to respond via social media, which then made mainstream news. They were able to use the resources they had developed as NP to organize and conduct a six-city bus caravan, gather over $20,000 in banned book donation, start four Underground Libraries across the Southwest, and take the banned books back into Tucson and hand them to students and families.

The Librotraficantes joined a national grass roots movement to not only stop the spread of Un-American laws attacking Freedom of Speech, Intellectual Freedom, and stifling Ethnic Studies, but the group returned to Texas to fight for Mexican American Studies courses in their own state to ensure that every student had access to the American Dream through education.

This is a social media exploration of the Librotraficantes.

**The Daily Show: Ethnic Studies**

Tucson’s Mexican-American Studies Ban

April 2, 2012—Mohamed Nasheed 04/02/2012

Al Madrigal travels to Arizona, where the powerful evidence of hearsay convinced the Tucson school board to ban Mexican-American studies programs. (5:26)


**QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

1. Although the video is humorous, what are some of the serious issues discussed?
2. Why does the Tucson Unified School District School Board defend the dismantling of the MAS program?
3. What can a humorous view accomplish that a more serious view might not be able to accomplish?
4. If you were called to testify before the TUSD school board, what would you say? Why?
**The Launch of the Librotraficantes**

The YouTube video is titled “Wet Books: Smuggling Banned Literature Back Into Arizona”

https://youtu.be/l-n3tvPz5ak

**QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

1. Although the video is humorous, what are some of the serious issues discussed?
2. What are some play on words that are important to the message of the video?
3. Why does Tony “El Librotraficante” dress the way he does? Why does he sound the way he does?
4. What can a humorous view accomplish that a more serious view might not be able to accomplish?
5. What do you think the Librotraficantes hope to accomplish? Why is that important?
6. What other actions can you imagine to help the Librotraficantes?

**Videos from Performances during the Librotraficante Caravan**

**LIBROTRAFFICANTE CARAVAN: Carmen Tafolla**
Published on Mar 14, 2012

Carmen Tafolla speaks at the Librotraficante Caravan Press Conference in front of the Alamo.

https://youtu.be/9Prms0m-s8M

**Los Librotraficantes: On the Road: Lorna Dee Cervantes**

**LIBROTRAFFICANTE CARAVAN: Lorna Dee Cervantes**

https://youtu.be/PLE7YDaInXk
Sandra Cisneros reads at the Librotraficante Caravan Banned Book Bash in San Antonio

https://youtu.be/vJWsHoAb57g

**QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

1. Which writer speaks to you the most? Why?
2. Each of the writers has a different style. How is each performance different? What do they have in common?
3. The writers relate experiences from their past. How are those issues relevant?
4. Each of the authors is banned in Arizona. Why do you think that is the case?

We have studied court cases from the past. Here are the oral arguments from the court case against the ban of Ethnic Studies in Arizona. This is unique because we have the opportunity to watch a historical precedent in the making, as we study legal precedents in the past. Even if you are not a lawyer, there are some statements and points that will capture your attention. Write down at least three for discussion.


This is a video of the actual oral argument heard by the judges of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and their questions for lawyers on both sides of the issue. Although some students may think that the material consists of only difficult to follow legal terms, the judges’ questions and the lawyers’ responses are easy to follow. Although some technical aspects of the law are addressed, the discussion consists of clear reasoning and eye-opening evidence that students will find intriguing.
QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

1. Which three statements from the oral arguments caught your attention? Why?
2. If you were a judge ruling in the evidence, would you strike down the ban or uphold it? List precise evidence that persuaded you one way or the other.
3. What evidence would you add if you were the lawyer for Maya Arce? What evidence would you add if you were the lawyer for Arizona?
4. After hearing these oral arguments, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled to have the Arizona Supreme Court re-try the case adding evidence that was omitted the first time. How do you think the Arizona Supreme Court will rule? Why?
5. How might this case impact you even if you do not live in Arizona?
The Future of Immigration Is the Past

In *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America* journalist Juan Gonzalez directly links various waves of migration from south of the United States border to the specific U.S. foreign policies that led to them. The main point of his book is represented by the metaphor of the “Harvest” in the title. The book argues that the waves of migration to the U.S. are the product of what the U.S. has sown in Mexico, Latin, and South America. To put it in a more common expression, “the chickens have come home to roost.”

This would come as a surprise to Americans. The book provides a fascinating context for digesting current views about immigration. Current arguments and debates about immigration trigger emotions on both sides of the issue; however, this book and other research point out historical factors that have been in place way before the 2016 presidential campaign—where immigration issues took center stage.
The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is one example. Republicans and Democrats have both taken sides on the issue. That has made the news. What has not made news is the fact that so many people in both Mexico and the U.S. are opposed to it.

Chapter 13 of the book is titled “Free Trade: The Final Conquest of Latin America.” Juan Gonzalez places NAFTA as part of a four-stage process that began in 1947 with Panama and Puerto Rico, then Mexico’s border industrialization program in 1965, then the Caribbean Basin Initiative in 1985. He cites the passing of NAFTA in 1994 as the fourth stage of off-shore production meant to benefit massive corporations not individual citizens.

In other words, large corporations can function across international borders to increase their profits while workers are left to deal with lower wages and a crumbling standard of living.

This would be shocking to most folks in any diner arguing about politics.

Maquiladoras, huge factories in industrial parks, just across the border are an example of this. Gonzalez writes of the original plan in the late sixties and early seventies where “twin” maquiladoras would exist across each other from the border, producing in tandem, reducing immigration because jobs would be created on both sides of the border.

Things did not quite turn out that way. He says they became “... a way for the corporations to evade U.S. labor and environmental laws while manufacturing hundreds of yards from our own country.”

Even before NAFTA, the U.S. and Mexico collaborated to create the Bracero Program to satisfy the nation’s need for labor during World War II. This program permitted workers from Mexico to work on farms in the U.S. on the condition that they complete the proper paperwork then return to their native country.

Conditions for the bracers became deplorable. The experience is chronicled in photos in the book titled *Uprooted: Braceros in the Hermano Mayo Lens* edited by John Mráz and Jaime Vélez Storey. Some workers were doused with kerosene because it was believed they were unsanitary and carried lice. The era is dramatized in the book *Rain of*
Gold by Victor Villasenor, who gives an account of life on the border as men waited for a chance to work as a bracero or once they got tired of waiting, crossed clandestinely in the U.S. to find willing farmers desperate for help to pick their crops.

This thread is touched on by Cecilia Balli, in her essay, “Ciudad de la Muerte.” She writes,

“In 1964 the United States terminated the Bracero guest-worker program with Mexico and deported many of its laborers, dumping thousands of men along the Mexican side of the border. In an effort to reemploy them, the Mexican government launched the Border Industrialization Program, which prodded American manufacturers to assemble their products in northern Mexico using cheap labor. The plan succeeded, but its main beneficiaries turned out to be women, who, it was determined, would make better workers for the new factories, or maquiladoras, because of their presumed superior manual dexterity.”

Balli’s essay does not focus on the list of dates of foreign policies brokered by nations. Instead, her piece, “Ciudad de la Muerte,” addresses the way maquiladoras have ravaged life along the border and have created an environment that is dangerous on many levels. This not a typical account about transnational migration. This is a very powerful essay that investigates the details of the murders of the women of Juarez. The author uses very vivid, even graphic, language to tell the story.

That is followed by the essay “Danos un Corazón Fuerte Para Luchar (Give Us a Strong Heart to Continue the Struggle): Living Undocumented” by Rhonda Ríos Kravitz, Marisela Hernandez, Ernesto Gutiérrez Topete, Violeta Urizar, and Oscar Srabia which focuses on current issues regarding citizenship status and the plight of “Dreamers” in the U.S.

Both essays focus on providing insights into the full impact of immigration in communities on both sides of the U.S./Mexico border.
Ciudad de la Muerte

Cecilia Balli

This essay first appeared in June 2003.

TEN YEARS OF MURDER. THREE HUNDRED WOMEN AND YOUNG GIRLS DEAD. NO CREDIBLE ARRESTS. WHAT UNKNOWN EVIL STALKS THE STREETS OF JUÁREZ? I ALMOST FOUND OUT FOR MYSELF.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS to a human body in the desert? If it’s fresh, the intestines eat themselves out. The body swells, the lungs ooze fluids through the nostrils and mouth, and the decaying organs let out a cocktail of nauseating gases. Sometimes, scavengers leave their mark: a gnawed leg, a missing shoulder. Eventually, all that is left is a pile of white bones. But there is a cruel trick the dry weather will sometimes play on a corpse. It will dehydrate the skin before the bacteria can get to it, producing a mummy—a blackened girl with skin dry as cardboard, baring her teeth like a frightened animal.

IN FEBRUARY 1996 A SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD girl named María Guadalupe del Río Vázquez went shopping in downtown Ciudad Juárez and vanished into thin air. Days later, her body was found in the desolate mountains of the Chihuahuan Desert—raped, strangled, her left breast mutilated. As girls continued to disappear, residents of the city formed bands and scoured the mountains for more bodies. The state police picked up the corpses—seventeen in all, an epidemic of murder—and quickly scurried away, leaving behind clothing, locks of hair, shoes curled like orange peels. The girls’ hands were bound with their own shoelaces. All of the victims resembled each other: pretty, slim, medium to dark skin, long, straight dark hair. In a country that privileges men, whiteness, and wealth, these victims were female, brown, and poor. In a city that resents immigration and anything else from central and southern Mexico, these young women who had come to the northern border

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hoping to find work were social outcasts, strangers without names—especially now that they lay in silence in the sand, looking just like the ones before and the ones who would follow.

The deaths in the mountainous desert region known as Lomas de Poleo confirmed the worst fears of the women of Juárez: that something sinister had overcome their city. Beginning in 1993, there had been an unusual number of news reports in Juárez about the abduction and murder of women, an anomaly in Mexico. The grisly discoveries in the desert signaled that the worst crime wave in modern Mexican history had entered a new and more intense phase. Today, the toll of women who have been murdered in the past ten years is more than three hundred, staining the reputation of the country’s fourth-largest city worldwide. Some of the women were murdered by their husbands and boyfriends. Other killings seemed to be random acts of violence. Around a third of the victims, however, were teenage girls whose deaths appear to be connected to a cryptic and chilling kind of serial killing. This crime is indisputably solvable: Evidence has been scattered like bread crumbs all over the crime scenes, but the state authorities have jailed no one who truly seems responsible. Be it incompetence or a cover-up, the lack of credible prosecution in these cases is perhaps the most blatant—and certainly the most baffling—illustration of the nearly flawless record of impunity that characterizes the Mexican justice system.

Who would commit such crimes? Juárez brims with rumor and suspicion. A serial killer with government protection is an obvious possibility. The indifference of the authorities charged with investigating the murders has focused suspicion on themselves. Maybe it’s the Juárez police, some people say. They drive those white pickups with the campers, where they could easily hide a rotting body or a pile of bones, and they’re always prowling around the shantytown of Anapra, on the edge of the desert, peering out their windows. The Chihuahua state police zoom about in sleek, unmarked SUVs capable of navigating the rugged desert terrain. Recently, federal investigators speculated that fourteen of the killings might be linked to an organ-smuggling ring.

Or maybe it’s the drug dealers. The desert is, after all, their country, a frontier on the fringe of globalization. Between dips in the mountains, you glimpse El Paso to the north, its downtown towers gleaming like teeth. The Rio Grande cut through the mountains and created a valley that would in time birth the most densely populated border region in
the world. But in Lomas de Poleo, there is only the sand and the desert scrub and a sea of trash—empty jugs, shabby toys, broken toilets, an unwound cassette of English lessons, plastic bags clinging to the brush like confetti. A frail man picks his way through a dumpster. An occasional small truck rattles off into the distance. They say that at night, this becomes the realm of gang members and drug runners, an army of men hauling their illicit goods into the United States. Rumor has it that if you wander far enough into the disorienting maze of primitive roads that have been scratched out of the sand, you will come upon a crude runway and a marvelous ranch with a swimming pool. If anybody sees you there, you should say you got lost and quickly turn around.

The obvious questions—who, why, how—remain unanswered. The abductions occur in mysterious moments, in quick, ghastly twists of fate that nobody seems—or at least wants to admit—to have witnessed. Most recently, they have transpired in the heart of the city in broad daylight. Some people believe the girls are taken by force, while others think it is more likely that the victims are lured by a seemingly innocent offer. A few mothers have said that their daughters disappeared a day or two after being approached about a job. Only one thing can be said with certainty, and it’s that in Juárez, Mexico, the most barbarous things are possible.

THE SUN SHIMMERS OVER DOWNTOWN Juárez like white linen, but I have learned to march down its streets staring at the ground or ahead with icy, distant eyes. To do anything else is to acknowledge the lusty stares from men of all ages who stand at the corners of the city’s busy thoroughfares waiting for nothing to happen. So begins the taunting. A skinny man with red eyes lets out a slow whistle through clenched teeth. Two young boys look at me, look at each other, and nod with a dirty grin. From among a group of men huddled on the steps of a shop, one calls out, “¡Una como esa!”—One like her!—and the rest burst out laughing, their mustaches spreading gleefully across their faces as they
watch me walk by. This is everywhere in urban Mexico, I remind myself, but knowing what I do about the fate of women in Juárez, their glares begin to feel more predatory. I watch my feet skitter on the pavement and, with every step, wish I could shed these hips, this chest, this hair. To walk through downtown Juárez is to know and deeply regret that you are a young woman.

Juárez, though, is a city of young women. They run its shops; they keep its hundreds of factories humming. In 1964 the United States terminated the Bracero guest-worker program with Mexico and deported many of its laborers, dumping thousands of men along the Mexican side of the border. In an effort to reemploy them, the Mexican government launched the Border Industrialization Program, which prodded American manufacturers to assemble their products in northern Mexico using cheap labor. The plan succeeded, but its main beneficiaries turned out to be women, who, it was determined, would make better workers for the new factories, or maquiladoras, because of their presumed superior manual dexterity. Word spread throughout Mexico that thousands of assembly-line jobs were cropping up in Juárez, and the nation’s north quickly became the emblem of modernity and economic opportunity. In the seventies, factory-sponsored buses rumbled into the heartland and along the coasts and returned with thousands of hungry laborers. Among them were many single women with children in tow, who, aside from landing their own jobs in the maquilas, began to staff the throngs of stores and restaurants that proliferated to satisfy the new consumerism of Juárez’s formerly cash-strapped population.

And so, if the working women of this border city had once earned reputations as prostitutes or bartenders, they now earned paychecks as factory workers, saleswomen, police officers, teachers—a few even as managers and engineers in the concrete tilt-ups that were constructed all around town to house around four hundred maquiladoras. For anywhere from $4 to $7 a day, they assembled automotive parts and electronic components and made clothing. Of the girls who couldn’t afford to go to college—which is to say, the vast majority—some took computer classes, where they learned to use Microsoft Word and Excel so that they might become secretaries and administrative assistants. Juárez, after all, is a city that places a high premium on skills such as knowing how to use computers and speak English. Even in its most impoverished desert neighborhood, a dazed collection of impromptu homes stitched
together from wood pallets, mattresses, cardboard boxes, and baling wire, I saw a tiny brick shack with a dozen mismatched chairs planted outside and a hand-painted sign that promised “Clases de inglés.”

But the migration was too fast, too disorganized. The population shot up to an estimated 1.5 million. Gone was the charm Juárez had possessed in the thirties, when its valley bore succulent grapes, or in the forties, when the music of Glenn Miller and Agustín Lara never stopped playing on Juárez Avenue, even as its neighboring country went to war. It was one of Mexico’s biggest blunders to have planted its largest industrial experiment in the desert, in a city separated from the rest of the country not only symbolically, by its distinctly North American feel, but also physically, by the stunning but unforgiving Juárez Mountains. Cardboard shanties began to dot the landscape. Sewage spilled onto the streets. Power lines reproduced like parasites. Today, radio talk-show hosts ramble on about the ways in which immigrants ruined their beautiful community. I asked a well-bred young man what he felt were the virtues of his hometown, and despite a genuine effort, all he could name were the swank, cavernous clubs where the rich kids spend their weekends consuming alcohol by the bottle.

Even as the maquiladoras have begun relocating to China in the past two years, the reputation of Juárez as a city of opportunity lingers in impoverished rural Mexico. Inside the city, however, Mexico’s economic vulnerability is exposed like raw flesh. The city is filled with broken people who crack open with the most innocent of questions. I met a woman from Zacatecas who lives in Anapra with her husband and three daughters in a minuscule house that they built out of wood pallets and thatched with black roofing material. They possess one bed, no refrigerator, and a tin washtub for bathing. State officials offered them this sliver of land, but the sliver is in the desert mountains, where life is not “beautiful,” as the woman’s brother had sent word home; it’s shivery cold and always covered in a thin film of orange dirt. When I asked her how she liked living in this colonia along the city’s northwestern frontier, the woman’s smile quivered and a puddle of tears instantly dribbled to her chin.

Still, the worst part about Juárez, she told me, is the threat of violence that hangs over the sprawling city like a veil of terror. For just a short distance from her home, the bodies of girls who resemble her own sixteen-year-old Ana have appeared in the desert. Lured to their
deaths—perhaps by promises of a job?—they lie abandoned like the heaps of trash that fleck this interminable sea of sand.

“DISCULPE, SEÑORITA...” I TURNED TOWARD the male voice that came from behind me and saw a dark-skinned, round-faced man in his thirties striding in my direction with a large basket of candies wedged between his neck and shoulder. He was heavyset, clad in light-brown slacks, a white, long-sleeved shirt with blue pinstripes, and a green windbreaker.

It was lunchtime, and I had walked out of a restaurant to return a call to a source on my cell phone, leaving behind three journalists with whom I’d been roaming the city. Diana Washington Valdez, an El Paso Times reporter who has been chronicling the Juárez women’s deaths, had thought I should meet an attorney who is defending one of the government’s scapegoats for the murders. But when we had rattled the wrought-iron gates of his office, there had been no reply. We had decided to wait at a small restaurant next door, and since a peal of music was issuing from a nearby television, I had gone outside to return the call. After I’d finished, I’d dialed my sister’s number.

He looked rather humble, and this, I thought, was confirmed by the apologetic smile he wore, as if he were sorry to be intruding for something as mundane as the time or how to find a street. I half-smiled at him. “Hold on,” I told my sister. I was about to save him the trouble of asking by telling him that I was not from around here when he spoke once more.

“What are you looking for work?”

Journalists and activists and sociologists trying to explain the loss of hundreds of women in such violent ways have constructed a common narrative. The story tells that when the immigrants came to Juárez from the countryside, they brought with them traditional Mexican ideas about gender. Women were to stay home, obey their husbands, and raise their children. But when wives and girlfriends and daughters began earning their own paychecks, they tasted a new independence and savored it. They bought nice things for
themselves. They went dancing. They decided when bad relationships needed ending. In many cases, because unemployment rates for men were higher, women even took on the role of breadwinner in their families. The men saw their masculinity challenged and lashed out. Their resentment, uncontained by weakened religious and community bonds, turned violent, into a rage that manifested itself in the ruthless killing of women. This story has become so popular that when I interviewed the director of the Juárez Association of Maquiladoras, he recited it for me almost as though he were delivering a pitch at a business convention.

Yet the violence in Juárez—against men as well as women—is at its barest a criminal act and the direct by-product of the lack of rule of law in the Mexican justice system. Killers know that the odds are overwhelming that they can get away with murder. Nationally, only two in every one hundred crimes are ever solved, including cases that are closed by throwing a scapegoat in jail. There are no jury trials, and it is easy to influence a judge with money. If not one of the Juárez girls’ cases has been properly resolved in ten years, only two explanations are possible: Law enforcement is either inept or corrupt. Most people believe both are true.

“I got to witness the inefficiency,” says Oscar Maynez, the chief of forensics in Juárez from 1999 to 2002. Maynez has been involved in the cases of the murdered women of Juárez from the beginning. In 1993, as an instructor at the state police academy, he was skimming criminal files to use in his class when something disturbing grabbed his attention: In three separate cases, it appeared that three young women had been raped and strangled. Fearing that a serial killer might be on the loose, he created a psychological profile of the killer. When he approached his superiors with the report, however, every one of them, including the Juárez police chief and the deputy attorney general in the state capital of Chihuahua, dismissed its importance.

Maynez left his job a year later to pursue a master’s degree in Washington, D.C. When he returned to reorganize the state crime lab, in 1999, he was greeted by a growing pile of women’s remains, along with case records and forensic evidence, all of it hopelessly confused. Though some of the bodies still had vital clues embedded, the lab had never done any follow-up on those that had appeared between 1993 and 1999, including DNA analyses of the rapists’ semen. Maynez was certain now—and the thought enraged him—that either a serial killer or a
well-funded criminal ring was systematically targeting Juárez’s youngest and poorest women. And yet, six years after his initial findings, neither the local nor the state authorities had made an effort to pursue an investigation according to Maynez’s profile.

In early November 2001 eight female bodies were found in a cotton field across a busy street from the maquiladora association’s air-conditioned offices. Five of them had been dumped in an old sewage canal, the other three in an irrigation ditch. Most followed a similar modus operandi: hands bound, apparently raped and strangled. Two days after the first corpses were found, Maynez and his crew began their work, dusting for evidence with tiny paintbrushes. As they did so, a man drove up in a bulldozer, saying that he’d been ordered by the attorney general’s office to dig up the area to search for more bodies. Maynez sent him off to work elsewhere, preserving the crime scene.

Just a few days later, the police presented an edited videotape confession of two bus drivers who said they had killed the women, naming each of the eight. It seemed odd that the murderers would know the complete names of their victims—middle names, maternal and paternal names. When the accused were admitted to the city jail, it became obvious that they were scapegoats and had been forced to confess, for they showed multiple signs of torture, including electrical burns on their genitals. The cost of defending them turned out to be quite high. In February 2002 one of the two lawyers who was representing the drivers was shot and killed by state police officers as he drove his car; they say they mistook him for a fugitive. (An investigation was conducted, but the officers were never charged.) And a few days after the national human rights commission agreed to hear the drivers’ cases, one of them mysteriously died in custody while undergoing an unauthorized surgery based on forged documents for a hernia that he had developed from the torture.

To date, eighteen people have been arrested in connection with the murders, including an Egyptian chemist named Abdel Latif Sharif Sharif, who arrived in Juárez by way of the United States, where he had lived for 25 years. He had accumulated two convictions for sexual battery in Florida. Sharif, who has been jailed in Mexico since October 1995, was accused by Chihuahua state prosecutors of several of the Juárez murders but convicted of only one. Though the conviction was overturned
in 2000, a state judge ruled in favor of the prosecution’s appeal, and Sharif remains imprisoned in Chihuahua City.

Judging from the lack of evidence, none of those eighteen individuals has been justly charged or convicted. The biggest testament to this is the fact that the murders continue unabated. At a press conference in jail in 1998, Sharif divulged information he had received from a police officer who claimed that the person behind the killings was Armando Martínez, the adopted son of a prominent Juárez bar owner. Sharif’s source, Victor Valenzuela Rivera, said that he had overheard Martínez bragging about the murders at the Safari Club, one of his father’s bars and a place frequented by police officers and narcotraficantes. Valenzuela insisted that Martínez, who also goes by Alejandro Maynez, had said he was being protected by government officials and the police and that he had bragged about his involvement in the trafficking of drugs and jewelry. The following year, Valenzuela repeated this account before several federal legislators and reporters; again, there were bloody repercussions. After Irene Blanco, the woman who had defended Sharif in court, demanded that the press investigate the allegations against Martínez, her son was shot and nearly killed by unknown assailants. The police say the shooting was drug-related; others blame police officers themselves. Martínez’s whereabouts are unknown.

Valenzuela’s testimony was not the only suggestion that the murders might be linked to the drug world. In 1996 a group of civilians searching for women’s remains in Lomas de Poleo came upon a wooden shack and inside it an eerie sight: red and white votive candles, female garments, traces of fresh blood, and a wooden panel with detailed sketches on it. On one side of the panel was a drawing of a scorpion—a symbol of the Juárez cartel—as well as depictions of three unclothed women with long hair and a fourth lying on the floor, eyes closed, looking sad. A handful of soldiers peered out from behind what looked like marijuana plants, and at the top there was an ace of spades. The other side showed similar...
sketches: two unclothed women with their legs spread, an ace of clubs, and a male figure that looked like a gang member in a trench coat and hat. The panel was handed over to Victoria Caraveo, a women’s activist, who turned it in to state authorities. Though the incident was reported by the Mexican papers, today government officials refuse to acknowledge that the panel ever existed.

As Oscar Maynez sees it, the problem with the Mexican justice system begins with “a complete absence of scruples among the people at the top.” The criminologist says that the state crime lab has become merely an office that signs death certificates. In the case of the eight girls’ bodies discovered in 2001, Maynez told the *El Paso Times*, “We were asked to plant evidence against two bus drivers who were charged with the murders.” Though the drivers were prosecuted, their evidence file, Maynez says, remained empty. Frustrated, he resigned in January 2002.

Because it has become his life’s mission to save Juárez—or at least reduce its death toll—he is still intent upon getting his job back some day. The only chance of this happening is if the National Action Party (PAN) retakes control of the state.

But the PAN-controlled federal government isn’t doing much to solve the Juárez murders either. Some of Chihuahua’s top leaders a decade ago now sit in the highest ranks of President Vicente Fox’s administration. In December 2001 federal legislators formed a committee to investigate the issue; it has yet to release a report. The bad blood between political parties and the long history of turf wars between state and federal law enforcement groups have prevented any sort of interagency cooperation, a key to solving difficult crimes in the United States. (On one of my trips to Juárez, I watched news footage of a mob of men pummeling each other—it was the state and federal police, fighting over who was supposed to protect the governor of Chihuahua when he flew into the city.) Early this March, the federal attorney general finally sent his investigators to the border, and in May they announced their intention to reopen fourteen of the murder cases as part of an investigation into organ smuggling.

Activists in Juárez and El Paso believe that the only way the murders can ever be solved is for Mexican federal officials to invite the American FBI to investigate, but historically, neither side has seemed eager for this to occur. Nationalism runs high in Mexico, and the country’s leaders do not want Americans meddling in their affairs. In El Paso, officials like
outgoing mayor Ray Caballero hesitate to offend their peers in Chihuahua. Caballero, who has had little to say publicly about the murdered women, told me, “For me to come out and make one pronouncement does not solve the problem.” Perhaps circumstances are changing. This spring his office announced the creation of a hotline that will allow people in Juárez to report information to the El Paso police, who will then turn it over to investigators in Chihuahua. In late April, two deputies of the Mexican federal attorney general asked the FBI to collaborate with them on their investigations of the Juárez murder cases and the Juárez drug cartel. FBI agents have also been training Mexican prosecutors and detectives in Juárez and El Paso.

“Are you looking for work?”

My heart stopped. I knew that line, knew it immediately. My eyes, frozen, terrified, locked onto his. “N-n-n-o,” I believe I stuttered, but the man spoke again: “Where are you from?” His eyes crawled down my body and back up to my face. I was wearing leather boots, a black turtleneck, and fitted jeans—the last pair of clean pants I had managed to dig out of my suitcase that morning. And I regretted it immediately, because they might have been appropriate for trekking in mountains but not, I realized now, for walking around downtown. My heart was back, pounding furiously. Only then did I notice that as I had talked on the phone, I had absentmindedly paced half a block away from the restaurant’s door. At that moment, there was nobody within sight, not even a single officer from the police station next door. I tried to envision the scenarios, tried to imagine some chance of safety. Would he ask me to follow him somewhere? Would someone drive up out of nowhere and force me into a vehicle? Did I have control of the situation or did he? If I darted toward the restaurant door, would I startle him, causing him to reach over and grab me? If I screamed, would my sister, who was now dangling by my thigh on the other end of a cell phone—listening, I hoped desperately, to this conversation—be able to help? Would Diana and the others inside the restaurant hear me over the music? If I was not able to escape, how much would I have to suffer before being killed? Was this it? Had I really—and the brief thought of this made me sad—gambled it all for a story? For a few infinite seconds, nothing, and everything, was possible. But as my heart began to slow down and my mind sped up, I thought of another possibility. “I’m from El Paso,” I said.
Irma Monrreal lives in a dust-tinged neighborhood known as Los Aztecas. The streets are unpaved, lined with tiny cement homes that peek out from behind clumsy cinder-block walls. Her home on Calle Grulla, which she bought on credit for $1,000, originally consisted of one room, in which she slept with seven children, but her eldest sons constructed another two rooms. Like so many immigrants in Juárez, Irma had hopped on a train and headed to the border with visions of prosperity flitting about in her head. In the fields of her state of Zacatecas, she had earned $3 a day hoeing beans and chiles. The big talk those days was of the factories in Juárez, where one could make nearly three times as much money. Since she and her husband had separated and her two eldest boys, who were thirteen and fourteen years old, would soon be needing jobs, she moved to Juárez and altered her sons’ birth certificates so that they could immediately begin work in the maquiladoras.

Though Irma had a bundle of children to care for, she was closest to her third-youngest, Esmeralda, a blithe girl with a broad, round face and an unflinchingly optimistic attitude. At fifteen, she had completed middle school and was determined to keep studying so that someday she might work in a big place—like the airport, she told her mother—and earn lots of money. She was an excellent typist. She didn’t date or spend much time with friends, but she was extremely close to her little sister Zulema, who was four years younger. The two pretended that they were television stars or models, and on special occasions they attended mass and treated themselves to lunch. When nighttime set in, they dreamed in bunk beds.

The only thing Esmeralda desired even more than an education was to have a quinceañera and to wear, like every other girl in Juárez who turns fifteen, a white gown to her rite-of-passage celebration. Her mother, who earns about $30 a week at a plastics factory, was saving up what she could to pay for the party, but Esmeralda felt the urge to pitch in. When an acquaintance asked Irma if she could borrow her teenage
daughter to help around the house, Esmeralda pleaded with her hesitant mother to say yes, promising that she would work only up until the December 15 ceremony.

A week went by, and Esmeralda was excited, chatty. One evening she confided to her mom that a young man who was a few years older than she and who worked at the printshop where she had ordered her invitations had asked her out to lunch. She seemed deeply flattered that someone would notice her, but Irma admonished her not to take any offers from strangers. Her daughter promised that she wouldn’t. A second week passed. Esmeralda would finish working at about four o’clock and head straight home, arriving well before Irma departed for her overnight shift at the maquiladora.

But a few days later, something went terribly wrong. At four-thirty, there was no sign of Esmeralda. Then it was five o’clock. Then six. At ten minutes to seven, Irma was forced to leave for work, but she asked her other children to watch for their sister. In the factory, she punched her time card and began talking to God silently.

The night dragged. When her shift was finally over, at seven in the morning, Irma rushed home to see her daughter’s face, but her world imploded when her children opened the door: *Esmeralda no llegó*. The girl had vanished.

During the following ten days, Irma sometimes wondered whether her mind hadn’t just taken a crazy turn. *Her* Esmeralda. How could this be happening? At night, she was overwhelmed with terror as she speculated where the girl might be, what she might be going through at that very moment. To lose a family member and not know what has happened to her is to live an existential anguish of believing fiercely and at the same time losing all notion of truth. I spoke with a psychologist at a Juárez women’s crisis center who said that she finds it almost impossible to help the relatives of disappeared people heal because they are unable to discount that their abducted family member is either dead or alive. In El Paso I met Jaime Hervella, a Juárez native who runs a small accounting and consulting business as well as an organization for relatives of the disappeared on both sides of the border. “It’s the worst of tragedies,” he said, motioning with his waxlike hands over a cluttered desk. Then his bifocals fogged up, and he wept suddenly. “I just can’t handle talking to the little old women, the mothers. Morning comes and they implore God, the Virgin, the man who drives the dump truck. Nighttime falls
and they are still asking themselves, ‘Where could my child be?’ And the hours pass in this way, and the sun begins to disappear.”

As she scavenged her memory for clues, Irma recalled the young man who had invited her daughter to lunch and immediately sent her son to look for him. But the owner of the printshop said he’d left his job. He refused to give any more information. After several visits herself, Irma finally persuaded the shop owner’s son to tell her where their former employee lived. She found the little house, but it was locked; she banged on the door, the windows, screaming loudly in case her daughter was inside, listening. Esmeralda had told her mother that the young man had asked her for her schedule and that he had wanted to know whether her mom always walked her home from work. As Irma circled the house, the man arrived. She explained who she was and asked if he knew anything about her daughter, but he brushed her away, saying that he was married.

A few days later, a co-worker at the maquiladora asked Irma if she’d heard the news: Eight bodies had been found in a couple of ditches at the intersection of Ejército Nacional and Paseo de la Victoria. Could one of them be Esmeralda? Next came the phone call from the state prosecutor’s office, asking her to identify the body. At the morgue, however, Irma was told it was too gruesome to view. She would have to obtain signed permission from the prosecutor’s office. They offered to bring out the blouse that was on the corpse when it was found; Irma’s heart collapsed when she glimpsed the speckled yellow, pink, orange, and white. It was the blouse that Esmeralda’s older sister Cecilia had sent from Colorado, where she had moved to with her husband.

Yet there was still that lingering doubt, so Irma requested the permit to see the body. Fearing the shock would be too great for their mother to bear, her two eldest sons insisted on identifying it themselves. When they arrived home from the morgue, they were silent, their heads hung low.

“So?” Irma asked anxiously. “Was it your sister?”
But the response was hesitant, brittle: “We don’t know.”
“What do you mean, you don’t know?!” Irma sputtered.
“It’s just that . . . she doesn’t have a face.”
The words shattered on the floor like a Christmas ornament. She burst: “But what about her hair—was it her hair?!”
“It’s just that she doesn’t have any hair,” came the grief-stricken reply.
“She doesn’t have any ears. She doesn’t have anything.”
The corpse presumed to be Esmeralda’s was one of the three found on November 6, a day before the other five were discovered a short distance away. All of the bodies were partially or wholly unclothed, some with their hands tied. But unlike the other girls, most of whom had been reduced to mere skeletal remains, Esmeralda’s state of decomposition was particularly grisly and perplexing. She was missing most of the flesh from her collarbone up to her face. The authorities suggested that the rats in the fields had had their share, but Irma noted—and Oscar Maynez, the chief of forensics, concurred—that it would have made more sense for them to feast on the meatier parts of her body. The mystery deepened when the forensic workers took hair and blood from Esmeralda’s mother and father and sent them to a laboratory in Mexico City. Even when DNA samples from the parents who had identified clothing were compared with those from the girls wearing the clothing, the results came back without a match. This opened up two possibilities: Either the samples had been grossly contaminated or, even more eerily, the murderers were switching clothes with other, as yet unfound, victims.

“Why?” Irma cried out as I sat with her one wintry afternoon in her tidy home, which is crammed with curly-haired dolls and deflated balloons and stuffed animals her daughter had collected—the last traces of happiness left in her little house. “Do they want to drive me crazy or something? Is it her or isn’t it?” In a silver frame on top of a brown armoire, Esmeralda sat squeezed into a strapless red top, her shoulder-length hair dyed a blondish brown. She was laughing irresistibly—cracking up—but across from the photo, Irma slumped in her chair in blue sweats and a denim shirt, her body heaving uncontrollably as I listened, speechless. “Why does God let the evil ones take the good ones away? Why the poor, if we don’t bring any harm on anybody? Nobody can imagine what this trauma is like. I go to work and I don’t know if my children are going to be safe when I return. It’s a terror that’s lived day by day, hour by hour.”
Like numerous stories I had heard from other victims' families, Irma’s included the lament that her family has fallen apart as her children struggle to confront the tragedy of losing their sister and try to assign blame. Unable to channel their newfound hate, they have begun hating each other. Her eldest sons have stopped talking to her. Zulema, who refuses to sleep in her bunk bed now, attempted to kill herself and her eight-year-old brother with tranquilizers a doctor had prescribed for Irma. Defeated, the woman spoke with the shame of a child who has discovered that she has made an irrevocably wrong choice. She wished, with all her might, that she had never made that fateful decision to come to Juárez. “They’ve destroyed my life,” she said with vacant eyes and a flat voice, once she had regained her composure. “I don’t believe in anything anymore. There is a saying that one comes here in search of a better life, but those are nothing but illusions.”

Irma eventually claimed the body, she says, so that she would “have somewhere to cry.” Instead of determining whether more lab work needed to be done, the authorities instantly handed it over. They never interrogated the suspicious young man Irma had reported, and in a tasteless act of disregard for her daughter, they ruled that the cause of the young woman’s death was “undetermined,” even though it seemed apparent that she had been strangled. On November 16 Irma buried the corpse, using the quinceañera savings to pay for the $600 coffin.

“Soy de El Paso,” I said to the man outside the restaurant. I held my breath. I remembered what Diana had told me when we first met to talk about the story: “They know who to leave alone. They leave the Americans alone. They leave the rich girls alone, because there might be trouble. The other girls? A dime a dozen.” And yes, his interest faded instantly. “I’m sorry,” he said, still bearing his apologetic smile, though somewhat more sheepishly. “I—I just saw you holding that piece of paper so I thought maybe you were looking for a job. Sorry.” He turned around and began to walk away.

I was still frightened, but now that I felt a little safer, the journalist in me began to return. “Why?” I called out nervously. “Do you know of a job?” He turned around and stared at me. “I hire girls to work at a grocery store,” he said. His eyebrows crinkled. “Where are you from?” Shaking my head, I stammered, “Oh, no—I’m from El Paso. My friends are waiting for me inside this restaurant.” I brushed past him in a hurry, skipping up the restaurant’s steps and to the table where the rest of the
group was finishing their meal. Diana was gone. I took my seat. My legs, my hands, trembled violently.

“You’ll never guess what happened to me,” I said in a shaky voice. The others fell silent and looked at me with interest. “I just got offered a job.” As the words spilled, one of the group nodded slowly. “You fit the profile,” she said. When I described the man to her, she said that he had walked into the restaurant earlier, while I was on the phone. He had chatted with the woman who was cooking, taken some food, and left.

I jumped from my chair and stepped over to the counter. “Excuse me, señora,” I said to the woman at the grill. “Do you know the man who just came in a few minutes ago?” “Not very well,” she replied. “At night he guards the lawyer’s office next door and by day he sells candies on the street.”

At that moment, something blocked the light from the doorway. I turned around and found myself face to face with the same man from outside, this time without his basket. He looked nervous. “Let me buy you a Coke,” he offered. “No, thanks,” I replied firmly. Then I asked him, “Do you really have a store?”

“You’re a journalist,” he said, “aren’t you?” His question caught me by surprise. I turned toward my table, then back to his intense gaze. “I—I’m here with some journalist friends,” I stuttered. “No,” he said forcefully, “but you’re a journalist, aren’t you?” It was obvious that he knew. “Well, yes, but I’m just here accompanying my friends, who are working on a story.” His tone softened. “Come on, let’s sit down. Let me buy you a drink. En confianza.” You can trust me.” “No,” I repeated, “I’m with my friends and we’re leaving.” I walked back to the table. Diana had returned, unaware of what had transpired. Later I would learn that she had gone to the lawyer’s office, encountered the candy man, and told him she was with a group of journalists who wanted to see his boss. But with the man standing there, all I wanted to do was get away. We all gathered our belongings and hurried toward the door. “The lawyer says he’ll be here tomorrow, if you want to see him,” we heard the man call out to us. I never turned back.

That night, safe in El Paso, I stared at the ceiling in the darkness of my hotel room and replayed the afternoon’s events over and over. My family had worried when I told them that I was going to write about the women of Juárez, even after I assured them that plenty of other journalists had done so safely. But you, they shot back, as if I’d missed the most
obvious point, you look just like those girls. I thought of how much care I had taken not to go to Juárez alone, even if it had meant sacrificing my journalistic independence. And yet, in that one brief instant I had let my guard down, and I had been approached by someone mysterious. I will never know for sure if that was it—if, as I have told colleagues I felt at that moment, I really touched the story, my own life colliding with those of the girls whose lives I had been hoping to preserve. What I do know is this: that I had felt my heart beat, the way they must have felt it beat too.

As I thought this, warm tears spilled down the sides of my face and trickled into my ears. And I realized that I was crying not for myself, but for the women of Juárez—for the girls who had died and for the mothers who survived them. They say that whenever a new body is found, every grieving mother relives her pain. I was crying for the girls who had stayed on the other side of the border. For the ones who couldn’t leave their reflections on paper and run far, far away, as I was going to do. I cried because I realized how easy it would have been to believe the man who approached me; because I understood that the girls were not naive, or careless, or as a former attorney general of Chihuahua once said, asking for it. They were simply women—poor women, brown women. Fighters, dreamers. And they weren’t even dreaming of all that much, by our standards: a secretarial job, a bedroom set, a fifteenth-birthday party. A little chance to live.

I cried because of the absurdity of it all, because it was possible for a life to be worth less than a brief taste of power. I cried thinking of how we had failed them.

Questions for Further Discussion

1. How have United States and Mexico foreign policies shaped the lives of women who work at maquiladoras?
2. Why do mostly women work at the maquiladores?
3. How has the actual border between Mexico and the United States led to the creation of the maquiladores? How might it contribute to the disappearances of the young women?
4. What are some of the possible explanations for these crimes?
5. Why do you think this crime has not been solved?
6. In the last paragraph of the essay, the author cries. Why do you think she cried? Is she supposed to?
Estella was 10 years old when she and her mother crossed the U.S. border from Mexico with six other immigrants. They walked in the desert for over 10 hours and rarely took breaks. There was little food and water. As risky as this journey was, her mother believed it was worth it for Estella to have a better life. As a college student today, that experience will be forever etched in Estella’s memory. Each day she reminds herself that she will never give up. Her dream is to complete her education and become an immigration lawyer. She tells her friends, “I will work hard to succeed and make my parents proud. I am part of the solution, not the problem.”

The United States has long been a key destination for immigrants like Estella and her mother, along with many others from all over the world. According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, of the total 11.4 million undocumented/unauthorized (hereafter, undocumented) immigrants living in the United States in 2012, nearly eight in 10 (78%...
or 8.9 million people) are from North America, including Mexico, Canada, the Caribbean, and Central America. The largest share is from Mexico (59%). The next largest populations are from Asia (15% or 1.3 million) and South America (8% or 0.7 million). This chapter focuses on one segment of the immigrant population, young undocumented youth, or DREAMers, who were brought to this country as children.

The term DREAMers originated from a bill in Congress, introduced in 2001, called the DREAM ACT (see Appendix B). DREAM was short for Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors. This Act never passed, even though many versions have been reintroduced since 2001, the last in 2013. Had it passed, as many as 2.5 million undocumented youth, or DREAMers, would have been provided an affordable public college education and military service opportunities, providing them with a pathway to citizenship.

Most DREAMers have lived in this country for the majority of their lives, usually arriving in the United States between the ages of 5 and 12 years of age. They have been called “Generation 1.5”. Born in another country but arriving in the United States as young children, they are distinct from both the first and second generations. The name DREAMer, although it had its origins in the DREAM ACT, is appropriate for another reason, as immigrant youth have high hopes and dreams for a better future. They came with their parents who wanted a better life for their children. Some came to escape political or economic conflicts in their native countries; a great many put their lives in danger crossing the border. Some came legally with visas, but their visas have expired since.

Life in the United States is often difficult for DREAMers for several reasons. First, debates over U.S. immigration policy are often divisive and contentious; anti-immigrant rhetoric has become increasingly harsh and public. Second, over the last several years, immigrants have witnessed an increase in the number of deportations, workplace raids, and restrictive local and state laws, heightening feelings of exclusion, discrimination, fear, uncertainty, and perpetual stress. Third, negative
characterizations and stereotypes of undocumented immigrants take a hard toll on many immigrant families. Mayra, a DREAMer who came to this country when she was 5 years old, has been called illegal, alien, foreigner, and not American. These terms serve to criminalize and dehumanize Mayra and millions of others like her. They are used to justify abuse by unethical employers who take advantage of many immigrants’ fears of speaking up, making them work long hours, for example, in agricultural fields with few breaks and difficult working conditions. Min-Jun and others have been told that they have no right to fight back and no right to live and work in this country, despite having lived most of their lives in this country, and knowing no other country but the United States. Violeta watched helplessly as her mother died for lack of access to medical care. DREAMers can’t work because they don’t have valid social security cards reserved for those with legal status, and they can’t travel out of the country to visit family and friends because they may be denied reentry to the United States. Without legal status, they can face deportation at any time to countries they do not know. DREAMers are forced to live in the shadows, sometimes needing to move every 6 months in order to stay hidden from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). They often watch with fear and helplessness as family members and friends are deported, not knowing when they will be able to be reunited. Many times, parents of DREAMers did not let them know of their undocumented status in order to protect them from verbal and physical discrimination. However, they realized firsthand their status when they were asked for a social security card, when applying for a job, or applying to college.

Education

Undocumented immigrants typically have low educational attainment rates. According to the Pew Research Center, 47% of undocumented immigrants aged 25–64 have less than a high school education, compared with only 8% of U.S. residents. They also have low college attendance rates even though DREAMers are well aware that a college degree is critical for their desire to have a career and a profession.

There are approximately 80,000 undocumented immigrants that turn 18 each year and sadly, 16%–20% of them do not graduate from
high school. Of the approximately 65,000 that graduate each year, only about 5%–10% go on to college and only about 1%–3% gain a degree. Undocumented immigrants have a right to obtain a K–12 education, but they receive little if any resources to pursue a college education. In 1982, the Supreme Court issued *Plyer v. Doe*, a landmark decision that stated all children, regardless of immigration status were entitled to a free public education in public primary and secondary schools. However, this law did not include college enrollment. Supreme Court Justice Blackmun effectively argued that “when a state provides an education to some and denies it to others, it immediately and inevitably creates class distinctions of a type fundamentally inconsistent with” the purposes of the Equal Protection Clause because “an uneducated child is denied even the opportunity to achieve.”

There are many barriers preventing undocumented students from entering college. In the past decade, debates over immigration reform have been heated, especially as they relate to whether DREAMers should be provided financial aid and/or in-state tuition, which is the ability to pay the same tuition rate as state residents pay. Some opponents of immigration reform have even argued that undocumented immigrants should not have the right to enroll in postsecondary education.
and have enacted state policies to that effect. In 2008, South Carolina prohibited undocumented students from enrolling in public postsecondary institutions. Alabama also passed a similar draconian law in 2011. Supporters of this view argue that undocumented students live “illegally” in the United States and therefore are not deserving of any services; they say it is unfair to legal residents to “reward” this type of “illegal behavior.”

In the absence of the DREAM Act or any federal direction on the issue of a right to a college education for DREAMers, states can determine their own policies. Currently, only 16 states provide in-state tuition provisions, passed through their state legislative processes. In addition, five states offer in-state tuition through their state boards of higher education or by the advisement of the state attorney general. Even the Federal DREAM Act, as currently written, does not require states to provide in-state tuition. The DREAM Act lets states decide whether they will or will not offer in-state tuition, making access to college across the United States very unequal for DREAMers. As a result, DREAMers have advocated strongly on behalf of future federal immigrant legislation that would be inclusive of in-state tuition in all states and enable federal access for eligible students to federal programs such as Pell grants, federal work-study, and federal student loans. Without nation-wide in-state tuition, states like North Dakota, Georgia, Arkansas, and Nevada, all of which have large undocumented populations and do not have in-state tuition policies, have made it very difficult and oftentimes impossible for DREAMers to attend college in those states.

Why is there so much opposition to DREAMers obtaining an education? Regrettably, anti-immigrant rhetoric has shaped the way immigrants are viewed and the opportunities they are afforded. This negative picture, however, is often overshadowed by the successes of immigrants.
Once enrolled in college, DREAMers are often high-achieving students, or “undocuscholars.” The image of the DREAMer as a high-achieving student is in clear contrast to the image of the DREAMer as unqualified and unworthy of an education. In comparison with their documented cohorts, DREAMers consistently hold higher GPA averages, according to the University of California, Los Angeles Center for Labor Research and Education's hearing and conference in 2007. It is not unusual to find DREAMers as honor students, exceptional students in search of a better life. They consistently debunk the negative stereotypes often attributed to undocumented individuals.

**Contesting the Negative Construction of Immigrants: Standing Up for Change**

Over the last 15 plus years, DREAMers have emerged as a powerful force with effective and compelling messaging. They have become an important and vital face of immigration reform. Part of their messaging is storytelling that helps the public, legislators, other college students, faculty, administrators, and policy makers understand who they are as people and as advocates. In California, as in other states, DREAMers are organizing campus clubs and working with well-established networks.

DREAMers are a powerful, dedicated group of student political activists. They proudly stand for social justice and are, as they publicly state, “Unafraid, Unapologetic, and Undocumented.” As activists, they refuse to live in a state of invisibility and fear. They call for greater access to higher education and for a pathway to citizenship. They have changed the language around their status and proudly call themselves “undocuscholars” and “predocumented,” as a replacement for undocumented. Living with strong hearts, they are resilient and imaginative. They live their lives with meaning and determination to make the world a better place, believing they have a right to be heard, to be safe, and to be treated fairly. As leaders, they stand up for their
beliefs and values, purposefully choosing not to keep their status private. Although many are at first timid to expose their status publically, they often gain the courage to do so with the support of their peers and community.

DREAMers know they have a great responsibility to be accountable to themselves and other undocumented individuals, but also to their families, allies, organizations, and citizens working for comprehensive immigration reform and justice for immigrants. Their accountability and conscious decisions are often guided by the Iroquois proverb, “In every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations.”

DREAMers have transformed the immigrants’ rights debate, talking about the civil rights of immigrants; the right of immigrants to live their lives full of hope and dignity. Immigrant rights are human rights, the basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled, regardless of immigration status. They have transformed the dialog from only asserting legal rights and the right to a pathway to citizenship to one that also includes and recognizes locally, statewide, and nationally that they are a politically autonomous group with basic human rights. Their vision is inclusive, and their fight is for social and policy change through a
movement that embodies a vision of empowerment, integrity, equality, and justice for all. Given the chance to gain an education and the ability to maximize their skills and talents, they will be able to contribute substantially to the long-term growth and prosperity of the nation.

**ENDNOTE**


**REFERENCE**

We have examined the spectrum of court cases to published stories all influencing the story of Mexican Americans. However, as mentioned early in this textbook, this is all about telling your story, even if you are not Mexican American. Also, just like the most authentic identities are based on self examination, it is important for all of us to tell our story, or preserve the story of our family, our community, as a testament to history and so that future generations can learn from us, and at the very least so that our kids and their kids can know where they come from.

What follows are some ways for you and your family to tell their story, and some examples of folks from the community telling theirs.

Tim Z. Hernandez is an award winning poet, novelist, and performance artist. His debut collection of poetry, *Skin Tax* (Heyday Books), received the 2006 American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation, and the James Duval Phelan Award from the San Francisco Foundation. His debut novel, *Breathing, In Dust* (Texas Tech University Press) was featured on NPR's *All Things Considered*, and went on to receive the 2010 Premio Aztlan Prize in Fiction. His second collection of poetry, *Natural Takeover of Small Things*, was released in 2013 and received the 2014 Colorado Book Award, and his novel, *Mañana Means Heaven*, which is based on the life of Bea Franco, also released in 2013, went on to receive the 2014 International Latino Book Award in historical fiction. Both books are with the University of Arizona Press. His book, *All They Will Call You*, was released on January 28, 2017, also from the University of Arizona Press. A genre bending work labeled a Documentary Novel, it is based on the song by Woody Guthrie, “Plane Wreck at Los Gatos (Deportee).”
Most recently, Hernandez was one of four finalists for the inaugural Freedom Plow Award from the Split This Rock Foundation for his work on locating the victims of the plane wreck at Los Gatos. As a performer he has collaborated with Grammy Award winning classical composer Eugene Freisen, and in 2001 was commissioned by the United Way of Greater Los Angeles to write and perform an original play on homelessness. Since 2007, he has worked with Poets & Writers Inc. and the California Center for the Book at UCLA teaching poetry, fiction, and non-fiction workshops across the West coast. From 2010–14 he was the statewide coordinator for Colorado Writers-in-the-Schools with focus on rural, under-served communities. He is a frequent guest artist at universities, cultural institutions, and literary centers across the United States and internationally.

Hernandez holds a B.A. in Writing & Literature from Naropa University and an M.F.A. from Bennington College in Vermont. He is currently a full-time Assistant Professor in the University of Texas El Paso's Bilingual M.F.A. in Creative Writing Program.
The Anthropoet: A Manifesto

Tim Z. Hernandez

The Anthropoet is the perpetual witness of external/internal landscapes.
Their quest is not a quest for “THE truth,” but rather, quest for “A truth.”
The Anthropoet is skeptical of words like “truth” or “fact.”
The Anthropoet questions everything—their strongest asset is curiosity. The Anthropoet must know, and nothing will stop them in this pursuit.
The Anthropoet is a relentless bloodhound of experience, story, clues, and documents.
The Anthropoet practices, in a physical way, the five senses as well as the sixth.
The qualitative world is the Anthropoet’s sauna.
Regardless of their own upbringing or belief system, the Anthropoet crosses all borders; ideological, spiritual, political, social, moral, formal, genre, race, class, country, planet, galaxy.
The Anthropoet will go to any lengths to scrutinize inside and outside of the subject, to get the story inside of the story.
The Anthropoet is comfortable in the light corners, where love and innocence abound—elementary schools, birthing wards, beneath the shade of a tree.
The Anthropoet is comfortable in the dark corners, the frays—among the ill, the lonely, beggars and hustlers, cemeteries, wars, and zoos.
The Anthropoet does not look away from the hideous, the wounded, the holy, the monster—he or she stares it in the eye unflinchingly, then dares to ask questions of it.
The Anthropoet may use (and often does) notepads or cameras or audio recorders, however, these external tools are luxuries and not meant to replace the most important tool of them all, their own divine bodies.
The Anthropoet practices contemplation, meditation, or other disciplines designed to expand the fullest potential of their own awareness, because the Anthropoet knows their own body is the only foolproof tool for recording experience.

The Anthropoet trusts their body contains the information and will be able to retrieve what is necessary and vital when the time comes to write. Whatever is left out or forgotten is what is unnecessary.

The Anthropoet is unafraid of long, uncomfortable, awkward, or ambiguous silences, because he or she is a practitioner of silence.

The Anthropoet knows when to be passionate and when to be dispassionate.

With equal ease, the Anthropoet can handle themselves in different circles. Be it among the academic, the homeless, the affluent, the streets, kindergarten classrooms, boardrooms, churches, mosques, labor camps, or auto garages.

When writing, the Anthropoet only stops to return to the moment of the experience, not the creative word-flourishes in the skull’s library.

The Anthropoet writes not only the subject itself, but also the meta of the meta.

The Anthropoet does not seek out what is generally understood as “important,” but rather, knows that whatever he or she focuses their lens on is what gives a subject its importance.

There is no space that the Anthropoet will not enter.

The Anthropoet’s uniform is always that of the people they serve.

The Anthropoet is most loyal to people of memory.

The Anthropoet heeds the wisdom of the Polish theater master, Jerzy Grotowski: “Tell me, do you walk home with your legs or with your ideas?”

The Anthropoet would rather be “in the field” than behind the desk.

The Anthropoet heeds the wisdom of the oral historian, Studs Terkel:

“... in their rememberings are their truths.”

The Anthropoet is a physical intellect, probing with fingertips and taste buds and nostrils and inner ears and heart antennae.

The Anthropoet is adept at technologies—cell phones, computers, etc.—but will never rely on them.

The Anthropoet may count among his or her allies, predecessors, and influences, the following individuals: Renato Rosaldo (anthropologist/
poet), Muriel Rukeyser (documentary poet), Ed Sanders (Investigative poet), C. D. Wright (documentary poet), Ernesto Cardenal (documentary poet), Marie Colvin (investigative reporter), Studs Terkel (oral historian), Ronald Blythe (oral historian), Americo Paredes (anthropologist/poet), Dorothea Lange (photo-journalist), John Steinbeck (journalist/fiction writer), Truman Capote (novelist/detective), Richard Steven Street (photographer/documentarian), James Agee (author/documentarian), Mark Nowak (documentary poet), Elena Poniatowska (novelist/documentarian), Woody Guthrie (songwriter/documentarian), John Reed (investigative journalist/poet), Jack Kerouac (poet/traveler), Luis Alberto Urrea (novelist/investigator), Audre Lord (poet/documentarian), Maria Sabina (healer/poet), and others he or she may wish to add to this growing list.

The Anthropoet will read this, take what works for them, and burn the rest. Through experience alone, he or she will come to discover their own tools, strengths, weaknesses, and methodologies.

The Anthropoet will sit down to write, eventually.
Introduction to Houston Huelga Schools

Introduction and Context

In order to understand the issues that arise with ethnicity and race in the classroom and how, even today, there are bold measures taken by local and state school board and policy makers, (i.e., the firing of the first school district superintendents of color in Ferguson, Missouri, and Baytown, Texas, the postponement of book selections for courses aimed at teaching ethnic studies in Texas, and the dismantling of the K–12 Mex. Am. Studies Program in Arizona), it is important to take note of how people react and respond to unjust efforts and policies that affect students of color.

Though not all history books report all things, light must be shed on movements that at the root were and are about protecting both culture and providing for “the future”—namely children. My project will shed as much light as possible on a particular portion of the Chicano Movement—the Huelga Schools that popped up in Houston, Texas, as a response to the “integration” move made by the Houston Independent School District.

Houston and Desegregation

Houston, Texas—In August of 1970, the Houston Independent School District (HISD) adopted a highly unconstitutional desegregation plan that was made to mix school populations between African American students and “white” students.

The truth of the matter was that the “white” students were Mexican American students who, at the time, were not a recognized “ethnic group” in HISD. Few if any of the Caucasian students were a part of this “desegregation” plan. In response to this, Mexican American families boycotted the start of the 1970–71 academic school year.

Over 3,000 Mexican American students did not attend school that first day. Within the first two weeks, the Mexican American Education Counsel (MAEC) helped create community based schools—strike schools (HUELGA SCHOOLS) that served Mexican American students.
The creation of the Huegla Schools became a part of the Texas response to the greater Chicano Movement well underway in Colorado and in California.

**Background**

HISD, at that time, made the move to label “Hispanic” students as white and thus move them from already predominantly white schools and bus these students to schools that were mostly African American as a way to integrate public schools. This move in the early 1970s, allowed HISD to segregate but not segregate and yet still comply with the law (until the law was challenged).

The level of disparity between the two types of schools, those with Caucasian populations and those with minority populations, was substantial. During the Chicano Movement in Houston at this time (the mid-1970s), this became a rallying point, one in which many in the community moved against. The Latino community boycotted, and took their children out the schools and “walked” out of class, and eventually created schools specifically for “Chicano Students.”
Lupe: Where did the Huelga Schools fall into?

Flores: I graduated in the mid-term, of ’71. The Huelga was already in place, I was lucky, I received a grant—a full grant, the length of the earth to the moon, to work on my masters, and I needed just a little bit more, to take the edge off of my thoughts, to keep me in some quick cash, so—

Lupe: You found out about the school?

Flores: And through a flyer I saw in the foreign language department, I told a friend and a few more friends, and word got back to my advisor: “No Pat, you can’t take that job.”

Lupe: How did you respond?

Flores: I told her, look, I am better prepared. I am exactly what they are looking for. Enough of the earlier ones, a bit part for some stay at home moms who want to be with their babies. But they have to go, they can’t stay long, me, I can stay until the flowers bloom again—I can make the flowers bloom again.

Lupe: So then, you made a decision,

Flores: I knew this was coming, so I walked out, figured I could struggle with anybody who didn’t see what I could see, fought my advisor who thought I needed a city job. Taught over thirty kids, in Denver Harbor, off in a church, on the corner of Hinky and Hursch. Spent our days with small chalk boards, lots of hand written assignments and a small room, and we flung around with bugs in the afternoon—the open air of science, investing in the smells and the touches, lady bugs and doodle bugs between the brain folds and the fingertips.
A Response to Gil Scott-Heron’s “A Poem for Jose Campos Torres”

“I had said I wasn’t going to write no more poems like this. I made a mistake.”

—Gil Scott-Heron, poet

From Lucy:
I am glad you called again, Lupito,  
 wanted to correct a comment I made  
 before, about Joe Campos Torres.  
 I make a mistake, I remembered it,  
 but I remembered it wrong, like it was  
 all the same time, along the same night,  
 he died, what? Under twenty-five,  
 was beaten so bad, the jailer  
 didn’t want his blood on the jail floors,  
 told the boys in blue to take him  
 to the hospital, they misunderstood,  
 like my memory, switched things up,  
 left the image of him, ranting drunk  
 at a bar, linger too long in the brain,  
 remembered him fighting with the dogs  
 in the street, back from a war that didn’t  
 treat any man, any Mexican man  
 well. They flung him in the hole,  
 allowed all his cuts to fill  
 with the bayou water and forgot  
 about him. I forgot about him,  
 forgot about the day when he died, it comes back, el cinco de mayo.  
 I wrapped him up in the years  
 of the huelga schools, I picture him  
 then, still in town, maybe I wish  
 he marched with us, yelling  
 at the dogs that were in the street.  
 But, it was the other way around.  
 By the time they drug his body up
from under Buffalo Bayou in 77,
we were ready. We screamed his loss,
we had huelga kids who were older,
knew where to walk, how big the posters
had to be, who knew what to say,
when another mejicano
had his soul ripped away.

**What We Didn’t Know—I**
**(Judge Ben Connally and I)**

You want to record me on my grandpa?

Yes.

Grandpa told my father once about how strangers would answer him after
he signed the desegregation order. They would send him letters to his office
with drawings, my family hung in trees with a note “you like them so much,
we can keep you with them.” Someone would call the house, say crazy shit—
“I hope you aren’t too attached to your wife and kids. You won’t live
to see your next birthday, you nigger-lover”, or worse, they would call
and breathe heavy, over and over. He said someone called a bomb threat
into the courthouse. Grandpa died when I was two. I remember him being
very tall, laughing, tossing me in the air. Father said Grandpa didn’t like
the people who put the integration plan together, because it was sloppy,
because it wasn’t real. Grandpa said he knew what needed to happen,
saw the train coming down the tracks, the colors that made the city work,
but people in power, they were blind and bullish. They were sick, they needed
strong medicine, but not a syringe full, a simple ampoule to ease the pain.
One time, said, at a party, some friends cornered him, asked him forcefully,
“What do you think you are doing by signing this? What are you doing to us?”

So, that enough?

*Silence*
"Oh no, miji’to, I must have forgotten!" she yelled at him on the phone—“forgotten?!?!?” he thought, but he said instead, “no, no that’s quite alright, if you don’t have the time today, we can always reschedule your interview . . .”

“No, no, that won’t do. I live about three minutes away, don’t worry. See you soon.”

“Now, how in the hell would you forget about such a moment?” he said out loud. He just couldn’t understand what the retired Dr. Flores was speaking about. “She must be tired,” he rationalized. He repositioned himself on the chair, just a little, so the light from the outside would reach his notepad. Thank God for glass walls.

The coffee shop he selected to interview the good Dr. Flores was strategically located very near her home, (1) because, it was just about one of the easiest low–key spots for coffee and (2) the design of the shop itself played to an old school sentiment that rang true to him—Boomtown was a coffee shop now, but in the early 1940s, it was a malt shop, with a double hinged door that clicked as it slowly opened back and forth, back and forth . . . but he digressed—the good Dr. Flores would have little choice in coming up with excuses not to make the interview. Unless of course, she forgot all about her interview with him, which is exactly what happened. She forgot.

He had his notes ready for her—he didn’t know her exact place in the world of the 1970s, in particular where she had been a teacher during the “strike” schools, the Huelga Schools, but she would tell him soon enough. He changed tables.

He didn’t want her to miss the interview or waste time with trying to find him in the shop, so he went from the middle table of the shop, by the lovely paintings by Zen Full, and made his way onto one table, situated right by the front door. She couldn’t miss him then. He was chunky, dark and eager—a fat man waiting for a meal, and she was a plump hen full of juicy details.

As she came into the coffee shop, she noticed him straight from the door. In fact, even before she could open the door, he could hear her say
“Lupe!” and she pointed at him. She didn’t carry much with her—only a small purse and a curious brown paper bag with a “SafeWay” Logo on it—a supermarket that was no longer a working franchise in Houston. His heart almost skipped a beat when he saw the bag. In some crazy way, that bag contained something of her past, a memento, a badge of courage that told her past and for him, it contained a secret, a treasure tied to his future. He could wait to rattle off all the questions he had in his head about teaching right at her. But first, a hug, a saludo, and a nice cup of coffee. He had to remember, she was human after all, not a relic.

Dr. Flores was very gracious with her smile, with her relaxed tone. She had given an “I am so sorry” roughly about ten times in less than twenty minutes, it even started to make him feel bad. He was just glad for the moment. He allowed her a sip of coffee. Ha. He allowed her. Right. No, he watched her, waited for her to take a ritual moment, that between a laborer and their drink. She deserved that moment, just as she deserved for someone to record the moment, record her presence in a larger story.

So, he began with the first question, “How did you become a Huelga School teacher?”—and her answer reminded him of his own first teaching experience.

“Well”, she cleared her throat, “I didn’t graduate like most education majors, mijo, no, I had to fend for myself, so I worked as I went to school and finished in December of 1971 . . .”; he had already turned on the recorder of his iPhone and took a gasp right when she said she finished in December. She was very much like him—he too had to work to go to school, he too had to fend for himself, and he too, had to graduate in the middle of the year. There was much more in common with his own personal life than he had ever thought possible. He took a risk and taught a bit across the Thames, across in London’s fog—to children much like the ones in the Huelga Schools. Children that were caught in the middle, overlooked.

Dr. Flores said “I found a flyer. You know, they were already full steam ahead by the time I was graduating, and I asked myself, what the hell? Why not teach a bunch of Chicanitos? Why not teach to the ones who need you?” And with that, she unloaded the bag, the history of children unraveled on the table top.

She was a delicate warrior. She guarded a history, a lesson, one waiting to be taught; and he, he was her latest student.
“The Tucson Three” Maya Arce, Korina Lope, and Nicolás Domínguez—some of Tucson Unified School District students who organized against Arizona’s Ethnic Studies ban. They sued the state to overturn the ban.

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UNIT VII

ONLY ART CAN SAVE US: MAPS TO THE HEART AND SOUL OF MEXICAN AMERICANS

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Top 10 Chicano Films for M.A.S.

Tony Diaz

This essay first appeared in the Huffington Post Latino Voices August 17, 2014.

Mexican American Studies (MAS) is spreading like wildfire in Texas.

By the time you read this, Texas will have the most schools teaching MAS in the nation—and growing.

On that note, we’re fine-tuning the MAS Texas Took Kit to help any K–12 teacher to incorporate Mexican American Studies. This can range from implementing an entire curriculum to using one lesson plan for a particular unit or obvious time of year such as Hispanic Heritage Month.

A not so obvious time of year to incorporate MAS in the classroom is Banned Books Week, but more on that later.

For now, here is my:

Top 10 Chicano Films for Mexican American Literature Courses


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**Chicana Films Need to Be Included in Mexican American Studies Curricula. Award-Winning Filmmaker Linda Garcia Merchant Tells Us Why!**

Linda Garcia Merchant

*Linda Garcia Merchant, an award-winning filmmaker and independent scholar, is technical director of the Chicana Por MiRaza Project, a community partner for the Somos Latinas Oral History Project and the Chicana Chicago/MABPW Collection Project, a member of the LGBT Giving Council of the Chicago Foundation for Women and a board member of the Chicago Area Women’s History Council. Watch the trailer for Linda’s latest production ‘Yo Soy Eva,’ being released this fall.*

So instead of just giving Tony a list with run times and authors, I wrote a passionate statement about why the inclusion of Chicana Filmmakers was important to the M.A.S. resource. Here is that statement:

I love being a Chicana Filmmaker because we are many things. We are primarily activists moving cultural production forward. We are provocateurs, inciting free thinking and daring conver-
sation to come from the open-ended questions we shout in the stories we tell. In Matilde Landeta’s Las Trotacalles, there is a death scene where the group of women standing around the bed of their dying friend are not dwelling on the sadness of the moment, but are having a heated conversation about the existence of God. Landeta manages to bring the emotional arc back from curious to poignant with the dying woman’s last words about faith that silences both the women and the audience.

We are risk takers, high wire aerialists tiptoeing over fields filled with the landmines of funding and exposure, cultural and gender insensitivities, resistance, and oppression, all while juggling actors, creative financing, production, distribution, and places to work, that will support us and our families.

Chicana filmmakers are family, bound by the bond of Chicana-ism and filmmaking, and the many battles fought to get things done. We teach one another craft and technique, understanding the importance of the auteur in the creation of product. We do not engage regularly, but we connect when it is important to do so. When we do engage, it is with the understanding that our bonds are as old as our history in this hemisphere, pre-tribal and pre-colonial. I say this because it is how I feel about one of the Foremothers of Chicana Filmmaking, Sylvia Morales, producer of *Chicana* (1979) and *A Crushing Love* (2009).

When I first met Sylvia Morales, I was just beginning production on my first film, *Las Mujeres*. Sylvia was beginning work on *A Crushing Love*. It was Chicano Filmmaker, Jesus Treviño, who said we should meet as we were working on similar projects.

Sylvia is tall, striking, as only Latinas can be beautiful, and the owner of the most piercing set of eyes that can and do stand as judge and jury at any moment. “So you want to be a filmmaker,” she grumbled, a tiny smirk on her lips and looking at me with that famous raised eyebrow. “Well, be prepared to always be broke and never completely satisfied with what you’ve done.” She then went on to tell wonderful stories of her experiences at the Denver Youth Conference and what it took to make *Chicana* (1979). To this day, I relish every moment of that first meeting.
and carry forward the important lessons I have learned from Sylvia about why we do what we do. Sylvia continues to mentor my work with honest feedback and constructive suggestions.

The highlight of my filmmaking career has been two opportunities to work with Sylvia on projects. First, in 2006, shooting Martha and María Cotera’s interview at my cameraman’s house in Evanston for A Crushing Love. Then in 2011, shooting panels and interviews for the Chicana Por Mi Raza Oral History Project at the MALCS (Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social) Summer Institute at CSU (California State University) Los Angeles, including a presentation of Madres Por Justicia by Teatro Chicana. Those four days in Los Angeles were the most exhausting and exciting of my life.

I believe that Chicana/Latina filmmakers have a special Y chromosome imprinted with the words “not impossible.” It is how I can rationalize our need to make films through the personal and economic challenge that comes from making film in a world consistently hesitant or disinterested in supporting us. It is a challenge that presents itself as time away from children,
spouses, and relationships in general. Filmmaking insists on a complete state of distraction during pre- and post-production, that begins with the creative acts, with writing scripts, and continues through the editing of footage, and concludes with the endlessly expensive lottery of festival submission.

However, this list isn’t just about the challenges that come with stories we tell. It is about the simple fact that we are telling them. Our “filmmaker” foremothers: Matilde Landeta, Sylvia Morales, Nancy De Los Santos, and Lourdes Portillo, learned the structure of our craft and then redesigned that form in shapes that reflect a thousand years of tias, comadres y abuelas, teaching us how to tell a tale.

Consider a young Latina in El Paso, Tejas; another in Kenosha, Wisconsin; and yet another in Las Vegas, Nevada watching A Crushing Love (Sylvia Morales, UCLA BA, MFA), Señorita Extraviada (Lourdes Portillo, San Francisco Art Institute MFA), or La negra Angustias (Matilde Landeta, Assistant Director during the Golden Age of Mexican Cinema).

While she watches these films, what seeds are planted in her mind, about the possibility of making film and becoming a filmmaker? Does she go on to become the young woman that makes Las Marthas or Mosquita Y Mari? I know she does. I know we do.

1. **Chicana.** Director/Writer: Sylvia Morales (1979) (Classroom clock: 23 mins). History of Chicana and Mexican women from pre-Columbian times to the present (Women Make Movies, distribution)

2. **A Crushing Love Chicanas, Motherhood and Activism.** Director/Writer: Sylvia Morales (2009) (Classroom clock: 58 mins). Sequel to Chicana, Morales asks the question of Chicana activists and their children, how do they successfully juggle the needs of both the community and their families. Morales takes the question a step further by turning the camera on herself and her daughter.

3. **Señorita Extraviada, Missing Young Woman.** Director/Producer: Lourdes Portillo (2001) (Classroom clock: 74 mins.) Story of the murdered women of Juarez, Mexico, is presented in a way that
demonstrates the genocidal nature of the tragedy and the lack of action by the government.

4. *Corpus: A Home Movie for Selena*. Director/Producer: Lourdes Portillo (1999) (Classroom clock: 47 mins.) It has been said that this documentary presents Tejana singing star Selena Quintanilla ‘from a Latina Feminist perspective.’ Portillo chooses to include Latina scholars commenting on the lasting fame and iconic nature of her memory.

5. *La Negra Angustias*. Director: Matilde Landeta Writers: Matilde Landeta and Francisco Rojas Gonzalez (1949) (Classroom clock: 85 mins.) At last a film about the Mexican Revolution with a woman leading the revolutionaries. Starring María Elena Marques, who is better known for her role in Emilio Fernandez’s film, *La Perla*.

6. *La Trotacalles*. Director: Matilde Landeta (1951) (Classroom clock: 101 mins.) The second of three features Landeta was able to make within the male dominated structure of the Mexican film industry. The film is about a group of streetwalkers, but without the moral judgements often applied to women in this profession.


9. *Antonia: A Chicana Story*. Directors: Luz Maria Gordillo and Juan Javier Pescador (2013). (Classroom clock: 55 mins.) One of the foremothers of Chicana studies, Antonia Castaneda’s life is presented through her writing along with interviews and conversations with colleagues and friends.

11. Mosquita Y Mari. Director/Writer: Aurora Guerrero (2012). (Classroom clock: 85 mins.) A coming-of-age story of young love that runs right into the fast-paced life that is immigrant community. Written and directed by Aurora Guerrero, this film is beautifully shot by Uruguayan cinematographer Magela Crosignani.

12. Las Marthas. Director: Cristina Ibarra (2014). (Classroom clock: 66 mins.) A wonderful documentary on a little known annual debutante ball that honors the legacy of George and Martha Washington in the border town of Laredo, Texas. Ibarra speaks to class and culture, inclusion, body image, and the public image of young women chosen to participate in this gala event.


QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

1. Write down how many of these films you had heard of before.
2. Why aren’t more of these films well known?
3. Choose one of the films to watch. After viewing the film, write a 200–450 word response discussing how the work influences any of the terms we have discussed.
4. Do you think non-Mexican Americans or non-Latinos can gain something from these works? What?
On January 10, 2012, the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) school board voted to close down the Social Justice Education Program, a program focused on Mexican American Studies. The decision was a result of Arizona state legislation, HB2281, which makes illegal any courses that: “(1) promote the overthrow of the U.S. government, (2) promote resentment toward a race or class of people, (3) are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group, and (4) advocate ethnic solidarity instead of treating pupils as individuals.” As a result, eighty books were banned and removed from classrooms in TUSD.


Rodriguez, R. (1996). *The X in La Raza II.*


**Final Thoughts**

The process of compiling this annotated bibliography provided a brief look at each of the eighty-four banned books. Many years ago, after struggling through high school and college, I finally became focused and intentional in my education when I committed to a degree in Creative Writing with a minor in American Studies (an emphasis on Southwest Studies) at the University of New Mexico. I was in my thirties and finally learning MY history. It created anger that I had grown up in the Southwest and never been exposed to the history of this area. Then it created confusion of how my life (at that time) related to my history—the history of my people. A few books that affected me during that time are on this list including *500 Years of Chicano History in Perspective*, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, and *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mextiza*.

Most recently, I’ve begun writing my dissertation proposal. My EdD will be in Education Leadership. As an educator for over fifteen years, my focus and passion has long been to address the challenges in our high-minority and high-poverty schools. Again, there are books on this list that have been required reading and those that I have sought out on my own, including *The Manufactured Crisis: Myths, Fraud, and the Attack on America’s Public Schools*, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America’s Schools*, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and *Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years*. 
There are books on this list that are on my shelves at home as absolute favorite stories. Some are signed by the authors who are close friends of mine with beautiful personal messages. Some I keep extra copies of, to give away to relatives or friends who I know are struggling to understand this world around us, including Bless Me Ultima, Immigrants in Our Own Land and Selected Poems, Black Mesa Poems, and So Far From God.

As I worked on this bibliography, I ordered more books and am waiting for them to arrive. Message to Atzlan, I downloaded immediately on my iPad so I could read Corky Gonzales’ message to educators. Critical Race Theory: An Introduction, Dictionary of Latino Civil Rights History, Justice: A Question of Race, Saving Our Schools: The Case for Public Education, Saying No to “No Child Left Behind,” and The Latino Condition: A Critical Reader are on their way into my home, my life, my consciousness.

Over twenty years passed between sitting in Rudolfo Anaya’s UNM office as an undergraduate student and sitting in his home over Spring Break waiting for Librotraficante’s to stop by on their way from Houston to Tucson, where they would deliver over 1,000 copies of the banned books to Tucson youth. Anaya and I spoke of many things including personal, professional, political, cultural, and the economic crisis we found our country in. Anaya had given the charge to Tony Diaz, organizer of Librotraficante’s to “Occupy Arizona with our stories and our history” and that’s exactly what Diaz was doing. During our visit, Rudolfo showed me a hand-carved wooden bulto of Patrociño Barela, the patron saint of Nuevo Mexican artists. And Rudolfo, with his seventy-four-year-old wise eyes asked me, “what if I had learned about Patrociño in my youth?” And now I ask, what if I had read Bless Me Ultima in my youth instead of in my thirties?

This is a dangerous time in America, when policies are being written, passed, and enforced that require the disbanding of a program such as the Social Education Program in Tucson. This battle for civil rights has a long history in America but something has changed recently to escalate the danger and this list provides insight toward understanding this danger. In closing, let us consider the writing of Tim Wise (2012) in Dear White America: Letter to a New Minority. Wise, a prominent anti-racist writer and educator writes,
“But now, white normativity is being challenged, and not only on one front, but on four: political, economic, cultural, and demographic. And each of these in turn and especially together, poses a direct challenge to whiteness on yet a fifth front, the narrative front, by which I mean the battlefield of ideas within which the national character and story itself are defined and told to others.”

This is the battlefield of ideas, the battle for the story of America, the battle for the American narrative. Who will tell the story of America?

Elaine Romero is an EdD student of Education Leadership at the University of New Mexico. She has been an educator for over fifteen years always serving Title I schools including rural, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and urban New Mexico. She has served as a Teaching Ambassador Fellow with the US Department of Education under the Obama administration. She recently spent a legislative session working as an education policy analyst for the Democratic Majority.
The Original MAS TUSD Teachers

Studying the banning of Ethnic Studies in Arizona is a powerful way to teach students how Literature, Rhetorical Analysis, voting, and so many other courses influence the real world.

Novels and court cases can be considered opposites in some ways. Readers love literature because it is open to interpretation and is intended to trigger emotions. On the other hand, court cases could be seen as representing the epitome of logic, reducing incidents to the essential components to be objectively reviewed.

The court case against the banning of Ethnic Studies in Arizona forces these opposites to clash offering students a unique opportunity to see in action several theories from the classroom. Also, court cases provide unique ways to archive moments in history.

The court case challenging the Ethnic Studies prohibition in Arizona was first called “Acosta et al v. Huppenthal et al.”

It was filed October 18, 2010, with the Tucson Division Office of the Arizona District Court. “Constitutionality of State Statutes” is listed as the nature of the suit. The document lists the original Mexican American Studies teachers at Tucson Unified School District as the plaintiffs. The courts would later rule that they were not eligible to sue the state; however, students could.

Also, Tom Horne is listed as a defendant. His name would be removed when he was no longer in office and he was replaced by John Huppenthal.

This is the reason that the name of the case during the oral arguments for the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals became Maya Arce v. John Huppenthal.

This is the list of the original Mexican American Studies teachers at Tucson Unified School District as archived by the court documents:

- Curtis Acosta,
- Sean Arce,
- Maria Federico Bummer,
- Dolores Carrion,
- Alejandro Escamilla,
- Jose Gonzalez,
- Norma Gonzalez,
- Lorenzo Lopez, Jr.,
- Rene F Martinez,
- Sally Rusk and
- Yolanda Sotelo
Every Week Is Banned Books Week for Chicanos

Tony Diaz

Every week is banned books week for Chicanos.

In Arizona, two Chicana high school students, Maya Arce and Korina Lopez, await word of when their case against Arizona HB 2281 goes up before the 9th Circuit Court of appeals.

That’s because in 2012, via AZ HB 2281, Arizona officials banned Mexican American Studies, claiming it promoted the overthrow of the government.

That statement is full of so many ironies I don’t know where to begin. Since it’s Banned Books Week, for everyone else, let’s start there. Typically, challenging a book is hard work.

You have to read the book—well, at least the paragraph or sentence that boggles your mind, or that people have told you should offend you. You have to fill out a form, sign your name, let your neighbors know that you’re a book banner.

Turns out Arizona is streamlining the process. With Arizona House Bill 2282, which prohibits any courses or classes that “promote the overthrow of the government,” Arizona officials were able to effectively challenge over eighty books in one swoop. Some were even carted out of classrooms and boxed during class time, in front of our youth.

These books were part of the curriculum for the K–12 Mexican American Studies Program at Tucson Unified School District.

The books include novels such as *The House On Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, *Bless Me, Ultima* by Rudolfo Anaya, and *The Magic of Blood* by Dagoberto Gilb.

There are more. So, this Banned Books Week, starting Wednesday, September 24 through October 1, every hour, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., the Librotraficantes will tweet and post the title and author of one of the books on the list of MAS Banned Books. It will take us all week to do

it. There are that many. We’ll be using the hash tags #MASbannedbooks #MASbannedbooksweek and #Librotraficante.

When we Librotrafican特斯 smuggled the banned books back into Arizona during our 2012 Librotraficante Caravan, I re-read some of the works to see what I had missed upon my first read because I couldn’t think of one of them promoting the overthrow of the government.

I don’t remember young Esperanza, the protagonist of Sandra Cisneros’ *The House On Mango Street*, even uttering the word “government.” Did the chapter titled “Bums in the Attic” hint at some sort of populist armed agenda? If so, I couldn’t find it.

In fact, of the list of over eighty titles, there aren’t any books that are even slightly useful manuals for overthrowing the government.

So I decided to instead find some.

I found two right away: *The Conquest of Gaul* and *The Civil War*, both by Julius Caesar.

*The Conquest of Gaul* is mind-blowing because it is basically Julius Caesar convincing the Roman elite and the Roman people that he needed to attack the hordes of barbarians they called the Germani who surrounded their borders and who any day might wash over them. If he added, “and took their jobs,” he might be talking about modern far-right Republican Immigration views. *That actually sounds like the template used to create Arizona SB 1070, the “show me your papers law,” that launched the current anti-immigrant movement.*

Come to think of it, in *The Civil War*, Julius Caesar justifies his atrocities against fellow Romans who opposed him by making them sound unpatriotic so that he could create policies that took power away from the people until he was able to squash his competition, destroy all dissent, and create an empire. Ironically, he made it seem as if he was suppressing those who were overthrowing the government, when in fact he was toppling the Republic.

Which takes me back to the list of books banned in Arizona.

Esperanza, from *The House On Mango Street*, resembles the young high school students suing Arizona, Maya and Korina—actually Cisneros does too.

*That’s what Arizona Republicans are scared of.*

Those eighty-plus books on the Banned MAS curriculum are starter books. They get our youth hooked on words, as they did with me.
Then, after mind-altering doses of Zinn and Critical Race Theory, we move on to harder reads, like The Conquest of Gaul.

This is what they fear. They fear so many of us dropping knowledge and realizing that it's the book banners who want to overthrow democracy and freedom of speech.

The Arizona book banners aren't afraid that the next Julius Caesar will simply go by the name “Julio.” They're scared that their next governor might.

Arizona should drop the case defending the un-American law HB 2281 (A.R.S. § 15-112 in recent court documents). They should reinstate the Mexican American Studies program they dismantled at Tucson Unified School District. They should rehire the MAS teachers they fired, and they should admit they were wrong.

Or, if Arizona does want to send America to the Roman Age, they should then ban ALL courses that promote the overthrow of the government, such as any survey of the American Civil War. The rebel South didn't simply promote the overthrow of the government—they actively engaged in it.

And they should ban Julius Caesar's books The Conquest of Gaul and The Civil War.

I'm okay with that because I've already read them.

And once you've read a banned book, they can never take it away from you.

We will launch our MAS Banned Book list during the Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say Radio Show in Houston, Tuesday, September 23, 2014, 6 p.m.–7 p.m., Central, on 90.1 FM KPFT Houston, Texas. Live stream & iTunes on www.KPFT.org.

We will let folks know about book drives, and you'll also meet some of the banned authors, too.
We will also give you updates on the status of the lawsuit against Arizona House Bill 2281.

#MASbannedbooks
#MASbannedbooksweek
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www.MASTexas.org
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