Acknowledgments

Thank you to all those who have supported me this year, especially Ryan, my work crew, and my housemates/sisters.

Thank you to Drew Hafner, who first introduced me to the struggle in Tucson.

Thank you to Andrew Byler for extensively helping me in the revising and editing process.

Thank you to Professor Tinson and Alana Kumbier.

Thank you to my wonderful committee members, Susan Tracy and Kristen Luschen. You have seen and supported me through my ups and downs this year.

Thank you to my brother, Cris, for reading my work and listening to me rant.

Thank you to mamma and daddy for being the most caring and supportive parents that I could have asked for.

Finally, I want to thank the students, teachers and organizers of Tucson's Mexican American Studies Program. You keep my hope alive for the possibilities of public education.
# Table of Contents

Introduction................................................................................................................................................1

Chapter 1:  
Early Mexican Immigration and the Chican@ Civil Rights Movement.......................................................19

Chapter 2:  
The Growing Threat and Rising Extremism: Arizona Case Study............................................................53

Chapter 3:  
Tucson's Mexican American Studies Program........................................................................................81

Conclusion.............................................................................................................................................105
Introduction

“Mainstream Euro-American studies deny all students – both White and of color – an education that takes seriously the realities of institutionalized racism that people of color live everyday, and knowledge that arises from within communities of color. Ethnic studies, by allowing for multiple voices to enter dialog constructing the narrative of this country, is critical to the development of a democracy that actually includes everyone.”
– Christine E. Sleeter, “The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies.”

Currently, Latin@s – specifically Mexican Americans – are the fastest growing student demographic in United States public schools. On January 10, 2012, the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) school board voted to dismantle its Mexican American Studies (MAS) program that served ten schools and over 1,500 K-12 students. The program was implemented in 1997 to improve the academic achievement, sense of belonging and graduation rate of Mexican American students. A study conducted by the University of Arizona showed that it was successful in doing so. However, through the subtle inner-workings of conservatives in positions of state-power, the MAS program was found guilty of: 1) Promoting resentment toward a race or class of people, 2) Being designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group, 3) Advocating ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals. The banning of the Mexican American Studies program in Tucson, Arizona marks the increasing attack and control of public education by “colorblind” politicians under an era of Neoliberal education reform and the targeting of People of Color, specifically Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans in this case. I believe that the banning of Tucson's Mexican American Studies program is a nativist response to the social and academic gains made by Mexican American students, which is seen as a threat to White political power. Furthermore, this is not an isolated incident, but part of a historical trend of marginalizing People of Color to maintain a system of White supremacy. As the student population of Chican@s and Latin@s increases nationally, the banning of the Tucson's MAS program is equally as concerning for the nation as it is for Tucson.

Jonathan Grady et al. (2012) and Lipman (2007) argue that Neoliberalism marginalizes the lives
of people of color, characterizing it as, “the white supremacist desire to police and contain those who threaten white places of order and activity.”

In this case, the Mexican American Studies program, which exposed students to aspects of racism and discrimination in U.S. history and in the lives of Mexicans and Mexican Americans, was seen as a threat to schools – a White place of order and activity. “Neoliberalism (in the twenty-first century) seeks to shift control of the economy from the public to the private sector with the avowed purpose of creating a more lean and efficient government while accumulating profit through a record rate.” Applying the Neoliberal business model to schooling, Neoliberal education reform puts a heavy focus on individual (as opposed to collective) progress, routinely measured through increased standardization testing. As testing becomes the norm for measuring student academic progress, the classroom curriculum has become more standardized, rigid and regulated.

The banning of TUSD's Mexican American Studies program is part of an ongoing trend of oppressing Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans in United States history. Since the establishment of the U.S. Border Patrol in 1924, Mexicans people have experienced exploitation of their labor, violence and criminalization of their bodies, and unequal opportunities in most facets of their lives, particularly in education. Throughout most of the twentieth century, Mexican workers were used and disposed of as an economic commodity. Workers endured long, difficult hours for little pay and less respect under poor living conditions. During periods of low demand for cheap, exploitable Mexican labor, workers were arrested, detained and deported. Further, this system of using or disposing of Mexican workers as an exploitable economic product has also led to the socioeconomic marginalization of Mexicans and Mexican Americans. With such low wages and migrant travel, most children of Mexican workers were only able to attend a short period of school before needing to work.

---

Therefore, Mexican workers became trapped in a destructive cycle of constant labor exploitation with little opportunity for upward mobility.

The Chican@ Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 70s was a period of resistance against the oppressive forces that Mexican Americans were experiencing. Marked by labor strikes, political uprising and school walkouts, the collective organizing efforts of El Movimiento allowed Chican@s to fight back after several decades of discrimination, inequity and exploitation. While the late 1970s and onward has exhibited a pushback by conservatives and White American nativists, the organizing and demands of the Chican@ Civil Rights Movement resonate with the current struggle for ethnic studies in Tucson.

Today's immigration discourse shows a rise in extremist legislation, literature and media coverage, subtly creating an attack on Mexican people on a national scale. The prevalence of this discourse has resulted in the normalization of extremist accusations about Chican@s, further perpetuating institutionalized forms of oppression. This has also resulted in the increased militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border and the criminalization of Mexicans. As the number of Mexican and Latin@ students increases within the U.S. public school system, the banning of Tucson's Mexican American Studies program ought to concern the nation, not just Tucson and Arizona.

In 2010, 41.6 percent of Tucson's population identified as Latin@, with those of Mexican heritage accounting for ninety percent of the Latin@ population. A similar trend can be seen on the state-level in Arizona with nearly thirty percent of the population identifying as Latin@ and those of Mexican heritage accounting for 96% of this population. On the national scale, just over sixteen percent of the U.S. population identifies as Latin@ and 63 percent of that population identifies as Mexican. Additionally, the Latin@ population across the United States is increasing at a faster rate.

---

4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
than that of any other racial or ethnic group.\(^6\) The juxtaposition of the banning of the Mexican American Studies program and the increased policing and criminalizing of Latin@s alongside of the increasing size of this demographic paints a concerning picture for immigration and education politics.

How have early tactics of criminalizing and stereotyping Mexican people worked to oppress Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans to this day? What parallels can be drawn between the Chican@ Civil Rights Movements and the Mexican American Studies program in Tucson? How do conservative politics affect and control education? Through an examination of early Mexican immigration and contemporary politics affecting Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans, I aim to gain a better understanding of these questions and find ways to break cracks into the Neoliberal capitalist system of education reform to promote the equity of all people, particularly students.

**Review of Relevant Literature**

The curriculum in most K-12 public school classrooms abides by a mainstream, or “heroes and holidays” approach, which makes no effort to include any voices or opinions outside of Euro-American, middle- and upper-class males. Within the “heroes and holidays” approach, which is taken in most history and social studies textbooks and classrooms, the experiences of oppressed people are only included in the curriculum through a few key figures and holidays. A common example is how the experiences of African Americans are usually only brought up during Black History Month; Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks are usually represented as the only two African-American heroes. While Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks are certainly important historical figures to be discussed, the focus on a few key individuals who stood up against injustice negates the collective organizing that has occurred in so many communities of color throughout U.S. history. Further, the excessive degree to which these heroes are discussed, distances students from the actual lived experience of racial injustice and actions taken to fight back against discrimination. A “heroes and holidays” approach skews

\(^6\) *Ibid.*
students' understanding of cultures by focusing on tangible cultural items such as food, music and costumes. Ultimately, this approach uses oppressed people to supplement the mainstream curriculum and furthers the notion of “the Other.”

Understanding what existing literature says about ethnic studies is crucial in analyzing the political situation surrounding ethnic studies. The literature that I have chosen provides context and a concreteness for understanding ethnic studies debates. Sleeter (2011) defines ethnic studies curricula as “units of study, courses, or programs that are centered around the knowledge and perspectives of an ethnic or racial group, reflecting narratives and points of view rooted in lived experiences and intellectual scholarship of that group.”

Ethnic studies curricula and frameworks are often dated back to 1968 at San Francisco State University, which then spread to other areas of California and eventually across the country. However, Sleeter (2011) points out that ethnic studies has been in existence for much longer than the 1960s. She cites W. E. B. DuBois (1903) and Carter G. Woodson (1933) as pioneers of ethnic studies work, thought and theory. There were also the Freedom Schools established by the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) during Freedom Summer (1964), tribal schools, and language immersion schools among other examples. Sleeter argues that, “Although commonly described as ‘divisive,’ un-American, and teaching racial separatism and even the overthrow of the U.S. government... ethnic studies curricula very intentionally include historically marginalized communities and students in a multicultural American curriculum and narrative, often supporting and developing cross-group communication.”

Another important aspect of ethnic studies is who is teaching the material and how. Ethnic studies teachers are usually part of the ethnic or racial group that the course is designed for. Further, as was the case with the Mexican American Studies (MAS) program in Tucson, Arizona, ethnic studies teachers have usually received specific training for teaching ethnic

---

8 Ibid., 5.
studies classes, including social justice education, Critical Race Theory (CRT), multicultural education, and culturally relevant pedagogical training. Therefore, unlike the mainstream or “heroes and holidays” curricular approach, ethnic studies takes into account the histories and perspectives of marginalized voices. Teachers of these courses receive specific training in order to best serve their students.

Sleeter (2002) identified five consistent themes that differentiate ethnic studies from what she calls Euro-American mainstream school knowledge:

1. Explicit identification of the point of view from which knowledge emanates, and the relationship between social location and perspective;
2. Examination of U.S. colonialism historically, as well as how relations of colonialism continue to play out;
3. Examination of the historical construction of race and institutional racism, how people navigate racism, and struggles for liberation;
4. Probing meaning of collective or communal identities that people hold; and
5. Studying one's community's creative and intellectual products, both historic and contemporary.  

Many studies have evaluated the positive effects of ethnic studies on a range of students. For the purposes of this research, studies that examine the effects of ethnic studies curricula and courses solely in K-12 settings are used. I have selected three categories that address the positive effects of ethnic studies: promoting positive student attitudes and inclusion, improving student academic achievement, and effectiveness of ethnic studies on White students.

**Ethnic Studies promotes positive student attitudes and inclusion**

I have selected two studies to show the positive effects of ethnic studies on students' attitudes and feelings of inclusion. Brozo et al. (1996) evaluated the effects of socially and culturally relevant coursework on a group of Mexican American eighth graders. Their research took place at West Oso Junior High School in the Molina area of Corpus Christi, Texas. Of the 45,000 residents in Molina,  

---


approximately 90% are Latin@ of which 70% speak English as a second or other language. Sixty percent of adults 18 and older had no high school diploma or G.E.D. Unemployment was 16.6% (more than two times the state average). Forty percent of Molina residents live below the poverty line with the average per capita annual income between $5,000 and $11,000.\footnote{William G. Brozo, Paul Cantú Valerio, and Minerva M. Salazar, “A Walk through Gracie’s Garden: Literacy and Cultural Explorations in a Mexican American Junior High School,” \textit{Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy} 40 (1996): 165.}

Minerva Salazar was a teacher at West Oso Junior High School, but she felt like she was not effectively reaching her students so she sought help. She worked with the two other co-authors of the study, Dr. Brozo and Paul Valerio.\footnote{Paul Valerio is a Mexican American native of Molina.} Minerva's class consisted of twenty-two eighth grade students, nineteen of whom were Mexican American, one Filipino American, one African American, and one Euro American. After extensive observations with Minerva's eighth grade reading class and multiple meetings with parents, administrators of West Oso Junior High and the local university, teachers, professors and other community members, Valerio and Brozo began working with Minerva to improve students' engagement with the material. The three of them designed a Hispanic culture unit and through a small grant from the Texas State Reading Association, Minerva ordered a class set of Rudolfo Anaya's \textit{Bless Me, Ultima} novel (1972). “Rife with \textit{curanderismo} (traditional Mexican American faith healing) and the practice of folk medicines, this book became the core of the unit around which reading, writing, and field activities were structured.”\footnote{William G. Brozo, Paul Cantú Valerio, and Minerva M. Salazar, “A Walk through Gracie’s Garden: Literacy and Cultural Explorations in a Mexican American Junior High School,” \textit{Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy} 40 (1996): 166.}

Short stories by authors such as Sandra Cisneros and Gary Soto also supplemented the unit. “Because the unit was about Hispanic cultural identity, it was critical that the eighth graders had opportunities to explore their cultural roots within their families.”\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}}

Community members and resources were another part of students' learning. This included a walk through Gracie Mendoza's\footnote{A Mexican American faith healer who lives in the Molina area.} garden and multiple trips to the university for lectures. Involvement
of students' home-life was also an important aspect of this process. Brozo et al. (1996) implemented the use of Integrated Parents Involvement Packets (IPIPs), which included a letter to parents, a sign-out sheet for documentation, an explanation of the use of IPIPs and a story and biography of the author to be read aloud by the students' parent or caregiver to the student. The final piece of the IPIP was an activity that was relevant to the reading. For example, after reading Rudolfo Anaya's (1990) “Saloman's Story,” which describes the process of brewing traditional teas from local herbs, parents and students were given instructions and ingredients to make their own native tea.\(^{16}\)

The effects of such IPIP activities were overwhelmingly positive. One student named Noelia stated that she was skeptical of her mother's and her own engagement in the tea-making activity. However, in a journal entry that involved a reflection of the activity, Noelia wrote that,

> While we drank it my mom told me about her parents from the valley and how they had to struggle to get by. She said she remembered drinking tea when she was sick that her mom, mi abuelita, made for her from herbs that grew wild around their house.\(^{17}\)

Noelia's experience of connecting with her mother, her history and familial cultural traditions was similar to that of other students in Minerva's class.

Brozo et al. (1996) implemented alternative ways of engaging with the text and creating meaning through paired reading and responding and peer-led discussion of the texts. Students exhibited high-levels of engagement through such activities. “These demonstrations of literary engagement were at a level unseen among Minerva's eighth graders before the Hispanic culture unit and the reading of books and stories authored by Hispanic Americans.”\(^{18}\)

After an overwhelmingly positive response from students after their field trip to Gracie's garden, they decided to each write her a thank you letter. In Nelda's letter, she wrote that,

> Before I took this trip I didn't know how useful nature can be. I realize now why many

---


\(^{17}\) Ibid.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.
Hispanics value nature's gifts so deeply. It's simply because nature's gifts are wonderful. Thank you for helping me better understand the depth of my Mexican culture. I enjoyed the tour of your garden very much. I hope I can do it again.\textsuperscript{19}

Based on the results of the Hispanic culture unit, Brozo et al. (1996) concluded that, “It became immediately apparent to us that the heart of what made the Hispanic culture unit a success was the high-quality, culturally relevant literature the students read.”\textsuperscript{20} They also state how regular and frequent opportunities for writing were particularly helpful because it allowed for students to bring in their own personal, familial, and cultural connections to the content, an opportunity often left out of the conventional curriculum. Engagement with the community as a cultural response was also positive in that it allowed students to learn first-hand from community members. Instead of using the few repeated heroes from students' textbooks, community members became “touchable role models,” which brought life and meaning to the unit. Through the use of IPIPs, “students were better able to connect the ideas from the novel and stories in our unit to their own families and heritage.”\textsuperscript{21}

While Brozo et al. (1996) documented the positive effects of a unit of study, Julio Cammarota and Augustine Romero created and evaluated an entire course that showed similar positive effects on students' attitudes and feelings of inclusion, implemented by The Social Justice Education Project (SJEP) in Tucson, Arizona in 2003. The program, located at Cerro High School in Tucson, is open to working-class Latin@s from the southwest Tucson area. SJEP provides students with a specifically designed social science curriculum that is aligned with state-mandated requirements for U.S. Government and History and involves students in Participatory Action Research (PAR). According to Cammarota and Romero (2009a), “The intention is for students to reclaim the political space that silences their voices in the missing element, student knowledge, for developing effective policies for young people.”\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 170.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 169.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} Julio Cammarota and Augustine Romero, “A Social Justice Epistemology and Pedagogy for Latina/o Students:
completed at the end of the course, informal, open-ended exit interviews with students, and students' research to assess their level of engagement and understanding with/of the materials were all used in their research to evaluate the effects of SJEP participation.23

In conducting their PAR projects, students chose to examine issues that personally affected them. Once students selected a theme that they were interested in investigating, they gathered and created poems, kept notes, took photographs, and/or conducted interviews in their area of interest. The latter half of the year was spent analyzing their fieldwork using a Chican@ Studies and Critical Race Theory (CRT) perspective. These analyses took the form of written reports, video documentation and presentations. Their findings were presented to teachers, the school board, principals, the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) superintendent, and local, state and federal officials.

Through poetry and photography, Cammarota and Romero (2009a) illuminate how students are able to bring their 'funds of knowledge' into their education in order to share a deeper, more meaningful connection to their work. Yolo Rivera, an SJEP student discussed in the study, used photography to analyze his experience of being a Mexican immigrant and an English Language Learner (ELL). Upon entering Cerro High School in Tucson, he was placed in a remedial ELL program. During Yolo's time in SJEP, he photographed a number of classrooms to document the subtle ways that Arizona's English Only law has marginalized ELL students.24 He then presented his findings to the TUSD School Board. Upon graduating from Cerro High School, Yolo gave the commencement speech at the graduation ceremony. While he entered Cerro with limited English-speaking ability, he graduated after fully conducting, then presenting a PAR project in English to the TUSD school board, federal, state and local

23 Ibid.
officials and at a national academic conference. During Yolo's graduation speech, he attributed his turnaround success in school to his participation the Social Justice Education Project.

**Ethnic Studies improves student academic achievement**

The studies above show the positive effects that ethnic studies has on student attitudes and feelings of inclusion. Research also demonstrates the positive impact of ethnic studies on academic achievement. Two additional studies about the Social Justice Education Project have been conducted by Cammarota (2007) and Cammarota and Romero (2009b). Cammarota (2007) surveyed the effectiveness of the program after its first year. A group of 17 students on the verge of dropping out participated in SJEP during its first year. Cammarota (2007) found that 15 out of the 17 total participants graduated from high school and 10 of those 15 were enrolled in college. An end of the year survey “overwhelmingly reported” that students' participation in SJEP motivated them to think more about their other classes and their future and consider attending college.\(^{25}\) Cammarota and Romero (2009b), in their analysis of the Social Justice Education Project, found that Chican@ students outscored Anglo students who attended the same school on the Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) test. 35 out of 36 students passed the writing section, 34 out of 36 passed the reading section and 27 out of 35 passed the math exam, “which was a considerably higher pass rate than the Anglo students attained.”\(^{26}\) SJEP students graduated at approximately 95% compared to 84% for Anglo students who attended the same schools where SJEP was offered. Further, SJEP students attributed their academic gains to their participation in the program.\(^ {27}\)

The studies of Cammarota (2007) and Cammarota and Romero (2009b) show the positive effects that ethnic studies can have on student academic achievement. Similar to the SJEP, Tucson

---


\(^{27}\) *Ibid.*
Unified School District's Mexican American Studies program – the only school district with a full-fledged ethnic studies program\textsuperscript{28} – has shown that a district-wide ethnic studies program can also have positive effects on student academic achievement. Cabrera et al. (2012) conducted an analysis of the effects of TUSD's Mexican American Studies program on student academic achievement. Student data used in the study were from the 2008 – 2011 graduating classes, with an equal number of Mexican American Studies participants and non-Mexican American Studies participants.\textsuperscript{29} While these four years do not capture the entire length of the MAS program, the 2008-2011 graduating classes were chosen because they represent the years when MAS participation peaked. These four years also contained the most complete student data, including students' race, gender, socioeconomic status, and student classification.\textsuperscript{30} Non-MAS students in the study were chosen from a sample of 13,054 students who reflected similar demographic characteristics to the MAS students in the study.\textsuperscript{31}

In order to evaluate the effects of Mexican American Studies participation on student academic achievement, Cabrera et al. (2012) used three categories: AIMS, graduation, and college attendance. The AIMS test defines academic success as an initial failure followed by successful completion and passing of the test.\textsuperscript{33} Graduation was broken down into two categories: the Arizona Department of Education (ADE)-designated cohort graduation\textsuperscript{34} and whether or not the student graduated at all (i.e. taking an additional year of high school). The model of measuring college attendance was considered

\textsuperscript{29} 2008: n=822 total, 2009: n=742, 2010: n=736, 2011: n=800.
\textsuperscript{30} Student classification, meaning if a student was ever classified as an English Language Learner (ELL), Gifted and Talented, or received Special Education services.
\textsuperscript{31} Total non-MAS students: n=1,550
\textsuperscript{33} Students who passed the AIMS test before participation in the MAS program were removed from the sample since the purpose of the study was to examine whether MAS participation positively affected AIMS testing results.
to be less successful, as warned by Cabrera et al. (2012).\textsuperscript{35}

For three out of the four years (2008, 2010, and 2011), MAS students who failed at least one AIMS test initially were significantly more likely to pass all three sections of the AIMS test after participation in the Mexican American Studies program. All four years showed a positive correlation between MAS participation and AIMS testing, although the 2009-year did not yield a high enough correlation to be considered significant.\textsuperscript{36}

The results for graduation were broken-down into two categories. For the ADE-designated cohort, MAS participation resulted in significant graduation rates for the 2008, 2009 and 2010 years. Results ranged from 51 percent more likely to graduate (2009) to 108 percent more likely to graduate (2008). When the dependent variable was graduation at anytime, MAS students ranged from being 46 percent (2011) to 150 percent (2008) more likely to graduate than students who did not participate in the Mexican American Studies program. While the 2011-year did yield positive results, the data was not significant.\textsuperscript{37}

Cabrera et al.'s (2011) analysis of the Mexican American Studies program on student academic achievement showed that there is no evidence of the MAS program adversely affecting student achievement. Of the twelve regression models for AIMS passing, MAS participation was positively correlated to the dependent variable in every case, of which seven yielded significant results. For the eight regression models evaluating graduation rates, each was positively related to MAS participation. Six showed a significant correlation. Cabrera et al. (2012) conclude that, “These results suggest that

\textsuperscript{35} They explain that they would have used the National Clearinghouse data, which accurately tracks where students attend college. However, the top college destination for most TUSD graduates – Pima Community College – is not a part of the National Clearinghouse's data. Therefore, college attendance was based on the Senior Survey, administered by TUSD, where students state which college, if at all, they are planning to attend. Unfortunately, this data was less complete than the AIMS test data. Further, one's intention to attend college may differ from whether or not they actually end up attending college.


\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Ibid.}, 6.
there is a consistent, significant, positive relationship between MAS participation and student academic achievement.”

Ethnic Studies is beneficial for all students

Hughes et al. (2007) conducted a study to examine the effects of how learning about historical racism affects students' perceptions of racism. Participants were 48 European American students at a summer school program in the Midwest. Additionally, seven students of color participated in the program, but were not used in the data analysis. Students ranged from 6 years 10 months old to 11 years 0 months old, with a median age of 8 years of age. For data analysis purposes, students were divided into groups based on age. While the socioeconomic status of students was not evaluated, the summer program tended to draw in middle-class, European American students. For each age group (6-7, 8-9, 10-11), two classes were created. One classroom for each age group was then assigned to a treatment condition: racism condition and control condition. Both groups consisted of an equal number of boys and girls.

For six consecutive days, every group of students received a history lesson taught by a European American teacher. Students' responses to each lesson were evaluated daily with a brief questionnaire. Once the six-day lesson was completed, students' attitudes toward African Americans and European Americans were assessed. Twelve biographies about famous Americans (six African Americans and six European Americans) were written specifically to be used in this study. The biographies emphasized the positive attributes and accomplishments of each person. For the racism condition groups, the biographies and lessons explicitly highlighted some of the racial discrimination experienced by the famous African Americans by European Americans. For the control condition group, no reference was made to racial discrimination.

---

38 Ibid., 7.
39 For all six days, the teacher remained the same.
Hughes et al. found that European American students exposed to racial discrimination in the six-day long lesson had significantly more positive attitudes and significantly less negative attitudes toward African Americans than students in the control group. Hughes et al. (2007) attributed this to the students' valuing of racial fairness. Their results indicate that by teaching European American students about racial discrimination, they are more likely to see how racism affects everybody and, therefore, more likely to acknowledge racism in the future.41

While the studies reviewed above show the positive effects that ethnic studies can have on all students in a variety of ways, it seems puzzling that Tucson's Mexican American Studies program was considered so controversial that it was banned. As the research in the chapters of this thesis will reveal, education is a site of social control, but also of individual social and economic mobility. Therefore, a means of maintaining the marginalization of People of Color and other oppressed communities is by controlling their education. The academic and social gains made by Mexican American students in the MAS program were viewed as threat to political power in the United States that positions Whites above People of Color. In this view, if ethnic studies programs improve the academic performance of Students of Color, then ethnic studies is also seen as a threat to existing systems of power and oppression. Therefore, I posit that the banning of the Mexican American Studies program is a nativist response to the increased educational achievements of Mexican Americans and the imposed threat to White nativist power.

Methodology and Key Terms

The first two chapters use secondary historical literature to explain early Mexican immigration. While European American oppression toward Mexican people could be dated back to early colonization, I chose to start at the 1920s because the creation of the Border Patrol marks the first legal criminalization of Mexicans that still thrives today. Chapter two utilizes interviews, news articles and

41 Ibid.
websites to highlight contemporary immigration politics on a state and local level. For chapters one and two, I found that using a mix of books, scholarly journals, and news articles was most helpful in providing a complete historical analysis that included the voices of individuals. The third chapter uses a variety of primary and secondary resources to convey the struggle for ethnic studies in Tucson. Since this is such a recent issue, there is a limited amount of detailed literature on the subject. Therefore, I have largely used news articles, interviews, video sources, and public statements issued by involved political figures. I utilized a variety of news sources, including conservative, liberal and radical viewpoints, as well as local Tucson news sources to provide a more local analysis.

An explanation of certain words and terms used throughout this research paper warrants an explanation. Literature that I have read uses either the term Chican@ or Mexican American. While Chican@ was formerly used as a racial slur, it underwent an empowering revival in the 1960s. Mexican American refers to people born in the United States who are of Mexican descent. Throughout this paper, I will be using Chican@ and Mexican American interchangeably. Additionally, regarding the use of Hispanic and Latin@, I will primarily be using the word Latin@, unless the word Hispanic is being used in a text that I am referring to. With regard to Mexican people who were not born in the United States or are only living in the U.S. temporarily, I will use the term Mexican or Mexican immigrant. I have refrained from using the term “illegal alien,” unless it is specifically being used by an author or political figure.42 To describe those living in the United States without citizenship or other documentation, I will use the word undocumented because I believe that it is more accurate and less dehumanizing.

Overview of Chapters

The first chapter of this thesis examines early Mexican immigration, starting in the 1920s with the National Origins Act of 1924 and the establishment of the United States Border Patrol. I then move

42 For further reading on why I and many others have chosen to “drop the I-word”, read here: http://colorlines.com/drop-the-i-word/.
into a discussion of 1940s through 1960s immigration reform, labor demands and increased
criminalization of Mexican workers through the Bracero program and Operation Wetback. The
Chican@ Civil Rights Movements is examined in four contexts: the grape boycott and labor strike of
the United Farm Workers, the collective, national organizing efforts, particularly around the Vietnam
War, the school walkouts and the Raza Unida Party.

Chapter two examines the conservative and White nativist pushback starting in the late 1970s,
following the Chican@ Civil Rights Movement. Next, I investigate the political climate surrounding
Arizona on a state-level, with a specific focus on Governor Jan Brewer and SB 1070. Finally, I move
from the state to local level, with an examination of anti-immigrant and immigrant advocacy groups in
Tucson.

The third and final chapter is an analysis of the Mexican American Studies program in Tucson.
It begins with the establishment of program in 1997, giving context to how it came to be. Next, I move
into an exploration of the various legal statements and bills issued to ban the program. Finally, I
conclude by looking at the student pushback of the banning of the program and the reinstatement of
federally-mandated, culturally responsive teaching.

The history of Mexican immigration in the United States is full of contradictions, with
economic dependency for cheap, exploitable labor at the forefront of the issue, yet essentially silenced
in debates around immigration. Through an overview and analysis of Mexican immigration history
starting in the 1920s, I will highlight trends of discrimination toward Mexican immigrants and Mexican
Americans. I will use the banning of the Tucson's Mexican American Studies program as a
contemporary example of maintaining White political power and control by oppressing Mexican
people. While the Chican@ Civil Rights Movement made the struggles and demands of Mexican
Americans more visible, the banning of the MAS program and SB 1070-related immigration extremism
in Tucson and Arizona show that these struggles and the courage to fight back are still alive. I believe
that there is much to be learned from the Mexican American Studies program in Tucson. Not only has this approach to teaching and learning improved the schooling experiences of so many MAS students, but it has also inspired a new generation of students to standup to discrimination, to take control of their education and fight back against oppression. Finally, as the population of Latin@s and Mexicans increases nationally, extremist immigration legislation and the banning of the Tucson's Mexican American Studies program signals the prevalence of White nativism and contemporary oppression toward People of Color in order to maintain a system of White supremacy.
Chapter 1. Early Mexican Immigration and the Chican@ Civil Rights Movement

“Restrictions on immigration and citizenship have always been about how we imagine who we are as a people and who we wish to include as part of the nation, whether this is explicitly recognized or not.”
– Leo Chavez, *The Latino Threat.*

Current immigration policies and attitudes towards immigrants are shaped by policies and attitudes of the past. The way that U.S. media portrays immigrants and how people in turn perceive immigrants can only be fully understood by looking at the United States' history of interpreting immigration. Today, most immigration debates focus on one issue: Mexican immigration. Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans have gained a reputation as the archetypal “illegal alien.” The media's portrayal of Mexicans as dangerous and threatening and Americans' fear – largely Whites – is what author Leo Chavez describes as the “Latino Threat Narrative.”

The Latino Threat Narrative posits that Latinos are not like previous immigrant groups, who ultimately became part of the nation. According to the assumptions and taken-for-granted ‘truths’ inherent in this narrative, Latinos are unwilling or incapable of integrating, of becoming part of the national community. Rather, they are part of an invading force from south of the border that is bent on reconquering land that was formerly theirs (the U.S. Southwest) and destroying the American way of life.43

In part, the “Latino Threat Narrative” is about culture wars, where White U.S. nativists fear that the inclusion of Latin@s, largely Mexican and Mexican Americans, in U.S. mainstream society will result in a loss of what they perceive as their culture. Therefore, Latin@s have been ostracized to the point in which they are seen as perpetual foreigners.

The assumptions validated by the “Latino Threat Narrative” not only grossly stereotype Latin@s and instill a sense of fear in people, but they also negatively impact generations of Latin@s on a day-to-day basis. A historical examination of United States immigration policies affecting Mexican immigrants reveals a history of contradictions, with labor and economic dependency at the forefront of

the issue, yet absent from the discourse of Mexican immigration. Through an exploration of early Mexican immigration in the United States, I highlight a tension in labor demands along with the establishment of the Border Patrol have pulled Mexican immigrants into the U.S. while simultaneously criminalizing them for their presence. In reaction to decades of oppression, the collective organizing of the Chican@ Civil Rights Movement helped to build a strong network of Mexican Americans to stand up against oppressive forces in labor, education and politics. By gaining an understanding of the decades long discrimination that Mexican Americans experienced, it becomes clear that this discrimination not only inspired the Chican@ Movement of the 1960s and 70s, but also later inspired the organizing efforts of Mexican American students in Tucson, Arizona.

**The National Origins Act of 1924**

The late 1800s and early 1900s were a period of intense immigration reform. Acts such as the *Chinese Exclusion Act* of 1882 established an exclusionary climate around immigration in the United States, ostracizing certain groups of people, particularly Chinese and other Asian immigrants. However, it wasn't until the 1920s that Mexican immigrants were seen as part of the immigration problem. Signed into federal law by President Coolidge, the *National Origins Acts* of 1924 ratified all previous immigration restrictions and established a nationality-based quota for immigration in the United States. According to the detailed quota system, over half of the total number of slots available to all immigrants were given to Germany, Britain and Northern Ireland. Additionally, it maintained the complete exclusion of Asians from the United States. Northern and Western Europeans were considered desirable, while Eastern and Southern Europeans, Africans, Asians, Mexicans and Latin Americans were considered undesirable, even when their labor was desired.44

While Anglo-American nativists45 played a crucial role in the creation and ultimate passing of

---

45 Three critical components of nativism: “(1) there is an often intense opposition to the “foreigner” which, (2) creates the defense and protection of a nationalistic identity, where (3) the foreigner becomes a perceived threat to that nationalistic identity.”
the act, there was heated debate about whether or not to include the Western Hemisphere in the nationality quotas. Southwestern citizens whose agricultural businesses depended upon the steady immigration of cheap labor, namely that done by Mexicans, did not want the National Origins Act to impede upon their businesses. On the other side were Anglo nativists who sought to exclude Mexico from the nationality quota as they viewed Mexicans and Mexico as biologically, socially and culturally inferior and undesirable. In the words of Congressman John C. Box, they believed that exempting Mexico defeated the purposes of the National Origins Act, which strived for “the avoidance of social and racial problems, the upholding of American standards of wages and living, and the maintenance of order. All of these purposes will be violated by increasing the Mexican population of the country.”

Ultimately, Southwestern business lobbies were able to exempt immigration from the Western Hemisphere from the quota system. Nativists tried to pass Mexican exclusion bills in 1926 and 1928, but they were unsuccessful and Mexico was never included in the nationality quota system. As it insured a supply of exploitable labor, the successful attempts by agricultural businesses to exclude the Western Hemisphere from the nationality quota system had much more to do with economic drive than any social altruism.

Southwestern growers and farmers shared the nativists’ fear that Mexican immigration might cause social and racial unrest, but stated that limiting the number of Mexicans allowed into the U.S. would destroy the thriving agricultural business emerging in states like California, Arizona and Texas. However, they reassured the nativists that they controlled the Mexican workers and would continue to do so in the future. They believed that racial hierarchies established in the southwest would ensure that Mexicans wouldn't infiltrate any of the cultural, social, or political aspects of society. As U.S.

---


Ibid.
historian Kelley Lytle Hernandez explains, “The hierarchy of race in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, they [southwestern growers] promised, provided barriers against Mexican incorporation. But in a nation most intimately versed in the black/white divide as the basic unit of racial control and social inequity, nervous onlookers worried about the place of Mexican immigrants – neither black nor white – in America.”

Indeed, trying to fit Mexicans into a racial category was a struggle, especially since there were Mexicans with white skin and blue eyes as well as Mexicans with darker features. Hernandez continues, “Struggling to fit Mexicans into the prevailing discourse of racial difference, inequality, and control, the borderlanders constructed Mexicans as more or less black or more or less white: they were an in-between people without a clear place in a racial order grounded in the black/white divide.”

Mexicans who had a more Anglo appearance could sometimes pass as White and therefore be afforded privileges of Whites in the United States. Those with darker skin were generally treated as African-Americans, as laborers to exploit. Southwestern growers hoped that Mexican workers would come to work, make money, and once their labor was no longer needed or desired, go back home to Mexico without leaving any impact beyond their sweat and labor.

Although there was a fear of Mexican people during the 1920s, it was a less informed xenophobia.

**The U.S. Border Patrol**

Under the *National Origins Act of 1924*, Congress set aside one million dollars toward establishing a “land-border patrol.” Under the Department of Labor Appropriations Act of May 28, 1924, the U.S. Border Patrol was officially established. By July 1, 1924, officers were on duty along the Canadian and Mexican borders. The early days of the Border Patrol were disorganized and disjointed; the office lacked sufficient funds and there was little guidance to dictate its authority and power. Additionally, with the extensive options for illegally crossing into the United States (i.e. forged

---

49 Ibid., 30.
50 Ibid., 31.
52 Ibid.
documents, breaking conditions of visas, illegally crossing the border) as well as the variety of immigrants prohibited from legally entering the United States, Border Patrol officers were given very broad possibilities for who they could detain.\(53\)

Border Patrol officers were mostly White, working-class males who had vehemently opposed unrestricted Mexican immigration in the 1920s. These white workers felt like they lost in the legal battle over Mexican immigration, but involvement in the Border Patrol gave them newfound power and authority to affect the everyday management of Mexican immigration. Hernandez explains that,

Though it was established to function as a national police force dedicated to broad enforcement of federal immigration restrictions, the disorganization of Border Patrol supervision coordination effectively granted control over that enforcement to the officers of the patrol. The intense U.S. immigration control empowered local men to determine the direction of U.S. immigration law enforcement.\(54\)

Border Patrol officers living in the southwest with a shared a disdain for Mexican immigration were able to target Mexicans explicitly. As Hernandez states, “by substituting policing Mexicanos for patrolling the border, Border Patrol officers linked being Mexican in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands with being illegal in the United States.”\(55\) The nativist attitudes held by early Border Patrol officers in many ways established and reinforced the perception of Mexicans and Mexican Americans as illegal within the boundaries of the United States. This belief has effectively carried through to this day; despite the enormous demographic of Mexican Americans living legally in the United States, Mexicans as a group are still frequently viewed as foreigners living in the U.S. illegally. By viewing Mexican people as “illegal,” there is a connotation that they have done something wrong, feeding into the Latin@ Threat Narrative.

Early U.S. Border Patrol tactics have profoundly influenced contemporary methods of Border Patrol policing. Line watches were an early tactic used, patrolling the political boundary between

---

\(53\) Ibid.
\(54\) Ibid., 44.
\(55\) Ibid., 45.
official U.S. immigration stations to apprehend unauthorized immigrants as they attempted to cross the border. However, not all of the patrolling was done on the border. Many officers roamed backcountry roads north of the border – what Hernandez calls the “borderlands.” Officers conducted traffic stops along these roadways in an attempt to stop Mexicans who had illegally crossed the border and were en route to their next destination. Much like the tactics used in Arizona’s contemporary immigration law SB1070, Border Patrol officers judged the appearance of the driver and passengers to determine whether or not they were likely “illegal.” Officers also used the method of tracking, by reading the markings left by people traveling across the land (i.e. human litter, broken twigs, footprints, etc) in an attempt to find Mexicans who had illegally crossed the border. As Hernandez states,

Border Patrol tactics were profoundly shaped by the deeper histories and broader social systems that marked Mexicanos as marginalized and temporary outsiders within the region’s dominant social, cultural, political, and economic systems. Immigration law, therefore, provided the basic framework for Border Patrol operations, but the histories of conquest, displacement, and the rise of Jim Crow in the era of agribusiness penetrated the Border Patrol’s everyday translations of immigration law into immigration law-enforcement practices.

The legacy of disdain that Border Patrol officers felt towards Mexican immigration as well as the southwest's complicated history with Mexico framed the Border Patrol's enforcement actions on a day-to-day basis. Further, early tactics used by the Border Patrol have shaped contemporary policing methods of Mexican people.

There were some agribusinessmen who contested the new authority given to Border Patrol officers, but mostly out of fear that the Border Patrol's aggressive behavior with Mexicans would cause the undue deportation of too many potential Mexican laborers. There were also cases of Mexican resistance to Border Patrol, but this largely in individual acts of violence, whether it was smashing bottles or flashing a gun, which Hernandez explains was most effective in neighborhoods that were

56 Ibid.
57 Ibid., 48.
largely Mexican and Mexican American.\textsuperscript{58} Mexican resistance in the form of violence helped to further perpetuate the Border Patrol's image of the violent and dangerous illegal Mexican immigrant. These early forms of resistance were less effective in that they were individualized and unorganized, making them less likely to affect systems of oppression.

With the crash of the stock market on October 29, 1929, the United States spiraled into the Great Depression. In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt passed the New Deal \textit{Agricultural Adjustment Act}, wherein the federal government provided incentives to reduce acreage in production. While the act intended to raise the value of crops by reducing crop surplus, it also resulted in a decrease demand for farm laborers.

The fiscal strains on comprehensive immigration law enforcement unfolded alongside dramatic changes in the political economy of policing Mexicans. In particular, whereas agribusinessmen had once demanded unrestricted Mexican migration, the Great Depression created a surplus of domestic labor and a sparked a rise in anti-immigrant activity that opened new possibilities for Border Patrol work in the California-Arizona region.\textsuperscript{59}

“Deport the Mexicans” became the battle cry of those attempting to create jobs and squeeze pennies from public services. Most powerful in California, but extending to Illinois and parts of Texas, local governments and charities sponsored train fares to force Mexicans and their U.S.-born children to return to Mexico.\textsuperscript{60} Like any other type of commodity, Mexican workers who had once been such a desired resource were simply tossed aside as their labor was less needed. As the demand for their labor decreased, Border Patrol tactics targeting Mexicans increased.\textsuperscript{61}

\textbf{The Bracero Program and Operation Wetback}

Increased policing of Mexican immigrants continued into the 1940s. During the rise of the Second World War, before the United States became involved in the war, farmers became concerned

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 80.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 81.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
about the shortage of farm labor if the U.S. entered the war. In 1941, the United States government approached Mexico in an attempt to establish a guest worker program. While the Mexican government was originally reluctant due to previous instances of exploiting Mexican labor, Japan's bombing of the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor convinced Mexico that establishing a guest worker program was a means of contributing to the allied war effort. However, the Mexican government still retained concerns about the exploitation of Mexican workers. Thus, Mexican government established a set of provisions\(^\text{62}\) that the United States would have to accept until they would fully agree to such a program, which would ensure that Mexican workers were not being discriminated against or exploited.

While Mexico had its reservations about the consequences of a guest worker program, it saw real benefits as well. For example, it would provide more job opportunities, particularly for poor, Mexican workers. It would also help the Mexican economy in the sense that Mexicans working in the U.S. would send money home to their families. Additionally, Mexican laborers would gain skills in the United States that might be useful for the Mexican economy. For the United States, immigrant workers would replace those who went to fight in the war as well as those who left rural agricultural jobs for higher paying ones in urban areas.\(^\text{63}\)

On August 4, 1942, the Bracero Program was established. Part of the official agreement stated that either country could terminate the program as long as they gave ninety days notice. Mexican laborers entered the U.S. to waves of supporters and opposition. Labor unions in the United States did not see the necessity of such a program and feared that Mexicans would begin to replace Americans in the job market. Additionally, they believed that the hiring of Mexicans would depress working-class

\(^{62}\) Mexican workers were not to serve in the U.S. military, Mexican workers were not to be subjected to discrimination on or off the job, Mexican workers were to be guaranteed transportation to and from their destinations, decent living conditions in the United States, and repatriation at the end of their contract periods, in accordance with Mexican labor laws, [and] Mexican workers were not to be used to replace American domestic servants or to reduce wage levels.

\(^{63}\) Ibid.
wages for employed Americans.\textsuperscript{64}

![Figure 1: Bracero workers being fumigated with DDT. Photograph by Leonard Nadel, Houston, Texas, 1965.\textsuperscript{65}](image)

As the Bracero Program was implemented and put into practice, the United States committed a number of violations to the provisions made by the Mexican government. For example, American growers forced their Mexican workers to pay for their own food, tools, housing, and blankets. Additionally, workers often had to perform tasks that were not specified in their contracts. There was also an issue of withheld wages for Mexican workers, where ten percent of their wages were withheld yet never returned to them.\textsuperscript{66}

Until 1947, the Mexican government refused Mexicans to work in Texas via the Bracero Program because of the abuse and racism that Mexican workers had experienced there previously.

However, farm workers were in high demand in Texas's agricultural business. In response its exclusion

\textsuperscript{64} Ronald L. Mize and Alicia C.S. Swords, \textit{Consuming Mexican Labor: From the Bracero Program to NAFTA} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

\textsuperscript{65} Photographer Leonard Nadel states, "Much in the same manner and feeling used in handling livestock, upon crossing over the bridge from Mexico at Hidalgo, Texas, the men are herded into groups of 100 through a makeshift booth sprayed with DDT."


\textsuperscript{66} Ten percent of a Bracero worker's salary was to be withheld until they fulfilled the agreements of their contract and returned to Mexico. This money was to be deposited in Mexican National Banks. Unfortunately, when these workers returned to Mexico, this portion of their salary was never attained nor found.\textsuperscript{Ibid.}, 13.
from the Bracero Program, Texas Governor Coke Stevenson put forth the *Texas Caucasian Race Resolution* of 1943 and the *Texas Good Neighbor Commission*. The Caucasian Race Resolution “affirmed the right of all Caucasians within the state to equal treatment in public places of business and amusement and denounced racial discrimination as violating the good neighbor policy of our state.” The resolution connected Mexicans with Caucasians, yet maintained discriminatory practices towards African Americans. Under the Texas Good Neighbor Commission, Governor Stevenson set up a commission to investigate charges against racial discrimination as well as slowly integrate a Latin American history section into Anglo American education. While the intentions of the two pieces of legislation seemed to be positive, Texans attempted to repair their relationship with Mexico for labor-related reasons rather than change racist discrimination and exploitation of Mexican laborers. The Texas state government did not embrace an anti-racist stance out of political reputations, but rather wanted to convince the Mexican government to send Mexican laborers to Texas. Since Texas was barred from the Bracero Program, the state government had to attempt to disprove its reputation of discriminating against its Mexican employees. Additionally, a program similar to, but distinctly different from the Bracero Program was more appealing to pro-statist Texans who wanted as little U.S. government involvement in their employment of Mexicans.

In the summer of 1948, the United States Department of Labor sent representative Donald Larin to El Paso to investigate the increasingly tense situation in Texas. The main issue involved Texas growers determination of wages, which were the lowest in the nation – $2.50 per 100 pounds of harvested cotton. While the Department of Labor condoned this practice, the established wages were never checked nor verified by the Department. The Mexican government wanted workers to receive the national wage of $3.00 per 100 pounds. Due to his lack of well-rounded knowledge on the situation,

---

69 Philip E. Lampe, “Bracero Program”.
70 Juan Ramon Garcia, *Operation Wetback: The Mass Deportation of Mexican Undocumented Workers in 1954* (Westport,
Larin quickly sided with the discontented Texas growers. “In Larin's opinion the fault lay exclusively with Mexico as it had violated the agreement that called for a picking rate of $2.50 per hundred pounds of cotton picked.” Additionally, in September, the United States Employment Agency (USES) threatened the Mexican government with unrestricted border recruitment if Mexico did not comply with the demands of U.S. growers. While statements by other United States officials, including U.S. President Harry S. Truman, did not support the violation or termination of the Bracero Program agreement, the situation of Texas growers pressuring local U.S. officials to satisfy their labor needs continued to escalate.

In October 1948, the U.S.-Mexico border opened up to allow thousands of undocumented Mexican workers to come into Texas to work for U.S. growers (known as the “El Paso Incident”). Border Patrol agents allowed those on the Mexican side of the border to freely cross. The Mexican government was outraged by the incident, noting that it completely disregarded the previously established agreements between the United States and Mexico. The United States government issued an apology a few days after the initial incident, yet no further action was taken on the national level.

When Mexican workers arrived at Texas farms, they were often escorted by Border Patrol officers to the farms while the Department of Labor looked on without protest. Despite poor wages, Mexican workers entered the United States in massive numbers; between October 13 and 18 of 1947, 6,000 Mexicans crossed the border into Texas. Sociologists Ronald L. Mize and Alicia C.S. Swords explain,

The unending demand for labor, the US government support for growers to secure workers by legal or illegal means, and the lack of Mexican government bargaining power created a significant backlash against Mexican immigrants working and residing in the US. At the same time that the US government encouraged illegal immigration, government officials voiced mounting pressure to deal with the ‘wetback problem.’

CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 74-75.
71 Ibid, 75.
72 Ibid.
74 Ronald L. Mize and Alicia C.S. Swords, Consuming Mexican Labor: From the Bracero Program to NAFTA.
75 Ibid, 34.
U.S. Attorney General Howard Brownell was adamantly opposed to undocumented Mexican laborers and made his opinion well-known. In May of 1954, he employed former lieutenant general Joseph Swing to lead the campaign, named Operation Wetback, to return Mexican workers back to Mexico. Mize and Swords continue,

Swing employed techniques with which he was most familiar to effectively militarize the US-Mexico border region. His mobile task force of agents were deployed in pre-specified positions along the border and in major cities that had a large undocumented Mexican labor force in order to round-up Mexicans and force them south. Quite literally, communities were encircled by several hundred border patrol agents.\textsuperscript{76}

While Operation Wetback obviously sent a strong message to Mexican workers, it also told Texas growers that “they would not be held responsible for the mass migration that they initiated and perpetuated by actively recruiting and employing undocumented labor.”\textsuperscript{77} Operation Wetback took off as the Bracero Program reached its peak; while Operation Wetback promoted the deportation of Mexican laborers back to Mexico, the Bracero Program encouraged Mexican laborers to come into the United States. The contradiction of the two programs became apparent, as undocumented Mexican workers were detained and deported, while those with a Bracero contract were paid and protected from deportation by the United States government. During this time, the U.S. media touted the success of mass deportation of Mexican laborers, which shed a positive light on the United States' Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS). While the Mexican government entered into the Bracero Program with a substantial advantage in leveraging agreements, the United States' unending pull for cheap labor drew both documented (Bracero contracted) and undocumented Mexican workers into the U.S.; a program that began as a binational agreement had slowly become completely controlled by the United States.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid, 37.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid, 35.
\textsuperscript{78} Deborah Cohen, “Caught in the Middle: The Mexican State's Relationship with the United States and Its Own Citizen-Workers, 1942-1954".
Deported Mexican workers took buses, trains, cargo ships and airplanes hundreds of miles south of the border to avoid re-entry into the United States. The process of repatriation was gruesome. In 1954, for example, 88 workers from the Bracero program died of sunstroke as they were detained and deported in 112 degree weather. The cargo ships were likened to that of the eighteenth-century slave ships. Approximately 1.3 million Mexicans, most undocumented, were deported from the United States via Operation Wetback.

Operation Wetback has had a lasting legacy on the current day militarization of the United States-Mexico border. Influenced by early Border Patrol and military tactics, many contemporary Border Patrol tactics draw from Swing, who at the time of Operation Wetback supported the building of a chain-link fence along the border at high traffic areas. He also promoted the use of aircraft surveillance as well as military vehicles to find and capture undocumented immigrants and joint Border Patrol and local police “round ups.”

While the Bracero Program was only designed to last until 1947, it underwent numerous renewals and lasted until 1964. By the 1960s, massive numbers of undocumented and documented Mexican and Mexican American residents lived in the U.S. This “domestic stock” of Mexican labor in addition to the introduction of the mechanical cotton harvester made the Bracero Program unattractive and no longer necessary. Much like in the 1930s during the Great Depression, Mexican workers were forced to return to Mexico now that the need for their labor was less urgent.

From the discrimination and labor exploitation that so many Mexican Americans experienced from the 1920s through the mid-1960s came a call for national organizing in the face of injustice. Inspired by the emerging movements of other oppressed communities, particularly the Black Power

---

79 Ronald L. Mize and Alicia C.S. Swords, *Consuming Mexican Labor: From the Bracero Program to NAFTA*, 35.
80 Ronald L. Mize and Alicia C.S. Swords, *Consuming Mexican Labor: From the Bracero Program to NAFTA*, 35; Philip E. Lampe, “Bracero Program”.
81 Ibid.
Movement, and fueled by decades of oppression, the Chican@ Civil Rights Movement began to mobilize Mexican Americans. Starting on the grape farms in the San Joaquin Valley of California and spreading into urban areas across the nation, a new generation of Mexican Americans decided to collectively organize against White nativist in order to control their own destinies and promote equity.

¡Chican@!: The Chican@ Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 70s

The Farm Workers’ Strike

In the mid-1960s in the San Joaquin Valley of south central California, agricultural businesses were flourishing. The majority of the farm workers were Mexican and Mexican Americans, many of whom entered the United States during the time of the Bracero Program. The life of a farm worker during this time was brutal, with long days of monotonous, strenuous work in the hot California sun. Their work involved serious health risks, particularly exposure to dangerous pesticides. Growers further exploited farmworkers by paying them substandard wages for their tough labor. The average life expectancy for a Mexican fieldworker was forty-nine years. Furthermore, farmworkers received an average of two to three years of schooling since most children had to work on the farms. These intersecting forms of oppression left many Mexican workers disempowered. Dr. F. Arturo Rosales, an active participant in the Chican@ Movement, explains that, “The farmworker was trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty and illiteracy.”

Jessica Govea summarized her memories of the horrid cycle of working in the fields as a child “in long, long hours, hot fields – having to work in hot fields – feeling that was it, that was what it was going to be.” Govea shows the feeling of hopelessness experienced by many Mexicans and Mexican Americans caught in the cycle of farm and child labor.

The majority of growers came from southern and eastern Europe in the 1920s and 30s. While some sympathized with their workers, most growers exploited them through poor wages and long days. Ester Hernandez, who was raised by migrant farmers, states that “we were seen as being ignorant, as

---

83 Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement. VHS, 1996.
84 Ibid.
being lazy, as being stupid, as being dirty. And that's why we were farmworkers and that's why we were poor.”

Attributing these poor conditions to their own shortcomings further marginalized Mexican workers instead of blaming systems of oppression that forced them into exploitive working conditions.

When the Bracero Program ended in 1964, it reduced the workforce available to growers; California farmworker organizers saw an opportunity. In the summer of 1965, with the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) backing them, Filipino farmworkers organized a wildcat strike against grape growers in Delano, California. Within a week, the strike was over growers accepted their demand for $1.50 an hour. At that moment, Mexican American farmworkers had to decide whether or not to strike with the Filipinos; Mexican American farmworkers were generally very poor and the strike could be a financial disaster for them because the majority of them were living on a day-to-day basis. On Mexican Independence Day, September 16, 1965, the National Farm Workers Association called a strike meeting to see if they would officially join the strike and back the Mexican American farmworkers. While growers threatened that Mexican American farmworkers would lose their jobs or be deported if they went on strike, NFWA decided that day to join the Mexican American farmworkers and go on strike.

When the strike began, farmworkers had no clear idea of how long it would last, but thought of it in terms of days or weeks. However, as Ester Hernandez states,

My family realized that we weren't going anywhere, that we had a lot at stake and that we had to basically stay and fight. That even, like my mother said, even if we starve to death that we would not be alone, but that we had to stay and fight. Because otherwise, nothing was going to change.

While the decision to go on strike was a difficult one since most Mexican American farmworkers were

---

85 Ibid.
86 The National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), co-founded by Dolores Huerta and César Chávez. Huerta grew up in the San Joaquin Valley and was a Mexican American activist from an early age. Chávez grew up in Arizona, but moved to California as a child with his family to become migrant farmworkers. In 1962, the two formed the NFWA, which originally helped to get workers unemployment insurance. “The Story of Cesar Chavez,” United Farm Workers, accessed March 22, 2014, http://www.ufw.org/_page.php?inc=history/07.html&menu=research.
87 Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement.
poor and uneducated, to continue to endure the deplorable conditions that they had withstood was no longer a choice. Early on, NFWA would go to farms and try to convince workers to join the movement. In order to be successful, they needed to have a solid, unified group of farmworkers to contest the growers who had power and money on their side. Close to three weeks after the strike first began, nearly 3,000 farmworkers were on strike in the San Joaquin Valley. Although the farmworkers clearly had power in numbers, the growers fought back; they brought in busloads of temporary farmworkers and attacked farmworkers with legal injunctions.\textsuperscript{88}

Most growers in the San Joaquin Valley grew grapes; so, farmworkers targeted the local grape industry. The strikers went from the farm to the marketplace and called for buyers to boycott the sale of grapes. As the movement grew, it became more than just an issue of labor or economics; it became a civil rights movement led by César Chávez. Chávez, originally from Arizona, had moved to California with his mother and siblings in 1938. He and his family had worked the California fields, giving him first-hand experience on the injustices that faced Mexican laborers.\textsuperscript{89}

On March 17, 1966, Chávez decided to make a pilgrimage; starting in Delano, he planned to march 300 miles to Sacramento and recruit men, women, and children to gain support and focus national attention on the farmworkers’ cause. Each night, the strikers would join together to discuss their goals for the next day, have mass, and participate in El Teatro Campesino (“farmworkers theatre”) to ridicule growers in a theatrical way. Teatro Campesino and other forms of emerging Chican@ art gave voice and visual form to the struggles and emerging movement of Mexican American farmworkers.\textsuperscript{90} Ester Hernandez states,

\begin{quote}
Chicano art had a very, very important role within the Chicano movement. It gave visual form to our dreams, our aspirations, our struggles. Because we did not own the media, we didn't own the television, we didn't own the radio, we didn't own the movies, we owned
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement}. 
nothing at all, the only way that we could, in many respects, get the word out – be visible – was to create posters and murals, paintings, banners, whatever. It took that form and that way we were able to disseminate information.\textsuperscript{91}

As Hernandez explains above, physical forms of expression helped to not only inform others about the strike, but also to gain ownership over some form of visual media.

![Image of a mural with people holding signs and flags]

Figure 2: El Teatro Campesino office wall by Antonio Bernal, 1968, Del Rey, CA.

![Image of a poster with the word "Huelga!"

Figure 3: Huelga by Andy-Zermeno, 1965.

![Image of a poster with the word "Boycott Grapes"

Figure 4: “Boycott Grapes” by Xavier Viramontes, 1973.

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
Within the first year of the strike, growers in the San Joaquin Valley attempted to negotiate a deal, but each time, they refused to meet the demands of the strikers. By 1967, the farmworkers had been on strike for nearly two years. Strikers ultimately decided to boycott the entire industry; they began to spread across the nation and boycotted stores that would not take a stand against the sale of grapes. They began to gain support from mayors and other important elected officials all across the nation; the boycott even spread into parts of Europe.\(^\text{92}\)

Following the '68 campaign, the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC)\(^\text{93}\) redoubled its efforts on the boycott. When President Richard M. Nixon, a California Republican, took office, he ordered the United States Department of Defense to increase its consumption of table grapes, purchasing three million more pounds of grapes than in 1968.\(^\text{94}\) Despite President Nixon's tactics to end the boycott, the UFWOC's widespread national support allowed them to keep moving forward. On April 1, 1969, the UFWOC signed a contract with Lionel Steinberg, a grape grower in the San Joaquin Valley. While the union grapes were $2 a box more than non-union grapes, they were still the most popular brand of grapes to purchase in California because of the wide spread support that the farmworkers had gained.

Finally, in April 1969, John Giumarra, the most powerful of the Delano growers, was ready to sign. Chavez insisted that he bring the rest of the Delano growers with him before they ended the boycott. On July 29, 1970, all of the Delano grape growers met with the farmworkers to sign the contracts at the Delano Hall. Twenty-six growers signed contracts guaranteeing farmworkers $1.80 an

\(^{92}\text{Ibid.}\)

\(^{93}\) The United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC) was the merged union of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) and the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), formed on August 22, 1966. “UFW History,” United Farm Workers, accessed March 22, 2014, http://www.ufw.org/_page.php?menu=research&inc=history/03.html.

hour plus 20 cents a box,\textsuperscript{95} a hiring hall, seniority and strict pesticide controls.\textsuperscript{96} After nearly five years of intensive striking, boycotting, and campaigning, the first grape strike and boycott was officially over. Through the NFWA, the growing prevalence of Chican@ art, and resistance of economic exploitation, Mexican organizers were creating a powerful movement.

\textit{Aztlán and the Anti-War Movement}

Around the time that César Chávez and his comrades embarked on their pilgrimage, a younger generation of Chican@s were organizing to build a national, collective movement of Mexican American youth. In 1966, Rodolfo “Corky” González founded the Crusade for Justice in Denver, Colorado, a Mexican nationalist organization independent of U.S. government involvement created to combat the injustices that Mexicans and Mexican Americans experienced in the United States. According to González, “We felt that if Mexicans didn't stick up for Mexicans, nobody was going to.”\textsuperscript{97}

In early 1967, he wrote the poem \textit{Yo soy Joaquín (I am Joaquin)}. Translated in English, the poem begins as:

I am Joaquín, lost in a world of confusion,  
caught up in the whirl of a gringo society,  
confused by the rules, scorned by attitudes,  
suppressed by manipulation, and destroyed by modern society.\textsuperscript{98}

The poem articulates the struggles that Mexican Americans experienced. It also tells the history of the Mexican people – their cultural and spiritual practices and their historical struggles to keep their history and culture alive. For most Mexican Americans, this was a history that they had never learned in school. \textit{Yo soy Joaquín} celebrated Mexican indigenous cultural heritage; whereas most Mexican Americans had been shamed for being Mexican, the poem did the opposite. Additionally, it was the first time that “Chicano” had been used as a unifying term that identified a group of people who shared


\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.

a long, yet untold history. George Hartley, Professor of Contemporary Poetry, Critical Theory and Ethnic Literatures explains that,

Prior to this, all of the work for justice, civil rights, farm labor laws, and cultural recognition for Mexican Americans had been carried out by Mexican Americans. But it wasn't until *I Am Joaquin*—which embodied all of these elements under the blanket concept of Chicanismo—that these elements could come into concert in the revolutionary subjectivity of the Chicano as the founding gesture of Chicano identity itself. The term ‘Chicano’ as it functions in *I Am Joaquin* brought the Chicano as such into being.  

“Corky” González, emerging as a leader of the Chican@ Civil Rights Movement, decided that it was time to expand the movement on a national scale. On March 27, 1969, González and the Crusade for Justice put together the first Chican@ Youth Conference in Denver. Chican@s all across the nation were invited and it attracted considerable attention. During the five days of the conference, over one thousand Chican@s came, three times what González had originally anticipated. Corky wanted to create the blueprint to lead the Chican@ Movement, which emphasized separate Chican@ institutions, community controlled schools, an independent political party, and cultural affirmation. The arts were heavily integrated into the conference, largely through poetry, music and dance. While the conference had a political agenda, it was also a time for Chican@ students to connect with one another and to share a sense of cultural solidarity. As the Chican@ Movement was growing, White American nativists were fearful of the perceived cultural threat.

The Chican@ Youth Conference also provided a space for Chicanas to question and express concerns about their role in the Chican@ Movement. There were those who believed that women should be behind the men and embrace a support role, yet most Chicana activists at the conference wanted recognition for their immense contributions and the opportunity to hold positions of power. While most Chicanas felt it should be understood that women and men were equal, the women's

---


100 González stated that he was aware at this point that they were under FBI surveillance.

101 *Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement.*

102 Ibid.
liberation movement was rejected because most felt that this movement did not recognize or understand racist or classist oppression. Chicana feminists Beatriz M. Pesquera and Denise A. Segura explain that,

Chicana writing and organizational activities of this period resounded with frustration over patriarchy in the Chicano movement and a “maternal chauvinism” in the women's movement. Time and time again Chicanas argued that ending race-class oppression would not automatically eliminate sexual oppression. Similarly, freedom from sexual oppression would not end oppression the the basis of race-ethnicity and class.

During the conference, an emerging young poet named Alurista asked if he could read a poem. His poem was a new mythology for Chican@s describing a new Chican@ homeland within the borders of the United States called Aztlán, which was the ancestral homeland of the Aztec.

With our heart in our hands and our hands in the soil, we declare the independence of our mestizo nation. We are a bronze people with a bronze culture. Before the world, before all of North America, before all our brothers in the bronze continent, we are a nation, we are a union of free pueblos, we are Aztlán.

For the new Chican@ movement, Aztlán came to mean the southwestern United States; it gave meaning to being Chican@ by giving them an ancestral homeland and beckoned a call for political power. Moctesuma Esparza, a Chican@ student activist explains what Aztlán came to symbolize for him,

It meant we were home, it meant this was our historic land, it meant this is where we were from; it meant we weren't foreigners; it meant we weren't wetbacks; it meant we weren’t illegal aliens; it meant we were in our ancestral land.

Alurista's poem was so well received that it became the preamble to El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán, a

103 Ibid.
104 Beatriz M. Pesquera and Denise A. Segura, “There is no Going Back: Chicanas and Feminism,” in Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings, ed. Alma M. García (New York: Routledge, 1997), 299;

As the Chicano Civil Rights Movement continued into the 1970s, a Chicana feminist movement also emerged, one that recognized and emphasized the intersections of gender and racial oppression. This movement also connected the experiences of Chicanas with other women of color, creating a Chicana movement that was both nationalist and feminist. Alma M. García, “Introduction,” in Chicana Feminist Thought: The Basic Historical Writings, ed. Alma M. García (New York: Routledge, 1997), 4.

106 Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement.
declaration advocating for Chican@ nationalism and action. At the end of the conference, over 1,000
Chican@s marched out of the conference headquarters to the State Capitol. There, they lowered the
Colorado state banner and raised the Mexican flag. “To outsiders, it looked like Chican@s were turning
their back on America. To Chican@s, it meant they were here to stay.” As Esparza states, Aztlán
symbolized an ancestral homeland which gave Chican@s a more meaningful existence in the United
States. However, starting in the mid-to-late 1970s, conservative and U.S. nativist reactions to Aztlán
differed greatly from the way that Chican@s in the Civil Rights Movement were perceiving it.

In 1969, President Richard M. Nixon took office and escalated the Vietnam War. At the height
of the UFWOC grape boycott, opposition to the war began to take hold within the Chican@
community as they protested discriminatory draft laws. Generational divisions emerged in the Chican@
community with regard to the anti-war movement. Most students and other young people were against
the war; most older members felt less adamant and tended to have more respect for the military since
Chican@s of the past had used the military as a gateway for education and respect in the United States.
Regardless of the generational divide, Chican@ groups began staging anti-war rallies.

Many Chican@s felt alienated from the general anti-war movement in the 1970s because it was
largely fueled by white, middle-class protestors who tried to get their own people out of the war and
were able to do so more easily by having the money to hire lawyers. On December 19, 1969, the first
Chicano Moratorium Committee (CMC) rally was held at Obregon Park in Denver and approximately
2,000 people attended. It was largely organized by the Brown Berets, a radical Chican@ student
organization. A second rally was held on February 28, 1970, and its turnout fueled a Chican@
national day of protest on August 29, 1970, exactly one month after the farmworkers strike ended.

The August 29th moratorium march in Los Angeles was the apex for the Chican@ Movement.

107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
Some 30,000 Chican@s gathered in protest of the Vietnam War; among them was Rubén Salazar, a Chican@ writer for *The Los Angeles Times* who had gained considerable respect from the Chican@ liberation movement. After a four and a half mile long march, protestors gathered at Laguna Park (now known as Rubén F. Salazar Park) to participate in speeches, live music, and dancing. According to the police, a couple of people went into a liquor store nearby and left without paying. Police followed them to the park in an attempt to catch them. However, because of the crowds, they couldn't get to them. Police called in for backup to breakup what they referred to as an illegal assembly of 25,000 – 30,000 Chican@s in East L.A. People were in a panic and a human stampede ensued. The police attacked and beat Chican@s with batons and sprayed them with teargas. While the police called it a Chican@ riot, Chican@s called it a police riot. Protestors took refuge in nearby homes and businesses as the police forced them out of the park and into the streets. At that time, Deputy Sheriff Thomas Wilson received a call that there was an armed person at the Silver Dollar Bar. According to Wilson,

> I knew that I had a tear gas projectile inside the weapon. I wanted to get something inside and I wanted to get it inside quick. I attempted to aim up toward the ceiling to bounce the projectile to the rear of the bar.\footnote{Ibid.}

While Deputy Wilson claimed that he gave order for everyone to come out, some people inside never heard him; among them was Rubén Salazar. Sadly, Salazar was hit in the head by the tear gas canister and killed. By the end of the day, 200 people were arrested, 60 were wounded, 3 died. The setbacks postponed plans to create a Chican@ political party. Salazar's death was seen as a serious loss for the Chican@ movement; they mourned the loss of a friend and the only Chican@ in the mainstream media. His death had a profound impact on the Chican@ Movement. Elizabeth “Betita” Martínez, a Chicana feminist involved in Civil Rights Movement stated that, “if it was an accident, it happened because the lives of Mexican people were considered worthless. So that you could fire a huge tear gas projectile into a bar – a public place – and not worry about it.”\footnote{Ibid.} However, Salazar's death also began to steer the

\footnote{Ibid.}
Chican@ Movement in a new direction; his death served as a reminder that there was a war going on in the United States – a war against Chican@s. While the Chican@ Movement endured resistance, it was gaining political, cultural and economic power.

**Chican@ Student Activism: High School Walkouts**

For generations, Mexican American students faced discrimination in educational settings, from being reprimanded for speaking Spanish to not having the opportunity to learn their history to being pushed into low-wage service jobs. Mexican American organizers recognized schools as a site of maintaining oppression, yet also of potential upward mobility. Accordingly, a young generation of Chican@ high school and college students decided to take control of their education.

Nearly 100,000 Chican@s lived in East Los Angeles in the 1960s. However, Chican@ high school students were significantly underperforming in school. At that time, one in four Chican@s finished high school; the high drop out rate of Chican@s was known as the push out rate. Students were shamed for having an accent and would receive serious repercussions or be ridiculed for speaking Spanish at school. Additionally, many schools tracked Chican@s into vocational programs and encouraged to be farm laborers or to learn how to cook and clean for a living.

Chican@ high school students in East L.A. decided that enough was enough; they organized a survey to evaluate their schooling experiences. Once the results from the survey came in, students made recommendations, calling for bilingual instruction, Mexican American history courses, an end to corporal punishment, and the hiring of more Mexican American teachers and counselors. Then, they presented their survey and recommendations to the Los Angeles School Board. However, the reactions from the School Board were less than enthusiastic. Chican@ student activist Moctesuma Esparza said that “they patted us on the back and my recollection was that they literally threw away the results of our survey. And that began to politicize us.”

---

Since the survey was unsuccessful in making their opinions heard, students organized a walkout. With the support of Sal Castro, an outspoken social studies teacher in Los Angeles, students mobilized. When the bell rang on March 1, 1968, 4,000 students walked out of five east-side high schools. They took to the streets chanting “we demand change” and “Chicano power”. According to Sal Castro,

“In the morning, as I walked into the school as the bell rang...out they went. Kids from all over different hallways and all over the school, bang, out into the streets, with their heads held high, with dignity. It was beautiful to be a Chicano that day.”

Students gathered at a local park, demanded that the School Board meet them there to talk and gave speeches. As the week continued, so did the walkouts and tensions between students and school administrators escalated. By the end of the week, sixteen schools saw more than 10,000 students out in the streets, intensifying tensions between Chican@ students and the police. During demonstrations that week, police officers ran after students, beat and clubbed them, cuffed and arrested them. According to Moctesuma Esparza, “police were not kind to high school students. They treated them in the same way that they treated other Mexicans and that was not very good.”

School officials blamed outsiders for the student demonstrations, singling out the Brown Berets. However, this was not the case – it was the students of the East L.A. schools who had organized the walkout. However, the Brown Berets served as the students' form of defense and security, much like their own police force. The Young Citizens for Community Action (YCCA), also known as the Brown Berets, was formed in East Los Angeles by David Sánchez and Carlos Montes and was composed solely of students, largely high schoolers. They became known as the Brown Berets after Sánchez decided that they “needed to make things more colorful” and after seeing some people wearing blue berets, he purchased a dozen brown berets at the General Hat Company. While they were still the

---

113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.
YCCA, they became known and remembered as the Brown Berets. Montes explains,

The brown beret was a symbol of the pride in our culture, race and history. It also symbolized our anger and militancy and fight against the long history of injustice against the Chican@ people in the U.S., especially the Southwest. We claimed the Southwest as Aztlan, the original homeland of the indigenous Aztec ancestors and founders of Mexico City, Tenochtitlan. We were from poor working class families growing up with the racism and police abuse.\(^{117}\)

The group aimed to highlight police brutality toward Chican@s as well as attacks on the school system. They had two forms of printed press that they distributed throughout the Chican@ community in East L.A. - La Raza and La Causa; both papers were highly passionate and critical of the injustices that Chican@s faced on a daily basis. The Brown Berets were recognized as “one of the most militant, sometimes violence-prone, Chican@ organizations in the country.”\(^{118}\) While their presence in the high school student walkouts was certainly beneficial, it also labeled the walkouts, and therefore the high school students, as dangerous and militant.\(^{119}\) Their presence in the student walkouts fed into White nativists' fear of the growing power of the Chican@ Movement, the presumed Latin@ threat.

Students began to receive calls from principals and other school officials who threatened to expel them if they did not stop protesting and walking out of school; they even threatened to take away grants and scholarships from college-bound Chican@ students. Concerned parents formed a group called the Emergency Support Committee, later renamed the Educational Issues Coordinating Committee (EICC). The group largely consisted of parents, but was divided into different subcommittees, which brought in high school and college students as well. On March 26, 1968, the EICC created a list of demands that they presented at a school board meeting, which included “a relevant cultural curriculum, teacher training that reflected local conditions, hiring of more Mexican American administrators and teachers, upgrading of facilities, more community input and a more

\(^{117}\) I[bid.]


\(^{119}\) *Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement.*
liberal approach to the rights of students.” On April 1, the EICC organized a group of eight hundred people to crowd the school board headquarters and demand action toward their requests. A few weeks later, they conducted a “walk-through” where members of the EICC marched through the schools to voice their frustrations with the school board. While the school walkouts were organized by youth, EICC’s involvement signal the relevancy of the students’ struggles to the experiences of older Mexican Americans.

However, in June 1968, The Los Angeles Police Department stormed into the houses of student organizers with their weapons drawn and arrested them. Thirteen Chican@ leaders involved in the walkouts were arrested and accused of conspiracy charges; one of those arrested was Sal Castro. If convicted, each defendant faced 66 years in prison. The EICC spent several days protesting and picketing outside of the Los Angeles Police Department and in front of the city jail. Within days, the thirteen arrested were released on bail. However, the Chican@ community in Los Angeles realized that the arrests were designed in an attempt to stop the student movement and send a message to Chican@ activists, which increased discontent against the police. While Chican@s were fighting for educational equality, the U.S. government framed it as conspiracy and criminalized the movement's key players.

Unfortunately, the arrests of the “LA 13” were only the beginning of police attempts to destroy the Chican@ student movement. Police and FBI involvement in the student organizing escalated and infiltrated Chican@ student organizations with COINTELPRO operatives; the Brown Berets became

---

120 Arturo Rosales, Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement, 192.
121 Ibid, 193.
122 The thirteen arrested were Sal Castro (Lincoln High School teacher), David Sánchez and Carlos Montes (co-founders of the Brown Berets), Ralph Ramírez and Fred López (Brown Beret members), Carlos Muñoz and Henry Gómez (UMAS activists), Moctezuma Esparza (UCLA), Eleazar Risco and Joe Razo (publishers of La Raza), Patricio Sánchez (MAPA activist), Gilberto Olmeda and Richard Vigil (community organizers).
123 Ibid.
124 F. Arturo Rosales, Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement, 193.
125 Ibid.
126 “COINTELPRO is an acronym for the FBI’s Counter Intelligence Program, which was used in the 1960s to monitor,
a special target. Apparently, one of the walkout leaders who said he was from Wilson High School was a Los Angeles police officer. There turned out to be a significant number of people in the organizations that were policemen or infiltrators and soon everyone became suspect. Furthermore, many of the student organizers who were proposing violent actions were actually working undercover; these were similar tactics used by the police and FBI in the Black Panthers. The police claimed that the student organizers were dangerous, armed subversives, yet the majority of what they were doing was peacefully protesting. The involvement of COINTELPRO signals the growing power of the Chican@ Movement and the presumed threat that the movement would have on White political power.

Moctesuma Esparza recalls this period,

And I remember, you know, just beginning to have this sense that I was being watched. And people started talking about it. We started talking about provocateurs and infiltrators and certainly after these arrests, everyone was paranoid.128

When Sal Castro returned to Lincoln High School after being discharged for his role in the walkouts, he was informed that his job had been revoked. As one of the only Chican@ teachers in East Los Angeles, students and parents recognized the importance of Castro's presence and fought to get him reinstated. The EICC picketed everyday outside of Lincoln High School and attended School Board meetings. After 10 days of picketing without results, Chican@ student activists resorted to a new tactic; instead of walking out, they sat in at the School Board meeting room. They occupied the room for a week, spending everyday and night there. They used this time to organize and talk about their next move. After seven days, the School Board agreed to vote on Sal Castro's reinstatement. At a 304 count vote in favor of Castro's reinstatement, EICC members, including the committee's chairman Reverend Vahac Mardirosian, made a final appeal. Ultimately, the School Board voted to reinstate

128 Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement.
As Luis Ruiz stated, “the walkouts were the first significant urban struggle of the Chican@s. And all that our kids were trying to do was to make the schools work better.” The walkouts shifted the focus of the Chican@ struggle into the cities. They helped inform parents and the Chican@ community at large that these young organizers shared the same struggles as older generations of Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Finally, the walkouts empowered students to realize their strength in numbers. It helped to form and enforce a nationalistic Chican@ identity that united high school and college students, parents, and community members in fighting for equal opportunity and treatment. As the Chican@ Civil Rights Movement progressed and strengthened, a group of Mexican Americans in Crystal City, Texas began organizing to create a national political party to represent the voices of Chican@s.

**La Raza Unida Party**

In the 1960s, Crystal City was a small city in southern Texas with majority Mexican and Mexican American population. José Ángel Gutiérrez, born and raised in Crystal City, became inspired by the Black Power Movement that had emerged in the late 1960s. He wanted to take action in his Chican@ community and make the voices of his people heard. In 1967, Gutiérrez and Mario Compean, along with three other college students founded the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO). MAYO stressed Chican@ cultural nationalism and direct political confrontation and demonstration to convey their goals. They wanted to regain control of the Southwest not by forcefully taking the land, but by gaining political control. Gutiérrez began organizing in Mexican American community in Crystal City. He targeted the high schools where young people were beginning to be fed up with

---

129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
131 William (Willie) C. Velásquez, Ignacio Pérez and Juan Patlán.
negative Mexican stereotypes.\textsuperscript{133}

Social life in Crystal City revolved around high school football. While Mexican Americans outnumbered Anglos in the Crystal City High School eight to one, Mexican Americans could only account for one spot on the cheerleading team. Students met with the local school board and demanded that more than one Mexican American cheerleading position be open as well the hiring of more Mexican American teachers, counselors, courses on Mexican American history and the right to speak Spanish in school. In order to mobilize for political power, Gutiérrez and other student activists recognized the importance of Mexican representation on the school board. When the school board refused to listen or meet their demands, frustrated students took matters into their own hands and staged a walkout. On December 9, 1969, seven hundred students walked out of Crystal City High School. Their numbers grew to nearly two thousand students by the end of the week.\textsuperscript{134} Soon, the Crystal City walkouts attracted attention in neighboring Texas towns where students experienced similar forms of discrimination. The Crystal City chapter of Texans for the Educational Advancement of Mexican Americans (TEAMA) organized local educators\textsuperscript{135} to meet with striking students during the holiday break.\textsuperscript{136} Furthermore, Texas Senator Ralph Yarborough had three Crystal City students attend a conference in Washington D.C. to discuss discrimination in their schools; present at the conference were Democratic Senators Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts and George McGovern of South Dakota who, in turn, contacted the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice as well as the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to inform the federal government of the injustices students were experiencing in Texas.\textsuperscript{137} With sufficient pressure on the Crystal City School Board, they voted in favor of the students' demands on January 9, 1970. Three months later, Diana Pelacios, a

\textsuperscript{133} Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement.
\textsuperscript{135} Greg Barrios, author of the Teaching Tolerance article “Walkout in Crystal City” was one of the teachers who worked with striking students over break.
\textsuperscript{136} Greg Barrios, “Walkout in Crystal City”.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
Chicana student at Crystal City High School was voted head cheerleader of the varsity squad.\footnote{Chicano!\; The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement.}

The walkouts provided a catalyst that gave the Chican@ community in Crystal City the momentum they needed to continue to organize against racial injustice. Building on this success, Chican@s in Crystal City decided to create their own political party: La Raza Unida Party (The United People). Chican@s realized that the Democratic and Republican Parties were essentially the same. Gutiérrez spoke out against “the Méxicano being socialized into believing that Democrats were the party of the poor and Republicans were the party of the rich. A Chican@ political party was a reminder to both major parties that Méxicanos were determined to make democracy and community control a reality in their pursuit for self-determination.”\footnote{Armando Navarro, La Raza Unida Party (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000): 32.} In order to be represented politically, they needed to create their own party. Through the organizing efforts of Gutiérrez and Mario Compean, two of MAYO's founders, La Raza Unida Party was established in Crystal City.\footnote{Teresa Palomo Acosta, “Raza Unida Party,” Handbook of Texas Online, June 15, 2010, accessed March 26, 2014, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/wem01.} Large numbers of Mexican Americans registered to vote in Crystal City for the Raza Unida Party.\footnote{Chicano!\; The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement.}

La Raza Unida Party found its greatest support among women. Women sat in on the Raza Unida Party's meetings and said that they did not want to be “the tamale makers” or “the busy bees” in the background; they truly wanted to be involved and have a say in the decision making process. Many men decided to leave the group because they did not want to be part of a group where women had that kind of power. However, the women of La Raza Unida were not deterred; they set a precedent for the roles that women and men would play in the Party.\footnote{Ibid.}

La Raza Unida platform stood for bilingual education, regulation of public utilities, farm subsidies, and equitable tax structure. Their agenda focused on the needs of working-class Mexican Americans. In the 1970 election in Crystal City, candidates from La Raza Unida Party won fifteen out
of sixteen possible positions on the School Board and City Council. Soon, La Raza Unida Party spread to Los Angeles and Denver where Corky González began to organize a Denver chapter of La Raza Unida Party.

1972 was a presidential election year and members of La Raza Unida met in El Paso, Texas to hold their party's first national convention. At this time, party members were aware of FBI surveillance, including COINTELPRO.\textsuperscript{143} Members and supporters of La Raza Unida were worried because they knew they were seen as a threat to the other political parties. Anglos feared that the Party would form alliances with the Mexican government in an attempt to reconquer the Southwest. At the convention, they debated whether or not to work within the system or go their own way. Delegates also voted to create a platform on whether they should support one of the two dominant political parties. Ultimately, they voted to not support the Republican or Democratic political candidates. They also voted on a Chairman of the Party. In a tight race between Corky González and José Gutiérrez, Gutiérrez came out on top as the first elected Chairman of La Raza Unida Party.\textsuperscript{144}

Six months after the Convention, an FBI memo called for tighter surveillance of Corky Gonzales' Crusade for Justice. Denver authorities believed that the Crusade members were armed and dangerous. On March 17, 1973, over 230 Denver police officers surrounded the Crusade for Justice headquarters. Within minutes, a confrontation erupted which lasted for over an hour. Police killed a twenty-year-old Crusade member, multiple Crusade members and police officers were shot and injured, and over sixty were arrested. Later that evening, a Crusade for Justice building was bombed. Fearing for their safety, many members left the group and it never fully recovered.\textsuperscript{145} By 1974, Crystal City was the last stronghold of La Raza Unida Party.

While the party had a short life, it brought national recognition to the first national Chican@

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{143} Armando Navarro, \textit{La Raza Unida Party}, 277.

\textsuperscript{144} \textit{Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement}.

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
\end{footnotesize}
political party. Through the organizing efforts of students like José Gutiérrez and Mario Compean as well as the Mexican American high school students who walked out in Crystal City, a legitimate third national political party formed to serve the needs of Mexican Americans and other oppressed peoples. While the Crystal City walkouts originally occurred to combat the discrimination that Chican@ students were facing in school, it triggered the mobilization of Mexican American youth to work in conjunction with adults to their community.

The Chican@ Civil Rights Movement marked a turning point for many Mexican Americans to collectively stand up against decades of oppression. While resistance was prevalent amongst Mexican Americans previous to the 1960s, *El Movimiento* differed in that resistance was organized in a more collective manner and often times on a national scale. Previous to the Chican@ Movement, Mexican immigration into the United States became problematized in the 1920s with demands from agricultural businessmen competing with the establishment of the Border Patrol. The contradiction of an economic system built off of a steady flow of cheap, exploitable labor and the criminalization of Mexicans via the Border Patrol has resulted in a confusing and complex status of Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans.

In the 1960s and 70s, Mexican Americans – farm workers, students, parents, and other youth and adults – decided to collectively fight back against decades of discrimination. Starting with the California grape boycotts in 1965, the Chican@ Civil Rights Movement began to spread into cities and states across the U.S. In East Los Angeles and Crystal City, Texas, high school and college students staged walkouts to protest the injustices that they were experiencing in their schools, including discrimination for being Mexican and the lack of culturally relevant curriculum, bilingual education, and Mexican American teachers and school officials. Further, schools became site of Chican@ organizing that later inspired the students of the Tucson’s Mexican American Studies program to

---

mobilize for educational equity.

The Chican@ Civil Rights Movement created an empowered structural, cultural and economic social standing for Mexican Americans. While the movement legitimized Chican@ oppression and strengthened their social and political power, it also fed into the racist xenophobia of White nativists. The empowerment of Chican@s was viewed by many as a threat to White political power. Much like during the Chican@ Movement, the academic growth and affirmation that Mexican American students experienced in the Mexican American Studies program has also been perceived as a threat. Mexican immigration into the United States reveals a legacy of disempowerment toward Mexican people, but also one of resistance and organization in the face of oppression.

The presumed Latin@ Threat Narrative began to gain power on a national scale by the end of the Chican@ Movement. After the establishment of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 and the end of the Chican@ Civil Rights Movement, a massive conservative and White nativist pushback aimed to perpetuate the marginalization of Mexican Americans.
Chapter 2. The Growing Threat and Rising Extremism: Arizona Case Study

“My true Americans here — those embracing our inalienable rights or those trying to diminish them?”
– Augustine Romero, “Rift in Arizona as Latino Class is Found Illegal.”

Following the gains made during the Chican@ Civil Rights Movement was a conservative and White nativist pushback to reestablish Mexican people as inferior. Through conservative literature and popular media, a triple threat of Mexican immigration propogated during the 1970s and 80s: invasion, reconquest and separatism. The invasion theme posited that Latin American immigrants, specifically Mexican, were entering the United States at alarmingly high rates, infiltrating and abusing the U.S. medical, welfare and educational systems. The notion of reconquest emerged by connecting Spanish conquistadors and the Chican@ Movement's claiming of Aztlán with the invasion of Mexican people in the United States. By connecting Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans to the Quebec separatist movement of the 1960s, conservative and White nativist writers and scholars claimed that Mexican immigrants were different than any other immigrant group, accusing them of refusing to assimilate into mainstream Anglo culture. Through a case study of Arizona's immigration politics, the manifestation of these extremist themes and how they affect the lives of individuals is made clear.

This “triple threat” paradigm has done immense damage to the way that many Americans, specifically White, perceive Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans. While local police violence toward Chican@s during the 1960s and 70s undoubtedly caused harm to Mexican Americans, there was now an attack and indoctrination of racism on the national level. The media portrayal heavily influenced people's perception of Mexicans and normalized these extremist claims. Further, these attacks on Chican@s resulted in the increased militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border. White nativists, who saw Chican@ progress as a threat, were reversing the gains made by Mexican American activists during the Chican@ Civil Rights Movement.
The 1970s & 1980s: Pushback against the Chican@ Civil Rights Movement

Due in part to the Chican@ labor, student and political movements, Mexican immigration became viewed by many as an invasion of the United States by the mid- to late-1970s, particularly in the Southwest. Through magazines, newspapers and political discourse, U.S. officials blew estimates of Mexican and Latin American illegal immigration out of proportion, including the Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).\textsuperscript{147} Leo Chavez explains that “numbers such as these invoke simplified responses – low/high, good/bad, affirmative/alarmist, assurance/fear – depending upon the prevailing sentiment toward immigration,”\textsuperscript{148} increasing the idea of the Mexican invasion. The media exacerbated this alarmist reaction with magazine covers depicting the United States overrun with “illegal aliens” (i.e. The December 1974 cover of the conservative American Legion Magazine). Many of these magazine articles and images depicted Mexicans as overusing the welfare, healthcare, and the education system.\textsuperscript{149} Such media propaganda furthered the notion of a rising Latin@ threat and was therefore utilized as an instrument of White supremacy.

The relationship between Quebec and Canada complicated the perception of Mexican Americans in the United States. The Quiet Revolution of the 1960s in Quebec saw a rise in Quebec nationalism, with residents of Quebec pushing for the preservation of their own language and culture. The fear in the United States was that this could happen with the so-called Mexican invasion.\textsuperscript{150} The cover of the January 29, 1979, issue of U.S. News & World Report featured a photograph of three Mexicans with their hands behind their heads, being patted down by a police officer or Border Patrol agent. The issue was entitled, “Illegal Aliens: Invasion Out of Control.” As Gomez states,

The negative implications of undocumented immigration raised by the magazine included

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid.
displacing U.S. citizens from jobs, use of welfare, and crime. But even more important was the internal threat posed by the children of immigrants, an idea that is central to the reconquest theme and the Quebec model.\textsuperscript{151}

The threat posed by children of immigrants, or rather the internalized fear that Anglo nativists in the United States felt could be traced back to the 1920s and 30s, where nativists assumed that Mexican laborers would leave when their labor was no longer desired. The fact that Mexican immigrants and now their children – citizens of the United States – were making the U.S. their home was shocking and unacceptable to many white Americans.\textsuperscript{152} Mexican American youth born and raised in the United States would have an undeniable effect on U.S. society, potentially “disrupting” the mainstream Anglo culture. The prevalence of Mexican American youth confirmed the fear of White nativists from the 1920s that Mexicans would stay in the United States. It is no coincidence that conservatives and White nativists have targeted schools as a site to perpetuate Chican@ oppression.

Into the 1980s, the media's coverage and depiction of Mexican immigration and Mexican Americans sharpened the triple threat theme of invasion, reconquest and separatism. In the March 9, 1981, issue of the \textit{U.S. News and World Report} fully escalated the idea of the Quebec Model for the United States.

\textsuperscript{151} \textit{Ibid}, 28.  
\textsuperscript{152} \textit{Ibid}.  

55
The cover, entitled “Our Troubled Neighbors – Dangers for U.S.” showed Mexicans south of the border and Canadians north of the border putting their respective national flags into the ground and raising their fists in the air. Those in Mexico are shown walking up Mexico into southern California. *Time* magazine's June 13, 1983, issue featured an article about Los Angeles entitled “The New Ellis Island.” The article stated that “Los Angeles is being invaded”\(^{153}\) and that since Mexico used to be a part of the Southwest, Mexicans arrived “feeling as much like a migrant as an immigrant, not an illegal alien but a *reconquistador*.”\(^{154}\) The April 1, 1985, issue of *New Republic* stated that children of Latino immigrants would grow up unfaithful toward the United States and would cause militant riots in the Southwest to express their disdain of this country.\(^{155}\) In Peter Brimelow's *Alien Nation* he discusses the fact that “Hispanics” (his word choice) were creating an Anti-Nation, an alternative U.S. within the U.S. Additionally, while Hispanics were being encouraged to assimilate, the teaching of Spanish and bilingual classes in public schools was allowing them to assimilate into their own version of American...

---


\(^{154}\) *Ibid.*

culture, which according to Brimelow, they had no right to do. Perhaps the most troubling of all the extremist depictions and prophecies of Mexican immigration was in the August 19, 1985, issue of *U.S. News and World Report*. The cover entitled “The Disappearing Border: Will the Mexican Migration Create a New Nation?” was accompanied by an article titled “The Disappearing Border,” which took the theme of reconquest to a level of fact – that Mexican immigrants were in fact in the process of reconquering the American Southwest.\(^{156}\)

Now sounds the march of the new conquistadors in the American Southwest. The heirs of Cortés and Coronado are rising again in the land their forebears took from the Indians and lost to the Americans. By might of numbers and strength of culture, Hispanics are changing the politics, economy and language in the U.S. states that border Mexico. Their movement is, despite its quiet and largely peaceful nature, both an invasion and a revolt. At the vanguard are those born here, whose roots are generations deep, who long endured Anglo dominance and rule and who are ascending within the U.S. system to take power they consider their birthright. Behind them comes an unstoppable mass – their kin from below the border who also claim ancestral homelands in the Southwest, which was the northern half of Mexico until the U.S. took it away in the mid-1800s. Like conquistadors of centuries past, they come in quest of fabled cities of gold.\(^{157}\)

The media effectively extends the “Latino Threat Narrative”\(^{158}\) beyond the scope of Mexican immigrants currently in the United States to ancestors of Spanish conquistadors from over five hundred years ago. The idea that Hispanics\(^ {159}\) and “their kin below the border,” have been plotting a reconquest of the American Southwest for several hundred years is an alarmist notion that furthers the threat narrative. Most importantly, the author of the article provides no proof of this fact. Chavez argues that,

> No critical perspective on the assumption of difference was put forward here, a difference so great and incommensurable that the people so designated were not even subject to normal expectations of social and cultural change. It was as if Mexican Americans and other Latinos existed in an ahistorical space apart from the life that took place all around them.\(^{160}\)

What is problematic about this is how such an article can influence people's perceptions of Latin@s

---

159 Hispanic is the language used in the article, which also extends the threat beyond just that of Mexicans.
without any hard evidence to back up such claims. Media sources such as the *U.S. News and World Report* were used as White nativist propaganda to disempower Mexican Americans. By the end of the 1980s, fueled by a nativist reaction to the Chican@ Movement, the perceived triple threat of invasion, reconquest, and the influence of the Quebec separatist movement, marked by Latin@s' maintenance of language and culture, was well under way in the United States.

**The 1990s into 2000: Post-9/11 Extremism**

The 1990s marked a period of economic boom in the United States with low unemployment rates and high job growth. A strong pull for cheap labor increased demand for undocumented workers coming to the United States. Chavez explains that, “the expanding economy created a hyperdemand for immigrant labor that pulled Mexican immigrants to ever more ‘exotic’ locations in the Midwest and the southeastern United States, including North Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Georgia.”\(^{161}\) With cheap labor in high demand, Mexican immigration workers were no longer isolated to the Southwest. While there were less alarmist, more moderate reactions to increased immigration due to its necessity in fueling the United States' economy, negative portrayals of Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans continued to pervade the media.

![Figure 2: June 11, 2001 cover of *Time* magazine.](image)

\(^{161}\) *Ibid*, 34.
Time magazine's June 11, 2001 cover was a photograph of two Latin@ children smiling and appearing to be normal kids, just as any other American child would be depicted. However, while the image of the children came off as pleasant, the title of the issue—“Welcome to Amexica: The border is vanishing before our eyes, creating a new world for all of us”\(^{162}\)—leaves the reader feeling otherwise. Within the idea of invasion, the word Mexico appears to be “taking over” the word America; the use of color furthered this idea with “Amexica” written in red, white and blue except for the letter c, which was in green, one of the colors of the Mexican flag. The use of children in the theme of reconquest furthered the title's message that the border was vanishing; it allowed for the children to play into the idea of a newly created world in place of what used to be the United States. With the image of Latin@ children depicted as threatening, it is no wonder that Latin@ youth have become targeted for backlash.

After the disaster of September 11, 2001, popular immigration discourse focused on national security and the border. Many viewed the U.S.-Mexico border as a way for potential terrorists to enter into the U.S. Chavez explains that,

> That none of the terrorists involved in the 9/11 carnage crossed the U.S.-Mexico border illegally was beside the point. Post-9/11 concerns with ‘the terrorist threat’ and national security resulted in greatly increased funding for border surveillance and control, including passage of a bill to build a seven-hundred-mile fence along the U.S.-Mexico border. Despite the added urgency of the new terrorist threat, the old triple threat posed by Mexican immigrants has continued to play a key role in public discourse on immigration after 9/11.\(^{163}\)

Border security became paramount, even though none of the suspects were Mexican or had entered into the United States from the Mexican border. Additionally, the attack on 9/11 made the United States wary of all “foreigners,” especially those who previous to 9/11 were already seen as a threat (i.e. Mexicans and Latin@s).

Shortly after 9/11, Patrick Buchanan\textsuperscript{164} published the book \textit{The Death of the West: How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization} (2002). In it, Buchanan emphasizes the “reconquista” threat as well as the “problem” of Mexican assimilation. His argument shows how the threat has developed, stating that, “Mexicans not only come from another culture, but millions are of another race. History and experience teach us that different races are far more difficult to assimilate.”\textsuperscript{165} In this statement, he asserts that there is some sort of inherent biological/genetic difference that comes along with being part of another race. Therefore, the Mexican threat is more than just a threat of cultural difference, it is a threat of racial (and therefore, according to Buchanan, biological) difference. Throughout the 1980s and into the 2000s, Buchanan wrote constantly about how the parts of the U.S., largely California, were on its way to becoming a Third World state.\textsuperscript{166} Using this logic, extensive Mexican immigration is causing the U.S. to move back in time to become less developed.

In 2003, Victor Davis Hanson\textsuperscript{167} wrote a book entitled \textit{Mexifornia: A State of Becoming}, which lamented the days when “the offspring of Selma's [California] immigrant farmers learned English, they intermarried, and within a generation they knew nothing of the old country and little of the old language.”\textsuperscript{168} In his book, Hanson preaches an assimilationist approach to immigration and wants

\textsuperscript{164} Patrick Buchanan is a conservative political writer and commentator. He served as senior advisor during the presidencies of Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Ronald Reagan. He is one of the founders of \textit{The American Conservative}, a conservative political journal of opinion. He is also a founding member and writing of NBC's \textit{The McLaughlin Group}, and CNN's \textit{Capital Gang} and \textit{Crossfire}. He has written ten books, including six \textit{New York Times} best-sellers. He is currently a columnist, an editor for \textit{The American Conservative}, political analyst for MSNBC and chairman of The American Cause. “Biography,” \textit{Patrick J. Buchanan}, http://buchanan.org/blog/biography.

\textsuperscript{165} Patrick Buchanan, \textit{The Death of the West: How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization} (New York City: St. Martin's Griffin, 2002), 125.

\textsuperscript{166} Chavez, \textit{The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation}.

\textsuperscript{167} Victor Davis Hanson is a professor at California State University and a senior fellow in residence at Stanford's Hoover Institution. He has contributed to the \textit{National Review}, a magazine and website for conservative news. He has written and edited more than 350 scholarly articles and sixteen books, some of which have been \textit{New York Times} best-sellers. He is a regularly contributor to the \textit{Military History Quarterly}, \textit{City Journal}, the \textit{New York Times}, and the \textit{Chicago Tribune}, among others.


\textsuperscript{168} Victor Davis Hanson, \textit{Mexifornia: A State of Becoming} (New York City: Encounter Books, 2003), 2.
Mexican immigrants to completely forget about their cultural and linguistic heritage. Hanson believes that the high drop out rate of Mexican and Mexican American students reflects a general lack of interest in assimilating instead of non-relevant, non-culturally responsive teaching. The reason Chican@ students were underperforming in school and more likely to be involved in gangs, according to Hanson, was their fault because they abided by a separatists’ belief and revolted against schools that tried to change that. Additionally, both Hanson and Buchanan criticized Chican@ studies programs as well as the student organization MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chican@ de Aztlán) for allowing the Mexican separatist movement to continue.¹⁶⁹ This attitude that the Latin@ threat is tempered by assimilation is dangerous in that the converse assumption is that threat is sharpened by ethnic awareness and studies.

Samuel P. Huntington's²⁰⁰⁵ book entitled *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America's National Identity* emphasized the idea of a mainstream, Anglo-Protestant culture to which most immigrants in U.S. history have been able to assimilate. In his chapter, “Mexican Immigration and Hispantization,” Huntington explains that Mexicans are unlike any other immigrant group in the United States because of their lack of willingness to accept and assimilate into the dominant Anglo-Protestant culture.¹⁷¹ Within Huntington's argument, a myth of assimilation emerges, where White American nativists believe that assimilation is as simple as learning and assuming the national language and cultural traditions of the United States. However, nativists do not address the fact that even when Mexican Americans have learned English, adopted Anglo cultural traditions, and studied the dominant-

²⁰⁰⁵ Samuel P. Huntington was a conservative Democratic political scientist. He served as foreign policy adviser in Hubert H. Humphrey's 1968 presidential campaign. He was coordinator of security planning for the National Security Council from 1977-1978. He was a founder of *Foreign Policy* magazine and president of the American Political Science Association. He attended Harvard University and went on to teach as a professor at Harvard's Albert J. Weatherhead III University. Huntington wrote, co-wrote, and edited a total of 17 books and over a dozen scholarly articles.
Anglo cannon of education, they are still perceived as foreigners. Here, nativism intersects with racism. Dr. Pérez Huber, a Critical Race Studies scholar, defines racist nativism as, “the assigning of values to real or imaged differences in order to justify the superiority of the native, who is perceived to be white, over that of the non-native, who is perceived to be People and Immigrants of Color, and thereby defend the native's right to dominance.”

Connecting Whiteness to native-status marginalizes Mexican Americans who have lived for many generations in the United States, not only for their ancestry, but also for their racial ethnicity.

In 2007, Patrick Buchanan wrote another book that emphasized the threat of Mexican immigration. His book, *State of Emergency: The Third World Invasion and Conquest of America*, includes chapter titles such as “The Invasion,” “A Grudge Against the Gringo,” “The Aztlan Plot,” and “The Return of Tribalism.” Particularly troubling is Buchanan's use of the word tribalism, which evokes similar feelings to which the European colonists used to describe the Native Americans (i.e. savages). Buchanan asserts that for a decade, Mexico and its president Vincente Fox, had pursued a strategy that “aims directly at a reannexation of the Southwest, not militarily, but ethnically, linguistically, and culturally, through transfer of millions of Mexicans into the United States and a migration of 'Anglos' out of the lands Mexico lost in 1848.”

He goes on to state that “la Reconquista is not to be accomplished by force arms, as was the U.S. annexation of the Southwest and California in 1848. It is to be carried out by a nonviolent invasion and cultural transformation of that huge slice of American into a Mexamerican borderland.”

Buchanan's fear of losing his “American culture” has led him to believe that the country of Mexico, along with its President, has a revenge plot on the U.S. to reclaim what it lost in the U.S.-Mexican War.

---

In some ways, Buchanan's belief in Chican@s' attempt to reclaim their lost land was true. The ancestral homeland of the Aztec – Aztlán – was adopted by Chican@ organizers during the 1960s and 70s to give them a locational existence. What differs is the way that different groups of people have come to perceive Aztlán. For most Chican@s, Aztlán is a place of meaningful ancestral existence, challenging the notion that Mexican Americans are foreigners in the United States. As Moctesuma Esparza states, “It meant we were home.”

If anything, Aztlán provided Chican@s with a sense of belonging in the U.S. However, the White American nativists perception of Aztlán has been quite different. The internal reclamation of the southwest – a reclaiming of an erased history – has come to be viewed as an attack on the United States. Aztlán helped to establish nationalist Chican@ identity that was an empowering call to stand up against racial discrimination. This empowerment has come to be viewed by Buchanan and other conservatives as a threat to White political power that has kept Mexican Americans marginalized.

Amidst the mess of extremist conservative literature, President George W. Bush put forth his comprehensive immigration plan, Secure Borders, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Reform Act of 2007, also known as The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007. The bill, which was never passed, was seen as a compromise between providing an easier route toward immigrants' citizenship while strengthening border security. It included funding for increased surveillance and barriers along the border, and a 45 percent increase in the number of Border Patrol agents from 13,000 to 18,000. At the same time, it would have established a temporary guest worker program and adjusted the visa criteria for skilled-workers. Conservative critics believed that the bill was an amnesty provision; they felt that it rewarded undocumented immigrants for illegally crossing the border by giving them an easier path to citizenship. On the other side, many criticized the bill's focus of granting citizenship through work skills as opposed to family reunification purposes. While the bill never made

---

175 Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement. VHS, 1996.
it out of the Senate, it gained harsh criticism from both sides of the immigration debate. The negative reactions to President Bush's immigration plan allowed for the resurfacing of the reconquest theme.

**Arizona Immigration Politics: A Case Study**

While understanding national immigration politics and conditions is important, a case study of Arizona further illustrates how lives and communities are affected by extremist immigration discourse. Solely considering national politics distances one's self from how these politics take shape in the social realm. An examination of Arizona immigration politics highlights how lives are affected by national and state immigration conditions.

The state of Arizona is regarded by many as one of the toughest states on immigration, with a harshly conservative political climate. Current state Governor Jan Brewer signed into law one of the most strict and controversial immigration bills – SB 1070. Previous to Jan Brewer, Janet Napolitano served two terms as Arizona state governor, making her the first Democratic governor to be re-elected in Arizona in a quarter of a century.

In 2005, Governor Janet Napolitano declared an immigration emergency in four Arizona counties on the border. A year later, she sent National Guard troops to the border to assist Border Patrol agents in stopping undocumented immigrations into the United States. While National Guard troops have been on the border since 1988, Fox News explains that, “Napolitano signed an order authorizing commanders to station an unspecified number of additional soldiers there to help federal agents.” Shortly thereafter, in May of 2006, President George W. Bush initiated “Operation Jump Off,” his plan to use National Guardsmen to assist the Border Patrol in “restoring order to the region.”

President Bush's language attends to the threat narrative, connoting that there is a crisis on the border. While the

---


177 Ibid.


National Guardsmen wouldn't partake in the law enforcement aspects of Border Patrol, they would be armed. “Operation Jump Off” was directly inspired by Governor Janet Napolitano's usage of National Guard troops in the Arizona-Mexico borderlands.

While in office, both houses of Arizona's state legislature were (and still are) Republican-dominated. Governor Napolitano came to be known as “Governor No” because of her extreme exercising of her veto power. During her time in office, she had issued 180 vetoes, exercising her veto power more than any other governor in Arizona's history. While Napolitano did crack down on employers who knowingly hired undocumented workers and increased the number of Border Patrol and National Guardsmen on the border, she also vetoed an extensive number of anti-immigration bills that targeted undocumented immigrants already living and working in the United States. These bills included a request for the U.S. Congress to repeal the Fourteenth Amendment — meaning that children of immigrant parents born in the U.S. would not have been granted direct citizenship, a bill that would have prohibited U.S.-citizens from marrying non-citizens, as well as a bill that would have made it illegal for day laborers to look for work on public streets. Napolitano supported comprehensive immigration reform, similar to that which President George W. Bush attempted to pass in 2007.

When Napolitano left office in 2009 to work as the United States Secretary of Homeland Security, current Governor Jan Brewer succeeded her. While most conservatives were glad to have one of their own back in office, many Arizona Democrats were fearful. Senator Ken Cheuvront, a Phoenix Democrat stated that, “it's going to be a travesty. We will have no one to stop the extremist legislation that inevitably will be put forward by the Republican majority." Incoming House Assistant Minority Leader, Krysten Sinema, a Phoenix Democrat stated that, “it's going to be very different.”

was certainly right.

Governor Jan Brewer assumed office on January 21, 2009. On April 23, 2010, she signed the *Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act*, also known as SB1070, into law. The inclusion of “Safe Neighborhoods” in the title shows that SB1070 was a response to a presumed threat. The intent of the law is “to discourage and deter the unlawful entry and presence of aliens and economic activity by persons unlawfully present in the United States” by identification, prosecution and deportation.\(^{183}\) The law authorizes police officers to detain anyone if “reasonable suspicion exists that the person is an alien who is unlawfully present in the United States.”\(^{184}\) It also makes failure to carry immigration documents a crime. Since “reasonable suspicion” is not defined in the law, SB1070 has empowered officers to racially profile anyone present in Arizona. With the immigration debate's focus on the U.S.-Mexico border and in a state where nearly 30% of the population is Latin@ (with Mexicans accounting for 96% of the Latin@ population).\(^ {185}\)

Even before the bill was signed into law, President Obama was outspoken about his opposition toward it, stating that it threatened “to undermine basic notions of fairness that we cherish as Americans, as well as the trust between police and our communities that is so crucial to keeping us safe.”\(^ {186}\) A month later, President Obama and Mexican President Felipe Calderón denounced SB1070 and discussed more effective methods of comprehensive immigration reform.\(^ {187}\) Cardinal Roger M. Mahony of Los Angeles, an outspoken advocate of comprehensive immigration reform, likened the ability of Arizona police officers to request immigration papers to “Nazism.”\(^ {188}\) While important

\(^ {183}\) S.B. 1070, 49 Leg., 2nd Reg. Sess. (Ariz. 2010).

\(^ {184}\) Ibid.


political figures spoke out against SB1070, its enactment marks a growing trend in extremist immigration discourse.

On April 23, the day that Jan Brewer signed SB 1070, approximately 2,000 people took to the streets of Phoenix in protest of the law, fearful that the bill would lead to civil rights abuses. A little over a week later, on May 1st, tens of thousands of protestors across the nation rallied against SB1070. In Los Angeles, there were 50,000 people present. Gloria Estefan, a Cuban-born singer who kicked off the march to downtown L.A., stated that, “We're good people. We've given a lot to this country. This country has given a lot to us.” In New York City, where some 6,500 protestors gathered, labor organizer John Delgado said that “I would like to thank the governor of Arizona because she's awakened a sleeping giant.” At the 8,000 person protest in Chicago, undocumented students “came out” about their immigration statuses. Other rallies were held in Dallas, Texas, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Denver, Colorado.

There have been numerous SB1070 protests in Tucson. On April 21, 2010, young and old alike took to the streets in downtown Tucson to rally for or against SB1070, which was in the hands of Governor Jan Brewer to decided whether to sign or veto the bill. Approximately two hundred people attended the protest. The majority of protesters were worried that the bill would cause racial profiling and increased discrimination toward Mexicans. A counter-protest was also held where a small group of people from Arizonans for Immigration Control showed their support for SB1070 and Governor Jan Brewer. They held signs with statements such as “Save my job. Honk for deportation.” On April 23, 2010, hundreds of students in Tucson from Pueblo, Rincon, Tucson, Desert View, Cholla and Amphi high schools walked out of class to protest the signing of SB1070. Similar rallies were held on March 4, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/24/us/politics/24immig.html?ref=us.


Ibid.

Ibid.

May 1 and have continued into this year.

Human rights activist and attorney Isabel Garcia said, “What happens in Arizona doesn't stay in Arizona.” What has been particularly troubling about the passing of SB1070 is how it has affected the rest of the 49 states. In 2011, Utah, Indiana, Georgia, and Alabama all passed similar bills. In Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Rhode Island, South Carolina and Michigan, there were unsuccessful attempts to pass similar legislation. The passing of SB1070 has not only influenced other states to enact similar legislation, but has also put a new focus on state power versus federal law, as seen through the debates between Governor Jan Brewer and President Obama.

Among Brewer's other anti-immigrant actions as Arizona Governor, in April 2011, she signed SB1406 into law, a bill that authorizes the construction of a fence along the Arizona-Mexico border. Building a fence along the border assumes that the United States is being threatened and needs to be protected. She has supported the usage of National Guardsmen on the border and has effectively urged the federal government to do so. During an interview in August 2010 with local NBC affiliate 12 News, Brewer stated that, “Our law enforcement agencies have found bodies in the desert either buried or just lying there that have been beheaded.” After six county medical examiners investigated her claims with negative results, she claimed that she misspoke and disputed accusations of having made such a statement. The claim that beheaded bodies have been recovered in the desert borderlands – evoking nightmare-like images – clearly shows Governor Jan Brewer's extremist stance on the perceived national security threat by Mexican immigrants. Furthermore, the idea that those crossing the border

---

would be beheading one another contributes to the idea of Mexican immigrants being barbaric and, most importantly different than Americans.

**The Minuteman Project**

In addition to Arizona state politicians, The Minuteman Project is an important group to look at as part of an ongoing movement toward normalized extremism within immigration politics. Jim Gilchrist founded the Minuteman Project, a self-described “citizens' Neighborhood Watch on our border,” active from October 2004-April 2005.\(^{197}\) Inspired by the Minuteman militia of the Revolutionary War, their goal was not to only survey the border in hopes of spotting immigrants trying to cross over the border illegally, but also to attract the media's attention in the hope of affecting federal government policies around immigration. Part of the Minuteman Project's ideology about undocumented immigration was that these “illegals” are coming into the United States without proper background checks through the U.S. or their home country's embassy. Therefore, there is reason for suspect – why are they sneaking into the country? – that perhaps they have something that they are trying to hide by avoiding the legal process. The Minutemen focus on the rights and privileges that they lose due to illegal immigration, which feeds into the notion that undocumented immigrants are draining social services such as education and medical services.

The Minuteman Project used nationalistic, masculine images and slogans in their advertising (i.e. shirts, posters) such as hyper-masculinized Uncle Sam, the American flag, the bald eagle, and the Minuteman icon from the revolutionary war. As Chavez states,

> The narrative enacted here was of citizens, especially males, coming to the defense of the nation's borders, which were under siege by invading force that the nation's own government was unwilling or unable to control. It was a patriotic discourse meant to spur patriotic Americans into action against two enemies, the noncitizen border crossers and the U.S. federal government.\(^{198}\)

The use of patriotic images was helpful in that a lack of support for the Minuteman Project could have

---


been skewed as a lack of support for the United States. Justifying their cause against Mexican immigration as a threat to the United States feeds into the national security discourse around immigration politics and furthers the notion that Mexicans are dangerous, drug smuggling criminals.

Gilchrist named April 1, 2005, a day of action for the Minuteman Project, where supporters were called to come and defend the border. The Arizona-Mexico border region was chosen because it is the area where the majority of illegal immigration occurs. His goals for what Chavez calls the “Arizona spectacle” were to:

(a) draw attention to ‘illegal immigration’ and the lack of border security; (b) reduce the number of apprehensions along the border where the group monitored; and (c) influence the U.S. Congress to put a ten-year moratorium on illegal immigration and cap the number of legal immigrants to 200,000 per year.\(^{199}\)

Ultimately, Gilchrist wanted to influence U.S. federal policy decisions on immigration. On March 30, 2005, a couple of days before the Minuteman Project's first day of action, the federal government sent 500 additional Border Patrol agents along the Arizona-Mexico border (total of 2,900 plus an aircraft) and top Homeland Security officials were sent to Tucson. While the federal government claimed that this action had nothing to do with the Minutemen Project, the group was thrilled and thought otherwise.\(^{200}\)

On April 1\(^{st}\), some two hundred volunteers showed up, well under the anticipated 1,300. Wearing shirts that said, “Some people are alive simply because it's illegal to kill them,” there was a certain appeal of the “Wild West” in the actions of the Minutemen. The binary of cowboys versus Indians was certainly visible in the actions and mentalities of the Minutemen, whether it was legal/illegal, citizen/noncitizen, documented/undocumented, or ally/enemy.

While the Minuteman Project lasted for just under one month, it was influential in a number of ways. First, the federal government continued to send more National Guardsmen to the border,

\(^{199}\) Ibid., 136.
particularly in the Arizona-Mexico region. The Minuteman Project gained huge popularity in the media and became a reputable opinion on “the other side” of the immigration debate. Jim Gilchrist has been interviewed by a number of news sources, including The Atlantic, Free Republic, Media Matters, Fox News, and Democracy Now!. The legacy of project continued into other states, including Texas, California, New Mexico as well as far from the border in Michigan and Idaho. Furthermore, the Minuteman Project turned the national debate on immigration into a debate about border security. Lastly, while the official run of the Minuteman Project lasted for only a month, there are those who continue to stakeout on the border in hopes of stopping illegal immigration. Other actions taken by Minutemen outside of border surveillance are harassing and video recording day laborers on public street looking for jobs, as seen in the 2011 Minutemen documentary.201

While the Minuteman Project succeeded in bringing national attention to border security, it is uncertain whether they were actually successful in deterring immigrants from crossing the border. For a number of reasons, the answer is likely no. The United States economy's demand for cheap labor will continue to draw immigrants into the country, an issue that has not been addressed by the Minuteman Project at all. Intersecting factors in the draw for immigrant labor include middle- and upper-class Americans’ desire for cheap commodities, food, and services and economic pressures related to globalization and low-wage production in developing countries. Additionally, immigrants looking to illegally cross the border could have found other areas where there was less surveillance.

Given the national and state sentiment around immigration, it is crucial to look at Tucson as important case. Tucson is located just over sixty miles from the border, making it a popular destination for those crossing from Mexico. Lane Van Ham, author of a monumental book on Tucson's immigrant advocacy groups, explains, “As a region that was once part of Mexico, where the former Mexican population was folded into the United States through conquest, and human activities continuously cross

201 The Minutemen, Verite Productions, 2011.
an international border, it complicates the idea of national cultures as essences hermetically sealed by territorial boundaries.”

As the Mexican immigrant and Mexican American population increases within the United States, the conditions surrounding immigration in Tucson inform our understanding of national immigration trends and further illustrate how lives are affected by extremist immigration discourse and legislation.

**Tucson Immigration Politics: A Case Study**

In 1994, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) began its Southwest Border Strategy, “a multiphase project aimed at disrupting illegal immigration through increased enforcement at popular entry points in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas.” Operation Safeguard, the Arizona-

---

targeted phase, began in 1995.

Operation Safeguard redirected illegal border crossings away from urban areas near the Nogales port-of-entry to comparatively open areas that the Border Patrol could more effectively control. By moving potential crossers away from urban areas where they were able to disappear into local communities, the Border Patrol has taken advantage of new equipment and technology and increased staffing to make apprehensions.  

The Tucson sector encompasses most of Operation Safeguard's area, covering some 261 miles of diverse and rugged terrain and expanding into parts of the Tohono O’odham Native American reservation. Over 1,700 Border Patrol agents, not including support personnel, detention enforcement and clerical support, staff the area's eight stations. Agents patrol the area by truck, aircraft and foot. Video monitors and electronic sensors have been placed at specific locations to detect for illegal crossings by foot or vehicle as well as the use of fences and bright lights.

According to the Chief of U.S. Border Patrol's Tucson sector, David Aguilar, the major focus of the area has been on people-smuggling. As enforcement and surveillance along the border has increased, more and more people attempting to cross have hired guides to help them across. These guides, or smugglers, as Aguilar states, are only interested in money and tend to abandon immigrants at the first sign of trouble. In 2001, fourteen immigrants died from heat exhaustion and dehydration after being abandoned by their guides east of Yuma. While Border Patrol tactics aim at ending illegal border crossings, the Southwest Border Strategy has resulted in increased people-smuggling. This indicates that the increased militarization of the border as a symptomatic treatment to deter undocumented immigrants has done little to dampen motivation to cross the border. Furthermore, if what Chief Aguilar says is true, then an increase in people-smuggling may also result in an increase in the death toll along the border, as immigrants risk their lives to enter into the United States.

Before delving into education in Tucson, it is important to understand the city's climate around immigration. For decades, immigrant advocacy and anti-immigrant groups have existed in Tucson. 

---

With the increased militarization of the border, immigrant deaths in the borderlands have become a key area of focus for immigrant advocacy groups in the Tucson area. Author Lane Van Ham states that, “Though Tucson immigrant advocacy bears the imprint of personalities and networks that are all its own, it has been influenced by regional, national, and global events and influenced them in turn.”

While the number of immigrant-related groups in Tucson are too large to cover in the scope of this paper, I will highlight groups at opposite ends of the poles, showing some of the most radical and racist immigration organizations in Tucson.

No More Deaths/No Más Muertes (NMD) began in 2004 as a collective of four faith-based immigrant advocacy groups in Tucson. They aim to end the death and suffering along the United States-Mexico border through providing humanitarian assistance – water, food, and medical assistance – to those in need. Their website, containing a number of important documents, press releases, news updates, also has an Arizona border death toll, listed at 2,666 as of March 26, 2014. NMD monitor Border Patrol happenings and aim to effect U.S. immigration policy to end the militarization of the border. During the summer months, they sets up camps in the southern Arizona desert to provide shelter for migrants.

In 2005, two NMD volunteers, Shanti Sellz and Daniel Strauss, picked up two migrants who they found in critical condition and transported them to Tucson for treatment. Along the way, they were stopped by Border Patrol and arrested for conspiracy charges and the transportation of illegal immigrants. Under the slogan “Humanitarian Aid Is Not a Crime,” immigrant advocates in Tucson rallied against Sellz's and Strauss' prosecution. In a case that attracted national and international attention, a United States district judge eventually dropped the case in September 2006.

Another important immigrant solidarity group is the Coalición de Derechos Humanos (Human

Rights Coalition), a Tucson-based grassroots organization that promotes the civil and human rights of immigrant communities while combating the militarization of the southern borderlands. They aim to strengthen border and urban communities abilities to exercise their rights, expose violence and misconduct of law enforcement officials, impact and change U.S. policies that target immigrant communities and increase the militarization of the border. They regularly provide “Know Your Rights” workshops in addition to the distribution of “Know Your Rights” summary cards. They work in conjunction with a number of social justice groups focused on LGBTQ issues, youth empowerment, and Indigenous rights and discrimination. One of their collaborative projects is the Yo Soy Testigo-I am a Witness Campaign, which aims to document and report law enforcement abuses and local law enforcement and Border Patrol collaboration.207

Among the slew of immigrant advocacy groups, there are also several anti-immigrant groups in the Tucson area. Three of these groups – Arizonans for Immigration Control, Minuteman Civil Defense Corps, Border Guardians – have gained a significant amount of attention in local, state and national media sources as well as in local politics.

Arizonans for Immigration Control is a anti-immigration group based out of Tucson that supports the strengthening of border security to suppress illegal immigration and the reduction of legal immigrants admitted into the United States.208 Founder and President Wes Bramhall believes that the influx of undocumented immigrants is “an invasion.” He goes on to states that, “They get across the border to take work away from our people and depress wages.”209 The group conducted a counter-protest on April 23, 2010 to show their support for the Governor Jan Brewer and her signing of SB1070.210

209 Ibid.
Another key piece of Arizonans for Immigration Control's work has been rallying and speaking out against immigrant amnesty groups, particularly those who provide water to border crossers.\(^{211}\) According to Bramhall,

> Neither the Border Patrol nor the citizens of our nation are in any manner responsible for the deaths of any illegal immigrants attempting to cross the Arizona desert whatever the time of year. However, we do have plenty of those among us – be they politicians, newspaper editors, church groups and some Hispanic organizations – who don't seem to know to which nation they owe their allegiance.\(^{212}\)

Bramhall's belief that those who provide water to dehydrated immigrants is indicative of their disloyalty to the United States helps to feed into the binaries of us/them, citizen/non-citizen, legal/illegal. These binaries of distinguishing U.S. citizens from undocumented immigrants are a key piece in perpetuating the marginalization of immigrants, specifically Mexicans. Further, to state that these aid providers are unpatriotic is quite far-reaching and neglects the fact that the actual lives of people are at stake. However, based on Bramhall's comments that the deaths of undocumented immigrants is not the fault of U.S. citizens clearly shows that he is not concerned with their lives.

Lastly, Bramhall's argument that undocumented immigrants come into the U.S. to “take work away from our people and depress wages” neglects the fact that the United States' economy's need for cheap labor is what has drawn so many undocumented immigrants into the U.S. since the early 1900s.

The Minuteman Civil Defense Corps (MCDC), not to be confused with the Minuteman Project, was co-founded in 2005 by Chris Simcox, a former member of the Minuteman Project, and Jason Todd “J.T.” Ready, a well-known neo-Nazi.\(^{213}\) According to their website, their mission is “to secure United

---

\(^{211}\) Bramhall specifically targets Humane Borders, a Tucson group that sets up water stations in the desert to provide relief from the hot, Arizona sun.


States borders and coastal borders against unlawful and unauthorized entry of all individuals, contraband, and foreign military.” While the group is not specifically based out of Tucson, it was the home to one of their chapters. Starting on March 28, 2008, the MCDC initiated “Operation Sovereignty,” which stationed volunteers along the border to patrol for undocumented immigrants. Then-president of the group, Chris Simcox, included state specific instructions that members possess firearms while on patrol.

While the national group was disbanded in 2010, local chapters continue to stay active by holding demonstrations in their respective cities and staking out on the border. President of MCDC, Carmen Mercer, sent out a call for action in March 2010. Mercer states that,

For eight long years we Minutemen played nice; yet for the past eight years we firmly expressed our opinions and desires for the border to be secured. This muster will be completely different. President Barack Obama and John McCain have left us no choice. This March we return to the border locked, loaded and ready to stop each and every individual we encounter along the frontier that is now more dangerous than the frontier of Afghanistan.

Similar to immigrant advocacy groups in Tucson, the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps stakes out on the border to observe. However, they're not observing for abuses of power by Border Patrol agents and other U.S. officials, but rather for people attempting to cross the border. Armed with guns, their work has come to be viewed by most reports as extremist vigilantism, a term that the group has come to embrace.

Border Guardians is likely the most extreme of all the anti-immigration groups in Tucson. They

---

216 For Arizona, Simcox stated that “side arms are permitted but not required”
have attracted national attention from their Mexican flag burning demonstrations. In April 2007, they staged a protest outside of the Mexican Consulate in Tucson to speak out against the number of undocumented immigrants in the United States. While the act of flag burning would surely offend avid patriotic Americans, apparently Border Guardians' burning of the Mexican flag is not an attack on Mexican people, but rather, according to group's director, Laine Lawless, it's a protest “against the Mexican government and the Mexicans that are illegally present in the United States right now.” Roy Warden, a member of the Border Guardians, was also present at the protest. In response to being called racist, Warden responded that, “Our movement is of all colors of skin. It has nothing to do with racism.” While in Warden's mind, Border Guardian's is not a racist group, the act of burning the Mexican flag could certainly be seen as a hateful act that targets a specific group of people. Further, Warden and the group's native/immigrant stance feeds into the notions of racist nativism. Whether or not the group is intentionally being racist, their targeting of Mexican undocumented immigrants has much to do with being People of Color as it has to do with being undocumented.

With his website, wardenburnsmexicanflags.com, Roy Warden, has received national attention for his hateful acts toward Latin@s. There have been multiple instances of him carrying his 9mm Glock on his hip while spewing hate speech from a loudspeaker or stomping on Mexican flags outside of a Catholic cathedral. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, he is seen as “one of the country's most controversial, volatile, and many believe, dangerous characters in the anti-immigration movement.”

The climate around immigration in Tucson as well as in the state of Arizona, is clearly intense.

---

221 Ibid.
223 Ibid.
with both immigrant solidarity and anti-immigrant opinions being voiced and fought for. The work of
groups like No Más Muertes, Coalición de Derechos Humanos, and Humane Borders has made a
serious impact on immigration, not just through the services that they're providing, but also by drawing
attention to the life-endangering lengths that immigrants are willing to take to gain entry into the
United States. Further, these groups have also highlighted the effects of the highly militarized U.S.-
Mexico Border and the abuses of power by Border Patrol agents and local police departments. On the
other side are the Tucson anti-immigrant groups like Arizonans for Immigration Control, the
Minuteman Civil Defense Corps, and Border Guardians. The actions taken by these groups, from
protests to blatant verbal or physical violence toward Mexican immigrants, are concerning for a
number of reasons. Members of these groups have not only influenced local Tucson politics, but also
Arizona and national politics. Moreover, the actions taken by extremists like T.J. Ready and Roy
Warden are indicative of a crisis – not an “illegal immigration” crisis, but a violent reaction to the
influx of undocumented immigrants. While these anti-immigrant groups are certainly dangerous, they
differ from those involved in the banning of Tucson's Mexican American Studies program. Their
overtly racist nativist ideals set them apart from the more subtle color-blind approaches by Arizona and
Tucson school officials.

As a response to the gains made during the Chican@ Civil Rights Movement, conservatives and
White nativists fabricated a triple threat imposed by Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans:
invasion, reconquest and separatism. Popular media has been used to further propagate this presumed
threat. Contemporary immigration politics in Arizona and Tucson illustrate the normalization of
extremism within immigration discourse and how this threat affects the lives of individuals.

Issues around immigration have transcended political debates of “illegal immigration” and are
intersecting with a multitude of issues. Within Tucson, nativist ideals and anti-immigration discourse

---

have targeted the public school system. At the intersection of education and immigration, Mexican American students in the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) have endured an attack on their schooling. However, in keeping with traditions of past Chican@ students movements, the Chican@ students in TUSD are fighting back.
Chapter 3. Tucson's Mexican American Studies Program

“Although schools in the United States were desegregated as a result of Mendez v. Westminster and Brown v. Board of Education, Mexican American students continued to receive a subpar education. What remained the same was a system that was set up to track children of color into menial social positions, thereby creating an underclass of exploitable labor, and preserving the legacy of power and control over social and political arenas for the white majority.”


The history of Mexican immigration into the United States reveals trends of exploitation, disempowerment and resistance. Following the gains made during the Chicano Civil Rights Movement was a conservative and White nativist pushback to disempower Mexican Americans and reestablish a system of White political power. Immigration politics in Arizona and Tucson shows the extent to which extremist immigration discourse affects the lives on individuals.

The academic and social gains made by Chicano students in Tucson's Mexican American Studies (MAS) program were seen as a threat to White political power. State- and local-level political and educational officials justified their assault on the program by positing a color-blind ideology. In the 21st century, color-blind ideology has become a contemporary means of perpetuating systems of racism and oppression, particularly in schools. The banning of Tucson's MAS program is a current-day example of how the fabricated Latin@ Threat Narrative has been used to disempower Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans and maintain a system of White supremacy.

History of ethnic studies in Tucson, Arizona

During the 1960s and 70s, the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) struggled with issues of desegregation. In the state court case of Fisher-Mendoza v TUSD (1978), African American and Mexican American students sued the Tucson, Arizona school system, alleging intentional segregation and unconstitutional discrimination on the basis of race and national origin. Roy Fisher, the parent of an African American student and Maria Mendoza, the parent of a Mexican American student, sued the
TUSD for not providing an adequate education to their children.\textsuperscript{225} Dr. Gómez and professor Jiménez-Silva, two bilingual and ELL education scholars, state that, “They were openly critical of past educational administrative practices, school violence caused by racial and cultural incidents, and over the educational needs of bilingual and minority children – all of which were recurring problems not addressed satisfactorily by previous attempts.”\textsuperscript{226} Implementation of strategies to fix this problem was broken down into three phases. Of significant importance to ethnic studies in Tucson was phase three, in which the District created four integrated magnet schools for white and minority students. The TUSD “created a Black Studies program and offered Standard English as a Second Dialect (SESD), offering courses in Black history and culture for nearly 3,000 African American students.”\textsuperscript{227} Unfortunately, there was no discussion of creating a Mexican American Studies Department even though they represented the largest ethnic group in Tucson.

Chican@\textsuperscript{s} have been in the fight for educational equity for nearly a century. While the Mexican American community in Tucson has endured educational hardships, they also have a history of fighting back. During the 1960s and 70s, their organizing began to implement more direct action. In 1969, students protested the high dropout rates and low college attendance of Mexican American students in Tucson. On March 20, 1969, after several unsuccessful attempts to amend the situation, students from Tucson High and Pueblo High walked out of school.\textsuperscript{228} Grace Gámez, professor of Justice Studies at the University of Arizona explains, “Some of the demands made included replacing a racist administrator; offering Mexican American History; and hiring Mexican American counselors, administrators and teachers.”\textsuperscript{229} After TUSD administrator Dr. Thomas Lee suspended all of the student protestors, parents organized a “walk-in” to force the administration to address the concerns of the students. Eventually,

\textsuperscript{226} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{227} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{229} \textit{Ibid.}

Around the same time as the students organized and led walkouts, a group called Communities, Organizations, & Neighborhoods for Mexican American Studies (CONMAS) was established. The group’s primary agenda was to implement a Chican@ studies program in the TUSD high schools. Sean Arce, who later became the director of the Mexican American Studies Department in Tucson, created CONMAS as an offshoot of the student group MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) at the University of Arizona. According to Miguel Ortega, a long time educational activist in Tucson, Arce played a critical leadership role within CONMAS, “slowly piecing together the nuts and bolts of the future program.”\footnote{Ibid.} They pressured the TUSD school board to take seriously the community’s demand for such a program. One way they attempted to do so was by regularly attending the TUSD school board meetings. They argued that there already was an African American and Native American Studies Department and while Latin@s—specifically Mexican Americans—represented the largest ethnic group in Tucson, there was no separate Latin@/Hispanic/Mexican American Studies Department.\footnote{Grace Gámez, “Buscar Las Raíces de la Verdad: A Historical Narrative of Education, Repression, and Resistance in Tucson, Arizona.”}

While CONMAS did not achieve their goal of creating a separate Latin@s Studies Department, the organization helped pave the way for the creation of the Hispanic Studies Department in 1998.\footnote{Conrado Gómez and Margarita Jiménez-Silva, “Mexican American Studies: The Historical Legitimacy of an Educational Program.”}

Protests from the local community, largely the Mexican/Mexican American community continued. While a conjoined Bilingual Education and Hispanic Studies Department did exist, many community members, specifically parents, believed that there should be a separate department. TUSD decided to keep the department conjoined due to financial reasons.\footnote{Ibid.}
Implementation of Hispanic/Mexican American Studies Program

In January 1997 a group of TUSD Latin@ parents, along with TUSD Board member Rosalie Lopez, filed a lawsuit claiming that “the District discriminated against Hispanic students by failing to run a comprehensive Hispanic Studies Department.” At the time, there was only one department for bilingual education, language acquisition and Hispanic studies. By combining these areas of study, parents and community members felt as though the Hispanic studies curriculum was not receiving adequate attention nor funding.

During the mid-1990s, The Tucson Xicano Coalition, which evolved into the Tucson Xicano Mexicano Committee for Self-Determination (TXMC), helped to organize forums, lead markers, and gather attendance at City Council and TUSD Governing Board meetings. Miguel Ortega argues, “it was through the TXMC that we seriously began to push for MAS [Mexican American Studies] at TUSD.”

Salomón Baldenegro was also a catalyst for the creation of Mexican American Studies in TUSD. During the late 1960s and 70s, Baldenegro organized with the Mexican American community in Tucson to create a community park between two of the poorest Mexican neighborhoods in Tucson at the time. Ortega states, “We adopted that battle as our very own Chicano Moratorium or our Crusade for Justice. It gave us a local connection to Chicano history and made us feel like we could repeat something like that again here in Tucson.” The use of local history, especially when working with youth, was critical in organizing during the 90s because it demystified “the possibility of them doing the same work as leaders themselves.”

On February 25, 1997, after much protest and multiple lawsuits, the Superintendent of the

---

235 Ibid.
237 Ibid.
238 Ibid.
239 Ibid.
TUSD, George Garcia, created the Bilingual Education, Hispanic Studies, and Language Acquisition Review Committee to investigate how to better meet the educational needs of Latin@ students in Tucson.\footnote{Tucson Unified School District, \textit{Mexican American Student Services Historical Background}, accessed April 14, 2014, http://www.tusd1.org/contents/depart/mexicanam/documents/background.pdf.} The Committee was made up of thirty-four community members, including parents, community leaders, teachers, administrators, union leaders, university professors, and one student, representing a range of ethnic and racial backgrounds. They were given one year\footnote{The Committee's recommendations were to be presented on March 25, 1998.} to conduct research, as well as have bi-weekly meetings and hold three public community hearings.\footnote{Conrado Gómez and Margarita Jiménez-Silva, “Mexican American Studies: The Historical Legitimacy of an Educational Program.”} The TUSD drafted a set of guidelines for the committee:

6. Review the Bilingual Education/Hispanic Studies Department in terms of existing programs as they relate to bilingual/multicultural education and second language acquisition;
7. Review existing national research and programming related to multicultural education, bilingual education, Hispanic Studies, and second language acquisition;
8. Hold several community meetings;
9. Make recommendations to the governing board and the superintendent.\footnote{Ibid.}

In July 1997, around the same time that the Bilingual Education, Hispanic Studies, and Language Acquisition Review Committee was developing their recommendations, the TUSD Board members requested an external audit of the Bilingual Education Department, Hispanic Studies and Language Acquisition in TUSD. The audit was to be conducted by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA). The TUSD School Board requested that the IDRA focus on four areas – compliance, operations, instruction, and fiscal matters.\footnote{Intercultural Development Research Association, \textit{External Audit of the Bilingual Education and Hispanic Studies Department: Executive Summary}, accessed April 14, 2014, http://www.tusd1.org/contents/depart/mexicanam/historical.asp.}

On March 10, 1998, the IDRA presented its report to the TUSD School Board. They agreed that the need for a Hispanic studies program was voiced by many stakeholders. They go on to state that, the Hispanic studies program must be guided by clear goals that acknowledge Hispanic contributions through an enriched core curriculum available in all campuses and to all students. Doing so means that the program's presence and identity must be distinct from...
According to the IDRA's recommendations, the TUSD should create a department for Hispanic Studies that was separate from the Bilingual Education Department. Additionally, they thought that Hispanic Studies should be available to all students, not just those students who identify as Hispanic. The IDRA also found that the current Hispanic Studies program lacked a clear focus and seemed disorganized. They provided recommendations for how to strengthen the proposed department.246

The Bilingual Education, Hispanic Studies, and Language Acquisition Review Committee submitted their report on the same day as the IDRA, March 10, 1998. Their report, entitled “Nuestro Futuro: A Blueprint for the Future,” made similar recommendations to that of the IDRA report. However, since the Committee consisted of parents, community members, teachers, and principals, their report comes off as more invested and less “external.” This is made evident through their dedication page, which dedicates the report to all TUSD students. Since the Committee was made up of many parents and community members who had endured similar struggles to the ones Tucson students were experiencing at that time, their involvement with the Committee was personal.247 It states, “May their future be culturally richer than ours; may their educational experiences be brighter and less filled with stereotypes and prejudices than their predecessors.”248 The dedication page clearly illustrates the fact that previous students in Tucson's school system felt wronged by their educational experience and shows the Committee's belief in the importance of ethnic studies.

The Committee presented fifteen recommendations in their report. The first states that “the title Mexican American Studies be used beginning March 10, 1998” (the day the Committee submitted their report). Their justification for changing the name of the program was based on statements from the

---

245 Ibid.
246 Ibid.
248 Ibid.
community hearings, input from interest groups, and the literature they reviewed. While the specific statements are not available, the name change is likely because most Hispanic/Latin@ students in the TUSD are of Mexican descent and that 'Hispanic' links cultural identity to Spain and its conquest of Mexico.

The Committee's second recommendation was to make the Mexican American Studies Program a separate department from the Bilingual Education Department. Similar to the IDRA's report, the Committee states that, “Mexican American Studies is a discipline of its own. Bilingual education will not be diminished nor should it be so by having a separate department for Mexican American Studies.” Both the IDRA and Committee's reports emphasize the fact that a separate Hispanic/Mexican American Studies Department should not belittle the importance of the Bilingual Education Department. However, Bilingual Education is remedial, while Mexican American Studies is an area of study; leaving the two combined into one department denotes the illegitimacy of Mexican American Studies.

The Committee's eighth recommendation was to implement ethnic studies courses throughout the K-12 curriculum. While this recommendation is somewhat vague, since it does not specify what kinds of ethnic studies courses, it includes a quote from the TUSD School Board policy to justify their recommendation: “Learning produces an understanding of diverse values, history and achievement of identifiable groups in society...” If a goal of learning is to provide “an understanding of diverse values, histories and achievement of identifiable groups in society,” then courses focused upon a variety of ethnic groups (i.e. ethnic studies courses) would help achieve this. The report goes on to recommend that teachers in the Mexican American Studies (MAS) Department should be trained in

---

251 Whether it is specifically for Mexican American Studies or all areas of ethnic studies.
multicultural education teaching approaches and strategies. Lastly, it finishes with quotes from three TUSD students. The quotes stress the importance of the Bilingual Education Department as well as creating a new MAS Department. The Board approved the proposal, immediately hiring and planning a budget for the program. However, the Department was first called the Hispanic Studies Department and the title was not changed to Mexican American Studies Department until 2002.

**Overview of Tucson's Mexican American Studies Program**

In order to gain a better understanding of the Mexican American Studies program in Tucson, it is important to understand the demographics of the Tucson Unified School District and in the MAS program. In 2011, there was a total of 52,987 students enrolled in the TUSD. The racial/ethnic breakdown of the TUSD population was 60% Hispanic, 24% White/Anglo, 5.6% African American, 3.9% Native American, 2.6% Asian American, and 2.4% Multi-Racial. More than half of the Hispanic population in Tucson is Mexican/Mexican American/Chicano. Within Tucson, 1,343 middle and high school students participated in the Mexican American Studies (MAS) Department programs. There was a total of ten schools that provided MAS courses: three K-8 schools, three middle schools, and four high schools. Over 90% of MAS students were Hispanic, 5% White/Anglo, 2% Native American,

---

253 “It's time that people start knowing about who they are...And I think it's time that you guys started doing something about this because I only have one more year left. And if I have to go to college and learn everything about my heritage and more about African American studies, well then do it for the next generation. Because I'm tired of seeing people ignorant of everyone else. Because this is what creates conflict and that is why everyone is so stereotypical about everyone else. Thank you.” Jim Juvera, 11th grader, Tucson High Magnet School, excerpt from his address to the Committee at the Tucson High Magnet School Public Hearing of October 15, 1997, quoted in Committee's report.

254 Conrado Gómez and Margarita Jiménez-Silva, “Mexican American Studies: The Historical Legitimacy of an Educational Program”.

255 In 2002, Augustine Romero took over the position as Director of the department. At the same time, the department underwent a name change to Mexican American/Raza Studies. In 2008, the title of the department was shortened to simply Mexican American Studies.


258 K-8 schools that provide Mexican American Studies courses: Hollinger, Lynn/Urquides, McCorkle; middle schools: Doolen, Secrist, Valencia; high schools: Cholla, Pueblo, Rincon, Tucson High.

1.5% African American, and just under 0.5% for both Asian American and Multi-Racial students.

Enrollment and participation in MAS is open to all students and students choose whether or not they want to participate in the program.\textsuperscript{258} Students could choose to take a standard, core-curriculum class or take a class in the MAS Department, which would satisfy that core-curricular class. For example, instead of taking U.S. history, one could take U.S. history from a Chicano perspective.\textsuperscript{259}

Below are the visions of the Mexican American Studies Department from the TUSD MAS website in 2011:

The Mexican American Studies department is dedicated to the empowerment and strengthening our community of learners;
Students will attain an understanding and appreciation of historic and contemporary Mexican American contributions;
Students will be prepared for dynamic, confident leadership in the 21st Century.\textsuperscript{260}

The Mexican American Studies Department's visions clearly show its dedication to their students—not just their education, but their overall well-being. Their third vision is aligned with most federal and state educational goals today, which include preparing students to be leaders in the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century global economy.

\textit{Attack on the MAS Program}

The Mexican American Studies Department came under political attack when Dolores Huerta came to speak at the Tucson High Magnet School on April 3, 2006. Dolores Huerta is a Mexican labor activist who co-founded the United Farm Workers with Cesar Chavez. During her lecture, she made the statement that “Republicans hate Latinos.”\textsuperscript{261} Augustine F. Romero, Director of Student Equity and co-founder of the Social Justice Project responded, “Concluding her speech, Ms. Huerta received a

standing ovation. At the time, and even today I would say that the overwhelmingly vast majority of those in attendance had absolutely no problem with Ms. Huerta’s words.”

In a PBS “Need to Know” interview with Sean Arce, co-founder of the Mexican American Studies program in Tucson, interviewer John Carlos Frey asked Arce how he felt about Huerta's speech:

JOHN CARLOS FREY: You’re okay with the statement Republicans hate Latinos? Don’t you think that that’s a problem?
SEAN ARCE: I’m okay with her stating that—given the context that—understanding—the context—that we’re operating in right now.
JOHN CARLOS FREY: Don’t you think that that kind of strong language doesn’t really foster discourse? Could she not have used a better word?
SEAN ARCE: I think it really fosters discourse. It really pokes at—the students’ intellect, the students’ critical thinking.

However, not all shared Arce's sentiment and soon the MAS program was held under what Augustine Romero calls a “politically-loaded magnifying glass.”

Republican Tom Horne, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction in Arizona, was offended by Huerta's comment. He asked his Deputy Superintendent Margaret Garcia-Dugan to give a response speech to the Tucson High Magnet School on May 12, 2006. Garcia-Dugan explained to students that she herself was a Republican and a Latina and did not hate herself, discounting Huerta's statement from a month earlier. She also spoke about not believing everything that you hear and learning to think for yourself. Many students were offended by Garcia-Dugan coming to speak at their school. Many felt as though she was trying to belittle Huerta's speech and Huerta as an activist. Additionally, Garcia-Dugan spoke in a misleading way about her fight for equal education for English Language Learners (ELLs).

Upon researching the organization that she campaigned with, English for the Children, Garcia-Dugan's agenda is revealed. The opening message on English for the Children's website is “let's


teach English to all of America's children and end bilingual education nationwide.” Garcia-Dugan ran the Arizona campaign to end bilingual education and prohibit ELL students, specifically Spanish-speaking in the case of her speech and of Arizona, from speaking their native tongue in school.

Several students protested Garcia-Dugan's speech by standing up and wearing shirts that said, “You can silence my voice but not my spirit,” “Prop 203 is anti-Latino,” and “English only is anti-Latino.” Some students wore blue tape over their mouths and raised their fists in the air, although most students stood in silence. When they were asked to sit down, they walked out of the auditorium. Romero responded to the Garcia-Dugan speech, stating that, “It is truly unfortunate that Ms. Garcia-Dugan cannot recognize that she is a great example of how our education system domesticates and indoctrinates students with the intent of producing people who are unconscious, dysconscious or conscious gatekeepers of the United States’ historically oppressive and unjust racial and social order.”

In Tom Horne's “An Open Letter to the Citizens of Tucson,” released on June 11, 2007, he laid out a set of reasons as to why “The TUSD Ethnic Studies Program should be eliminated.” Under the second justification, entitled “Personal Observations” (although Horne chose to never personally attend any of the MAS classes), he references “a small group of La Raza Studies students” who “treated her [Garcia-Dugan] rudely” and “defiantly walked out”. He goes on to say that,

In hundreds of visits to schools, I've never seen students act rudely and in defiance of authority, except in this one unhappy case. I believe the students did not learn this rudeness at home, but from their Raza teachers. The students are being ill served. Success

---

269 Ibid.
272 Ibid.
as adults requires the ability to deal with disagreements in a civil manner. Also, they are creating a hostile atmosphere in the school for the other students, who were not born into their 'race.'

While the students had a viable reason for their protest, Horne manipulated their actions to shed a negative light on the MAS courses. Horne used the students' protest to help strengthen his argument for the banning of ethnic studies, and framed the MAS courses as corrupting young individuals into being disobedient radicals. He blamed teachers for “corrupting” these students, which discounts the students' ability to think and protest on their own. Furthermore, he specifically removed the blame from parents (i.e. “I believe the students did not learn this rudeness at home...”), which interprets parents as allies of Horne, not enemies.

Along with what Horne personally observed at the Garcia-Dugan speech, which served as a justification for banning the MAS program, he used his personal philosophy, the textbooks that were being used in the classes, extracurricular activities, and interviews with a few teachers to further strengthen his argument. The opening statement of the first section, entitled “The TUSD Ethnic Studies Program Should Be Eliminated,” warned that “the citizens of Tucson, of all mainstream political ideologies, would call for the elimination of the Tucson Unified School District’s ethnic studies program if they knew what was happening there.” Horne consistently tries to recast his desire to eliminate the program as apolitical since citizens “of all mainstream political ideologies” would want the program to be banned.

Under the “Philosophy” section, Horne states, “I believe people are individuals, not exemplars of racial groups.” Dr. Charles Mills, Professor of Moral and Intellectual Philosophy at Northwestern University provides a different way of viewing racism that is helpful in interpreting Horne's statements. Mills believes that white supremacy is maintained through a denial of the existence of racism.

\[\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}\]

most interviews, Horne talks about race in terms of “whatever race you happen to be born into.” Horne's blatant denial that race holds any significance in the United States today allows him to further perpetuate the racist systems that are in place, particularly in the U.S. public school system. Horne's denial of racism in the United States strengthens his justification for banning the program, since much of what is taught in the MAS courses are contemporary issues facing Mexican Americans. If Horne believes that Mexican Americans do not experience racism, then there is no need for classes to mention it. Horne goes on to discuss participating in the 1963 Civil Rights March on Washington where he saw Martin Luther King, Jr. state that he hoped for his children not to be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. “That has been a fundamental principal for me my entire life, and Ethnic Studies teaches the opposite.” However, Ethnic Studies scholars argue differently. They believe that teaching the histories of racial and ethnic groups other than Whites/Anglos (Ethnic Studies) does not result in racism and was in fact developed to counter the racism that many people of color were experiencing in school.

In Section IV, titled “Textbooks,” Horne claims, “those students should be taught that this is the land of opportunity, and that if they work hard they can achieve their goals. They should not be taught that they are oppressed.” Implicit in Horne's comments is the belief that the United States can achieve equality by treating everyone as if they have the same potential to achieve political, social, economic and educational success and that the means to do so is by working from the assumption that People of Color and White people have the same access to these things. However, the history legacy of the Bracero Program, “Operation Wetback,” and the exploitation and discrimination that led to the farmworker strikes and the East L.A. student walkouts reveal that this is a false assumption.

Horne's statements indicate a larger, national ideological trend toward colorblindness,

278 Ibid.
279 Ibid.
particularly present in schools. Horne, like many other school teachers and administrators, operates under a color-blind racial ideology, which asserts that to overcome racial inequality, Americans must move beyond the belief that race holds any cultural, social, or economic significance.\textsuperscript{280} In post-Civil Rights United States, the majority of White Americans believe that racism is no longer an issue in the United States.\textsuperscript{281} However, as Brown et al. argue,

\begin{quote}
Fifty years later when state-sanctioned racial segregation is illegal and people of color have still to achieve truly equal opportunity with white Americans, the color-blind ideal actually impedes efforts necessary to eliminate racial inequality. Formal colorblindness fails to recognize or address the deeply rooted institutional practices and long-term disaccumulation that sustains racial inequality. Color-blind ideology is no longer a weapon that challenges racial inequality. Instead, it has become a powerful sword and a near-impenetrable shield, almost a civic religion, that actually promotes the unequal racial status quo.\textsuperscript{282}
\end{quote}

Without the acknowledgement of the long history of racism in its various forms in the United States and how engrained racial inequality has become in the minds of so many Americans and in state and national policies, there is no way to move beyond it. As Brown et al. state above, color-blind racial ideology not only impedes the elimination of racism, but also helps to marginalize those who speak out against racial inequality by claiming that those who speak out are perpetuating racism by acknowledging it.

Color-blind racism also allows for the perpetuation of White privilege because there is no recognition of race to begin with. Through color-blind racial ideology and White privilege, whiteness not only affords certain privileges to White Americans, but also allows them to deny these privileges to people of color; Whites have the historic ability to accumulate wealth, power, and opportunity while simultaneously denying these privileges to people of color (non-whites).\textsuperscript{283} “Thus whites, aware or not,
misguided or not, typically resist change because their privileged status comes with (unearned) advantages. White Americans who believe they will lose if blacks gain are prone to oppose policies designed to reduce racial inequalities.Through Horne's denial of institutionalized racial inequalities, he maintains his White privilege by attempting to eliminate a program that was designed to dismantle the unequal schooling experiences and outcomes of Mexican and Mexican Americans students in Tucson. Therefore, a color-blind ideology provides a justification for denying ethnic studies courses because it negates the necessity of these courses; inherent in this denial of ethnic studies is the fear of People of Color taking power and privilege away from Whites. The removal of ethnic studies feeds into the Latin@ Threat Narrative, positing that Whites stand to lose if Latin@s gain.

**Legislation: From HB2281 to No Más MAS**

Dolores Huerta's speech lit a spark that would soon fuel the conservative attack on Mexican American Studies. On June 17, 2009, Tom Horne and his cohorts introduced State Bill 1069, which would prohibit Arizona public schools from teaching ethnic studies courses aimed at a particular group or that advocate ethnic solidarity. Awaiting a vote in the House, it never passed. Shortly thereafter, Arizona State Governor Republican Jan Brewer signed House Bill 2281 into law less than a month after signing SB1070, Arizona's controversial immigration bill. HB 2881 prohibits any classes that promote the overthrow of the government, are designed for students of a specific ethnic group, teach resentment toward a race or class of people, or advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of students as individuals. Any schools that allow classes which violate this law would cause the entire Tucson Unified School District to lose 10% of their state funding, approximately fifteen million dollars.

---

284 *Ibid*, 44.
285 The word “group” is the exact wording used in SB 1069.
288 *Ibid*. 

95
Tom Horne's term as State Superintendent of Public Instruction ended at the start of 2011, at which time he assumed the position of Arizona Attorney General. However, just hours before Horne's position changed, he issued a letter of notice that the TUSD's Mexican American Studies program was in violation of HB 2281, now known as A.R.S. §15-112. While Horne states that three out of the four ethnic studies programs within Tucson could be considered in violation of category three, stating that classes cannot be designed primarily for students of a particular ethnic group, he goes on to say that all of the complaints he received were solely about the MAS program. This, along with five anonymous non-MAS teacher testimonies and written materials that are used in the classes were utilized to support Horne's argument. Horne concludes his letter by stating that TUSD has sixty days to eliminate the MAS courses and ninety days “to eliminate the race-based discipline rules.” Once again, failure to comply would result in 10% of TUSD's state funding to be withheld.

Later that day, on December 30, 2010, the TUSD issued a letter of compliance stating that “the Governing Board hereby directs that all District employees shall comply with the foregoing resolution and with all applicable laws, and further directs the District's Superintendent to ensure such compliance by all District employees.” This was a turning point in the battle to preserve the MAS Program in Tucson, pinning teachers, students and other community activists against their local school board.

The Final Days of MAS

2011 was an intense year for both supporters and dissenters of the Mexican American Studies Program. Tom Horne no longer held the position of State Superintendent of Public Instruction, but in his place was John Huppenthal, who shared many of Horne's sentiments about the Program. Through 2011, both sides of the argument filed multiple lawsuits and legal complaints, fueling the

290 Ibid.
political battle that had engulfed the MAS Program. While activists, including teachers, parents, community members, and most importantly students, rose up in an attempt to preserve the Mexican American Studies classes, they were overpowered by the aggressive hammer of political conservatism.

On March 21, 2011, Dr. Mark Stegeman, President of the TUSD School Board, wrote an open letter in the Arizona Daily Star. He proposed that the MAS courses should be offered as electives and not be able to serve as a substitute to traditional core classes. “Freed from the obligation to cover the core material, the MAS courses can become deeper and more focused.”292 What Stegeman does not acknowledge is that this would severely weaken the program by delegitimizing it into non-core credit classes. It would also reduce the number of students who are able to take the classes because they need to fulfill core credits and can only take a few electives.

Shortly thereafter, the TUSD Board was to vote on whether or not to turn the MAS courses into electives. It was April 26 and the Board meeting was to begin at 6 PM. Outside, students and other MAS supporters held a ceremonial blessing, part of their peaceful protest. When the doors opened twenty minutes before the meeting began, students, staff and community members charged into the TUSD Board meeting room. Multiple students chained themselves to chairs and chanted “Our education is under attack! What do we do? Fight back!”293

Sadly, the media portrayal of the protest helped to further Horne's argument that Raza studies students are militant and defiant. Local Tucson news station, KOLD 13 covered the event as breaking news, entitled “TUSD Meeting Chaos.” They described the protest as “a mob like scene” where “a school board meeting turns chaotic.” Protestors were said to be “armed with posters” and “stormed” the building. This coverage of the protest depicted the students as out of control, yet they never mentioned

that their intention was to delay the vote and force Board members to listen to their opinions and see or hear their desire to keep the MAS program. Similar to the media's depiction of Mexicans at the end of the 20th century, the coverage of student protesters was an instrument to propagate the disempowerment of Mexican Americans. Unfortunately, only two School Board members were there for the protest, while the rest left after Dr. Stegeman decided to reschedule the meeting. Ultimately, through repeated student protests and pressure from Save Ethnic Studies.org, the non-profit organization providing the legal defenses for the teachers, the vote was indefinitely postponed.

John Huppenthal took over Horne's position as State Superintendent of Public Instruction in January of 2011. Soon after, he called for a curriculum audit of the TUSD's Mexican American Studies Department. The audit would determine whether or not the program was in violation of A.R.S. §15-112, if the classes were designed to improve student achievement, and if they actually did improve student achievement. The auditing group, Cambium Learning Group of Dallas, Texas, was to make unannounced classroom visits, interview students and teachers and evaluate teacher materials. As the audit began, Save Ethnic Studies.org, along with their attorney Richard Martinez, issued a public statement that they believed the audit to be unlawful and biased. However, the audit continued.

The findings of the audit, which were issued on May 2, 2011, stated that the Mexican American Studies courses were designed to improve student achievement, that they did improve student achievement based on test scores on the AIMS state test (Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards), and they observed no violations of A.R.S. §15-112. While they did find some flaws with the program and provided recommendations for how to make improvements, they found no violations based on the auditing group's given criteria.
On June 15, 2011, a little over a month after the findings of the audit were reported, Huppenthal announced that MAS was out of compliance with A.R.S. §15-112. He stated that the reviewed curriculum material consistently referred to Whites as oppressors and Latin@s as oppressed and only presented one perspective on historical events. He also found that much of the materials referred to the reader as Latin@ and, therefore, Huppenthal insinuated that the classes are specifically designed for Latin@ students. Additionally, the “reviewed curriculum and materials repeatedly emphasize the importance of building Hispanic nationalism and unity in the face of assimilation and oppression.”

While Huppenthal called for the audit of the MAS Department in the first place, his personal findings were out of line with what the audit discovered. Huppenthal believed that the audit was flawed, with less than half of the MAS classes observed and only limited classroom materials provided to the auditors. With the findings of the audit cast aside, Huppenthal gave the TUSD Board sixty days to bring the MAS Program into compliance with A.R.S. §15-112.

Between August and October of 2011, multiple hearings were held to determine whether Superintendent Huppenthal's declaration that the Mexican American Studies Program was in violation of A.R.S. §15-112. On December 27, 2011, Administrative Law Judge Lewis D. Kowal concluded that the MAS courses did in fact violate sections 2, 3, and 4 of the law. Therefore, Judge Kowal determined that Arizona State Department of Education should withhold 10% of their funding until the TUSD was in compliance with A.R.S. §15-112.

At the January 10, 2012, TUSD School Board meeting, the Board took a final vote which would
determine the fate of the MAS Program. The Board Room was packed with supporters, largely students, who attempted to convince them to preserve the Program one last time. There were police lining the walls of the room, ready to remove any MAS supporters if told to do so by the Board. Throughout the meeting chanting could be heard from outside, as well as occasional fits of passionate rage from the crowd. Ultimately, in a 4-1 vote, the TUSD School Board decided to discontinue the Mexican American Studies Program. The MAS Program was ended indefinitely.302

Mayra Feliciano, a high school student at Tucson High Magnet School, spoke at the Board meeting on January 10. As she turned her back to the School Board and instead faced the crowd of MAS supporters who she refers to as “her community,” she embodied the struggle and passion for education that Mexicans and Mexican Americans have shown throughout Tucson's history:

> It may be up to the Governing Board the future of our classes in TUSD, but it is up to us to keep them alive, regardless of what their decision may be. We will fight and we will keep our culture, history, identity, language, and education alive...we have the right to culture, history, identity, language and education. We want an educational system where all cultures fit. Unidos we stand or divided we fall.303

The Aftermath of the MAS Ban

The next day, January 11, students organized a massive school walkout. Hundreds of students from Cholla, Pueblo, and Tucson High, among others, fled to the streets and marched to the offices of the TUSD. On January 12, Mexican American Studies teachers were sent a memo from the TUSD with a list of seven books that were to be removed from classrooms, boxed up, and placed in the school district's textbook depository.304 The book banning issue has been extremely controversial and disputed,

---


303 Ibid.

304 The seven banned books: Critical Race Theory by Richard Delgado, 500 Years of Chicano History in Pictures edited by Elizabeth Martinez, Message to Aztlán by Rodolfo Corky González, Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement by Arturo Rosales, Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire, Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years by Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson, Occupied America: A History of Chicanos by Rodolfo Acuña.

with John Huppenthal and the TUSD stating that all the banned books are still available in school libraries, accusation of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* being banned, and other reports of officials entering rooms while classes were in session to box up the banned books. The decision of which books were officially banned was based on the Judge Kowal's court ordered decision.

Following the walkouts and protests in the week directly after the Mexican American Studies program ban, students organized a day of action on January 24, 2012. Largely organized through social media websites, the day consisted of a walkout where students met at Santa Rita Park, in Tucson, at nine AM and marched to TUSD headquarters. Upon their arrival at TUSD, the estimated 250 student protesters listed a set of demands to the TUSD School Board, including the reinstatement of the MAS program. Amidst the chanting, students also discussed among themselves about the importance of ethnic studies. Students chose not to engage with news reporters present at the protest because of the way they have been portrayed during past protests.

One of the main organizers of the event was UNIDOS (United Non-Discriminatory Individuals Demanding Our Studies), “a new youth coalition of students from local Tucson high schools, alumni and community members, demanding our educational human rights.” UNIDOS was created in response to the passing of HB 2281 and seeks to restore and protect ethnic studies and other social justice education initiatives. Part of the day of action, as organized by UNIDOS, was the establishment of Tucson's Community School of Ethnic Studies. “Part of the school's mission is to allow members of

---


the community to share why Mexican American studies is important to them.**308

On April 10, 2012, the TUSD School Board voted 3-2 in favor of not renewing Sean Arce's contract, former director of the Mexican American Studies Department. Over a hundred protesters – students, teachers, and other supporters of Arce and the MAS program – were present at the meeting. The vote resulted in massive uproar from the protesters, who set off a smoke bomb and shouted, “You should be ashamed!” and “You're gonna regret it!” at school board members. They proceeded to zip-tie themselves together and chanted, “No justice, no peace, no racist TUSD!” A scuffle between security guards and protesters ensued, although there are no reports of anyone being injured or arrested.309 In an interview with Democracy Now!, Arce stated that,

The thinly veiled attempt to explain my release from the district is that they were going in a different direction, but when in fact we know this was an act of retaliation, in that I, along with many others, stood up to see this law as unconstitutional...And because we stood up, the district has retaliated.310

Without a renewal of Arce's contract, his job at TUSD was over after June 2011. Arce provided much of the foundation for the initial establishment of the Mexican American Studies program in the 1990s.

After the MAS program was officially banned, former MAS teacher Curtis Acosta and his colleagues decided to implement weekend classes and forums on Mexican American Studies. Held at the John Valenzuela Youth Center every Sunday, Acosta and other teachers conduct voluntary classes for Tucson students interested in continuation of these studies. Entitled CLASS (Chican@ Literature After School Studies), instruction focuses on topics and issues including November 2011’s unit on Chicana literature, feminism, and gender roles. According to Acosta, “They are dedicated to creating positive change and improvements to their community...They are the epitome of the empowered and

308 Ricardo Bracamonte, “Tucson Students Walk Out Over Mexican American Studies Ban.”
dedicated scholars that have been the legacy of our MAS program for years.”

“Special master” Willis Hawley, appointed by the federal government, was sent to Tucson in 2012 to help resolve issues of desegregation in TUSD School Board in compliance with the federal mandate. Published in November 2012, he released a desegregation proposal. A key piece of the approved plan, called the Unitary Status Plan (USP), “is to offer 'culturally relevant' courses that focus on this history, experience, and culture of blacks and Latinos.” The USP has been enacted over four years and will be reviewed by the federal court in the 2016-17 year to determine how effective the school district has been in eliminating issues of desegregation and discrimination.

TUSD School Board President Adelita Grijalva stated that because the case is only focused on Black and Latino students, there have been concerns expressed from Native American communities in the Tucson area over feeling left out. The desegregation plan is part of a thirty-year long battle, which began with the Fisher-Mendoza court case of 1978. Furthermore, in separate interviews, Curtis Acosta and Sean Arce both expressed their wariness of the reinstatement of “culturally relevant” courses and materials, particularly because neither of them had been contacted to make recommendations. Sean Arce stated that,

The position that the District is taking with regard to the reinstatement of MAS classes will definitely negatively affect any type of implementation of such a ‘multicultural curriculum.’ Nonetheless, we are hopeful that the new Governing Board that will take

313 Lesli A. Maxwell, “Ethnic Studies to Return to Tucson in Court-Backed Desegregation Plan.”
over the District leadership to force John Pedicone and TUSD administration to fully reinstate the MAS program.316

What Arce is referring to above is the TUSD’s initial objection to the Unitary Status Plan. While the current TUSD School Board has a pro-MAS majority, both Arce and Acosta referred to the USP “being built upon the grave of MAS.”317

While it is difficult to determine the status or effectiveness of the multicultural education program since it was so recently implemented, it has proved that the voices and protests of students have been heard. Teachers, parents, community members, and, most importantly, students are not only remembered for their legacy in fighting for a more just education, but are also continuing in the fight to this day. The words of César Chávez ring true,

Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore.318

While the termination of the Mexican American Studies program could certainly be considered a tragedy, it has also inspired a whole new generation of Chican@ student activists who have stood up and will continue to stand up against racial discrimination and for a more just educational system. The banning of Tucson’s MAS program is contemporary evidence of continued White nativist attempts to disempower Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans. The preservation of programs such as this are critical in combating systems of White supremacy.

316 Jeff Biggers, “Will Tucson School Board Election Reinstate or Replace Mexican American Studies? Interview with Curtis Acosta.”
Conclusion

“Outlawing solidarity benefits only those whose interests are threatened by people organizing for greater equality.”

Mexican immigration in the United States has long been about maintaining a delicate balance of economic dependency and criminalization. While the National Origins Act of 1924 helped satisfy Southwestern agricultural businesses' need for cheap, exploitable labor, the establishment of the Border Patrol in 1924 maintained the racial hierarchy of White supremacy that has allowed United States law and politics to function in a discrete, marginalizing manner. A similar dichotomy emerged during the 1940s and 50s via the Bracero Program and “Operation Wetback.”

The United States has treated Mexican immigrants as an economic product resource, much like an animal or machine, which provides a profitable function. In this view, Mexican workers are solely present in the U.S. to provide an economic service. While their economic services have been exploited through cheap wages, long, difficult workdays, and poor living conditions, anything desired or influenced outside of their labor was criminalized. Further, this system of treating Mexican workers as an exploitable economic resource has also led to the marginalization of Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Most children of Mexican workers needed to financially assist their families, which limited them to a short period of schooling. Caught in a cycle of labor exploitation, Mexican workers had little opportunity for upward mobility.

In the mid-1960s, the United Farm Workers (UFW) went on strike in protest of the discriminatory working conditions and wages on California grape farms. Their strike and subsequent grape boycott paved the path toward national, collective Chican@ organizing against injustice. Future Chican@ organizing efforts were held in 1969 in Denver, Colorado at the first Chicano Youth Conference, through the efforts of Corky González and his Crusade for Justice. With artistic expression as an important part of the Chican@ Movement, the poems of Yo Soy Joaquin and Alurista's poem...
about Aztlán helped create a nationalist Chican@ collective identity that unified Mexican Americans in the fight against discrimination.

It was also during the Chican@ Civil Rights Movement that students took on a powerful role in organizing within schools. A number of Mexican American college student groups – MEChA, the Brown Berets, MAPA, UMAS – were established and helped organize protests and high school walkouts. Students demanded the right to learn about their history, for more Mexican American teachers and administrators, and for an end to the discrimination that so many Chican@ students experienced because of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Within this young generation of Mexican Americans, schools became the focus of ending the racism that these students, along with prior generations of Mexican Americans, had experienced.

In response to the increasing movement and political power that Chican@s were creating, the mid-1970s and onward have been marked by a conservative and White nativist pushback. Through the lens of news and magazine articles, illustrations, and books, White Americans fearful of the growing power of Chican@s aimed to marginalize Mexican Americans through a triple threat of extremist ideas – invasion, reconquest, and separatism. This literature has helped to establish and normalize extremist claims about Mexican Americans in the United States. Furthermore, it has subtly worked to re-establish the idea of Mexicans and Mexican Americans as perpetual foreigners, as “illegal aliens.”

While this was occurring throughout the 1970s, 80s and 90s on a national-level, Arizona began to integrate these extremist ideals into their legal and political system. Through the threat of national security, Arizona Governor Jan Brewer used her state-power to enact policies to further marginalize Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans. SB 1070, Governor Jan Brewer's immigration law, has placed an unruly degree of power in the hands of local police officers to detain anyone under reasonable suspicion of being undocumented. While there are certainly a large number of supporters of the law, immigrant rights activists across the United States are still continuing to protest SB 1070 to
this day.

The passing of SB 1070 is a clear mark of the rise of extremism in immigration discourse. The work of groups like the Minuteman Project and racist nativist literature by conservatives such as Patrick Buchanan and Samuel P. Huntington have helped to normalized this extremism. Further, this normalization of extremist immigration rhetoric is a response to the gains made by Mexican Americans, what author Leo Chavez calls the “Latino Threat.”

By gaining an understanding of the political climate around immigration within Arizona and Tucson, it is hardly surprising that the Mexican American Studies (MAS) Program within the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) was banned. Much like the conservative pushback against the Chican@ Civil Rights Movement, the banning of the MAS program was a response to the academic gains and sense of belonging and identity that many MAS students were experiencing. MAS students found their classes to be overwhelming positive, stating that the classes taught them “to give back to the community,” to “think critically,” and provided “meaning to this work.” The banning of the Mexican American Studies Program in Tucson is as much an attack on Mexicans and Mexican Americans as it is on education. Also, the banning of the MAS Program is not an isolated incident, but part of an ongoing process of oppressing Mexican people and maintaining a system of White supremacy.

By asserting a color-blind ideology, the elimination of racism is impeded and those who speak out against racial inequity are marginalized by claims that they are perpetuating racism by acknowledging it. Therefore, the use of color-blind racism provides a basis for the denial of ethnic studies, since this ideology denies the existence of institutionalized racism. Additionally, as the number of Mexican and Latin@ students increases within the U.S. public school system and as color-blind

---

racism becomes the prevailing ideology in schools, the banning of the Mexican American Studies Program is equally concerning for the nation as it is for Tucson and Arizona.

As the number of immigrants increases within the United States, so does the population of immigrant students in U.S. public schools. As the number of immigrants increases, so does the number of first- and second-generation students in the public school system. Rong and Preissle, co-authors of *Educating Immigrant Students in the 21*st* Century* state,

> The United States is being transformed by high, continuing levels of immigration. No American institution has felt the effect of these flows more forcefully than the nation's public schools. And no set of American institutions is arguably more critical to the future success of immigrant integration.  

Public schools are an important site of social interaction, identity development, and learning. As of 2009, 22.5 percent of all public school students were either immigrants themselves or had at least one parent who was an immigrant. Furthermore, urban public schools, particularly those in low-income neighborhoods, tend to have the highest numbers of immigrant and first- and second-generation students within the U.S. This increasing demographic of youth in U.S. public schools means that public school teachers, officials and policymakers need to work toward better serving this increasingly large population of students. However, the differing cultural and linguistic practices of these students, even those who are born and raised in the United States, has resulted in nativist discrimination, particularly by White conservatives. Rong and Preissle argue that,

> Because immigrant students bring with them different life experiences and beliefs, cultural communication patterns, languages, and educational traditions, their immediate addition to U.S. schools places strong demands for reform on many public education systems. U.S. public education, however, has strongly rejected conserving and maintaining the native language and cultural values of immigrant children; the preference for emphasizing Americanization in curricula and instruction aimed at socializing

324 With Mexican immigrants and Mexican American students accounting for the largest subcategory.
immigrants to the norms of the dominant culture can be traced to the country's genesis.\textsuperscript{325} As public school control is moving from the hands of local school districts to state-power, state-level education officials are dictating the path of students' education. In Arizona, this has been visible within the state-level assault on the Mexican American Studies program in Tucson by Governor Jan Brewer, Tom Horne, and John Huppenthal. The local Tucson school board did play a part in the decision-making process in that they ultimately voted to dismantle the MAS program. However, this was after Tom Horne's colleagues scripted HB 2881, which was specifically aimed at the MAS program, which Governor Jan Brewer then signed into law. If the Tucson school board had decided to keep the program in place, the Tucson Unified School District would have lost ten percent of the its state-funding. Local education officials, as well as parents, community members and students, have a better understanding of the local school community. However, by placing such power in the hands of state-level education and government officials, local voices and control over public education by the public are being lost.

The national- and state-driven school choice movement and increase in charter schools is also causing problems for marginalized students, including Latin@ and immigrant students, as well as English Language Learners (ELL). Iris Rotberg, a writer for \textit{Education Week}, reviewed and analyzed a number of studies on how the school choice movement and push toward charter schools is affecting education. She found that charter schools increase the risk of school segregation.\textsuperscript{326} She cites eleven studies that support the link between school choice programs and increased segregation by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Rotberg goes on to highlight studies that show that the risk of school segregation is directly linked to school choice programs. This happens in a variety of ways, including charter schools that target specific racial or ethnic groups, partial government vouchers or subsidies which limit opportunities for lower income families, lottery systems, academic enrollment, and


and parental or behavioral requirements. Rotberg states that,

In some communities, charter schools have a higher concentration of minority students than traditional public schools (Booker, Zimmer, & Buddin, 2005; Institute on Race and Poverty, 2008). In others, charter schools serve as a vehicle for “white flight” (Bifulco, Ladd, & Ross, 2008; Ni, 2007; Renzulli & Evans, 2005; Heilig, Williams, McNeil, & Lee, 2011). School segregation increases in both cases — in the charter schools students attend and in the traditional public schools they would have attended (Institute on Race and Poverty, 2008). This outcome can be offset only if the choice program has a specific goal to increase diversity.\footnote{Ibid.}

By limiting enrollment to a certain demographic of students on the basis of academic requirements or by targeting a specific racial or ethnic group, all schools suffer issues of segregation. Students requiring special education or language services are significantly underrepresented in charter schools because charter schools tend to not have the services they require or limited, inadequate services.\footnote{Ibid.}


Therefore, by not having adequate special education or language services, students of color and ELLs have limited school choice opportunities.

State-level immigration reform has also started targeting schools. In 2011, Alabama passed an SB 1070-inspired law, HB 56. The law is considered to be even tougher on immigration than Arizona's SB 1070 in that it contains more restrictions against immigrants. HB 56 contains similar provisions which allow police officers to arrest and detain anyone they suspect may be undocumented. It also states that it is illegal to rent property to undocumented immigrants. Further, and most concerning for education, is that it bans undocumented immigrants from attending public colleges and universities and requires K-12 public school officials to ascertain students' birth certificates to determine if a student is undocumented.\footnote{Elizabeth Summers, “New Alabama Immigration Law Tougher than Arizona's SB-1070 Measure,” PBS News Hour, June 10, 2011, accessed April 4, 2014, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/law-jan-june11-alabama_06-10/.

While undocumented students are not banned from attending K-12 public schools,
this likely does not make undocumented students and/or parents feel welcome, a tactic of the law. HB 56 sponsor Representative Micky Hammon told *Birmingham News* that the law “attacks every aspect of an illegal alien's life,” and that it is designed to, “make it difficult for them to live here so they will deport themselves.”

Latin@ students have a higher dropout – or push-out – rate than any other racial or ethnic category. In 2011, Latin@ students had a dropout rate of thirteen percent, compared to eight and four percent for African Americans and White students, respectively. Additionally, Mexican American students have the highest dropout rate of any racial or ethnic subgroup. This high dropout rate, coupled with new immigration and public education reform policies, is truly concerning as the number of Latin@ youth, particularly Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans, increases within U.S. public schools. Public education policymakers, administrators and teachers need to implement policies, programs and teaching practices that effectively work toward increasing the academic and social experiences of Latin@ youth in public schools.

I believe that the banning of Tucson's Mexican American Studies program is an attack on the Mexican and Mexican American community of Tucson, particularly undocumented immigrants. As state-level political and education officials gain control of public schools, there is an increased risk of racist nativist tactics to further deprive the schooling experiences of students of color, especially immigrants.

The mainstream curriculum for most subject matter in U.S. public schools reflects the voices, experiences and histories of European Americans. While this perspective is important to gain an understanding of, the voices of marginalized groups of people – people of color, immigrants, the poor,

---


and women – have largely been omitted. Therefore, an argument for ethnic studies and a more inclusive curriculum is not to discount the Euro-American experience, but rather to provide public school students with a more accurate depiction of people within the United States. The increasing number of Latin@ and immigrant students within the U.S. public school system is an undeniable fact, which will continue to happen over the next couple decades. The schooling experiences of these students – and in many ways, their futures – are in the hands of public school policymakers. It is absolutely essential that action is taken to better serve all public school students by providing them with more inclusive and accurate course materials that not only strengthen their academic experiences, but also their social and personal experiences.

Sleeter (2011) states, “As students of color proceed through the school system, research finds that the overwhelming dominance of Euro-American perspectives leads many such students to disengage from academic learning.”

Ethnic studies courses, programs and pedagogy as approaches to education have been shown to have positive academic and social outcomes for students. Further, the existence of ethnic students is in part due to the struggles and demands of Students of Color for a more affirming, inclusive and relevant curriculum. The struggle in Tucson, Arizona over the banning of the Mexican American Studies program is no different. Implemented in 1997 after several decades of organizing by Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Tucson, the MAS program aimed at increasing the academic and social experiences of Mexican American students. Moreover, a study conducted by Cabrera et al. (2012) showed that MAS participation positively effected the state test scores and high school graduation rates of Mexican American students. Students who participated in the Mexican American Studies program have expressed the importance of these classes to them, teaching them

about who they are and where they come from. The history of Mexican immigration since the 1920s is not just a legacy of disempowerment, but one of resistance and organization in the face of such attempts. While the banning of Tucson's Mexican American Studies program marks the prevalence of racist nativism and extremist immigration tactics, it also shows that Chican@ resistance and organizing is still alive and well.

Works Cited

I. Primary/Unpublished Sources

http://www.chavezfoundation.org/_cms.php?
mode=view&b_code=001008000000000&b_no=16&field=&key=&n=8.

Garcia-Dugan, Margaret, Tucson Magnet High School, AZ, May 12, 2006, accessed April 14, 2014, 


Huerta, Dolores. Lecture, Tucson High Magnet School, AZ, April 3, 2006, accessed April 14, 2014, 
http://quill.tusd.k12.az.us/doloreshuertaaddress.


“Preamble to El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán,” Alurista, 1969, 


Tragedy Along the Arizona-Mexico Border: Undocumented Immigrants Face the Border, April 2003, briefing before the Arizona Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (Washington,


II. Web Sources


III. Published Sources

Books


Hernandez, Lytle Kelley, Migra!: A History of the U.S. Border Patrol. California: University of


**Articles**


http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/02/01/kappan_rotberg.html.

http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/01/12/16populations.h31.html.


**Media**

http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,952000,00.html.

Arce, Sean, interviewed by Juan Gonzalez, *Democracy Now!*; April 13, 2012,  

Arce, Sean, interviewed by John Carlos Frey, *Need to Know*, PBS, February 15, 2013,  


http://www.newstaco.com/2012/01/24/tucson-students-walk-out-over-mexican-


Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement. VHS. Galán Productions and National Latino Communications Center.


The Minutemen. DVD. Verite Productions.


Grey Literature

Bilingual Education/Hispanic Studies and Second Language Acquisition Review Committee, Nuestro Futuro: A Blueprint for the Future, accessed April 14, 2014,


