

THE HARRISON HIGH SCHOOL WALKOUTS OF 1968:  
STRUGGLE FOR EQUAL SCHOOLS AND CHINANISMO IN CHICAGO

BY

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DISSERTATION

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## ABSTRACT

For the most part, high school activism in the Midwest has not been the subject of scholarly research. Moreover, the Chicano Movement in Chicago is a history that at present remains largely unrecorded. This study examines archival evidence such as newspaper articles, intelligence reports, as well as oral interviews with key former students, and administrators of Harrison High School to chronicle Mexican-origin student activism and grassroots organizing for urban school reform that took place between 1968 and 1974 in the Little Village and Pilsen communities of Chicago.

In 1968, Mexicano students, responded to their invisibility by organizing school walkouts and making demands for urban school reform. The student demands included among other things, the teaching of Latin American history along with the institutionalization of bilingual-bicultural programs which stipulated the hiring of qualified teachers, counselors, and principals.

The politics of protest and confrontation that manifested at Harrison High School during the late 1960's is a testament of how Mexicano students became makers of their own history at this particular high school which failed to respond to their unique needs in spite of the growing Mexican-origin student population.

Although the notion of 'Chicano' never quite popularized the public imagination of most Mexicans in Chicago, Mexicano students, parents, and community activists

forged a spirit of Chicanoism to fit their unique circumstances and local context for urban school reform during the height of the civil rights era.

*“The chronicler is the history-teller.”*

--Walter Benjamin

*Illuminations: Essays and Reflections.*

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In 1968, various significant student walkouts took place at Harrison High School located in the South Lawndale community of Chicago. Although the majority of students who were actively involved in the ‘blow-outs’ were African American<sup>1</sup>, a noteworthy number of students who participated in the walkouts were Mexicano/Chicana/o/Mexican-American.<sup>2</sup> In this study, I examine archival evidence such as newspaper articles, intelligence reports, and oral interviews with key former students, as well as administrators of Harrison High School to chronicle Mexican-origin student activism and grassroots organizing efforts for urban school reform that took place between 1968-1974 specifically in the South Lawndale and Pilsen communities of Chicago.

For the most part, high school activism during the 1960’s has not been the subject of scholarly research in the Midwest. Moreover, the Chicano Movement in Chicago is a history that at present remains largely unrecorded. Yet, during the late 60’s, urban public schools constituted one of the major contestatory sites where, once again, ‘culture wars’ or battles over schooling, curriculums, and ideologies began to reoccur across the

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<sup>1</sup> See Dianne Danns, *Something Better for Our Children: Black Organizing in Chicago Public Schools, 1963-1971*. (New York: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Mexicano/Chicana/oMexican American/Mexican-origin will be used interchangeably throughout this paper to refer to Mexicans living in the U.S. I will use ‘Mexicano’ specifically to refer to Mexicans living in Chicago. It must be noted that, in Chicago, Latino groups identify themselves by national origin and not the hyphenated phenomenon.

country.<sup>3</sup> For Mexican Americans, in the area of public schooling, the recurring themes between the continuity and discontinuity of conflict in education (e.g., domination, segregation, and deculturalization), struggle (e.g., litigation and legislation), and resistance (e.g., boycotts, protests, walkouts and additive language initiatives such as full bilingualism)<sup>4</sup> in the Mexican American quest for educational equality in the U.S.<sup>5</sup> As Joel Spring notes, “The strong resistance to deculturalization during the great civil rights movement highlights the difficulty, if not impossibility, of deculturalization through educational institutions.”<sup>6</sup> For instance, during the late 60’s, Chicana/o high school students began to protest and organize walkouts throughout the Southwest in parts such as Brownfield, CA,<sup>7</sup> Houston,<sup>8</sup> Crystal City,<sup>9</sup> and Edcouch-Elsa, TX.<sup>10</sup> The most documented walkouts occurred in Los Angeles. In 1967, high school students in East Los Angeles began planning walkouts as a manifestation of their grievances as recipients of

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Joel Spring, *The American School: 1642-2000*. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001), pp. 388-418. Also see, Clarence J. Karier, *The Individual, Society, and Education: A History of American Educational Ideas*. 2nd Edition. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), pp. 326-362; James W. Fraser, *The School in the United States: A Documentary History*. (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2001), pp. 293-318.

<sup>4</sup> See, Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., “Status of the Historiography of Chicano Education: A Preliminary Analysis,” *History of Education Quarterly* 26 (Winter 1986): 523-536. See also, Ruben Donato, *The Other Struggle for Equal Schools: Mexican Americans during the Civil Rights Era*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997); Guadalupe San Miguel Jr., *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston*. (Houston: Texas A&M University Press, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> See, Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr. and Richard R. Valencia, “From the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to Hopwood: The Educational Plight and Struggle of Mexican Americans in the Southwest,” *Harvard Educational Review* 68 (1998): 353-412.

<sup>6</sup> Joel Spring, *Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality: A Brief History of the Education of Dominated Cultures in the United States*. (New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, INC., 1997). p. 50.

<sup>7</sup> See Ruben Donato, *The Other Struggle for Equal Schools: Mexican Americans during the Civil Rights Era*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> See Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr. *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston*. (Houston: Texas A&M University Press, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> See Jose Angel Gutierrez, *The Making of a Chicano Militant: Lessons from Cristal*. (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> See Miguel A. Guajardo & Francisco J. Guajardo, “The Impact of Brown on the Brown of South Texas: A Micropolitical Perspective on the Education of Mexican Americans in a South Texas Community”, *American Educational Research Journal* 41(2004): 501-526.

inferior schooling. By 1968, with the assistance of teachers, community professionals, and clergy, there was a majority decision among students to demonstrate a walkout.<sup>11</sup> As López notes, “The Brown Berets, many of them high school students or recent graduates, also joined in planning the walkouts. The student militants formed strike committees at Garfield, Roosevelt, and Lincoln high schools. They also formed a central committee to draft demands and coordinate any actual strikes.”<sup>12</sup> The central student demands called for bilingual education, more Mexican teachers, more counselors, better library facilities, and the establishment of a parents council.<sup>13</sup>

Accordingly, educational historians have documented the Mexican American educational struggle for equal schools throughout the Southwest quite well. But there still remains a large void in the literature with respects to Mexicanos in the Midwest. Indeed, more research is needed which pays attention to educational reforms at the local level within particular urban school contexts. Throughout the nation and world, the tumultuous year of 1968 was marked by student protests and mass demonstrations. In this case, what politics of opposition occurred in Chicago for Mexican-origin students in high school settings during the height of the civil rights era?

An examination of Chicago newspaper articles revealed a consistent reference to Mexican-origin students who participated in the Harrison High School walkouts in the South Lawndale community as either ‘Puerto Rican’, ‘Spanish-Speaking’ or ‘Latin

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<sup>11</sup> Ian F. Haney López, *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice*. (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003). Also see Dolores Delgado Bernal, *Chicana School Resistance and Grassroots Leadership: Providing an Alternative History of the 1968 East Los Angeles Blowouts*. diss., UCLA, 1997; Carlos Muñoz, Jr., *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement*. (New York: Verso Books, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> Ian F. Haney López, *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice*. (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003). p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

American'. At issue here, I believe, is the way in which the specific historical narratives of Mexican-origin students interestingly become omitted in the process. Whether this tendency by journalists, government organizations, or school officials was intentional or not, one of the unintentional consequences is that it results in a silencing of Mexican American student narratives that, in effect, distort the history of Mexican-origin human agency in Chicago during the height of the civil rights era. Hence, the use of the terms 'Latin American', 'Spanish-speaking', and 'Puerto Rican' decontextualizes Mexicans from the making of their own history while omitting them from the written record, memory, and thus specific history in Chicago. Therefore, my intention in this study is to use primary documents and oral sources to correct the distortions of the overlooked narratives of Mexican-origin student activism in one Chicago public high school during the civil rights era. One effective way to ground this narrative is to interview the Chicana/o students who participated in the walkouts at Harrison High.

The educational historiography of Mexican Americans points out that further studies should explore the relationship between local communities, local school districts, and public school reform efforts.<sup>14</sup> Mexican American education scholars also assert that Chicanas/os have passed through some of the similar experiences of some European immigrant groups but that the trajectory of Mexican Americans in relation to public schools more closely resembles the experiences of African Americans, and other dominated cultures in the U.S.

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<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Richard R. Valencia, Martha Menchaca, and Rubin Denato, "Segregation, Desegregation, and Integration of Chicano Students: Old and New Realities." in Richard R. Valencia eds., *Chicano School Failure and Success: Past, Present, and Future*. 2nd ed. (New York: RoutledgeFarmer, 2002): pp. 70-113.

distinctive differences notwithstanding.<sup>15</sup> For instance, Mexicans were already residing in the Southwest territories (Texas, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and parts of Oklahoma) at the time of Anglo-Saxon settler westward expansionism and were thus involuntarily incorporated into the United States as internal colonial subjects after the brutal Mexican American War of 1846-1848.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the historical point of contact of Mexicans in the United States with the dominant society was through military conquest. Although article VIII of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 stipulates that Mexicans who stayed in the conquered territories of the southwest would be granted U.S. citizenship status and the language rights of Mexicans would be honored,<sup>17</sup> in actuality, those who decided to reside in the Southwest after the war were used as a source of cheap labor<sup>18</sup> and subsequently became dispossessed subordinate second-class citizens, or paradoxically, came to be seen as ‘foreigners’ in their own land. Hence, it has not been uncommon for Mexican and Mexican Americans to be historically portrayed by the popular print and mass media (e.g., magazines, newspapers, books, dime

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., See also, Joel Spring, *Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality: A Brief History of the Education of Dominated Cultures in the United States*. 2nd edition. (New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 1997).

<sup>16</sup> See, David J. Weber, *Foreigners in their Native Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican American* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1973); Carey McWilliams, *North From Mexico: The Spanish Speaking Peoples of the United States*. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968); Ellwyn R. Stoddard, *Mexican Americans* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1973), 7-36; Henry B. Parks, “The Creation of Modern Aztlan” in *Introduction to Chicano Studies*, eds., Livie Isauro Duran & H. Russell Bernard (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1973), pp. 168-183; Americo Paredes, *With His Pistol in His Hand* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958). For an interesting analysis of the aggressive role played by U.S. covert operations in Mexico right before and during the Mexican American War, see A. Brooke Caruso, *The Mexican Spy Company: United States Covert Operations in Mexico, 1845-1848*. (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Publishers, 1991); see also Julian Nava, *Viva La Raza: Readings on Mexicans Americans*. (New York, N.Y., D. Van Nostrand Company, 1973), pp. 53-89.

<sup>17</sup> Isauro Duran & H. Russell Bernard, “The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: Articles 8-15” in *Introduction to Chicano Studies*. eds. (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1973), pp. 202-206.

<sup>18</sup> See Juan Gomez-Quiñones, *Mexican American Labor, 1790-1990*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994).

novels, romances, TV, Hollywood films) as: savages, drunkards, criminals, passive victims, lazy, bandits, unclean, deceitful, and as intellectually inferior. Furthermore, Mexican males have, at various times, been portrayed as over sexed 'latin lovers' while Mexican women have often been showcased as being promiscuous temptresses.<sup>19</sup>

Historically, these attitudinal characteristics created by the dominant culture in the U.S. have shaped and influenced the way Mexican, Chicano/as, or Mexican American children are perceived by various school officials throughout public schools.<sup>20</sup> Yet, despite these tendencies by the mass media promulgating a disturbing public imagination on Mexicans, Chicano/as, Mexican Americans, significant human agency and/or resistance are also reverting themes that accompany Mexican American/Chicana/o history as well. Nevertheless, previous studies on the historiography of Chicanas/os alert us to the necessity of maintaining sensibilities towards the recurring themes between the continuity and discontinuity of conflict in education (e.g., domination, segregation, and deculturalization), struggle (e.g., litigation and legislation), and resistance (e.g.,

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<sup>19</sup> See Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization 1800-1890*. (New York, N.Y.: HarperPerennial: A Division of HarperCollinsPublishers, 1994), pp. 191-207;227-241; James R. Grossman ed, *The Frontier in American Culture*. (Berkeley: University of California Press,1994); Lewis H. Carlson & George A. Colburn, *In Their Place: White America Defines Her Minorities: 1850-1950*. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1972), pp. 134-162.; see also, Thomas M. Martinez, "Advertising and Racism: The Case of The Mexican-American" in *El Grito*, II, 4 (Summer 1969), 3-12. and Francisco Armando Rios, "The Mexican in Fact, Fiction, and Folklore" in (Ibid.), 14-28. For an interesting study of stereotypical beliefs of both Anglo-Americans and Mexican-Americans in a South Texas community see, Ozzie G. Simmons, "The Mutual Images and Expectations of Anglo-Americans and Mexican Americans" in, *Introduction to Chicano Studies* eds., Livie Isauro Duran & H. Russell Bernard (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1973), pp. 387-398., Also see, Glen Gaviglio, "The Myths of the Mexican American" (Ibid.), pp. 398-406. For an examination regarding the coverage of Mexicans in various mass communications of the media see Bradley S. Greenberg, Michael Burgoon, Judee K. Burgoon and Felipe Korszeny, *Mexican Americans & the Mass Media.*, eds. (Norwood, New Jersey: ABLEX Publishing Corporation, 1983). pp 29-34. 202-223.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Sofia Villenas and Douglas E. Foley, "Chicano/Latino Critical Ethnography of Education: Cultural Productions from La Frontera," in *Richard R. Valencia ed., Chicano School Failure and Success: Past, Present, and Future*. (New York: RoudledgeFarmer, 2002).

confrontational, additive educational initiatives) in the quest of Mexican Americans for educational equality in the U.S.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, there is still much historical documentation needed on the Mexicano educational experiences of students in Chicago during the height of the civil rights era.

### Research Questions

It is interesting to note that in the late 60's, only after many protests and demands by student activists, were 'ethnic study' programs and departments initiated in universities. Moreover, Black, Chicana/o, Puerto Rican, and Native American university studies departments emerged out of this historical context of grass-roots community organizing, strong student demands and struggles. These university campus struggles that were forged were very much part of larger social movements (e.g., Black Power, Brown Power, Red Power, Chicano and Antiwar) taking place during the civil rights era. Therefore, some of the broad questions that I have are: How did these various social movements during the civil rights era impact and galvanize Mexican, Chicana/o, or Mexican-Americans living in Chicago during that time? What kind(s) of political consciousness and ideological proclivities were present for Mexican-origin residents and students in South Lawndale in this fascinating historic moment and under what conditions did these develop and emerge?

The key specific questions that I have are:

1. What circumstances prompted Mexicano students to protest at Harrison High?

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<sup>21</sup> See, Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr. and Richard R. Valencia, "From the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to Hopwood: The Educational Plight and Struggle of Mexican Americans in the Southwest," *Harvard Educational Review* 68 (1998): 353-412.

2. Who were the major agents of social change in this local community?
3. What were the actual demands of Mexican-origin students at this high school?
4. What was the response of the school administration to the student demands?
5. How was 'Chicanismo' manifested in Chicago during the late 60's and what is its legacy?

In speaking with a few older community residents and employees at Latino Youth, Inc., where I worked for five years as a social worker and educator, they mentioned that various 'race riots' took place in Little Village amongst African American and White students during the 1960's at Harrison High. Indeed, when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in 1968, America's cities erupted with Black outrage over race and class antagonisms that had been brewing for quite some time. In Chicago, Black ghettos located in the West Side of the city were torched in protest. Following the lead of the Black Panthers of Chicago, many Black students at Harrison assumed a 'Black Power' ideology.<sup>22</sup>

Curiously, I wondered, what were the Mexican-origin students at Harrison going through during these so-called 'race riots' between Black and White students? In 1983, Harrison High School closed down and was converted to an elementary and middle school which is predominantly enrolled by Mexicano students. While different accounts of what actually took place are contested by various social actors, the evidence I examined, based on Chicago newspaper clippings, intelligence reports, and oral interviews suggests that, in the late 1960's, poor and working class Mexicano students

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<sup>22</sup> See Dionne Danna, *Something Better for Our Children: Black Organizing in Chicago Public Schools, 1963-1971*. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003).

and parents in Chicago became history makers in their efforts for progressive urban public school reform. In addition, 1968 marks a significant year in terms of Chicana/o student confrontational tactics for public school reform throughout the Southwest as well. Hence, absent from the newspaper accounts of what took place during the late 60's is the perspective of Mexicano students at Harrison High who participated in protests and school walkouts. Indeed, Chicago provides a unique case not only for discerning the fascinating African American/Mexican American student coalition building strategies that took place locally in particular schools such as Harrison High School during the 60's and 70's, but also for recognizing interesting manifestations of political mobilization processes between Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and other Latinos during the height of civil rights era as well. To this end, I explore the topic of the Harrison High School walkouts of 1968 in a more nuanced fashion.

### Theoretical and Methodological Approach

Sociologist Philip Abrams argues that historical studies must also be sociological and sociological studies historical to the extent that, "...sociologists need to ask historical questions and that the distinctive subject-matter of history does not defy sociological analysis."<sup>23</sup>In other words, "history has no privileged access to the empirical evidence relevant to the common explanatory project. And sociology has no privileged theoretical access. Moreover, it is the task that commands attention not the disciplines."<sup>24</sup> In this

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<sup>23</sup> Philip Abrams, *Historical Sociology*. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982). p. 301.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*; p. xi.

study, I also draw on the insights and methods of ‘critical realistic history’<sup>25</sup> which attempts to get to ‘what really happened’ by utilizing, “ruthless criticism and a thorough investigation of primary sources, including the motivations of historical actors.”<sup>26</sup>

In this research project I chronicle the walkouts that transpired at Harrison and Froebel High Schools between 1968-74 from the standpoint of the Mexican-origin students who participated in the manifestations of these boycotts. Therefore, the research methodology is qualitative and interpretive in its process. I generated data by documenting oral interviews and interpreting primary archival materials. Interviews were audio-taped recorded and lasted for approximately one hour or one and a half hours. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended. Hence, an interview guide was used which included a list of exploratory questions to get to the ‘what happened’ and ‘how it happened’ with respects to the school walkouts from the perspective of the Mexican-origin students who participated in them.

I tapped into informants memories of the landmark event of the Harrison High School walkouts and then used data as well as ‘interdisciplinary triangulation’ as a strategy for checking the validity of the study.<sup>27</sup> However, with respect to checking the chronology of events and context, I employed, “triangulation of documentation with interviews”<sup>28</sup> in order to confirm and expand on the reliability of particular themes. I then

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<sup>25</sup> Karen Graves, Timothy Glander, and Christine Shea eds., *Inexcusable Omissions: Clarence Karier and the Critical Tradition in History of Education Scholarship*. (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2001).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>27</sup> See Valerie J. Janesick, “The Dance of Qualitative Research Design: Metaphor, Methodology, and Meaning” in *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*. Eds. Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998). pp. 46-47.

<sup>28</sup> See Vanessa Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*. (North Carolina, The University of North Carolina Press, 1996); pp. 223-224.

transcribed the interviews and identified particular generative themes and coded them appropriately.<sup>29</sup> A snowball approach<sup>30</sup> was utilized to generate a sample of Mexican-origin former students from Harrison High School who participated in the walkouts. Final rounds of interviews were conducted over the telephone to fill in any remaining gaps in the story.

### Methods of Data Analysis

The data was analyzed inductively which is to say that I did not intend to prove or disprove any particular hypothesis or theoretical framework. I began the inquiry with evidence and not with theory. Therefore, the theory derived from this study was ‘grounded theory’.<sup>31</sup> This implies that the logic and direction of the research was informed ‘on the ground’ via archival evidence and through dialogue and oral interviews. The project thus focused on the micro level by privileging the local stories, voices, and analysis of the Mexican-origin students who participated in the walkouts of 1968-74 and the impact this had on the larger community.<sup>32</sup> However, I also draw from the work of

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<sup>29</sup> See Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990).

<sup>30</sup> See H. Russell Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994); p. 97.

<sup>31</sup> See Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990).

<sup>32</sup> See for example Saldivar (1990), Guajardo and Guajardo, and Pizarro (2005).

San Miguel Jr.,<sup>33</sup> Donato,<sup>34</sup> López,<sup>35</sup> García,<sup>36</sup> Guajardo and Guajardo,<sup>37</sup> Gonzalez,<sup>38</sup> Vargas,<sup>39</sup> Valencia,<sup>40</sup> Bernal<sup>41</sup>, Muñoz,<sup>42</sup> and Navarro<sup>43</sup> to assist in the interpretation of the data from a macro perspective (e.g., the developments that occurred nationally such as other high school walkouts). The micro-macro integrative theoretical orientation which is advanced by Ritzer<sup>44</sup> is dynamic rather than binary via the constant switching back and forth viewpoints of these respective perspectives, each informing the other. In addition, with respect to the interpretation of data from the micro perspective, I drew from the work of Guajardo and Guajardo<sup>45</sup>, Bernal<sup>46</sup>, Pizarro<sup>47</sup>, Saldívar<sup>48</sup>, and Delgado.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr. *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston*. (Houston: Texas A&M University Press, 2001).

<sup>34</sup> Ruben Donato, *The Other Struggle for Equal Schools: Mexican Americans during the Civil Rights Era*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997).

<sup>35</sup> Ian F. Haney López, *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice*. (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> Ignacio M. García, *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos among Mexican Americans*. (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1997).

<sup>37</sup> Miguel A. Guajardo & Francisco J. Guajardo, "The Impact of Brown on the Brown of South Texas: A Micropolitical Perspective on the Education of Mexican Americans in a South Texas Community", *American Educational Research Journal* 41(2004): 501-526.

<sup>38</sup> Gilberto Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation*. (Philadelphia: Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, 1990).

<sup>39</sup> Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>40</sup> Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr. and Richard R. Valencia, "From the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to Hopwood: The Educational Plight and Struggle of Mexican Americans in the Southwest," *Harvard Educational Review* 68 (1998): 353-412.

<sup>41</sup> Dolores Delgado Bernal, "Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research" in *Harvard Educational Review* 68(1998): 555-582.

<sup>42</sup> Carlos Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement*. (New York: Verso Press, 1989).

<sup>43</sup> Armando Navarro, *Mexican American Youth Organization*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).

<sup>44</sup> See George Ritzer, *Sociological Theory*. (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1996).

<sup>45</sup> Miguel A. Guajardo & Francisco J. Guajardo, "Critical Ethnography and Community Change" in Henry Trueba & Yali Zou eds., *Ethnography in Schools: Qualitative Approaches to the Study of Education*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Marcos Pizarro, *Chicanas and Chicanos in School: Racial Profiling, Identity Battles, and Empowerment*. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2005).

<sup>48</sup> Ramon Saldívar, *Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference*. (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990).

<sup>49</sup> Richard Delgado and Jean Stefanie, Eds. *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000).

Moreover, Saldívar argues that the “dialectics of difference” within Chicano narratives challenges mainstream narratives to the extent that, “For Chicano narrative, history is the subtext that we must recover because history itself is the subject of discourse.”<sup>50</sup> Here, critical race theory was useful as a theoretical lens for the purposes of data analysis with respect to making sense of how “counter-narratives” represent an avenue for contesting dominant ones. Since, CRT is based on privileging contextual, historical, and specific descriptions over abstract, decontextualized, ahistorical ones,<sup>51</sup> “In both simple and complex ways, critical race theorists challenge the notion of the supposedly biased subjectivity of narratives from the disenfranchised.”<sup>52</sup> In the end, CRT recognizes that, “It is only by listening intently to people of color, for example, that we can begin to see that dominant ‘realities’ too are constructions and that they often exist at the expense of the reality of others.”<sup>53</sup> In this case, the counter-narratives of Mexican-origin students at Harrison High were the focus of the study.

### Review of the Literature: The Chicano Movement

During the 60’s and 70’s, public schools constituted one of the major contestatory sites where, once again, ‘culture wars’ or battles over schooling, curriculums, and ideologies

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<sup>50</sup> Ramon Saldívar, *Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference*. (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990); p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> See, *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*. Eds., Kemberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas (New York: The New Press, 1995); pp. xi-xxxii, *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*. eds., Richard Delgado and Jean Stefaniec (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000)., pp. xv-xix.

<sup>52</sup> Marcos Pizarro, “‘Chicana/o Power!’ Epistemology and Methodology for Social Justice and Empowerment in Chicana/o Communities” in *Qualitative Studies in Education* 11(1998): 62.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

began to reoccur across the country.<sup>54</sup> In the area of public schooling, the recurring themes between the continuity and discontinuity of conflict in education (e.g., domination, segregation, and deculturalization), struggle (e.g., litigation and legislation), and resistance (e.g., blowouts, protests, walkouts and additive language initiatives such as full bilingualism)<sup>55</sup> in the Mexican American quest for educational equality in the U.S.<sup>56</sup> As Joel Spring notes, “The strong resistance to deculturalization during the great civil rights movement highlights the difficulty, if not impossibility, of deculturalization through educational institutions.”<sup>57</sup>

Accordingly, historian Zaragosa Vargas argues that, “The social, economic, and political environment of Texas, the Mountain States, California, and the Midwest shaped and produced a series of distinctive movements within the larger Mexican American civil rights struggle, which the union movement had nurtured and made strong.”<sup>58</sup> Despite the significant wartime contributions of Mexican Americans, post World War II veterans continued to experience institutionalized forms of racism and discrimination as well as social and economic inequality back at home.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, after World War II, Vargas

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<sup>54</sup> See, for example, Joel Spring, *The American School: 1642-2000*. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001), pp. 388-418. Also see, Clarence J. Karier, *The Individual, Society, and Education: A History of American Educational Ideas*. 2nd Edition. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), pp. 326-362; James W. Fraser, *The School in the United States: A Documentary History*. (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2001), pp. 293-318.

<sup>55</sup> See, Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., “Status of the Historiography of Chicano Education: A Preliminary Analysis,” *History of Education Quarterly* 26 (Winter 1986): 523-536. See also, Ruben Donato, *The Other Struggle for Equal Schools: Mexican Americans during the Civil Rights Era*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997).

<sup>56</sup> See, Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr. and Richard R. Valencia, “From the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to Hopwood: The Educational Plight and Struggle of Mexican Americans in the Southwest,” *Harvard Educational Review* 68 (1998): 353-412.

<sup>57</sup> Joel Spring, *Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality: A Brief History of the Education of Dominated Cultures in the United States*. (New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, INC., 1997). p. 50.

<sup>58</sup> Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); p. 280.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 252-253.

maintains that, “Mexican Americans began to press for changes in their communities by forming and straightening new and old alliances with labor and with progressive civil rights organizations. The movement focused on the need for better jobs, an end to police brutality, access to housing and education, and representation in government.”<sup>60</sup> Vargas goes on to note the following which is worth quoting at length with respect to post World War II:

The choices made and the strategies utilized by Mexican Americans in their campaigns for economic and social justice were constrained and eventually stalled, though not defeated, by the circumstances of the anticommunist and anti-alien reaction, growing CIO autocratic rule, and a resurgent racism. These factors momentarily served to keep Mexican Americans in their place and rendered them virtually invisible until the emergence of the modern Chicano protest movement.<sup>61</sup>

In other words, prior to the 60’s, Mexican Americans in the U.S. had a long history of struggle for social and economic equity.

Nonetheless, one of the emergent figures of the civil rights movement was César Chávez whose farm worker union movement called for economic and social justice for the Mexican American population. On the other hand, the confrontational social protests that characterized a significant portion of the political activity in America during the 60’s reached the Chicana/o community as well. Therefore, urban leads such as Rodolfo ‘Corky’ Gonzales of Denver organized the Crusade for Justice, Reyes López Tijerina formed the Federal Alliance of Land Grants in New Mexico whose purpose was to recover lost land for Mexicans, while José Angel Guitierrez formed La Raza Unida Party

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 253.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 254.

(the United Peoples Party) in Texas which, in effect, represents a third party supporting candidates who offer alternatives to the Democratic and Republican parties.

Like Black power, 'Chicanismo' has taken on a variety of meanings, but all definitions stress a positive self-image and place little reliance on conventional forms of political activity. As García notes, "The emphasis on 'dignity, self-worth, pride, uniqueness, feeling of cultural rebirth, and equal economic opportunity' became attractive to Mexican Americans across class, regional, and generational lines, since most had faced some form of discrimination in their lives."<sup>62</sup> However, García goes on to assert that, "The Chicano Movement was not simply a search for identity, or an outburst of collective anxiety. Rather, it was a full-fledged transformation of the way Mexican Americans thought, played politics, and promoted their culture. Chicanos embarked on a struggle to make fundamental changes, because only fundamental changes could make them active participants in their lives."<sup>63</sup>

In short, a significant aspect of 'Chicanismo' is a rejection of the 'liberal agenda' for solutions in favor of a more activist 'militant ethos.' Hence, "New leaders arose who were part of the community, and the organizations they founded shunned assimilation and sought legitimacy not from the integrationist middle class but from the nationalistic working class."<sup>64</sup> García cogently observes that, "Numerous organizations, such as the Crusade for Justice in Colorado, La Raza Unida Party in Texas, and the Alianza Federal de Pueblos Libres in New Mexico, competed with the League of United Latin American

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<sup>62</sup> Ignacio M. García, *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos among Mexican Americans*. (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1997). p. 6.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Citizens, the American G.I. Forum, the Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations, and other integrationist organizations to be the activist entities of the Mexican American community.”<sup>65</sup>

Finally, García attempts to synthesize various intricate aspects of the Chicano movement by identifying four phases. As García states, “These phases contribute to a clearer picture of what occurred among the barrio’s elite, the working class, and La Raza’s artists and culturalists.”<sup>66</sup> Essentially, the first phase was a rejection of the liberal agenda for solutions to deeply embedded social problems experienced by Mexican Americans. The second phase involved a reinterpretation of the past within a ‘nationalist framework’ which, he points out, allowed Mexican Americans to explain the barrio’s problems by blaming American society which is characterized by racism, colonization, and segregation. The third phase, García tells us, led Chicano activists, intellectuals, and artists to affirm racial pride and a sense of ‘people hood.’ Finally, “In the fourth phase, Chicano activists engaged in oppositional politics. They developed platforms, manifestos, and tactics that best represented an oppositional strategy to the American mainstream.”<sup>67</sup> What was the impact that inferior schooling had on the Mexican-origin community across the U.S. and how did this change the racial and ethnic identity of this group during the civil rights era?

Legal scholar Ian Haney López argues that during the 30’s and 40’s with the rising conflict between the United States and Mexico , “...the terms that Anglos used to describe Mexicans shifted sharply from ones accentuating perceived differences in

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., pp. 10-12.

culture, religion, and language toward ones stressing skin color and ancestry.”<sup>68</sup> López goes on to point out three distinctive aspects of Anglo racial ideology which racialized Mexicans in a very particular way. First, “The mixed origins of Mexicans proved no bar to their racialization, for the U.S. society fit them neatly into the degraded category reserved for racial mongrels..”<sup>69</sup>

Second, there has always existed a deep seated fear, he tells us, with ‘racial mixing’ in the U.S. Hence, “Their mixed origins suggested to Anglos that Mexicans had lax standards about interracial relations which, if transplanted to the United States, threatened racial disaster.”<sup>70</sup> Another aspect of Anglo racial ideology with respect to the racialization of Mexicans was that “...They believed that the populations they encountered were inferiors destined to fade before them, not through Anglo fault or misdeed but by the laws of nature.”<sup>71</sup> According to López, the third aspect of Anglo racial ideology rests on an assumption of Anglo cultural superiority to the extent that, “The result was a volatile ideology of white superiority supposedly rooted in nature and revealed through physical differences.”<sup>72</sup> In the end, “Whether a compromise, the United States did grant citizenship to Mexicans in the now American Southwest. In social, economic, and political relations, however, Mexicans remained a non-white group marked by a host of degraded traits.”<sup>73</sup> Indeed, López maintains that although Mexican Americans or Chicanos have at times been legally classified as ‘white’ by the courts, they

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<sup>68</sup> Ian F. Haney López, *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice*. (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003); p. 58.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

have historically occupied a 'non-white' status in social, economic, and political relations.<sup>74</sup>

A significant aspect of the Chicano Movement was the growing radicalization among Mexican American Youth. As López succinctly states, “Inspired by black and white radicals who rejected dialogue with community power brokers and government officials, militant young Mexicans increasingly thought that social change depended upon confronting the institutions they considered directly responsible for inequitable community conditions--the establishment, in the parlance of the day.”<sup>75</sup> High Schools were a primary site where political action was manifested by students. In 1966, a group of Mexican high school students formed an organization called, Young Citizens for Community Action (YCCA).<sup>76</sup> Initially, this group focused on addressing educational issues, provide community service, and participate in local elections, however, over time, the organization began to focus their efforts on seeking redress for the most pressing issue which was police brutality. As López notes, “To mark this increased militancy, the group changed its name to the Brown Berets and adopted the following pledge: ‘I wear Brown Beret because it signifies my dignity and pride in the color of my skin and race.’” The politics of insurgency in East Los Angeles included a dramatic new willingness to claim a non-white identity as the basis for solidarity and mobilization.<sup>77</sup> He goes on to point out “...the Berets’ use of Panther rhetoric and practices confirms the black struggle’s

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<sup>74</sup> Ian F. Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*. (NY: New York University Press, 1996).

<sup>75</sup> Ian F. Haney López, *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice*. (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003); p. 18.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., pp. 18-19.

important influence on the Mexican community's emerging conception of itself as a racial minority.<sup>778</sup> López states that, "By 1970 the Brown Berets had over sixty chapters across the Southwest and as far away as Chicago."<sup>79</sup>

In 1967 high school students in East Los Angeles began planning a walkout of their schools as a manifestation of their grievances as recipients of inferior schooling. By 1968, with the assistance of teachers, community professionals, and clergy, there was a majority decision among students to demonstrate a walkout.<sup>80</sup> As López notes, "The Brown Berets, many of them high school students or recent graduates, also joined in planning the walkouts. The student militants formed strike committees at Garfield, Roosevelt, and Lincoln high schools. They also formed a central committee to draft demands and coordinate any actual strikes."<sup>81</sup> The central student demands called for bilingual education, more Mexican teachers, more counselors, better library facilities, and the establishment of a parents council.<sup>82</sup>

In short, the role of Mexican-origin or Chicana/o students during the 60's can be largely characterized as active to the extent that many participated in the making of history but as passive to the extent that not all students participated in the walkouts or agreed with the 'militant ethos' or ideological proclivities of radical politics as a strategy or tactic for the betterment of their life chances in the U.S. For instance, many of the principal organizations such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and the American G.I. Forum which sought more conventional avenues (e.g., litigation)

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

for addressing the ‘social dislocations’ of Mexican Americans. Many of these liberal ideological allegiances have to do with the particular class locations or socio-economic status of the social actors. For example, “All of the individuals involved in LULAC either were born in the United States or were naturalized citizens.” In addition,...”They were also part of an extremely small but vocal middle-class element within the Mexican American community.”<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, the working-class high school student ‘blowouts’ or walkouts which transpired during the 60’s attempted to address the discriminatory practices in public schools and as San Miguel astutely points out, “The student protests were complemented by the activities of MALDEF, the American G.I. Forum, LULAC, and countless other organizations which also demanded an end to the exclusionary and discriminatory practices of public schools during the late 1960s and 1970’s.”<sup>84</sup>

In, *The Other Struggle for Equal Schools*, Rubén Donato argues that during the first half of the twentieth century, the schooling of Mexican Americans in the Southwest functioned as a form of social control to socialize students into loyal and disciplined workers.<sup>85</sup> He goes on to point out that in the state of California, the government initially classified Mexicans as ‘Caucasians’ and then later reclassified them as ‘Indian’.<sup>86</sup> Donato notes that with respect to desegregation then, urban school districts defined Mexicans as ‘white’ and utilized this category to integrate African American and Mexican American students in an attempt to provide ‘racial balance’ in the post-Brown era. According to

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<sup>83</sup> Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *“Let All of Them Take Heed”*: Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>85</sup> Rubén Donato, *The Other Struggle for Equal Schools: Mexican Americans during the Civil Rights Era*. (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997).

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

Donato, it was not until the *Keyes v School District No. 1 Denver Colorado* (1973) that a comparison between African American and Mexican American educational experiences commenced which opened up the consideration of Mexican Americans as a separate ‘ethnic minority group.’ This would come to have consequences in local desegregation plans since white students were not part of the equation in attempts to be integrated along with African American and Mexican American students throughout urban schooling districts in the Southwest.

One of the key insights which Donato provides is the active participation of Mexican American parents in a California community during the late 60’s who challenged local school districts and the school board. Donato contends that by 1971, Mexican Americans in Brownfield formed a united front and made various demands to the local school board.<sup>87</sup> Some of the demands included the following: Special training for Mexican American parents to evaluate Title I programs, three bilingual aides to work with a community district liaison officer to serve between the Mexican American community and the schools, bilingual aides for minority schools, training for all teachers in ESL, the inclusion of minorities in the curriculum, and free lunches for low-income targeted schools.<sup>88</sup> Mexican American student protesters of Brownsfield High, “insisted that teachers stop making ‘derogatory statements’ about them, that school officials hire a female dean of girls, and that the school incorporate courses in the history and culture of U.S. minorities. One major concern for protesting students was the lack of Mexican American educators in the high school.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

Donato goes on to point out that the national level concerns to eradicate poverty (e.g., the Great Society Program) under the Lyndon B. Johnson administration, sparked some effects on the Brownfield community. For instance, in an effort to increase the educational achievement level of disadvantaged youth, federal and state funds became available to target the needs of Mexican American children with limited English proficiency. Conversely, he tells us that what started out as isolated parent individual complaints, ended up becoming a significant organized movement. Indeed, Mexican American parents formed an organization called Comunidad Organizada Para Educación (COPE) which pressed the school board to be included in local decision-making processes and sought accountability for the specific use of Title I funds.<sup>90</sup>

The white community's reaction in California to the establishment of bilingual-bicultural elementary schools was unfavorable since, "Many white residents believed that the plight of Mexican American children was the result of a cultural orientation that did not value education, rather than the structure of the school."<sup>91</sup> Donato asserts that with respect to state-mandated bilingual education in Brownfield, parents actually took a back seat since central administrators essentially pushed the implementation of bilingual education in the district aggressively. This, in turn, led white parents (a group calling itself Concerned Citizens for Education) to contest the district administration since they firmly judged that bilingual education, for migrant children with limited English proficiency, would dilute the standards for the quality education of white students.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. p. 147.

Lastly, Donato points out that in the post-Brown era, the lower courts were primarily held responsible for working out particular desegregation plans. For example, the California State Department of Education pressed school systems to ‘ethnically balance’ their schools but left this discretion under the responsibility of local officials.<sup>92</sup> Here, Donato distinguishes two political ideological camps that were operative within the school board which he coins as ‘Pluralist’ and ‘Conservative.’ According to Donato, Pluralists essentially believed that desegregation plans were too biased and called for two-way busing between the Brownfield district and predominately white community in Atherton. On the other hand, Conservatives sustained that busing Mexican American students one way was the only reasonable desegregation plan. Pointedly, Conservatives argued that busing Atherton students to Brownfield schools that were predominately Mexican American would breed mediocrity for white students. Moreover, he is quick to note that white resistance also occurred in the form of ‘white flight’ from the Brownsfield schooling district. In addition, the *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974) case held that interdistrict desegregation remedies were not allowed unless solid evidence could prove that district lines were actually drawn to preserve segregation.<sup>93</sup> Therefore, in the end, Mexican American isolation was effectively sustained throughout Brownsfield schools.

In the area of litigation and legislation, the legal history of Latino desegregation points to various strategies utilized by Mexican American Legal Defense attorneys which spearheaded desegregation cases in the U.S. The *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946) case provided the impetus for Equal Protection to be utilized as a strategy by legal experts to

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. p. 122.

argue on behalf of national origin discrimination rather than 'race' discrimination since, “group' discrimination classifications was the hazy standard that drove the courts in the 1940's; racial classifications would not be defined for many years.”<sup>94</sup> It is interesting to note that the first instance of court ordered desegregation case for Mexicans occurred in Lemon Grove California in *Alvarez v Owen* (1931). The Lemon Grove school district was attempting to separate white children from Mexican children on the basis of so-called 'language problems'. The defendants argued that Mexican children should be assigned to a separate school (which Mexican parents dubbed as 'the barn') since Mexicans' children's 'language deficiencies' were perceived to be educationally backward and thus hindered the educational progress of Anglo children.

The irony of this case was that many Mexican children were actually born in the U.S. and spoke English. Since Mexicans at this time were ‘White by law,’<sup>95</sup> the attorneys' legal strategy with the courts became to use the legal status of ‘white’ to advocate for the integration of Mexican students with White American students for the purpose of attaining educational justice. With respects to the legal racial classification of Mexicans, “The Court concluded that Mexicans were neither Negroes nor Indians (nor Mongolians, the other category segregated under the California Education Code) and their segregation was therefore unlawful.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> See Christopher Arriola, “Knocking on the Schoolhouse Door: *Mendez v. Westminster*, Equal Protection, Public Education, and Mexican Americans in the 1940's” in *La Raza Law Journal* 8 (1995): p. 192.

<sup>95</sup> Ian F. Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*. ( New York, NY: University Press, 1996).

<sup>96</sup> See Margaret E. Montoya, “A Brief History of Chicana/o School Segregation: One Rationale for Affirmative Action” *La Raza Law Journal* 12 (2001); p. 166.

In the *Mendez* case the issue of 'race' and the legal classification of Mexicans would come up once again:

The *Mendez* suit claimed that segregation of Mexican children violated the Fourteenth Amendment in the absence of specific state laws that required or enabled the local school districts to mandate a Mexican school system. State codes allowing or requiring school segregation applied only to 'non-white' races, specifically Indian children (except Native American Indians), Chinese Japanese, and Mongolian. The suit alleged that no legal 'racial' status had been applied to Mexicans other than that they were members of the Caucasian race and therefore not subject to the discriminatory education codes.<sup>97</sup>

Pointedly, however, “The Court never ruled on whether Mexicans are a group, an ethnicity, or a race, merely stating that Mexican American school children had been discriminated against and their Fourteenth Amendment rights had been violated.”<sup>98</sup>

Therefore, “The essence of the *Mendez* case revolved around the charge that segregation operated 'to deny or deprive equal protection of the laws' to English and non-English Mexican Children.”<sup>99</sup> In short, as Margaret Montoya purports: “...this case was of great importance for Chicanas/os because it paved the way for litigation in Texas and Arizona, challenging segregation schemes, as well as for other populations of color helping to develop the arguments for *Brown v. Board of Education*.”<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Gilbert G. Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation*. (Cranbury, New Jersey p. 152.

<sup>98</sup> Christopher Arriola, “Knocking on the Schoolhouse Door: *Mendez v. Westminster*, Equal Protection, Public Education, and Mexican Americans in the 1940's” in *La Raza Law Journal* 8 (1995); p. 198.

<sup>99</sup> See Gonzalez, p. 153. It is worth noting that the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment was originally passed only after the Civil War to extend, specifically to former Black slaves, “equal protection” under the law. Hence, “the Supreme Court was not likely to apply the amendment's protections to any other group besides ex-slaves.” And so a broader interpretation of this clause by the Court would be necessary in the *Mendez* case: “Equal Protection was in a state of metamorphosis during the 1940's and could have gone in any direction. The question was, which cases would lead the courts and which arguments would be persuasive. The NAACP and others hoped *Mendez* would be one of those cases, if not the case in the efforts to overturn segregation as embodied in the existing corpus of segregation precedent.” See Arriola *Ibid.*, pp. 189,192.

<sup>100</sup> Montoya, pp. 168-169.

Educational historian Guadalupe San Miguel Jr. cited twenty eight court cases where Mexican-origin plaintiffs filed lawsuits in their struggle for attaining educational schooling opportunities for their children.<sup>101</sup> Accordingly, Marco Portales tells us that, “Four of the twenty-eight lawsuits filed by Latino plaintiffs went to court years before Brown in 1954. These were *Independent School District v. Salvatierra* (San Antonio, 1930); *Ramirez v. State* (Texas, 1931); *Mendez et al. v. Westminster School District of Orange County et al.* (California, 1947); *Delgado et al. v. Bastrop Independent School District* (Texas, 1948). Another case, *Hernandez v. Texas*, was filed the same year that the Supreme Court made the decision to desegregate public schools. It was only after the Supreme court Brown decision of 1954, though, that the other twenty-three lawsuits were filed.”<sup>102</sup> In *Hernandez v. Texas* 347 U.S. 475 (1954), the Supreme Court applied the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to Mexican Americans if subjected to discrimination as an ‘identifiable ethnic group.’

According to Portales, “The landmark case that began to change educational opportunities for Latinos in Texas, however, was *Delgado et al. v. Bastrop Independent School District* in 1948. This lawsuit was filed by the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), with Gustavo C. (Gus) Garcia serving as the plaintiff’s attorney.”<sup>103</sup> In this case, “The main suit alleged that Mexican children were being segregated from the children of other white races in the absence of specific state law and in clear violation of

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<sup>101</sup> See *Let Them All Take Heed: Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).

<sup>102</sup> Marco Portales, “A History of Latino Segregation Lawsuits” in *The Unfinished Agenda of Brown v. Board of Education*. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2004); p. 125.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

the Texas attorney general's legal opinion.”<sup>104</sup> Portales remarks that “...Delgado served as a precursor to how the Supreme Court would rule in *Brown v. Board of Education*.”<sup>105</sup> Portales goes on to maintain that between 1954 and 1981 there were at least twenty-three education lawsuits filed by Latino citizens. However, of all the cases, “The *Cisneros v. Corpus Christi Independent School District* case in 1970 established another benchmark case for Mexicans. Cisneros held that Mexican Americans in a school district were 'an identifiable ethnic-minority group' that had been segregated and discriminated against. Therefore, as in the case of blacks, they were entitled to all of the protections provided by *Brown*.”<sup>106</sup>

In, *Brown, Not White*,<sup>107</sup> Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr. takes the reader through the struggle of Mexican-origin activists in Houston and their quest for educational equality during the 1960's and 1970's. In rich detail, San Miguel documents the multiple tactics and strategies forged by the Mexican-origin community in the Houston Independent School District over their legal recognition as a ‘distinct identifiable minority group.’ The author argues that since Mexican children were legally classified as ‘white,’ school desegregation, in the case of Houston, took on a quite disproportionate bi-racial (Mexican/African American) form. As a result, according to San Miguel, integration in practice meant that Anglo children were excluded from all of the desegregation plans after the seminal *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954. At issue here, suggests San Miguel, was the ‘separate but unequal’ quality of schooling for Mexican and African

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>107</sup> Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr. *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston*. (Houston: Texas A&M University Press, 2001).

American children residing in predominantly poor school districts in Houston. San Miguel tells us that, “These new restrictions meant, then, that Mexican American students, for the most part, now had to attend schools within the zones defined by the local board, even if those schools were inferior ones in the ghetto.”<sup>108</sup> The essential narrative that San Miguel provides is that beginning in the 1970’s, Mexican American grassroots organizing activists in Houston began to shift their strategies for attaining educational equality primarily by taking on a new ‘brown’ identity in order to challenge, the quite limited, racist school desegregation policy of the local school district.

San Miguel points out that one of the most significant organizations to emerge in the 1930’s, was the League of Latin American Citizens (LULAC). “It was loyal to U.S. ideals and sought to eliminate racial prejudice against Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans,” observes San Miguel.<sup>109</sup> San Miguel adds, “LULAC also struggled for legal equality, equal educational opportunities, and adequate political representation.”<sup>110</sup> In this chapter, the author also provides a portrayal of discriminatory housing patterns for Mexicans and suggests that although most Mexicans occupied the lowest paying jobs, there was also a middle class Mexican presence in Houston neighborhoods.

San Miguel goes on to analyze how community activism and the specific role the construction of complex Mexican identities played in the Chicano movement in Houston. According to San Miguel, a multiplicity of identities were constructed by Mexican leaders who comprised heterogeneous class, religious, and educational cleavages. He contends that there were four distinctive types of identities: “cultural nationalism,

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

structural accommodationism, social reformism, and conventionality.”<sup>111</sup> One of the main tensions that was operative within the Chicano movement, he tells us, occurred between Mexican-origin and Mexican American leaders who belonged to two main ideological camps: ‘accommodationist’ and ‘integrationist.’ These two archetypal intellectual ideals significantly differed towards the dominant political and social structures of American society.

For instance, San Miguel suggests that Mexicans who subscribed to the ‘Mexicanist’ identity were interested in ‘selective accommodation,’ “...they were not interested in becoming American citizens. Nor were they interested in joining the American mainstream.”<sup>112</sup> This ideology played a role in determining confrontation (e.g., protesting and marching) as a strategy for creating social change. San Miguel suggests that Mexican-origin leaders who subscribed to ‘integrationist’ ideas were more in favor of assimilationist goals and therefore resorted to conventional tactics (e.g., petitioning and litigation) to achieve their ends. However, he is also quick to point out that the Mexican American Generation (Mexicans who were born in the United States) were not simply assimilationists: “They believed in cultural pluralism, a complex set of ideals that embodied distinct notions of culture, race, class, and gender.”<sup>113</sup>

San Miguel also interestingly asserts that although the Mexican American generation were essentially a racially mixed (mestizo) group, they tended to view themselves as Caucasian and aspired to middle class status. Therefore, “The goal of members of the Mexican American Generation thus was to support moderate social

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

change that would improve, not replace, the existing social order.”<sup>114</sup> And so another tension that was present amongst Mexican-origin activists, suggests San Miguel, was between middle-class Mexican leaders (many of whom were small business owners) and poor and working class Mexicans who resided in the barrios. What this implies is that there was no simple unity within the Chicano movement in Houston and that the identities that were constructed by various Mexican and Mexican American groups were indeed complex and quite heterogeneous.

These various ideological strands were to shape and impact the particular Mexican organizations that emerged and the tactics that were utilized in Houston during the Chicano movement in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s. According to San Miguel, the most significant organizations that were formed by the Mexican community in Houston were: the League of Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the Mexican American Education Council (MAEC), the Mexican American Legal Defense (MALDEF), and the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO). These organizations were comprised of middle-class, poor and working class youth, women, and men of Mexican-origin. The MAYO organization was made up primarily of High school and university students who became involved in consciousness raising efforts that advocated cultural pride. MALDEF and LULAC on the other hand, focused their attention on litigation as a strategy to combat the discrimination of local school districts against Mexican Americans. San Miguel, writes that, “LULAC became the leading organization engaged in civil rights.”<sup>115</sup> *Delgado v Bastrop Independent School District* (1948) represents the

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

most critical case that was litigated with respect to the segregation of Mexican children in local school districts in the state of Texas:

*In Delgado v Bastrop Independent School District* the parents of school age Mexican origin children alleged that school officials in four communities in Texas were segregating their children contrary to the U.S. Constitution. The U.S. District Court agreed with the plaintiffs and ruled that placing students of Mexican ancestry in different buildings was arbitrary, discriminatory, and illegal.<sup>116</sup>

This case, San Miguel tells us, set the precedent for the major desegregation battles that were to be fought in the courts by LULAC and MALDEF throughout the late 1960's and early 1970's in the case of the Houston Independent School District. One of the most crucial shifts that occurred in the litigation campaign of LULAC was a change in legal strategy which at first centered on declaring the Mexican-origin population as Caucasian in order to combat discriminatory practices of local school districts. Put differently, LULAC at first proclaimed Mexicans to be legally 'white' to dispute the separation of Mexican children from Anglo children and to challenge the inferior schooling practices of the local school districts. After the seminal *Brown v Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) case, LULAC's strategy took on a different form, says San Miguel, when Mexican activists in Houston began to challenge the 'white' identity in favor of a 'brown' one in order to effectively launch a pairing policy that would be inclusive of Mexicans, African Americans and Anglos within the Houston Independent School District. So, for example, the construction of a new ethnic identity (Brown), argues San Miguel, became the main consciousness building activity that brought the diverse ideological positionalities together. Along with this new consciousness of cultural nationalism, came a more

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

militant strategic orientation as the “new voices of protest”<sup>117</sup> began to utilize boycotts, walkouts, picketing, marching and, in short, confrontational tactics to reach their objectives.

Accordingly, Ignacio García's typology of ‘Chicanismo’ encompasses four stages which are not mutually exclusive but when analyzed carefully suggest a lasting impact on the legacy of the student protests. For instance, with respect to the political ethos of ‘Chicanismo’, García notes that, “During the Movement, activists chose to identify certain symbols, events, rhetoric, and forms of resistance as being part of a pool of consciousness that gave meaning to the term Chicano, which came to denote those who fought for the rights of Mexican Americans and fought against Anglo-American racism.”<sup>118</sup> In the end, García argues that, “A large part of that ethos remains intact among Mexican Americans politicians, academicians, intellectuals, artists, and social workers today.”<sup>119</sup> However, he asserts that the contemporary ‘Chicano ethos’ has now become institutionalized within a larger liberal ‘pluralistic mainstream.’<sup>120</sup> As García states, “The Movement institutionalized a political counterculture that defines itself through its ethnicity and historical experience. Mexican American politicians now depend on this counterculture to maintain their identity and their political leadership.”<sup>121</sup>

Finally, Haney López argues that with respect to the legacy of the Brown Berets’ radical ideology of the 60’s, “...The Berets’ success should not be measured by their

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>118</sup> See *Chicanismo: The Forging of Militant Ethos among Mexican Americans*. (Tucson, The University of Arizona Press, 1997). p. 8.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

ideology but rather by the new identity they helped to create and disseminate. The Berets developed an racial analysis that pictured Mexicans as a brown people victimized by pervasive racism, and identified the legal system as a prime culprit. This assessment still rings true for many in the Mexican community today.”<sup>122</sup> Lastly, López cogently articulates another central legacy of the movement, “In addition, the Chicano movement played an instrumental role in creating a transnational consciousness among Mexicans in the United States, leading many to reject the Mexican American generation’s hostility toward recent Mexican immigrants in favor of a politics of solidarity based on cultural affinities and shared class interests.” In the end, “The Chicano movement mobilized the working-class members of the Mexican community and transformed a diffuse social and political alienation into a positive program of empowerment centered on a claim of being non-white.”<sup>123</sup>

### Description of Chapters

Chapter one provides an introduction to the research project along with an examination of preliminary newspaper articles which sparked some of the central research questions I developed for this project. I then discuss the research design, methodology, and theoretical frameworks employed in this study. Lastly, I provide a literature review of the scholarship related to the specific topic of Chicana/o high school activism during the late 60’s.

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<sup>122</sup> Ian F. Haney López, *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice*. (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003); p. 200.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 238.

Chapter two sketches out a brief history of Mexicans in Chicago in the pre-*Brown* era. It discusses the major social, political, and economic forces that were set in motion in Mexican communities of Chicago prior to the *Brown* era. It includes the major types of jobs Mexicans obtained and some of the racial attitudes towards Mexicans in Chicago before 1954. This chapter also describes some of the early schooling experiences of Mexican American children in Chicago.

Chapter three consists of examining the effects of segregation for Mexicans in Chicago and the intricacies of the *Westminster* and *Brown* case. In particular, I discuss the impact that the landmark *Brown* decision had on Mexican American students residing in the Little Village community. As opposed to attempting to desegregate local schooling districts, the spirit of *Brown* took on a different form in Chicago as Mexican Americans fought for the implementation of effective bilingual/bicultural programs in their quest for establishing equal schools. A coalition of Latino organizations demanded that Title III, a proposal for Community Bilingual Centers, be fully funded and believed that Title I funds were being improperly spent.

Chapter four looks at the circumstances that existed for Mexicans at Harrison High School which eventually led to student protests and walkouts in the late 60's. Mexican-origin students at Harrison High drafted a manifesto which demanded bilingual programs, teachers, counselors, staff as well the teaching of Latin American history. The walkouts at Harrison in 68' were initially student led and resulted in the formation of a united 'Latino' (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Colombian) front under the banner, OLAS (Organization of Latin American Students). This chapter also examines how in 1969 the

broader national Chicano Movement galvanized Mexican-origin youth living in Chicago. During the late 60's, the Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS) was the key college chapter organization involved with political consciousness raising with high school students. The student *teatro* which formed at Harrison was influenced by the National Chicano Youth Conference in Denver, Colorado and was used as a vehicle for cultural affirmation at Harrison High.

Chapter five examines the legacy of *Chicanismo* in Chicago. This chapter documents the battles which took place in the mid 70's for the construction of Benito Juárez High School in the Pilsen community and the general impact of the Chicano *movimiento* in Chicago. Students, parents, and community activists organized walkouts and picket lines at the Froebel Branch of Harrison High in Pilsen and pressed the Chicago Board of Education to build a new school in the Mexican community. In the 1970's, city-wide Latino coalitions which included Mexicano and Puerto Rican organizations were formed in Chicago to make demands for bilingual instruction and programs to the Board of Education.

Chapter six serves as the conclusion for this project. I discuss the findings of this study, reflect on the historical lessons learned, and tease out implications for current educational policy from this research.

### Summary and Conclusion

This research paper is driven by my passion to chronicle local community history in order to preserve 'collective memories' of human agency. Accordingly, the memories

of resistance and activism by Mexican-origin students of Harrison High serve as the primary point of view for making sense of particular lived experiences. Moreover, a major assumption that undergirds this study is the understanding that all inquiry is an interpretive enterprise embedded within a particular moment in history which, in turn, demands an explicit interpretive framework. In the end, both sociological and historical imagination is required then in the construction of narratives which will always be open to contestation by a variety of social actors.

## CHAPTER 2

### RACE AND CLASS: MEXICANS IN CHICAGO (1916-1954)

In this chapter, I sketch out a brief history of Mexicans in Chicago in the pre-Brown era. The following questions guide me in this endeavor: What social, economic, political conditions and social forces were set in motion in Mexican communities of Chicago prior to the 60's? For instance, how did Mexicans arrive in Chicago in the first place? What kind of jobs did they occupy? How were Mexicanos racialized in Chicago at the turn of the century? For example, what were some of the racial attitudes towards Mexicans in Chicago in the pre-*Brown* era? What were some of the early schooling experiences of Mexican American children in Chicago like?

Although the actual year Mexicans arrived to Chicago remains disputed,<sup>1</sup> what can be commonly agreed upon is that Chicago has had a Mexican presence since the year 1900. For example, according to census tracts taken in 1900, there were 102 Mexicans

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<sup>1</sup> Some sources based on 1850 census data state that fifty Mexicans were identified as living in Illinois. Others claim that Mexicans were already in Chicago by 1893; see, for example, Rita Arias Jirasek and Carlos Tortolero, *Mexican Chicago*. (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2001), p. 8. According to a 1837-1970 census population survey on Foreign born, Foreign stock and race I was able to rummage, in 1880, there were 24 Mexicans living in Chicago. See, *City of Chicago. The People of Chicago: Who We are and Who We have Been*. Lewis W. Hill, Commissioner. Chicago: Department of Development and Planning, 1976. Also, in an attempt to determine the sources of Mexican Immigration to the United States, Gamio examined post-office money order records and found that in 1926, 2,923 money orders were sent from the state of Illinois to Mexico between July and August. See Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States: A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930). p. 4. According to Jones, the census figures for 1920 show a Chicago Mexican population of 1,224. See Anita Jones, *Conditions Surrounding Mexicans in Chicago*. diss., University of Chicago, 1928.

living in Chicago.<sup>2</sup> Yet, first class citizenship status and cultural rights have historically remained a consistent elusive reality for Mexican Americans.<sup>3</sup> So, while many liberal democratic theorists talk about the notion of the “citizen-subject”, it is the very meaning of citizenship status that has been ambiguous for Mexicans since the culmination of the Mexican American War 1846-1848. For instance, Article VIII of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 stipulates that Mexicans who stayed in the conquered territories of the Southwest would be granted full U.S. citizenship status (with claim to all of the rights, benefits, and privileges) and that their language rights would be honored.<sup>4</sup> In actuality, those who decided to reside in the Southwest after the war underwent a process of institutionalized subordination and marginalization that included deculturalization (Americanization) campaigns in the area of schooling and were subsequently used primarily as a source of cheap labor.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See, *City of Chicago. The People of Chicago: Who We are and Who We Have Been*. Lewis W. Hill, Commissioner. Chicago: Department of Development and Planning, 1976., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> What I wish to draw attention to is how cultural rights is an issue rarely acknowledged much less adequately addressed by the United States legal system. The United Nations Charter, however, does acknowledge particular claims to religion, language, literature, and the arts, as cultural rights, for certain minority groups within a nation-state. The vast amount of literature on Critical Race Theory, that developed out of foundation established by Critical Legal Studies, alert us to the sensibilities of examining how the very laws of the U.S. Constitution are constructed and structured in such ways that protect private property over cultural rights. See, for example, *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*. edited by Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas (New York: The New York Press, 1995); *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*. second edition, eds. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> “The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: Articles 8-15” in Introduction to Chicano Studies. eds., Isauro Duran & H. Russell Bernard (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1973), pp. 202-206.

<sup>5</sup> See Juan Gomez-Quinoñes, *Mexican American Labor, 1790-1990*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994).

## Recruitment of Mexican Labor in the Midwest

Several historians point out that, during the period from 1900 to 1930 the demand for unskilled cheap labor became so intensified that American companies began to recruit and contract Mexican immigrants to work throughout the Southwest and other parts of the country such as Illinois and Pennsylvania.<sup>6</sup> This phenomenon was in part sparked by World War I which left major labor shortages in the U.S., as a significant amount of the male working population were drafted as soldiers to fight in the war. To be sure, several push and pull factors were operative during this historical period (1910-1930) which contributed to significant outward migration patterns of Mexicans from Mexico. For example, 1910 marked the beginning of the Mexican Revolution and this political turmoil, in turn, compelled many Mexicans to leave their homeland in search of economic opportunities in the U.S. Southwest. While Mexican workers were employed primarily as agricultural workers in the Southwest, it was the sugar beet industry along with the railroads that eventually established the early Mexican communities in the Midwest.<sup>7</sup> Historian Anita Jones noted that many Mexican families who had worked in the Michigan and Minnesota beet fields ended up staying in Chicago at the end of the season.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, “Once the workers made it to the Midwest, it was not uncommon for them to travel to Midwestern cities like Omaha, Gary, and Chicago looking for work that was better paid and less arduous than the \$2 per 10 hour workday in the fields.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States* Vol. II. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1932); Juan R. García, *Mexicans in the Midwest: 1900-1932*. (Tucson, The University of Arizona Press, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> See, Elizabeth Martinez, Ed., *500 Years of Chicano History in Pictures*. (Albuquerque: SouthWest Organizing Project, 1981); Juan R. García, *Mexicans in the Midwest: 1900-1932*. (Tucson, The University of Arizona Press, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> Anita E. Jones. *Conditions Surrounding Mexicans in Chicago*. diss., University of Chicago, 1928.

<sup>9</sup> Rita Arias Jirasek and Carlos Tortolero, *Mexican Chicago*. (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2001).

According to labor historian Paul S. Taylor, although “as early as 1907 Mexicans had been used as seasonal labor on railroads ‘even in Chicago,’”<sup>10</sup> 1916 marks the permanent entry of Mexicans to Chicago employed as railroad workers. Moreover, “In 1928, the percentage of Mexicans employed in the Chicago-Gary area on all groups of railroads stood at fairly high levels.”<sup>11</sup>

The other areas of Mexican labor concentration in Chicago were the steel and meatpacking industries, historian Nuevo Kerr concluded: “large-scale Mexican immigration to Chicago began in 1916 with the recruitment of 206 railroad track laborers from the Texas-Mexican border. The 1920 Census counted 1,200 Mexicans in Chicago, most of whom worked for the railroads, the steel plants, and the packing houses.”<sup>12</sup> Most Mexicans were directly recruited by employers and shipped to Chicago via railroad cars and “...they received the lowest wages of all ethnic groups in the city.”<sup>13</sup>

### Mexican Migration to Chicago

Año Kerr contends that there have been four major waves of Mexicans to Chicago: 1916-1929, 1929-1939, 1939-1954, and 1954-1970. The cemented places of settlement for Mexican immigrants in Chicago were: Hull House (Near West Side), South Chicago (near the steel mills), and the Back of the Yards (near the meatpacking industries). It is also interesting to note that each of these waves is accompanied with a

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<sup>10</sup> Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States*, citing Victor S. Clark, “Mexican Labor in the United States” U.S. Bureau of Labor Bulletin, no. 78, p. 477.

<sup>11</sup> Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States*, p.

<sup>12</sup> Año Nuevo Kerr, “*The Chicano Experience in Chicago: 1920-1970.*” diss. University of Illinois at Chicago, 1976. p. 270.

<sup>13</sup> Felix M. Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness: The Case of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago.* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), p. 24.

considerable amount of complexity, ambiguity, and contradictions. For example, between 1929-1939, what are indisputably considered the Depression years in U.S. history, xenophobic nativist sentiments began to emerge and Mexicans quickly came to be looked upon as scapegoats, “So they blamed unemployment on ‘all those illegals’ usually meaning Mexicans without entry documents.”<sup>14</sup> Consequently, a massive repatriation or deportation “policy” became in effect and as many as 300,000 Mexicans (both legal and undocumented) were rounded up and sent back to Mexico.<sup>15</sup> By 1931, unemployment in Illinois had reached 700,000 and one of the hardest hit regions was Cook County which had the largest concentration of Mexicans in the Midwest.<sup>16</sup> According to Garcia, “The Mexican population in Chicago numbered about 21,000 in 1930; by 1938, it was less than 16,000.”<sup>17</sup>

Año Nuevo Kerr commented:

After 1929...repatriation was colored by growing antagonisms toward immigration in general and toward continued Mexican immigration in particular. Aimed primarily at ‘excluding probable public charges,’ the U.S. laws made unemployed aliens especially vulnerable to the arbitrary use of repatriation as a means of lessening the ‘burden’ they were said to place on the public schools, jails, and hospitals as well as on welfare agencies. Mexicans had a higher unemployment rate than any other group in Chicago in the 1930’s except Blacks; it was easier and less expensive to return them than it was to return Europeans or Asians.<sup>18</sup>

It must be noted that some Mexican families voluntarily left for Mexico during this time of duress as economic opportunities became scarce in Chicago, however, “Others decided

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<sup>14</sup>Elizabeth Martinez, ed, *500 Years of Chicano History in Pictures*. (Albuquerque, NM: SouthWest Organizing Project, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Juan R. Garcia, *Mexicans in the Midwest: 1900-1932*. (Tuscon, The University of Arizona Press, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 234.

<sup>18</sup> Louise Año Nuevo Kerr, “*The Chicano Experience in Chicago: 1920-1970.*” Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Chicago, 1976., p. 72.

to stay, especially those whose children had become agringados or Americanized.”<sup>19</sup>

Chicago resident Olga Garcia recalled: “My father decided not to leave, he figured if we were having a hard time here, life in Mexico could be harder.”<sup>20</sup>

Conversely, between 1939-1954, major historical events such as World War II created new labor needs and, once again, the U.S. turned to Mexico to assist in filling in the gap of the new labor demands. To be sure, many Mexicans voluntarily migrated to U.S. cities in search of economic opportunities, but it was the 1942 implementation of the Emergency Farm Labor “Bracero” Program that brought Mexicans temporarily to the U.S. in significant numbers.<sup>21</sup> For instance, between 1943 and 1945, 15,000 Mexicans were brought to work in Chicago.<sup>22</sup> The Bracero program also ignited the migration of Mexican undocumented workers whom U.S. employers were very willing to hire for the cheapest wages. Interestingly, the G.I. Forum, a Mexican American veterans organization founded in 1948 which advocated political, economic, and civil liberties, perceived the “large influx of ‘illegal aliens’ as a threat to its goals.”<sup>23</sup> The G.I. Forum adopted an assimilationist stance and argued that since undocumented workers were willing to work for meager wages, this would undermine their efforts to acquire equal rights for citizens of Mexican descent.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), a Mexican American organization founded in 1929 that was dedicated to attaining social, economic, and political rights for Mexican Americans, also expressed

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<sup>19</sup> Rita Jirasek and Carlos Tortolero, *Mexican Chicago*. (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2001), p. 49.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>21</sup> Julian Zamora, *Los Mojados: The Wetback Story*. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971).

<sup>22</sup> Louise Año Nuevo Kerr, *The Chicano Experience in Chicago: 1920-1970*. Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Chicago, 1976., p. 174.

<sup>23</sup> See Juan Ramon García, *Operation Wetback: The Mass Deportation of Mexican Undocumented Workers in 1954*. (Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1980)., p. 86.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

dissent to undocumented workers. LULAC's main concern was educating Mexican Americans in American citizenship and so their position had an accommodationist bent on improving the quality of life for solely Mexican American citizens.<sup>25</sup> Hence, LULAC argued that illegal Mexican labor would significantly lower wage standards which would lead to the further exploitation of Americans of Mexican descent.

### The Racialization of Mexican Labor

In 1954, "Operation Wetback" policy was officially launched in the U.S. under the Eisenhower administration and, once again, documented as well as undocumented "illegal aliens" (Mexicans and Mexican Americans) were rounded up and deported to Mexico in significant numbers.<sup>26</sup> In 1954, an estimated 1,075,168 persons were deported by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.<sup>27</sup> In 1955, there were officially 236,090 national apprehensions of undocumented workers.<sup>28</sup> "In October 1953, the *Chicago Sun-Times* reported that according to the Chicago Office of Immigration and Naturalization Service, there were 'nearly 100,000 Mexicans' in the city, including '15,000 wetbacks' and 300 undocumented aliens were being apprehended and returned to Mexico from Chicago each month."<sup>29</sup>

One of the paradoxes and contradictions of U.S. policy towards the Mexican population in the U.S. is that not only did Mexicans alleviate some of the severe labor

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>28</sup> Nelson G. Copp, *Wetbacks and Braceros: Mexican Migrant Laborers and American Immigration Policy, 1930-1960*. diss., (Boston University, 1963), p. 45.

<sup>29</sup> As quoted in Louise Año Nuevo Kerr, *The Chicano Experience in Chicago: 1920-1970*. diss., University of Illinois at Chicago, 1976., p. 139.

shortages for U.S. companies for the cheapest wages, but Mexicans also served in the armed forces as soldiers during World War I, II, and Korea. In fact, as many as 500,000 Mexicans served as foot soldiers in Second World War fighting in the Pacific, North Africa, Sicily, France, and Germany. In World War II, 17 Congressional Medal of Honors were awarded to Mexicans.<sup>30</sup> A newsletter published by Chicago parishioners of St. Francis of Assisi Church reported that as many as 500 young men and women served in the armed forces from this single parish, “The compilation of these newsletters is dedicated to, ‘the men and women of the Mexican-American barrios of Chicago, Illinois, who served this country and died defending their beliefs.’”<sup>31</sup> Yet, back home in the major urban centers of the U.S., Mexicans continued to be popularized by the print media as deviant and “subversive.” The so-called “Zoot Suit Riots” of 1943 in Los Angeles are indicative of the general racial tensions and attitudes that existed, not just towards Mexicans, but Filipinos and African Americans during this historical time period:

Hundreds of Anglo sailors, later joined by Marines and civilians brutally attacked young Chicanos. At first they picked on teenagers or “pachucos” who wore zoot suits, a fashion which designed for dancing but also expressed the rebellious spirit and desire for identity of the pachuco. Zootsuits were declared subversive by officials. Soon whites were beating up on any young Mexican (also Filipinos and Blacks), with or without a zootsuit. Racism went on a rampage.<sup>32</sup>

The treatment accorded to Mexican workers in Chicago during this time is highly suggestive of some general race and class distinctions in the context of race relations in

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<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth Martinez, Ed. *500 Years of Chicano History in Pictures*. (Albuquerque, NM: Southwest Organizing Project, 1991).

<sup>31</sup> Rital Arias Jirasek and Carlos Tortolero, *Mexican Chicago*. (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2001), p. 82. It is also interesting to note that the actual statistics of Mexicans who served during the Second World War is difficult to ascertain since the Department of Defense did not collect data for “Mexican” soldiers. Rather, it was not until 1979 that the label “Hispanic” was included in the compilation of statistics. See *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Martinez, Ed. *500 Years of Chicano History in Pictures*. (Albuquerque, NM: Southwest Organizing Project, 1991).

America. For example, sociologist Felix Padilla points out that “...many of the newcomers, particularly those recruited by major American firms, were hired primarily as strike breakers and very seldom for permanent and steady employment.”<sup>33</sup> To the extent that Mexicans were hired and utilized as strikebreakers, Mexicans, in effect, were used as buffers against African Americans migrating from the South to northern cities like Chicago.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, this pernicious tactic by companies in Chicago (unwittingly motivated by the profit motive and in pursuit of their best economic interests), not only caused racial antagonisms between African Americans and Mexicans, but “This situation aggravated and accelerated the hostility of European ethnic workers against Mexicans, making recognition and acceptance that much more difficult to achieve.”<sup>35</sup> It is important to note that as a result of these racial tensions caused primarily by labor disputes between and amongst workers, various union organizing efforts were effectively undermined by the recruitment of Mexican workers.

Moreover, with respect to union membership, Mexicanos were for the most part excluded from the ranks. For example, Kerr tells us that in 1947 the Metropolitan Welfare Council created a sub-committee on ‘Mexican American interests’ which was chaired by Frank Pax. At a city-wide conference held in 1949, Pax reported that although 6,000 Mexicanos worked in Chicago’s steel industry, no Mexican American was on the union staff.<sup>36</sup> In addition, Mexican unionists were also underrepresented in the

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<sup>33</sup> Felix M. Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness: The Case of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago*. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), p. 23.

<sup>34</sup> Louise Año Nuevo Kerr, *The Chicano Experience in Chicago: 1920-1970*. diss., University of Illinois at Chicago, 1976.

<sup>35</sup> Felix M. Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness: The Case of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago*. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), p. 24.

<sup>36</sup> Louise Año Nuevo Kerr, “*The Chicano Experience in Chicago: 1920-1970.*” diss., University of Illinois at Chicago, 1976. p. 152.

meatpacking and railroad industries as well.<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, the recruitment of Mexican labor played a prominent role in bringing Mexicans to major Midwestern industrializing urban centers like Chicago.

In sum, a combination of push and pull factors such as U.S. labor shortages influenced by World War I and II, and political turmoil in Mexico, account for the migration and recruitment of Mexican labor to the United States. Each wave of Mexicans to Chicago is also marked by complex, contradictory, and contestatory narratives as well. For example, Mexicans who stayed in Chicago formed organizations and participated in political and social clubs. Nevertheless, the cultural citizenship status and legality of Mexican Americans continued to historically remain quite ambiguous.

According to the 1930 census, the number of Mexicans in Chicago was 19,362.<sup>38</sup> However, it is interesting to note that the census did not count “Mexicans” as such until 1930. In fact, Taylor points out that it was not until 1930 that the census established the race classification “Mexican” defined as “all persons born in Mexico or having parents born in Mexico, who are not definitely white, Negro, Chinese, or Japanese.”<sup>39</sup> Curiously enough, prior to 1930, Mexicans were racially classified as “White” which underlines the rather simplistic Black/White binary social construction of “race” during that historical time period. However, although Mexicans were racially classified as “White,” by the census, they were not the beneficiaries (psychological or public) of European immigrant White skin privilege in the social context of a White supremacist (Anglo-Saxon Protestant) nation state. Rather, as Robert Blauner observes: “America has used African,

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Paul S. Taylor, p. 52.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

Asian, Mexican, and, to a lesser degree, Indian workers for the cheapest labor, concentrating people of color in the most unskilled jobs, the least advanced sectors of the economy, and the most industrially backward regions of the nation.”<sup>40</sup> Some critics might argue that other European groups (e.g., Irish, Polish, Italian) were also economically exploited and were also the recipients of religious antagonisms (e.g., anti-Catholicism) as well. However, as prominent sociologist W.E.B. DuBois pointedly suggested, White workers came to accept lower wages in return for “psychological and public wages.”<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, historian David Roediger also contends that nineteenth century European immigrants gradually came to define themselves as “White” in order to receive racial privileges (e.g., personal liberty and the right to vote) as they moved up the socio-economic ladder.<sup>42</sup> And so, unlike southern and eastern European immigrant groups,”... Mexicans Americans have been socially constructed by most Anglo whites as a distinctive and inferior racial group. Regardless of how they saw or see themselves, they have usually been racialized by the dominant group as inferior and not white.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See Robert Blauner, *Racial Oppression in America*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972); Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America*. (San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1972) and Mario Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality*. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).

<sup>41</sup> W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880*. (New York: Atheneum, 1992).

<sup>42</sup> David Roediger, *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness: Essays on Race, Politics, and Working Class History*. (New York: Verso, 1994). Also see *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. (New York: Verso, 1991); *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White*. (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2005).

<sup>43</sup> Joe R. Feagin and Clarece Booher Feagin, *Racial and Ethnic Relations*. (Upper Saddle River: New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 2003), p. 206.

## Racial Attitudes Towards Mexicans in Chicago

So, for example, in the case of Chicago, Taylor illustrates some of the racial attitudes that were pervasive towards Mexicans in the late 1920's: "a social worker said: The Mexicans are mixed with Negro and Indian. When we send a child for a summer outing to a private home, we tried to bleach the child out. The family expected a Mexican but we didn't want them to think we had sent a Negro." Accordingly, when asked what racial group Mexicans belonged to one Chamber of Commerce official answered Taylor's inquiry by stating: "No, they are not regarded as colored; but they are regarded as an inferior class. Are the Mexicans regarded as white? Oh, no!"<sup>44</sup> Moreover, Taylor also reported that, "An Italian woman, who resented mildly the entry of Mexicans into her neighborhood said: The Mexicans are of a different race; their faces are blacker."<sup>45</sup> Taylor goes on to exemplify that another primarily Italian religious mission in Chicago expressed their attitudes towards Mexicans by stating the following:

The Italians don't like the Mexicans. One Italian said: 'I don't want my kids to associate with the Mexicans. God made people white and black, and He meant there to be a difference.' The Italians used to come in numbers of two or three hundred; now only three or four families come regularly, although we visit their homes and invite them to come. The others won't come because of the Mexicans.<sup>46</sup> In the Back of the Yards community, Mexicans were temporarily employed in the stockyards as a result of labor struggles with southern and eastern European ethnic groups that preceded them until

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<sup>44</sup> Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1932), p. 235.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> As quoted in Taylor, Ibid., p. 234.

these disputes were settled. But as sociologist Joanne Belenchia points out, “Those who stayed on, lived in areas of predominantly Irish or Polish settlement, working out a co-existence with the frequently hostile ‘Anglo’ groups.”<sup>47</sup> Moreover, historian Juan García asserts that “Color also influenced attitudes about Mexicans.” One resident of Brighton Park in Chicago stated, “Some of them are dark, just like the niggers; I wouldn’t like to live among them. I want to live among white people.”<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, historian Gabriela Arredondo argues that as they navigated with pressures to ‘Americanize,’ between 1916 and 1939, Mexicans in Chicago experienced unique discrimination and negative prejudices against them to the extent that the Great Depression along with the New Deal programs eventually relegated Mexicans to a ‘non-white,’ ‘un-American’ racial group status.<sup>49</sup> She went on to note, “As a worker at the Chicago Chamber of Commerce explained, ‘The Mexicans are lower than European peasants. They are not white and not Negro; they’re Mexican.’<sup>50</sup> During the 1920’s, Arredondo points out that conflict, competition, and often times violence characterized the interactions between Mexicans and other European immigrant groups in Chicago, “In 1927, on the Near West Side, for instance, Poles assaulted and killed a Mexican man near 14th and Halsted. The Mexican was not robbed but rather was killed, reportedly to drive Mexicans out of the neighborhood.”<sup>51</sup> Historian Francisco Rosales noted that, “In 1922 Victor García arrived in South Chicago to find that Mexicans were despised by the Polish

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<sup>47</sup> Joanne M. Belenchia, *Latinos and Chicago Politics. The Chicago Politics Papers*. The Center for Urban Affairs, Northwestern University, 1980, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> Juan R. Garcia, *Mexicans in the Midwest: 1900-1932*. (Tucson, The University of Arizona Press, 1996) p. 57.

<sup>49</sup> Gabriela F. Arredondo, ‘*What the Mexicans, Americans?*’ *Race and Ethnicity, Mexicans in Chicago, 1916-1939*. Phd. diss., (University of Chicago, 1999).

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

residents, who in Garcías opinion, controlled that section of the city. He could not find a place to stay or a job and wasted much of his precious resources on hotel bills.”<sup>52</sup>

Conversely, historian David Weber noted that during the 1920’s in Chicago, “young Poles living in the Back of the Yards would pounce upon a Mexican on the street and beat him without provocation, while Slavic children chased their Chicano counterparts.”<sup>53</sup> In South Chicago, “Polish gangs beat up Mexican boys for no reason at all, and occasionally the fights engulfed the adults in the community...”<sup>54</sup> Moreover, in 1931, Chicago Congressman Oscar de Priest expressed his opposition to Mexican immigration to Chicago “on the grounds that they were taking jobs which belonged to American citizens, ‘whites and colored’.”<sup>55</sup> Weber points out that on the Near West Side of Chicago around Hull House, relations between European ethnic groups and Mexicans demonstrated that, “sufficient evidence of hostility remained into the 1940’s to stimulate the comment that ‘their neighbors plainly show by words and actions that they (Mexicans) are not wanted.’”<sup>56</sup>

Furthermore, historian Paul Taylor points out that in Midwestern towns like Gary, Indiana, it was not uncommon for theaters to (forcibly) give Mexicans separate seating. One owner of a theater expressed that, “The Mexicans are not considered white. They are ushered to the first aisle with the colored. White people don’t like to sit next to colored or Mexicans. No, even though they are clean. Many of them are not clean and we can’t

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<sup>52</sup> Francisco A. Rosales, “*Mexican Immigration to the Urban Midwest During the 1920’s.*” Phd. diss., (Indiana University, 1978), p. 150.

<sup>53</sup> David Stafford Weber, “*Anglo Views of Mexican Immigrants: Popular Perceptions and Neighborhood Realities in Chicago, 1900-1940.*”, Phd. diss., (Ohio State University, 1982); p. 155.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>55</sup> As quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>56</sup> As quoted in *Ibid.*, p., 157.

separate on the basis of dress, so we separate on the basis of nationality...<sup>57</sup>” In sum, the above excerpts strongly suggest that during the twenties, thirties, and forty’s, Mexicans in the Midwest (similar to the experiences of Mexicans in the Southwest), were perceived and socially constructed as a distinctive racial group that was inferior in status to that of southern and eastern European immigrants. In the end, these types of negative attitudes were to eventually serve as the basis for rationalizing and institutionalizing the segregation of Mexicans from schooling and other public and social institutions in the Midwest.

#### Gerrymandering and Public School Segregation of Mexicans

*Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) marks the most significant case that legally justified a “separate but equal” doctrine regarding the use of public institutions in the United States. Yet, as historian Clarence Karier points out, it was actually a northern state court case that the U.S. Supreme Court utilized (Massachusetts, *Roberts v. City of Boston*, 1849) which set the legal precedent for segregation in the public schools.<sup>58</sup> In the case of Mexicans, segregation has also been a pervasive feature in their accommodation and adaptation to various urban spaces throughout the U.S. Sociologist Joe Feagin asserts that school segregation for Mexicans was institutionalized in the Southwest to the extent that, “Before World War II, Mexican American school children from Texas to California were often segregated.”<sup>59</sup> Feagin is also quick to note that, “... as a rule, Mexican Americans

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<sup>57</sup> As quoted in Taylor, *Ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>58</sup> See, Clarence J. Karier, *The Individual, Society, and Education: A History of American Educational Ideas*. 2nd edition. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), p. 387.

<sup>59</sup> Joe R. Feagin and Clairece Booher Feagin, *Racial and Ethnic Relations*. (Upper Saddle River: New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 2003), p. 221.

were segregated by local laws or by informally gerrymandered school district lines rather than by state law.”<sup>60</sup> Indeed, Chicago has a long legacy of institutional racism which has had the devastating effect of excluding Latinos from electoral politics.<sup>61</sup> Political scientist Teresa Cordova argues that in Chicago, “Gerrymandering has been the most prevalent measure to deny ‘fair representation’, and court challenges have been the most effective way to remedy it.”<sup>62</sup> She goes on to state that, “The Chicago case confirms the prevalence of gerrymandering and its likely continuance without the vigilant attorneys who make it their business to intercede.”<sup>63</sup> This suggests that similar to the experiences of Mexican American children throughout the Southwest who were segregated by local school districts,<sup>64</sup> Mexicans in Chicago were also the victims of gerrymandering which fostered and institutionalized segregated public schools. Furthermore, according to Rita Hernandez, in the 1920’s, “Many more Mexican children were enrolled in the Chicago Public School system than in private schools.”<sup>65</sup> She goes on to cite that 1,242 children enrolled in twenty nine elementary schools, both public and Catholic, in Chicago during the spring semester of 1928 and that, “The number of Mexican children enrolled in Catholic elementary schools was 162, or 13 percent of Mexican total enrollment in Chicago schools.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> See, for example, Teresa Cordova, “Harold Washington and the Rise of Latino Electoral Politics in Chicago, 1982-1987” in *Chicano Politics and Society in the Late Twentieth Century*. ed., David Montejano (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), pp. 31-57.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> See, Joel Spring, *The American School: 1642-2000*. fifth edition. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2001), pp. 402-404.

<sup>65</sup> Rita D. Hernandez, “*The Silent Minority: Mexican Americans in the Chicago Public School, 1970-2001*”, p. 16-17.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

Therefore, despite the fact that *de jure* segregation was legally terminated as a result of the *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946) case,<sup>67</sup> *de facto* forms of segregation continued to separate Mexicans in Chicago in isolated communities and Mexican children thus continued to attend predominately segregated public schools throughout the 1940's and 1950's.<sup>68</sup> Some critics might argue that segregation is, not necessarily, such a negative social phenomenon in it and of itself since segregated communities also provide positive attributes such as cultural affirmation, a familiar language, values, ideas, beliefs, and, in short, social cohesion, for certain ethnic groups. Nonetheless, at issue here is the disparity in funding for local school districts located in poor and working class communities in comparison to middle-class districts which has historically resulted, in a "separate but unequal" condition and hence unequal education for Mexican American children in Chicago.<sup>69</sup> As the Harvard Project on Desegregation candidly points out, "National data show that most segregated African American and Latino schools are dominated by poor children but that 96 percent of white schools have middle-class majorities."<sup>70</sup> Thus Gary Orfield concludes that, "The extremely strong relationship between racial segregation and concentrated poverty in the nation's schools is a key reason for the educational differences between segregated and integrated schools."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> For a quite detailed analysis of the *Mendez* case which includes an examination of the significant parental involvement and mobilization of various members of the Mexican community as well as organizations that brought this seminal case to court see, Gilbert G. Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation*. (Philadelphia: The Balch Institute Press, 1990), pp. 136-156.

<sup>68</sup> See, Rita D. Hernandez, "*The Silent Minority: Mexican Americans in the Chicago Public Schools, 1970-2001*." Ph.D., diss., 2002.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Gary Orfield and Susan E. Eaton and the Harvard Project on School Desegregation, *Dismantling Desegregation: The Quiet Reversal of Brown v. Board of Education*. (New York: The New Press, 1996), p. 53.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

## Racial Attitudes Towards Mexican Students

Historian's Año Nuevo Kerr and Paul S. Taylor were able to document some of the racial attitudes of Chicago Public School teachers towards Mexican children in the late 1920's. For example, according to Taylor, of the 1,242 Mexican children of 29 elementary schools in Chicago in 1928, 38 percent were enrolled in kindergarten and first grade and 80 percent were enrolled in fourth grade or lower.<sup>72</sup> Taylor provides the following written accounts of statements made by a particular school administrator: "Truancy is a greater problem among the Mexicans (than the Italians)" and a teacher interviewed by Taylor stated, "It seems to be quite difficult to get the Mexicans started right in the schools, and to get them coming regularly."<sup>73</sup> Moreover, a high school principal commented that Mexicans were, "a little backward academically."<sup>74</sup> Another teacher expressed: "A few of the Mexicans are bright. The rest of them are quite willing to be led even if they are dumb."<sup>75</sup> Taylor also noted that a principal near Hull House (a traditional entry port in Chicago for newly arrived immigrants) whose enrollment was almost entirely Italian made the following observation: "Some of the Mexicans children are among the brightest we have. The average intelligence and school progress among the Mexicans is higher than among the Italians."<sup>76</sup>

Moreover, historian David Weber noted that during the 1920's, Chicago teachers declared that Mexican children "seldom required detention" and "subjectively rated

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<sup>72</sup> Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States*. vol. II (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1932), p. 177.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

Mexicans equal to or above the second-generation Italians and Poles with whom they shared classes.”<sup>77</sup> Thus, according to Taylor and Weber, some of the attitudes of teachers and school administrators towards Mexican students appear to be ambivalent and contradictory while others are clearly negative.

In her study, historian Año Nuevo Kerr, on the other hand, highlights the negative attitudes and perceptions of teachers towards Mexican children as, ‘hostile’, ‘docile’ or ‘lazy.’<sup>78</sup> She goes on to note how a Bowen High School teacher in South Chicago evaluated the fifty students in attendance in 1928 as, “troublesome, lacking in ambition and ‘not perseverant’ in their tasks.” Furthermore, Kerr asserts that, at the Mark Sheridan School in ‘back of the yards,’ Mexican children were put in first grade, no matter what their age, until they learned to read English.”<sup>79</sup>

#### The Limits of Progressive Liberal Reform: Mexican Nationalism in Chicago

The beginning of the twentieth century brought about dramatic new changes in American urban life. Rapidly, industrialization and urbanization had a tremendous impact on families, communities, and individuals. Significant waves of Southern and Eastern European immigrant groups began to alter the landscape in American society. And as Karier keenly observes, “The new American nation which emerged in the first half of the nineteenth century was not only a melting pot of diverse cultures but also a

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<sup>77</sup> David Stafford Weber, *Anglo Views of Mexican Immigrants: Popular Perceptions and Neighborhood Realities in Chicago, 1900-1940*, Ph.D diss. Ohio State University, 1982. p. 81

<sup>78</sup> See, Año Nuevo Kerr, “*The Chicano Experience in Chicago: 1920-1970*,” p. 70.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

great boiling pot of economic, political, social, and religious conflict.”<sup>80</sup> Nonetheless, “Within this milieu a new middle-class liberal ideology emerged.”<sup>81</sup> According to Paul Violas, “The new liberals supported policies that moved the nation toward the acceptance of a compulsory corporate state in which the individual would simply be a part of the greater collective unity.”<sup>82</sup> Hence, “The key concern became the development of more effective control in order to eliminate conflict and to establish the harmonious organic community.”<sup>83</sup>

To be sure, Mexicans in Chicago benefited from the cooperative goals of pragmatic liberals such as Jane Addams whose Hull-House settlement provided ‘Americanization’ instruction along with advice on employment, health, as well as social and recreational facilities.<sup>84</sup> However, as Arredondo points out, since Mexicans in Chicago during the 1920’s and 1930’s experienced discrimination and segregation that marked them as ‘not-white’, assimilation then became contested and negotiated among

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<sup>80</sup> Clarence J. Karier, *The Individual, Society, and Education: A History of American Educational Ideas*. 2nd Edition. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986)., p. 68.

<sup>81</sup>Paul Violas, “Jane Addams and the New Liberalism” in *Roots of Crisis: American Education in the Twentieth Century*. (Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Company, 1973)., p. 68. For a more complex and nuanced interpretation of Jane Addams and Hull-House see Mary Jo Deegan, *Race, Hull-House and the University of Chicago: A New Conscience Against Ancient Evils*. ( Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2002). In this treatise, Deegan explores the intricate alliances among and between scholars, activists, men, women, Whites, and African Americans with respect to the study of race and community relations at Hull-House, and the University of Chicago from 1892-1960. Deegan essentially argues that a careful analysis of Hull-House and the assorted cast of characters associated with this settlement over the years reveals a ‘third way’ to understand change and American race relations, “It lies betwixt and between conflict and accommodation; cooperation and resistance; divisions between whites and blacks, men and women, the academy and the community.”, p. 161.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> See, Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*. (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1960); David Weber S., “*Anglo Views of Mexican Immigrants: Popular Perceptions and Neighborhood Realities in Chicago 1900-1940*”, Ph.D. diss., (Ohio State University, 1982).

Mexicans as they responded by turning inwards developing a sense of nationalism or fragile ‘Mexicanidad’ (common peoplehood).<sup>85</sup>

Indeed, a close examination of Hull-House settlement house records, activities, and artifacts suggests that rather than becoming simply ‘Americanized’ as white European ethnic groups did, Mexicans in Chicago actually forged transnational ties.<sup>86</sup> Badillo, for example, contends that during the 1920’s, first-generation migrants in Chicago remained Mexican nationals.<sup>87</sup> He notes that, “They did so for many reasons, including discrimination, proximity of the homeland, belief that life in the North was only temporary, and reticence to engage in U. S. politics.”<sup>88</sup> Moreover, Lopez maintains that during the 1920’s, the Mexican migrant community in Chicago embraced a patriotic Mexican identity via grass-roots organizations such as mutual aid societies (mutualistas) which helped give form to a particular type of ‘cultural nationalism’.<sup>89</sup> López observed that, “Migrants in Chicago were not duped into embracing a distant and irrelevant invented nationalism, rather, they used Mexican nationalism as a tool for engaging the urban politics of metropolitan Chicago and addressing the anxieties about the dangers of navigating the modern multiethnic spaces of the city.”<sup>90</sup> In the end, López argues that Hull-House Art School teachers and artists borrowed a particular post-revolutionary

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<sup>85</sup> See Arredondo, “‘What the Mexicans, Americans?’ Race and Ethnicity, Mexicans in Chicago, 1916-1939.”

<sup>86</sup> See *Pots of Promise: Mexicans and Pottery at Hull-House, 1920-1940*. Eds. Cheryl R. Gans and Margaret Strobel. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

<sup>87</sup> David A. Badillo, “Incorporating Reform and Religion: Mexican Immigrants, Hull-House, and the Church” in *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Rick A. Lopez, “Forging a Mexican National Identity in Chicago” in *Ibid.*, p. 40. Historian Juan R. García also argues that mutual aid societies in the Midwest provided social and psychological support to Mexican migrants as they turned to their own group for protection, assistance, and relief. See *Mexicans in the Midwest, 1900-1932*. (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 1996). pp. 159-189.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

national aesthetic from Mexico City and through Kilns, pottery classes, and folkloric festivals encouraged Mexican migrants in Chicago's Near West Side to embrace this new 'imagined' Mexican national culture. Hence, "As migrants discovered and embraced the cultural dimensions of their Mexicanness within the context of an extended absence from Mexican soil, Hull-House became one of the sites for the construction and enactment of this unifying Mexicanidad."<sup>91</sup>

### Within School Segregation of Mexican Children

Nevertheless, education historian Joel Spring argues that in the beginning of the twentieth century public schools became a primary instrument of social control.<sup>92</sup> Compounding the complexity of these social phenomena was the significance of the Mexicano population in urban centers during the early twentieth century. In Chicago, during the 20's and 30's, the Mexican school aged population increasingly participated in the educational system. Kerr asserts that, "School attendance among Mexican American Children in the 1930's reached the highest level it has ever seen in Chicago even to the present." She goes on to note that, "In 1935, for example, 96 percent of all fourteen and fifteen year-olds were enrolled in school."<sup>93</sup> Although school attendance increased for Mexican American children in Chicago during the mid 30's, the little evidence that has been documented strongly suggests that Mexican children received an inferior quality education. For instance, Kerr notes that, "Because they did not speak English well, the

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> See, Joel Spring, "Education as a Form of Social Control", pp. 30-39., in *Roots of Crisis: American Education in the Twentieth Century*. (Chicago, IL: Rand McNally College Publishing Company, 1973).

<sup>93</sup> Año Nuevo Kerr, "The Chicano Experience in Chicago: 1920-1970" p. 96.

Mexican children in the Dove school near Hull House on the near West side were placed in the two rooms set aside for 'defective' children.<sup>94</sup> What can be inferred from this excerpt, aside from the implications of administrative mistreatment, is that, in Chicago, school segregation for Mexican American children began to take shape in institutionalized forms. And so the subordination and marginalization of Mexican students due to limited English language acquisition begins to surface as a significant factor in the discriminatory treatment of this group dating back to the 1930's.

Año Nuevo Kerr also suggests that, in the 1930's, Mexican Americans in Chicago became more socially differentiated, economically diverse, and politically active. For example, Kerr found that, "Mexicans in Chicago in the 1930's continued to take interest in political events in Mexico (elections in Mexico were daily followed and connections with Mexican national organizations and popular fronts were also common)."<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, Mexicans also began to join labor clubs, unions, and workers' organizations as a means of countering the effects of the economic depression. Hence, in the mid 1930's, "local alliances and unions for the unemployed and underemployed, often multi-ethnic, attracted many Mexicans."<sup>96</sup> Some of these organizations were cultural institutions such as theater groups who also conducted musical fundraisers which emerged out of the context of community church based organizations. In 1928, one of these theater groups organized participated in Our Lady of Guadalupe parish in Chicago.<sup>97</sup> One of the most intriguing aspects of the establishment of these cultural

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Rita Aarias Jirasek and Carlos Tortolero, *Mexican Chicago*. (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2001), p. 50.

institutions is the way in which this suggests that, in the context of racist and discriminatory treatment, new “urban mestizo “ identities that spanned two nations were constructed by Mexicans in Chicago<sup>98</sup> so that, “The members of these communities, who for the most part identify themselves as Mexican or Mexican American, maintained strong connections to the language and culture of Mexico.”<sup>99</sup> And so, what is highly suggestive here is how cultural affirmation, interestingly enough, came to serve as a form of resistance while providing an avenue in maintaining human dignity and respect for Mexicans in the process.<sup>100</sup>

Furthermore, Mexican social activities and civic organizations were also formed such as the Stockyard Community Council in 1934.<sup>101</sup> Kerr noted: “University of Chicago professor Ernest Burgess and grassroots organizer Saul Alinsky led the council. Alinsky was famous for his community organizing skills and was labeled by some as a socialist since he believed that community members themselves could provide their own leadership.”<sup>102</sup> What this suggests is that since the 1930’s the Mexican ‘community’ in Chicago (whether real or ‘imagined’)<sup>103</sup>, far from being monolithic, was actually socially, politically, and somewhat economically heterogeneous to some extent. However, it is

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> It is important to note that the construction of identities is understood here as involving complex contestatory and mediated processes that are constantly being negotiated within particular political, social, and economic contexts. So, in this case, sometimes these constructed cultural identities may be bi-cultural (e.g., Mexican and American) and other times they may take on a more multi-dimensional (e.g., Spanish monolingualism only, English monolingualism only or Spanish, English bi-lingual) aspect while sustaining an identity that is fluid, non-fixed, and ever-changing in the context of struggle with the dominant culture. See, for example, Williams V. Flores and Rina Benmayor, Eds., *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997). , pp. 255-277. Also see, David G. Gutierrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>101</sup> Año Nuevo Kerr, “*The Chicano Experience in Chicago: 1920-1970*”, p. 105.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. (New York: Verso, 1991).

imperative to note that this does not preclude the fact that Mexicans as a group were and continue to be politically and economically powerless.

### Summary and Conclusion

The multifarious experiences of the Mexican diaspora in Chicago shows tremendous similarities and unique differences to patterns that were also simultaneously being entrenched throughout communities of the Southwest. Mexicans who arrived in Chicago primarily as a result of aggressive recruitment campaigns settled in different parts of the city near the availability of low-wage work (e.g., railroads, meatpacking, steel mills). Members of this heterogeneous population also established a variety of social and cultural institutions to meet their diverse needs forging new cultural identities (between Mexico and the U.S.) not only as a form of cultural continuity, but as a response to the new hostile, discriminatory, urban environment. The majority of the Mexican population who became racialized, as inferior and “non-White”, resided in segregated residential neighborhoods in Chicago while throughout the 1920’s and 30’s, Mexican children began to attend public schools in increasing numbers. While Hull-House provided a variety of services to Mexican immigrants, their nebulous racialized status in the new urban environment also inspired a ‘Mexicanidad’ or transnationalism which emerged out of the Hull-House settlement site as well. Finally, segregated schools as well as within school segregation for poor and working class Mexican children began to become institutionalized due primarily to discriminatory treatment on the basis of language, cultural, and perceived racialized differences.

## CHAPTER 3

### SEGREGATION AND THE IMPACT OF *BROWN* FOR MEXICANS IN CHICAGO

Between 1848 and 1928, vigilante mobs lynched at least 597 Mexicans throughout various Southwestern states in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, anti-Mexican mob violence was a tactic that was utilized, not only for Anglo conquest and settler colonization of the American southwest, but also for forging and maintaining institutionalized forms of White Supremacy.<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that although Mexicans were legally classified as ‘white’ in the courts, (and a small elite minority of them secured the social advantages of ‘whiteness’), Anglo racial attitudes towards Mexicans for the most part viewed them as ‘racially impure’ (as hybrid mestizos of Indian, Spanish, and African stock) and thus as racially inferior Others. As historians Carrigan and Webb note, “Their impure status pushed them to the margins of whiteness, precluding their entitlement to many of its social privileges.”<sup>3</sup> Hence, “...almost no white man was made to stand trial for the lynching of a Mexican.”<sup>4</sup> Moreover, U.S. consul Thomas Wilson testified to Congress:

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<sup>1</sup> This number is considered a conservative estimate since it has been difficult for historians to verify specific data such as the actual racial/ethnic identity of particular victims. Historians Carrigan and Webb point out that one of the difficulties with assessing archival data has much to do with the limitations of the black/white paradigm which, in this case, simply divided lynching victims into ‘black’ or ‘white’ racial categories. Less conservative estimates tally Mexican lynchings, in this historical period, in the thousands. See William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, “The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin Or Descent in the United States, 1848 to 1928” in *Journal of Social History* v. 37 (Winter 2003): pp. 411-38.

<sup>2</sup> Historians Carrigan and Webb contend that the lynching of Mexicans were turned into public spectacles of violence which served to perpetuate the idea of Anglo settler cultural and political dominance. See *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 418.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 417.

“when an aggression is made upon a Mexican it is not much minded. For instance, when it is known that a Mexican has been hung or killed...there is seldom any fuss made about it; while, on the contrary, if a white man happens to be despoiled in any way, there is a great fuss about it by those not of Mexican origin.”<sup>5</sup> To be sure, mob violence and vigilantism was a historical reality promulgated by race and class antagonisms in the Deep South, however, northern states adopted similar views, attitudes, and systematic mechanisms of exclusion toward Mexicans.<sup>6</sup> One such type of exclusion was the use of spatial separation or segregation. Northern industrialized cities like Chicago afforded Mexicans the opportunity of working in the meat packing industries, railroads, and steel mills where they entered the labor force as strike breakers which, in turn, confined them to poorly paid labor. The combination of economic displacements and racial prejudice resulted in residential housing discrimination which progressively led to the creation of Mexican segregated ‘barrios’ in Chicago. As sociologists Massey and Denton state:

Fortunately, several studies have been carried out to document and quantify the link between discrimination, prejudice, and segregation. Using data from the 1977 HUD audit study, George Galster related cross metropolitan variation in housing discrimination to the degree of racial segregation in different urban areas. He confirmed the empirical link between discrimination and segregation, and he also discovered segregation itself has important feedback effects on socio-economic status.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. As quoted by Carrigan and Webb.

<sup>6</sup> The Illinois Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission On Civil Rights (1982) summary report on bigotry and violence in Illinois states that, “There are four principal categories of groups in the State that espouse bigotry and violence: The Ku Klux Klan, Neo-Nazis, the Christian Identity Movement and other church related organizations, and more moderate groups with racist ideologies.” p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Douglas S. Massey & Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993); p. 109.

## Housing Discrimination and Segregation of Latinos in Chicago

Chicago (which is considered one of the most segregated cities in the world) has a long history of residential segregation exacerbated, in large part, by a ‘triple housing market’ (African American, Latino, and White): “The policy of ghettoization, the creation of racially distinct neighborhoods, was consciously adopted by a variety of private and governmental actions, and has resulted in an on-going, pervasive, institutional system which is described as a dual housing market, one for blacks and other minorities, one for whites.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the Illinois Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights examined the issues of housing problems in Chicago and concluded that housing segregation was a result of a number of racialized institutional practices: exclusionary zoning or redlining (e.g., the practice of mortgage lenders to ‘map in red’ predominately minority inner-city neighborhoods and denying people of color in these geographic areas mortgage and home improvement loans), restrictive covenants (discrimination against blacks and other dark skinned ethnic groups), high interest rates (e.g., charging poor and working class people of color interest rates as high as 18 percent on mortgage and improvement loans), Blockbusting or panick-peddling (e.g., a method whereby brokers utilize ‘there goes the neighborhood’ scare tactics to manipulate the selling of properties by owners only to re-segregate neighborhoods), and quotas (e.g., builders and apartment house owners severely limiting integrating neighborhoods by secretly and strategically using ‘minority quotas’ strategically to maintain all White communities.

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<sup>8</sup> Housing Chicago Style: A Consultation. A Report prepared by the Illinois Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1982), p. 38.

Accordingly, the Chicago Real Estate Board's Code of Ethics adopted its code after the 1924 National Association of Real Estate Boards' and cautioned: "A realtor should never be instrumental in introducing into the neighborhood ...Members of any race or nationality or any individual whose presence would be clearly detrimental to property values in that neighborhood."<sup>9</sup> Michael W. Scott, Vice President of Pyramidwest Development Corp tells us that, "In 1950 the Real Estate Board dropped the words 'race' and 'nationality' from its code, but the policy remained the same."<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, private builders were also implicated in these insidious 'triple housing market' principles, "...Thus in the post World War II housing boom of the 1940's and 1950's, giant subdivisions were built from which minority families were excluded. The only new housing available to minorities consisted of a comparatively small number of units rented in minority enclaves designated for minority occupancy."<sup>11</sup> It was not until 1968 that The Fair Housing Act "extended the ban on discrimination because of race, color, religion, or national origin to all housing or rental of a room or apartment in a house in which the renter lived."<sup>12</sup> What should not go unnoticed, however, is that prior to the passage of the Human Rights Act (1979), Illinois did not have a Fair Housing Law.<sup>13</sup> Some critics sustain that segregated neighborhoods exist in Northern urban centers because it is 'natural.' In other words, there is the common perception that people tend to segregate themselves due to personal preferences. Yet, what I want to suggest is that the aforementioned types of institutionalized forms of housing discrimination continued to be

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<sup>9</sup> As quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

practiced, subsequently, segregated Chicago neighborhoods remained highly segregated. This, in turn, led to the formation of segregated schooling districts. It is to this that I now turn.

### The Effects of Public School Segregation

In 1935, W.E.B. DuBois wrote the following: “Theoretically the Negro needs neither segregated nor mixed schools. What he needs is education. What he must remember is that there is no magic either in mixed schools or in segregated schools. A mixed school with poor and unsympathetic teachers with hostile public opinion and no teaching concerning Black folk is bad. A segregated school with ignorant placeholders, inadequate equipment, poor salaries, and wretched housing, is equally bad.”<sup>14</sup> Here, DuBois suggests that the issue of school segregation has less to do with the racial mixing of students per se and more to do about confronting the social problem of inferior schooling for African Americans. Another interpretation suggested in the above quote by DuBois is that segregated schools, in and of themselves, are not all necessarily bad.<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately, the experiences of African Americans and other dispossessed peoples such as Mexicans, public schooling throughout America has often times been quite bad. In the case of Mexicans, the culmination of the Mexican American War (1846-1848), in which Mexico lost over half of its territory to Anglo colonialist settlers,

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<sup>14</sup> “Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?” in Eugene F. Provenzo Jr. Ed. *DuBois On Education*. (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002); p. 143.

<sup>15</sup> On this point see, for example, Vanessa Siddle Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Walker argues that although, for the most part, African American schools in the South were ‘separate and unequal’ some of these schools (such as Caswell County Training School in North Carolina) actually provided quite nurturing educational environments for African American students.

led to a process of subjugation and subordination that relegated the Mexican-origin population to second-class citizenship status. As Gilbert G. Gonzalez notes:

The segregation of Mexican children attempted to extend an existing duality demarcating the colored minorities, including Mexicans from the Anglo communities. Thus, segregation reflected and recreated the social divisions within the larger society formed by residential segregation, labor and wage rate differentials, political inequality, socioeconomic disparities, and racial oppression. Public school segregation involved an extension of a prior condition to the socialization process—the psychological and socioeconomic reproduction of a social relationship dividing a dominant from a subordinate community. Education for the Mexican community therefore meant change as well as the preservation of their subordination.<sup>16</sup>

Commentating on examining the importance of educational integration within individual school districts in urban areas, Gary Orfield writes, “Intense residential segregation often means that minority families are extraordinarily dependent on one or a handful of urban school districts within a state. Outside the South, both blacks and Hispanics are overwhelmingly urban residents, principally of central cities within large metropolitan areas. And as minority dependence of these districts has grown, white enrollments have declined.”<sup>17</sup> Orfield goes on to point out that between 1968 and 1980 white student enrollment within Chicago school districts sharply declined by a total of 62.1 percent.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See Gilbert Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation*. (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1990); p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> See Gary Orfield, *Public School Desegregation in the United States, 1968-1980*. (Washington, D.C.: Joint Center for Political Studies, 1983); p. 22.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

## The Larger Social and Political Context of *Brown*

In 1954, the Supreme Court handed down the landmark decision *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 383 (1954) in which the court ordered an end to *de jure* racial segregation in public schools. Moreover, in the second decision *Brown v. Board of Education*, 345 U.S. 294(1955), the Supreme Court mandated school districts and states to desegregate public schools with “all deliberate speed.” Some legal scholars contend that a broader contextual analysis of the seminal *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) case reveals that the decision was influenced less by protecting minority interests (e.g., ending racial segregation and promoting social justice) and more by enhancing the interests of the Nation at a very unique moment in history. For example, Derrick Bell and Mary Dudziak both point out that Cold War ideology (e.g., fear of communism and battle with the Soviet superpower) of the 50’s, and the priority to suppress black radicalism in America were the crucial motivating interests that lead to the seminal *Brown* decision.<sup>19</sup> Bell, specifically argues that white political elites were interested in preserving their elite status and in reforming the rural economies (via industrialization which, he suggests, segregation would prevent) of the southern states as well. He asserts that without this “interest conversion” between whites and blacks, the Supreme Court would never have upheld *Brown*.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Dudziak maintains that U.S. Foreign policy interests in the Third World were particularly invested in selling the image of America as a true democracy and sought to promote (via the mass media of newspapers) this image to the

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<sup>19</sup> See Derrick A. Bell, “*Brown v. Board of Education* and the Interest Convergence Dilemma” in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, pp. 20- 29.; Mary L. Dudziak, “Desegregation as Cold War Imperative” in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, pp. 106-117.

<sup>20</sup> See Derrick Bell, *Ibid.*

world.<sup>21</sup> Thus, underlying the *Brown* decision, it is suggested, were two social forces at work: On the one hand, the plea for social justice and desegregation on the part of African Americans. On the other hand, the fight against the ideological proclivities of the Communist Party, progressive politics and the marketing of a liberal form of government to the rest of the world.

### The Significance of *Mendez* for *Brown*

Nonetheless, both *Brown* I and II, decisions have an imperative place in American history since they, in effect, reversed the historic *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) decision which had previously established the “separate but equal” doctrine. However, it must be noted that a somewhat overlooked desegregation case which was to have a significant impact on *Brown* actually took place seven years before *Brown*: *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946). Legal scholar Christopher Arriola writes that, “The NAACP began its attack on segregation in Missouri Ex. Rel. *Gaines v. Canada* 305 U.S. 337 (1938). The NAACP successfully argued that the state of Missouri was not providing separate but equal facilities for an African American law student who was sent out of state because no ‘black’ law school existed. The court ruled that the state had to either allow the student entry into the existing school to create a law school for Blacks.”<sup>22</sup> However, Arriola points out that, “Missouri avoided the ruling by hastily establishing a separate law school

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<sup>21</sup> See Mary Dudziak, *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> See “Knocking on the Schoolhouse Door: *Mendez v. Westminster*, Equal Protection, Public Education, and Mexican Americans in the 1940’s” in *La Raza Law Journal* 8 (1995): p. 190.

for African-Americans.”<sup>23</sup> Hence, The NAACP was unable to achieve its desired goals of integration as it moved into the late 1940’s.”<sup>24</sup>

Some scholars assert that international events sparked a consciousness ‘turning point’ for the Courts since, “They point out the importance of the recent War with Germany and the way courts were inclined to refer to the atrocities of the Nazis in their opinions during the 1940’s”<sup>25</sup> For example, Gilbert Gonzalez points out that World War II, which brought about a fight against fascism and Nazism, alerted United States elected public officials and policy makers to take action and attempt to develop “hemispheric solidarity”<sup>26</sup> by “...constructing peaceful relations between minorities and non-minorities in the United States.”<sup>27</sup> To this end, the U.S. Office of Education in conjunction with the State Department, launched the Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA). Gonzalez tells us that the overall gist of this office was to implement a program “...aimed at dissolving minority militancy in the United States.” Here, international forces begin to shape social actors’ that precipitated the actions by Mexican parents struggling for social equality within public schooling.

Nonetheless, the *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946) case provided the impetus for Equal Protection to be utilized as a strategy by legal experts to argue on behalf of national origin discrimination rather than ‘race’ discrimination since, “‘group’ discrimination classifications was the hazy standard that drove the courts in the 1940’s; racial

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> See for example, Ibid; Also see Montoya, and Gonzalez.

<sup>26</sup> Gilbert Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation*. (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1990). p. 116.

<sup>27</sup> See Gonzalez, p. 116; 117.

classifications would not be defined for many years.”<sup>28</sup> It is interesting to note that the first instance of court ordered desegregation case for Mexicans occurred in Lemon Grove *California in Alvarez v Owen* (1931). The Lemon Grove school district was attempting to separate white children from Mexican children on the basis of so-called ‘language problems’. The defendants argued that Mexican children should be assigned to a separate school (which Mexican parents dubbed as ‘the barn’) since Mexicans’ children’s ‘language deficiencies’ were perceived to be educationally backward and thus hindered the educational progress of Anglo children. The irony of this case was that many Mexican children were actually born in the U.S. and spoke English. Since Mexicans at this time were “White by law,”<sup>29</sup> the attorneys’ legal strategy with the courts became to use the legal status of “white” to advocate for the integration of Mexican students with White American students for the purpose of attaining educational justice. With respects to the legal racial classification of Mexicans, “The Court concluded that Mexicans were neither Negroes nor Indians (nor Mongolians, the other category segregated under the California Education Code) and their segregation was therefore unlawful.”<sup>30</sup>

In the *Mendez* case the issue of ‘race’ and the legal classification of Mexicans would come up once again:

The *Mendez* suit claimed that segregation of Mexican children violated the Fourteenth Amendment in the absence of specific state laws that required or enabled the local school districts to mandate a Mexican school system. State codes allowing or requiring school segregation applied only to ‘non-white’ races, specifically Indian children (except Native American Indians), Chinese Japanese, and Mongolian. The suit alleged that no legal ‘racial’ status had been

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<sup>28</sup> See Arriola, p. 192.

<sup>29</sup> See, Ian F. Haney Lopez, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*. (N.Y.: New York University Press, 1996).

<sup>30</sup> See Montoya, p. 166.

applied to Mexicans other than that they were members of the Caucasian race and therefore not subject to the discriminatory education codes.<sup>31</sup>

Pointedly, however, “The Court never ruled on whether Mexicans are a group, an ethnicity, or a race, merely stating that Mexican American school children had been discriminated against and their Fourteenth Amendment rights had been violated.”<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, “The essence of the *Mendez* case revolved around the charge that segregation operated ‘to deny or deprive equal protection of the laws’ to English and non-English Mexican Children.”<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless, *Mendez* is considered to be quite a significant court decision in legal history. Not only did the legal strategy of reinterpreting the Fourteenth Amendments Equal Protection clause shift the terrain of discourse from ‘equal facilities’ to ‘social equality,’<sup>34</sup> but the use of social science knowledge via ‘expert’ testimony (e.g., anthropologist Ralph Beals) by Robert Carter to argue against the pernicious effects of segregation caught the attention of several eminent NAACP attorneys such as Thurgood Marshall who would later utilize this tactic in the landmark *Brown* case.<sup>35</sup>

In addition, some legal scholars argue that the amicus curiae briefs filed in the appellate court (by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People,

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<sup>31</sup> Gonzalez, p. 152.

<sup>32</sup> Arriola, p. 198.

<sup>33</sup> Gonzalez, p. 153. It is worth noting that the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment was originally passed only after the Civil War to extend, specifically to former Black slaves, “equal protection” under the law. Hence, “the Supreme Court was not likely to apply the amendment’s protections to any other group besides ex-slaves.” And so a broader interpretation of this clause by the Court would be necessary in the *Mendez* case: “Equal Protection was in a state of metamorphosis during the 1940’s and could have gone in any direction. The question was, which cases would lead the courts and which arguments would be persuasive. The NAACP and others hoped *Mendez* would be one of those cases, if not the case in the efforts to overturn segregation as embodied in the existing corpus of segregation precedent.” See Arriola *Ibid.*, pp. 189,192.

<sup>34</sup> Gonzalez, p. 154.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

American Jewish Congress, the National Lawyers Guild, The Japanese American Citizens League, the California Attorney General) in the *Mendez* case “provide the cutting edge arguments that make the case so interesting to legal history.”<sup>36</sup> For example, Christopher Arriola contends that the American Jewish Congress used the Jewish Holocaust of Nazi Germany to “...appeal to the conscience of the Court and perhaps influence it in a way that no strictly rational arguments could have.”<sup>37</sup> Arriola goes on to point out that “The AJC brief then moves to the new argument that all race or group classifications are suspect and deserve strict scrutiny under equal protection.”<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, Thurgood Marshall advocated on behalf of the NAACP to argue in the brief that, “Both our national constitution and the terms of our international commitments demand that this Court invalidate the acts of defendants in setting aside in their respective jurisdictions separate schools for children of Mexican or Latin origin.”<sup>39</sup> Also, one of the main arguments pointed out by the NAACP brief was that, “*Plessy* does not disallow a ruling that school segregation is invalid since *Plessy* only deals with public transportation.”<sup>40</sup>

In short, as Margaret Montoya purports: “...this case was of great importance for Chicanas/os because it paved the way for litigation in Texas and Arizona, challenging segregation schemes, as well as for other populations of color helping to develop the arguments for *Brown v. Board of Education*.”<sup>41</sup> To be sure, “In the final analysis, the

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<sup>36</sup> Arriola, p. 192.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>41</sup> Montoya, pp. 168-169.

briefs represent a significant contribution to the history of Equal Protection not only for Chicanos, but for all racial minorities in the United States. The briefs provide a snapshot in time where Equal Protection was headed in the 1940's and illustrate the positive effects of intergroup cooperation in civil rights litigation."<sup>42</sup>

### Some Intricacies of the *Brown* Case

Looking back at the *Brown* case, Judge A. Leon Higginbotham believed that it was the "most important governmental act of any kind since the emancipation proclamation."<sup>43</sup> Five individual cases in the states of South Carolina, Virginia, Delaware, the District of Columbia, and Kansas collectively came to be known as Brown I. The first case by the lower courts originated in Clarendon County, South Carolina, "The case *Briggs v. Elliott* (1951) was the first elementary and secondary education litigation taken on by Marshall."<sup>44</sup> Legal scholars Robert Cottrol, Raymond Diamond and Leland Ware further point out that, "The key to *Briggs v. Elliott* and the other cases that presented direct challenges to segregated schools lay in the innovative use of expert testimony to establish the psychological harm that segregation inflicted on African American schoolchildren."<sup>45</sup> They go on to succinctly summarize the strategic utilization of social scientists and other expert testimony in challenging segregation before the Courts: First, it demonstrated the psychological injuries that were caused by segregation. This made it clear that equalizing

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<sup>42</sup> Arriola, pp. 197-198.

<sup>43</sup> As quoted by Tavis Smiley in James Anderson and Dara N. Byrne Eds. *The Unfinished Agenda of Brown v. Board of Education*. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2004); p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> Robert J. Cottrol, Raymond T. Diamond, and Leland B. Ware, *Brown v. Board of Education: Caste, Culture, and the Constitution*. (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2003); p. 120.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

facilities would not remedy the harm that the black students were suffering. Second, it exposed the actual purpose of segregation the perpetuation of racial subordination, what Charles Sumner and Benjamin Roberts had recognized as a system of caste distinction even before the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment. Third, the testimony of experts refuted widely held beliefs about intellectual inferiority of Afro-Americans. The expert witnesses would force the judges to grapple with the realities of segregation.<sup>46</sup>

Nevertheless, the other segregation cases were filed in 1951 in the District of Columbia: *Bolling v. Sharpe*. Followed by a case in Richmond, Virginia in 1952: *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*. In addition, two separate segregation cases were also filed in Delaware: *Gebhart et al. v. Belton et al.* (1952) and *Gebhart v. Bulah* (1952).<sup>47</sup>

Interestingly, several significant events at the grassroots level began to unfold prior to the development of the lower court cases. As Mark Tushnet, who served as law clerk to Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, states: “In the late 1940’s students in Lumberton, North Carolina, In Hearne, Texas, and in South Park, Kansas, walked out of school to protest the run-down segregated schools they had to attend. In Kansas, NAACP branches in Wichita and Topeka competed for the honor of supporting a lawsuit challenging their state’s segregation statute. Topeka won the competition.”<sup>48</sup> Essentially, in Topeka, Kansas the litigation revolved around, “Oliver Brown, a railroad welder whose daughter Linda had a dangerous walk across railroad tracks and a main street to get to her

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>48</sup> Mark V. Tushnet, *Brown v. Board of Education: The Battle for Integration*. (New York, NY: Franklin Watts: A Division of Grolier Publishing, 1995); p. 53.

school bus. At first they wanted simply a better transportation system to get the children to the segregated schools. Brown quickly decided, though, that challenging segregation itself was more important.”<sup>49</sup>

In 1954, Robert Carter with the help of his fellow NAACP lawyers Jack Greenberg, Thurgood Marshall, James Nabrit, Spottswood Robinson and Louis Redding argued that, “State-imposed segregation was inherently discriminatory and therefore a denial of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. As in the lower court cases, they used the doll researches of the Clarks to maintain that segregation accentuated feelings of inferiority among black children.”<sup>50</sup> As Richard Kluger notes, “Robert Carter introduced into the case the element he had spent the better part of a year preparing--the testimony of social psychologists. He began with Kenneth Clark.”<sup>51</sup> Kenneth Clark was an African American psychologist who, along with his wife Mamie, had conducted some research on the image African American children had of themselves.

In sum, “In their research, the Clark’s showed children a number of dolls, some white, some dark, and asked them which was the nicest doll, which the ugliest, and which was most like themselves. The Clarks’ research showed that African-American children typically called the white dolls nice and the dark ones ugly, while saying that the dark

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> James T. Patterson *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and its Troubled Legacy*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); p. 53.

<sup>51</sup> Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America’s Struggle for Equality*. (New York: Alford A. Knopf, 2004); p. 363.

ones were most like themselves. According to the Clarks, this showed that African American children had negative self-images.”<sup>52</sup>

In 1954, Chief Justice Earl Warren (who was newly appointed by the Eisenhower presidential administration) delivered the opinion of the unanimous Court. After describing the importance of education to a democratic society, the Court framed the issue on whether, “segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other ‘tangible’ factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities.” The Court found that it did stating in part:

Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law, for the policy of separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with sanctioning of the law, therefore, has a tendency to (retard) the educational and mental development of negro children and to deprive them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racially integrated school system... We conclude that, in the field of public education, the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Mark V. Tushnet, *Brown v. Board of Education*, p. 58. It should also be noted that “As early as 1952, however, scholars poked holes in Clark’s methods. His terms were fuzzy: what were young children supposed to mean by ‘nice’? Could tests on a mere sixteen children prove that segregation harmed all black children?” “Was it fair to conclude from such tests, they asked, that school segregation per se caused children to choose dolls as they did?” see James T. Patterson, *Ibid*; p. 44.

<sup>53</sup> Transcript of the *Brown v. Board* Opinion Supreme Court of the United States *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954) in James Anderson and Dara N. Byrne, *The Unfinished Agenda of Brown v. Board of Education*.(Hoboken, NJ: 2004); pp. 175-176.

One year later, the Supreme Court would deliberate on the appropriate remedy and time-frame of school desegregation that came to be known generally as Brown II. In 1955, Chief Justice Earl Warren read the opinion of the Court by first, “declaring the fundamental principle that racial discrimination in public education is unconstitutional” and added: All provisions of federal, state, or local law requiring or permitting such discrimination must yield to this principle.”<sup>54</sup> However, Chief Justice Warren appeared to be very designing with respects to setting the parameters of school desegregation implementation by placing the burden specifically on local school district authority:

Full implementation of these constitutional principles may require solution of varied local school problems. School authorities have the primary responsibility for elucidating, assessing, and solving these problems; courts will have to consider whether the action of school authorities constitutes good faith implementation of the governing constitutional principles. Because of their proximity to local conditions and the possible need for further hearings, the courts which originally heard these cases can best perform this judicial appraisal. Accordingly, we believe it appropriate to remand the cases to those courts.<sup>55</sup>

Chief Justice Warren concluded the opinion of the Court by stipulating: The judgments below, except that in the Delaware case, are accordingly reversed and the cases are remanded to the District Courts to take such proceedings and enter such orders and decrees consistent with this opinion as are necessary and proper to admit to public

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<sup>54</sup> As quoted in Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality*. (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004); p. 747.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

schools on a racially nondiscriminatory basis with all deliberate speed the parties to these cases.”<sup>56</sup>

### The Limits of *Brown* and Political Impact

Yet, as Albert P. Blaustein and Clarence Clyde Ferguson, Jr. observe, “What the Court did not announce was the ways and means of implementing that decision.” “The fact that special decrees prohibiting school segregation based on race were delayed a full year--and then permitted to be delayed still further at the discretion of the lower courts--was part of the compromise that marked the Court’s handling of *Brown v. Board of Education*.”<sup>57</sup> Indeed, although the positive significance of the *Brown* decision remains disputed<sup>58</sup> with respects to attaining educational and racial justice for the majority of African American and Mexican children, this landmark case had consequential social and political unintended consequences: “What *Brown* did do was to act as a catalyst for a whole new phase of the civil rights movement. It would be a phase in which the champions of civil rights would continue the struggle of equal rights in the courts and in other venues.”<sup>59</sup> For instance, legal scholar Mark Tushnet writes that, “Civil rights leaders repeatedly invoked *Brown* in their political and moral arguments against segregation. He goes on to assert that, ”Long-standing community outrage at unfair treatment was the primary cause for the Montgomery bus boycott, but the protesters

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<sup>56</sup> As quoted in Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice*, p. 748.

<sup>57</sup> *Desegregation and the Law: The Meaning and Effect of the School Segregation Cases*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1957); pp. 158,161.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, Derrick Bell, *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>59</sup> Robert J. Cottrol, Raymond T. Diamond, and Leland B. Ware, *Brown v. Board of Education: Caste, Culture, and the Constitution*. (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2003); p. 184.

invoked *Brown* to justify their actions. Four days after *Brown* was decided, a community leader wrote the city's mayor threatening a boycott. The day the boycott started, Martin Luther King, Jr., who became a national civil rights leader as a result of his actions in Montgomery, referred to *Brown* in telling listeners in Montgomery, 'If we are wrong, the Constitution of the United States is wrong.'<sup>60</sup> However, it must also be noted that Martin Luther King, Jr., "...generally placed little reliance on litigation. Like many militant civil rights leaders after 1955, King favored direct action."<sup>61</sup> In the early 1960's, Thurgood Marshall was also sounding cautiously optimistic about the possibilities of the Courts alone in bringing an end to racial segregation when he was quoted as saying: "I consider the lawsuits to be a holding action, a way of getting things open so that they can operate. But the final solution will only be when the Negro takes his part in the community, voting and otherwise."<sup>62</sup>

### Latino School Desegregation Cases

Educational historian Guadalupe San Miguel Jr. cited twenty-eight court cases where Mexican-origin plaintiffs filed lawsuits in their struggle for attaining educational schooling opportunities for their children.<sup>63</sup> Accordingly, Marco Portales tells us that, "Four of the twenty-eight lawsuits filed by Latino plaintiffs went to court years before *Brown* in 1954. These were *Independent School District v. Salvatierra* (San Antonio,

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<sup>60</sup> *Brown v. Board of Education: The Battle for Integration*, pp. 130-131.

<sup>61</sup> James T. Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and its Troubled Legacy*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); p. 120.

<sup>62</sup> As quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>63</sup> See *Let Them All Take Heed: Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).

1930); *Ramirez v. State* (Texas, 1931); *Mendez et al. v. Westminster School District of Orange County et al.* (California, 1947); *Delgado et al. v. Bastrop Independent School District* (Texas, 1948). Another case, *Hernandez v. Texas*, was filed the same year that the Supreme Court made the decision to desegregate public schools. It was only after the Supreme court *Brown* decision of 1954, though, that the other twenty-three lawsuits were filed.”<sup>64</sup> In *Hernandez v. Texas* 347 U.S. 475 (1954), the Supreme Court applied the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to Mexican Americans if subjected to discrimination as an “identifiable ethnic group.”

According to Portales, “The landmark case that began to change educational opportunities for Latinos in Texas, however, was *Delgado et al. v. Bastrop Independent School District* in 1948. This lawsuit was filed by the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), with Gustavo C. (Gus) García serving as the plaintiff’s attorney.”<sup>65</sup> In this case, “The main suit alleged that Mexican children were being segregated from the children of other white races in the absence of specific state law and in clear violation of the Texas attorney general’s legal opinion.”<sup>66</sup> Portales remarks that “...Delgado served as a precursor to how the Supreme Court would rule in *Brown v. Board of Education*.”<sup>67</sup> Portales goes on to maintain that between 1954 and 1981 there were at least twenty-three education lawsuits filed by Latino citizens. However, of all the cases, “*The Cisneros v. Corpus Christi Independent School District* case in 1970 established another benchmark case for Mexicans. *Cisneros* held that Mexican Americans in a school district were ‘an

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<sup>64</sup> “A History of Latino Segregation Lawsuits” in *The Unfinished Agenda of Brown v. Board of Education*. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2004); p. 125.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

identifiable ethnic-minority group' that had been segregated and discriminated against. Therefore, as in the case of blacks, they were entitled to all of the protections provided by *Brown*.<sup>68</sup>

### The Implications of *Brown* for Mexican in Chicago

So, what was the impact of the above cases as well as *Brown* I and II on the Mexican-origin community in Chicago during the post-*Brown* era (1955-1974)?

Although these seminal court decisions did not apparently result in litigation cases filed

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 129. For a quite detailed and compelling historical examination of the case in Houston see Guadalupe San Miguel Jr. *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston*. (Houston, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2001). In this treatise, San Miguel documents the multiple tactics forged by the Mexican-origin activists in the Houston Independent School District over their legal recognition as a 'distinct identifiable minority group.' The essential narrative that San Miguel provides is that beginning in the 1970's, Mexican American grassroots organizing activists in Houston began to shift their strategies for attaining educational equality primarily by taking on a new 'Brown' identity in order to challenge, the limited bi-racial (Mexican/African American) racist school desegregation policy of the local school districts.

in Chicago, the battle for the idea of *Brown* took on a different shape and form.<sup>69</sup> For example, in 1978, former Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) Director of Education Litigation, Peter D. Roos, reported to the Illinois Office of Education (Chicago Office) that, “Hispanics generally, and limited English speaking students in particular, have rarely opted in large numbers to attend schools out

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<sup>69</sup> It must be noted that the conditions for developing school desegregation plans in northern industrialized cities like Chicago were different from those in the rural South and the Southwest generally. For instance, William Anton Vrame argues that many school administrators in Chicago had “relegated the issue of desegregation of their school systems to a low status” since, “By and large, these school men felt that the Supreme Court decision did not apply to their situations. For one thing, they felt that their systems were already integrated.” Therefore, “Until 1961, these officials tended to ignore the Supreme Court *Brown* decision and took little action to develop comprehensive desegregation plans for their school systems.” In 1961, *Webb v. The Board of Education of the City of Chicago*, was filed by the NAACP on behalf of African American parents who “filed suit against the Board of Education seeking injunctions under the Fourteenth Amendment to prevent the school system from compelling their children to attend segregated schools. The complaint charged that the Chicago Board deliberately fostered segregation by use of the neighborhood school policy, gerrymandering attendance districts, selecting school sites, and refusing to utilize empty space in white schools. The plaintiffs alleged that their children were enrolled in overcrowded and inferior schools as a result of these board policies.” However, this litigation case extended until 1963 when, along with the approval of the NAACP, the Board agreed to an out-of-court settlement: “ Judge Hoffman met with the attorneys and officials from NAACP and the Chicago Public School System early in August 1963 on the matter of fixing a trial date for this litigation. But he urged the partners to attempt to resolve the matter out of court instead.” Broadly speaking, in Chicago, “litigation became stalled and efforts to influence the legislation to force Chicago to adopt a school desegregation plan were constantly defeated.” See, *A History of School Desegregation in Chicago since 1954*. (University of Wisconsin, Ph.D. Diss., 1970); pp. 11, 43, 56; Neil E. Lloyd, *The Decision-Making Process and the Chicago Board of Education: The 1968 Busing Decision*. (Loyola University, Ph.D. Diss., 1974); pp. 68-69. Conversely, resistance to school desegregation also took on another unique form in Chicago. Four of the fundamental reasons which help explain why it became such a difficult, if not impossible, reality in Chicago have to do with the following: 1) logistical problems that desegregation posed (e.g., creating a racial balance throughout primary and secondary schools within all local schooling districts. 2) Insufficient funds to implement an adequate two-way busing plan between white and non-white schooling districts. 3) a significant ‘white flight’ to the suburbs began to occur in Chicago between 1950-1965, not only taking with it the tax base, but leaving a predominately African American and Latino school population throughout local schooling districts, and 4) Big boss Daley and the powerful political machine in Chicago did not find desegregation plans in their best interests. On this point William Anton Vrame aptly describes the particular political and social dynamics at work here: “Throughout the controversy between civil rights leaders and school districts, school desegregation became an extremely unpopular issue for white politicians to champion. Few if any white politicians risked the wrath of their constituents and possible political recrimination by doing so. White ward bosses perceived busing to desegregate the schools as a threat to the racial homogeneity of their community’s and consequently, of the ward base of power. Because busing threatened to decrease their position of power, these politicians exerted pressure on school officials through the Board of Education to not adopt such a policy.” See, *A History of School Desegregation in Chicago since 1954*. (University of Wisconsin, Ph.D. Diss., 1970); pp. 44-45.

of their neighborhoods even when desegregation was the promised end.”<sup>70</sup> What Roos points out is that the Chicago School District voluntary desegregation plan failed to recognize the unique needs of Latinos which entails in part drawing attention to effective utilizations of bilingual/bicultural educational programs within schools. As Roos notes, “The concern that desegregation will destroy bilingual programs is very real. A plan that seeks to desegregate the Chicago schools must evidence sufficient commitment to convince the Hispanic community that this will be a fair and just effort and that bilingual programming will be enhanced, not destroyed.”<sup>71</sup> In other words, Roos suggests that for Mexicans in Chicago, bilingual education represents part of the desegregation remedy for gaining access to genuine equal educational opportunity. Hence, writing on the particular experiences of the Latino community in Chicago, Roos concludes, “It must be remembered that in the long run the greatest hope for desegregation under a voluntary plan is the improvement of education in the segregated minority schools.” Indeed, the battle for equal educational opportunity in Chicago during the 1970’s then revolved

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<sup>70</sup> Also see Peter D. Roos, “Chicago Desegregation and the Hispanic Community” A Report submitted by MALDEF to the Illinois Office of Education E.E. O. Chicago Office, (1978); p. 1.

In addition, although the *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) case in San Francisco opened up Bilingual Education mandates which called for the special linguistic needs of minority students, Mexican American educators, activists, and legal scholars were making the case of bilingual education to meet the unique needs of Mexican American students in desegregated settings in the early 1970’s. See Guadalupe San Miguel Jr., “The Impact of Brown on Mexican American Desegregation Litigation, 1950’s to 1980’s.” *Journal of Latinos and Education*. (2005) 4:4.

<sup>71</sup> Peter D. Roos, “Chicago Desegregation and the Hispanic Community” A Report submitted by MALDEF to the Illinois Office of Education E.E. O. Chicago Office, (1978); p., 13.

around the struggle for implementing sound bilingual/bicultural educational programs rather than desegregating local school districts.<sup>72</sup>

In 1972, the Illinois State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights asserted that during the late 1960's there was a "...growing concern among Latino parents, students, and community leaders over the alleged violations of Latino students' rights to an education in Chicago."<sup>73</sup> As a result of these concerns, education became a major focus among Latino organizations in Chicago such as the Association of Spanish Speaking People of America (ASPA), the Mexican American Council on Education (MACE), and Adelante, an organization of teachers who are primarily Mexican American.<sup>74</sup> According to the Illinois State Advisory Committee, the aforementioned organizations as well as other groups articulated a list of demands before the schools which included but were not limited to: teaching of Latin American History, intensification of federally-funded programs for teaching English as a second language (TESL) addressing the growing dropout problem among Latino students, and greater use of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act Federal Title I program.

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<sup>72</sup> See, for example, Rita D. Hernandez, *The Silent Minority: Mexican Americans in the Chicago Public Schools, 1970-2001*. Loyola University, Ph.D. Diss., 2002. It must be noted that by the late 1970's, most Latino educators and activists advocated for bilingual education as the right strategy for attaining equal educational opportunity which was conceived as improving the academic achievement of Latino students. On this point see Guadalupe San Miguel Jr., "The Impact of Brown on Mexican American Desegregation Litigation, 1950's to 1980's." *Journal of Latinos and Education*. (2005) 4:4. Also, Reynaldo and Valverde point out that despite the fact that Title I programs were created with African Americans in mind, Title VII established bilingual programs for Latinos by targeting Limited English-speaking (LEP) students to learn English while maintaining their native language. See A. Reynaldo Contreras and Leonard A. Valverde, "The Impact of Brown on the Education of Latinos." *Journal of Negro Education*. 63:3 (1994).

<sup>73</sup> "Bilingual/Bicultural Education: A Privilege or a Right?" A Report of the Illinois State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights. (1974); p. 1.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

The first federal court opinion holding that Mexican American students are entitled, “as a matter of substantive constitutional right, to be educated in public schools utilizing a bilingual/bicultural program” came from the state of New Mexico.<sup>75</sup> In this case, *Serna v. Portales Municipal School Board* 351 F. Supp. 1279 (1972), the Federal District Court held that ‘these Spanish-surnamed children do not in fact have equal educational opportunity and that a violation of the constitutional right to equal protection exists.’<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, in the Court of Appeals decision, *Keyes v. School District No. 1* (Denver, Colorado), 445 F. 2d 990 (10th Cir. 1971) 413 U.S. (1973), the Court concluded that ‘the (Keyes) decision held it would be a deprivation of equal protection for a school district to effectuate a curriculum which is not tailored to the educational needs of minority students...’<sup>77</sup> Whether or not bilingual education is an entitlement rather than a privilege remains disputed by the Circuit Courts.<sup>78</sup>

### *Lau* and Struggle for Bilingual Education Programs in Chicago

However, in the Supreme Court decision *Lau v. Nichols*, (1974), which was brought about by Chinese-speaking students attempting to secure special language services, the Court “held that the failure of the school system to provide English language instruction to students who do not speak English denies them a meaningful opportunity to participate in the public educational program and therefore violates the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination in programs receiving Federal financial

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., pp. 69-70.

<sup>77</sup> As quoted in Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>78</sup> See Ibid.

assistance.”<sup>79</sup> As education historian David Tyack points out, “...many states translated that mandate into programs of bilingual education. Activists in the War on Poverty targeted funds to students from low-income families and devised regulations to make sure they reached poor children.”<sup>80</sup> In Chicago, for instance, the minutes of the meeting of the State Bilingual Advisory Council to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction dated September 29, 1973, record that, “Various educators and community leaders have urged that teachers of bilingual students come from the same cultural background as their students.”<sup>81</sup> Moreover, on March 30, 1971 La Raza Unida, a city-wide Latino coalition comprised of 65 (Mexican-origin and Puerto Rican) organizations, submitted a letter to Mayor Richard J. Daley which outlined the urgent need to be included in the areas of education, health, housing, police, social services, and employment.<sup>82</sup> The letter ended with a list of demands in each of the aforementioned areas. With respect to education, demands included the following: That the existing vacancy on the Board of Education be filled by a Chicano; that Chicano or Puerto Rican principals be appointed in schools where 30 percent or more Spanish-speaking students; that the Board of Education be directed to train and fill positions with Chicanos and Puerto Ricans such as counselors, truant officers, teacher aides, school community representatives, school maintenance, office clerks, lunchroom supervisors where at least 10 percent of enrollment is of Spanish-speaking children.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>80</sup> David Tyack, *Seeking Common Ground: Public Schools in a Diverse Society*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003); p. 150.

<sup>81</sup> “Bilingual/Bicultural Education: A Privilege or a Right?” A Report of the Illinois State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights. (1974); p. 12.

<sup>82</sup> Intelligence Report, Chicago Police Department, March 30, 1971, Red Squad Records, Box 249, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

The other list of general demands included: that all psychological testing be stopped unless it meets the minimum criteria established in *Deane v. Board of Education*; that testing staff be fully bilingual and bicultural, that tests be designed for valid measurement according to language and cultural background of the child; That every Spanish-speaking child be granted his right to an equal education by providing him with fully bilingual and bicultural programs during their entire school years; that bilingual programs be implemented in primary grades in all schools with at least 10 percent Spanish-speaking children enrollment; that programs be expanded for bilingual bicultural para-professionals to do follow-up instructional activities, that intensive research programs be initiated to resolve the high Latino ‘push-out’ problem.<sup>84</sup>

On July 9 1971, a meeting was held with 45 persons of “Latin descent” to discuss Title III funding for Community Bilingual Centers.<sup>85</sup> According to one report, the meeting took place at the Board of Education and was held so that Assistant Superintendent of Government Funded Programs, James Moffat, could inform and urge Latino community representatives to accept only partial funding (\$200,000) of Elementary and Secondary Education Act Title III funds from the federal government.<sup>86</sup> A coalition of Latino groups (primarily Mexicano and Puerto Rican) calling themselves Chicago’s Latin American Community and Committee for Title III Programs, which was comprised mostly of members from La Raza Unida, voted against partial funding being offered and appealed for community bilingual centers being fully funded at \$600,000.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>Intelligence Division, Chicago Police Department, July 16, 1971, Red Squad Records, Box 249, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

Furthermore, on July 30, 1971, the *Chicago Sun-Times* reported that a Board of Education official promised a “raucous meeting of Latin Americans” that they would get 2.1 million in federal aid to schools in poor neighborhoods.<sup>88</sup> After adverting the crowd of 400 Latinos that only public schools in the poorest Chicago neighborhoods would qualify for federal poverty aid, Assistant superintendent for government-funded programs, James G. Moffat, signed a pledge of \$2 million for a program to teach English as a second language (TESL) to Spanish-speaking children.<sup>89</sup> On July 30, 1971, the *Chicago Today* noted that since Superintendent James Redmonds’ house had recently been picketed by “Latins” demonstrating for better education, Assistant superintendent James Moffat showed up to the meeting held at Holy Family Academy as his representative.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, on Monday July 26, 1971, the *Chicago Sun-Times* reported that approximately 200 representatives of Chicagos’ “Spanish-speaking community” marched on the home of Superintendent James Redmond to voice their grievances with respect to ‘insufficient educational spending’ in their communities.<sup>91</sup> On July 26, 1971, The *Chicago Tribune* noted that about 300 Latin Americans demonstrated in front Schools Superintendent James Redmond’s home demanding more to be done to educate Chicago’s Spanish-speaking youth.<sup>92</sup> According to the *Chicago Tribune*, the march was sponsored by the Latin American Education Alliance.<sup>93</sup> One report noted that on July 29, 1971, representatives from the Alliance of Latin American Education of Chicago (a

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<sup>88</sup> *Chicago Sun-Times*, July 30, 1971.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Chicago Today*, July 30, 1971.

<sup>91</sup> *Chicago Sun-Times*, July 26, 1971.

<sup>92</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, July 26, 1971.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

Latino coalition comprised of the Latin American Task Force, Organization of Latin American Students, La Raza Unida, and Latin American Defense Organization) conducted a march on Division and State Street demanding that Title III, a proposal for Community Bilingual Centers, be fully funded and implemented in their communities.<sup>94</sup>

Nevertheless, on July 30, 1971, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that present at the meeting held at Holy Family Academy was the Latin American Education Alliance comprised of more than 30 Chicago Latino community organizations which initially “shouted off” the speaker platform since they were expecting Superintendent James Redmond to be present.”<sup>95</sup> According to the *Chicago Tribune*, the Latin American Education Alliance made demands that bilingual education programs be expanded and that bilingual family centers be established along with programs for dropouts.<sup>95</sup>

Furthermore, on August 10, 1971, representatives from the Latin American Education Alliance held a community meeting and drafted a list of demands to present to elected public officials.<sup>96</sup> The demands entailed the following: since Latinos represented 10% of the total public school enrollment for the city, federal funds be earmarked for the Latino community; a large increase in bilingual education Title I appropriations; by fiscal 1971-1972, political representatives guarantee Chicago be funded under the program for drop-outs (Title VIII); that Federal Law be changed to use ‘language and cultural isolation’ as criteria rather than twelve year old census and public aid figures.<sup>97</sup> One

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<sup>94</sup> Intelligence Division, Chicago Police Department, Red Squad Records, Box 249, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>95</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, July 30, 1971.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Intelligence Division, Chicago Police Department, August 10, 1971, Red Squad Records, Box 249, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

report noted that the Alianza Latino Americana Para El Adelanto Social (ALAS), a coalition of Latino community groups, presented a testimony to Michael Bakalis, Illinois Superintendent of Public Instruction at a hearing on Public Education held at the University of Illinois Circle Campus on July 26, 1971.<sup>98</sup> Essentially, the testimony publicly rejected partial funding totaling \$200,000 on a proposal that originally called for \$700,000. ALAS members felt that by accepting this funding from the State Office of Public Instruction, the Chicago Board of Education “acted as traitors” toward the Latino community.<sup>99</sup> The testimony went on to point out that although the Chicago Board of Education was aware of the special linguistic needs of Spanish-speaking children throughout the public school system, the Latino community believed that Title I (Elementary and Secondary Act) funds were improperly being spent.<sup>100</sup> The testimony argued that Title I funds were specifically meant for special programs for “educationally deprived children” not for schools to meet their general needs. Yet, they asserted, \$2 million of Title I funds were being improperly spend for the salaries of “school community representatives.”<sup>101</sup> Hence, they charged that Title I funds were being spent in a manner contrary to federal law which was failing to meet the linguistic educational needs of Latino children in Chicago.

In sum, the evidence suggests that Mexicano local community activists were quite active in advocating for bilingual education and programs while attempting to secure the appropriate staff for providing high quality bicultural instruction as well. Moreover, with

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<sup>98</sup> Intelligence Division, Chicago Police Department, July 26, 1971, Red Squad Records, Box 249, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

respects to funding, although “The Chicago Board of Education publicly advocated bilingual/bicultural education and sought Federal and State funds for programs. Local monies, however, have never been significantly used to back up the Board’s public commitments.”<sup>102</sup> In 1974, the bulk of support for bilingual/bicultural programs in Chicago came from Title I, III, and VII of the Federal 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and under the State Bilingual Act.<sup>103</sup>

Accordingly, “In 1972-73, 4,000 students participated in bilingual programs in Chicago, and 2,000 more outside Chicago were served by State funds. In 1973, the Illinois General Assembly raised the allocation for bilingual programs from \$2,370,000 to \$6,000,000, making it possible to increase the number of children served in all bilingual programs from 6,000 to 17,000.”<sup>104</sup> However it is also worth noting in that year, “The Superintendent of Public Instruction has estimated that 100,000 students throughout Illinois need bilingual instruction.” And so this appears to be a somewhat low number when one considers that in 1972, 61,978 Spanish-speaking students (e.g., predominately Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban) were identified by a racial survey of pupils by the Chicago Board of Education. By 1970, Mexicans were the largest Latino group in Chicago estimated at 133,143 followed by Puerto Ricans 78,963.<sup>105</sup> In school district 19 (which includes the South Lawndale or Little Village community), “44.8 percent of the 19,348 students in 1973 were Latino, most of Mexican background.”<sup>106</sup> Yet,

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>103</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>105</sup> See Rita Hernandez, “*The Silent Minority.*”

<sup>106</sup> Bilingual/Bicultural Education: A Privilege or Right? A Report of the Illinois State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights., p. 9.

according to a racial survey of Administration and Teaching Personnel dated September 29, 1972 conducted by the Chicago Board of Education, “Of 426 schools with Latino enrollment, 303 had no permanent Latino teaching staff. In terms of students, 1,814 Latino high school students and 12,674 Latino elementary school students attended schools with no Latino teachers. Another 25,108 Latino students attended schools having only one (or no) Latino teacher; that is 41 percent of all Latino students in Chicago public schools.”<sup>107</sup> Nonetheless, as the Illinois State Advisory Committee pointed out to the United States Commission on Civil Rights in 1974, “At the present time, however, Federal and State bilingual programs are not mandatory for school districts having Spanish speaking students, and the incentive for their use has come primarily from the Latino communities.”<sup>108</sup>

Interestingly enough, 1974 was the same year that the Supreme Court *Milliken v. Bradley*, case was decided pertaining to Detroit, Michigan. In this case, a remedy to desegregate a predominantly African American school district was being sought. “A lower court had attempted to frame a solution that would mix children in the city with those in the largely white suburbs, but the Supreme Court declared that suburbs could not be required to participate unless the plaintiffs could show that ‘racially discriminatory acts of state or local school districts...have been substantial cause of inter-district segregation.’”<sup>109</sup> The implications of this decision were devastating for future urban school desegregation remedies. Now, each city had the burden of resolving the problem

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<sup>107</sup> See Bilingual /Bicultural Education: A Privilege or a Right” p. 11.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>109</sup> Jennifer Hochschild and Nathan Scovronick, *The American Dream and the Public Schools*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003); p. 34.

of school segregation “within its own borders.”<sup>110</sup> As Hochschild and Scovronick note, “*Milliken* shut off effective school desegregation for most northern cities, where more and more African Americans and Latinos were living. Except in southern states where segregation was written into law, it was very hard to prove that city or district boundaries were drawn purposely to separate the races; courts could therefore rarely impose cross-district remedies.”<sup>111</sup> In the end, “The possibility that cities might be desegregated under *Brown* and its successors helped send whites to suburbs that *Milliken* absolved from any role in a solution. At the same time, economic trends sent poor blacks (and later, immigrants) into the cities.”<sup>112</sup>

In Chicago, when Superintendent James F. Redmond (1966-1975) proposed a desegregation plan which revolved around busing a few thousand Black children to the Austin and Lake Shore communities, it “elicited waves of White opposition.”<sup>113</sup> As Dorothy Shipps points out, the ‘White flight’ to the suburbs was precisely Chicago’s Mayor Richard J. Daley’s biggest fear since his chief concern was not desegregating local school districts but attracting the middle-class base to the inner-city and maintaining a White majority near the central business district.<sup>114</sup> Political scientist Paul Peterson contends that each time Mayor Daley publicly commented on Redmond’s desegregation plan, he distanced himself from having any particular opinion in the matter and directed attention to members of the Chicago Board of Education as having the final responsibility

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Dorothy Shipps, *School Reform, Corporate Style: Chicago, 1880-2000*. (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2006), p. 74.

<sup>114</sup> See Ibid., pp. 74-84.

of being “responsive to public opinion.”<sup>115</sup> What Peterson suggests is that Daley was privately opposed to any busing proposals for the sake of preventing an “exodus of whites from the city”, yet politically expedient in appearing to preserve the neighborhood school for fear of disrupting his Democratic Black and White constituency.<sup>116</sup>

Nevertheless, by 1975, Chicago Public Schools were more segregated than when superintendent Redmond arrived. According to Shipps, 50 percent of high schools were 95 percent White or Black and 72 percent of students were Black or Latino.<sup>117</sup> According to Travis Johnson, superintendent Benjamin Willis and James Redmond, with the approval of the mayor, adopted various strategies in their respective terms between 1954-1975, which in the end, helped maintain racial segregation throughout Chicago Public Schools.<sup>118</sup> Some of these tactics included, “skewing boundaries, restricting transfers to Blacks, building schools only in the black community, and the use of mobile units.”<sup>119</sup> These strategies coupled with ‘white flight’ and Whites’ refusal to go to school with Blacks, Johnson tells us, were the key reasons Black schools were overcrowded.<sup>120</sup>

#### Within School Segregation and the Politics of Bilingual Education

Consequently, despite *de jure* segregation being declared unconstitutional by the highest court of the land, *de facto* segregation has been much more difficult to be

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<sup>115</sup> Paul E. Peterson, *School Politics Chicago Style*. (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1976). 159.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. p. 81.

<sup>118</sup> Travis T. Johnson, *Race, Politics, Money: School Reform Chicago Style*. diss. Kent State University, 1993.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 250.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

adequately addressed by the courts. For example, within school segregation based on linguistic exclusion has also historically been aggravated by concentrated poverty characteristic of poor and working class schooling districts. In 1973, the Advisory Committee for the Education of the Spanish Speaking and Mexican Americans in the Annual Report to the Secretary; Department of Health, Education, and Welfare recommended the following:

...that education for the Spanish Speaking be designed, not only to enable them to move quickly and efficiently into the mainstream, but also to retain their Spanish language and those attributes of their Hispanic culture which have contributed so much to the culture of America. It is through bilingual-bicultural programs that this goal is best achieved, without damage to the self-image of the Spanish Speaking child enrolled in an American School.<sup>121</sup>

Indeed, “A fundamental premise behind bilingual-bicultural education is that students should not be forced by the schools to choose between the culture and language of their families and the dominant culture and language of the American society.”<sup>122</sup> This is precisely why advocates of cultural democracy in education have cogently pointed out three foundational reasons for implementing effective bilingual/bicultural educational programs throughout public schools:

1. Researchers have determined that permanent psychological damage often results when the student’s cultural identity is denied or suppressed in school.
2. Students have been found to achieve better academically when teachers respond to their cultural identities positively, thus drawing on their strengths.
3. Each culture has a special contribution to make to the experience of all students in the educational process.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> As quoted in *Bilingual/Bicultural Education: A Privilege or a Right?* p. 18.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Yet, between the 1970-71 school year in Chicago, there were a disproportionate number of Latino students classified as ‘special education’ and assigned to ‘special’ classrooms.

The student classifications ranged in the following categories:

1. Educable Mentally Handicapped (EMH); 2) Trainable Mentally Handicapped (TMH); 3) Brain Injured/Severe Learning Disabilities (BI/SLD); 4) Moderate Learning Disabilities (MDL); 5) Blind/Partially Seeing; 6) Deaf/Hard Hearing; 7) Socially Maladjusted; 8) Early Remediation Approach (ERA); 9) Impact; 10) Multiple Handicapped, and 11) Orthopedically Handicapped.<sup>124</sup>

The Illinois State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights reported that according to the 1970-71 Chicago Board of Education Racial Survey of Special Education, under the specific categories of: 1) Brain Injured/ Severe Learning Disabilities; 2) Educable Mentally Handicapped (EMH); 3) Moderate Learning Disabilities, “More than four or every five students in the second and third categories are black, Mexican, or Puerto Rican.”<sup>125</sup>

Furthermore, 77 percent of African American, Mexican, and Puerto Rican students in Chicago Public Schools were classified under the ambiguous special education category of ‘socially maladjusted.’ As the Illinois State Advisory Committee aptly noted, “The use of the category ‘socially maladjusted’ is questionable, especially in light of the social, cultural, and social judgments which this category suggests.”<sup>126</sup>

Curiously, the racial breakdown of special education teachers in 1970-71 reveals that, out of 2,006 teachers, only three were of Mexican origin.<sup>127</sup> In addition, “Among the 179 special education personnel assigned to district offices, 44 were black (26.6 percent) and 135 were white (75.4 percent). There were no Latinos in this group.”<sup>128</sup> Thus, in 1974, the Illinois State Advisory Committee concluded that, “This seems to indicate evidence

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. It should also be noted that with respects to the representation of Latinos in CPS administrative positions, in 1969, Mrs. Maria Cerda became the first to be appointed to the Chicago Board of Education. See Ibid., p. 2.

of systematic discrimination by race and national origin in the referral and/or testing, classification, and placement of students in special education classes. A non-discriminatory special education program should have a significantly lower minority enrollment, especially in categories of non-physical impairment.”<sup>129</sup> As Dolores Guerrero who was the only Latina staff person in 69’ at Harrison High stated, “Nobody knew what was happening at Harrison. No one knew why many students were being placed in mentally retarded classrooms. They did not test well because they didn’t speak English.”<sup>130</sup>

In the final analysis, within school segregation then was an issue for Mexican-origin students throughout Chicago Public Schools. Evidence suggests that students and community activists were pushing for proportionate representation of Latino teachers and bilingual/bicultural curriculums in the quest for securing the spirit of Brown for themselves or their children in Chicago. Another example which adds substantial evidence to this, was the 1968 student walkouts that took place at Harrison High School in the Little Village community of Chicago. Fourteen years after *Brown II*, Harrison High School was actually somewhat ‘racially balanced’. For instance, according to Principal Sam Ozaki, in 1969 the racial composition of Harrison High was approximately 40% Black, 40% Latino, and 20% White.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, in 1969, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that out of a total student enrollment of 3,000, Harrison High School had more than 1,200 “Latin Students.”<sup>132</sup> However, by 1974, a ‘white flight’ gradually continued to

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Dolores Guerrero. Interview with author, June 16, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>131</sup> Sam Ozaki. Interview with author, March 23, 2009.

<sup>132</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, May 9, 1969, p. 6.

occur as European ethnic groups increasingly left the South Lawndale community and headed to other sections of the city or the suburbs.

Meanwhile, Mexican-origin and African American students became re-segregated throughout Chicago Public School District fourteen. For instance, former Mexican-origin students of Harrison High were either placed in the newly constructed Benito Juárez High School in the Pilsen community or Farragut High School, while most African American students were placed at Collins High School in the North Lawndale community. What is also most intriguing is that although Mexicans were racially classified as 'White' by the courts, all Mexican-origin students were classified as 'Puerto Rican' by Harrison High School administrators in 1968. Thus, newspaper coverage of the student walkouts distorted the human agency of Mexican-origin student activism in Chicago during this pivotal moment in American history by referring to all Latino students who participated in the 'blowouts' at Harrison High as 'Puerto Ricans' or 'Latins.'

### Summary and Conclusion

Since the culmination of the Anglo-settler Western expansionist Mexican American War 1846-1848, Mexicans were forcibly incorporated into the U.S. via military conquest. As a result, the majority of Mexicans became subjugated, subordinated, and segregated peoples with second class status. Violent vigilante lynching of Mexicans points to evidence that Mexicans were perceived as racially inferior Others. Consequently, Mexicans became dispossessed subordinate second-class citizens in the United States or, paradoxically, came to be perceived as 'foreigners' in their own land. In

northern industrialized cities like Chicago, Mexicans were racialized as inferior and so they lived in segregated neighborhoods, not by choice, but by institutionalized forms of housing discrimination in the form of discriminatory real estate policies and procedures which relegated them to particular poverty stricken neighborhoods characterized by inferior schooling districts.

Before *Brown*, *Mendez v. Westminster* served as a testing ground for many of the arguments (such as the use of social science expert testimony) involved in the landmark *Brown* decision. Coalition strategies amongst African American and Mexican American attorneys sheds light on future inter-ethnic tactics that may be utilized to challenge institutionalized forms of educational inequality throughout public schools. Despite being racially classified as ‘White’ by the courts, Mexicans faced linguistic and cultural discrimination throughout public schooling in Chicago. Evidence of this is suggested by the overrepresentation of Mexican students in Special Education classes.

Finally, the promise of *Brown* and the struggle for equitable education for Mexicans in Chicago during the civil rights era 1954-1974 seemingly took on a somewhat different shape and form than the Southwest. Voluntary desegregation in the post-Brown era by Mexican-origin community activists was resisted for fear of losing the battle for bilingual/bicultural programs in their local neighborhood schools. What the archival evidence suggests is that although local schooling district litigation cases were not filed in Chicago, the battle for educational equity within schools was fought. During the early 70’s, the campaign for establishing effective bilingual/bicultural programs, it is argued, became part of the quest for overcoming inequality throughout local Chicago

public schools. This is evidenced by a coalition of Latino (primarily Mexican and Puerto Rican) organizations which demanded that Title III, a proposal for Community Bilingual Centers, be fully funded and implemented in their respective communities. In addition, many Latino community activists in Chicago believed that Title I funds were being improperly mishandled and spent. Community control then became the objective in their quest for educational equity.

In short, the collective extralegal struggles for attaining the promise of Brown by Mexican-origin students and activists in Chicago at the height of the civil rights era has yet to be adequately documented. We have yet to hear the actual voices of social actors that may perhaps provide a more complete narrative. It is to this that I now turn in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE HARRISON HIGH SCHOOL WALKOUTS OF 1968: CHICANISMO IN CHICAGO

In this chapter I begin by pointing out how an inspection of newspaper articles discloses how Mexicans, Mexicanos, or Chicana/os were labeled as ‘Puerto Ricans’, ‘Latin Americans’ and ‘Spanish-speaking’. The critical omission of Mexican American narratives distorted the historical trajectory (continuous and discontinuous) of Mexican-origin student activism that developed in Chicago during the late 60’s.

I began by looking for newspaper clippings that had anything to do with Latino student walkouts, protests, or boycotts in Chicago throughout the 60’s. I realized very quickly the limited amount of on-line national newspaper catalogues between the years 1964-1967. The first newspaper article I examined appeared in *The New York Times* October 10, 1968. Curiously enough, this article reported that, “A Negro and Puerto Rican walkout and a rash of fires today emptied 3,100 students at Harrison High School, where pupils have quit classes for three days in a dispute over the teaching of Afro-American and Latin American history.”<sup>1</sup> The first thing that caught my eye was that the article referred to all Latino students who participated in this walkout as ‘Puerto Rican’ students. The reason this alerted me was that Harrison High School is located in the South Lawndale community of Chicago and, according to census tracts based on the 1970

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<sup>1</sup>*New York Times*, October 10, 1968, p. 38.

and 1980 censuses, the South Lawndale community consisted of the greatest community concentration of Mexicans in Chicago.<sup>2</sup>

Conversely, according to the community area data book, which is based on the 1970 community census extrapolated from the U.S. Bureau of Census, Mexican and Mexican American residents added up to 82.9 percent of the total population in the South Lawndale community comprising 12, 842 of the Spanish-speaking population. While there has historically been somewhat of a Puerto Rican presence in the South Lawndale community dating back to the early 60's, 1970 census tracts indicate that Puerto Ricans made up a total of 1,806 of the Spanish-speaking community population.<sup>3</sup> So, despite the evidence which strongly suggests that Mexicano students comprised the majority of the student body composition at Harrison High School, in one sweep of the type writer, the *New York Times* erased Mexican American students from this significant event. Maria Díaz, a former student and participant of the walkouts at Harrison High, provides further evidence of this when she states:

“Originally, we Latino students felt that part of the movement was to help Latino students who were Spanish-speaking primarily from Mexico and keep them up, on their math and their English so they could stay with the rest of us who were bilingual or monolingual in terms of English and so they could transition into the mainstream and that would help us in bilingualism to go to college, get jobs and so on and so forth like that...”<sup>4</sup>

The next newspaper articles I examined were: *The Defender*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Daily News* to compare and contrast coverage of student

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<sup>2</sup>The Chicago Fact Book Consortium., ed., Local Community Fact Book Chicago Metropolitan Area Based on the 1970 and 1980 Censuses., p. 84.

<sup>3</sup>Community Area Data Book, Chicago Association of Commerce and Industry Research and OSLA Financial Services Corporation Based on 1970 Census, U.S. Bureau of the Census., p. 241.

<sup>4</sup>Maria Díaz, Interview with author, February 17, 2008.

walkouts at Harrison High School. On October 21, 1968, *The Daily Defender* reported that “an estimated 400-500 Latin American students are expected to walk out in Harrison and Tuley Park High Schools because their demands are not being met.”<sup>5</sup> According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Victor Adams president of the New Breed Black student organization, was one of the main organizers of the school boycott and was quoted as saying, “Harrison's Spanish-speaking pupils would join in the boycott to make it 90 percent effective.”<sup>6</sup> On October 10, 1968 the *Chicago Tribune*, reported that, “At Harrison High School, 2850 W. 24th st., black and Latin American students staged a walkout, youth gangs set fires in waste baskets, released tear gas in the school, and threw a fire extinguisher through a door.”<sup>7</sup> An article that appeared in the *Chicago Sun-Times* on October 10 1968 stated that, “The most serious disorders occurred at Harrison High, 2850 W. 24th, where black and Spanish-speaking students have demanded more influence in school decisions.”<sup>8</sup>

On October 10, 1968 the *Chicago Daily News* printed an article which asserted that, “At Harrison High School, 2850 W. 24th st., scene of the most serious disturbances this week, attendance was about 40 percent of normal Friday as the New Breed, a black student organization, called for a boycott there. Principal Alexander W. Burke addressed two separate student assemblies. About 300 students, mostly blacks and Puerto Ricans, walked out at the second one after an unidentified youth grappled a microphone and urged a walkout.”<sup>9</sup> As evidenced above, these articles consistently refer to Mexican-

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<sup>5</sup> *Daily Defender*, October 21,1968, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, October 12,1968, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, October 10,1968, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Chicago Sun-Times*, October 10,1968, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> *Chicago Daily News*, October 10,1968, p. 10

origin students who participated in the Harrison High School walkouts as either Puerto Ricans, Spanish-speaking, or Latin Americans. When I asked Salvador Obregon, the official spokesperson of OLAS, the Latino student organization at Harrison, why the Harrison administration had classified all Latino students as ‘Puerto Ricans’ his response was:

I’ll tell you why...because that’s how out of tune they were with what they had under their roof. For them, they probably just said, ‘they are all brown or Puerto Ricans’. That’s just one small indicator of how they had the gall to say that the majority of us were Puerto Ricans because they had no idea who we really were...The lack of time in understanding the percentage of Latino students and understanding the difference between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans is another slap in the face to us...You don’t even know who we are?

Moreover, María Gomez, a first generation Mexicana student who participated in student walkouts remembers:

“Walkouts were going on until 1974, until my time when I graduated and so I’m at the tail end of these before Benito Juárez High School<sup>10</sup> was built...We wore the headband. We wore t-shirts that said: Chicano Power with the arm and the brown stuff...We had teachers telling us when we were at Harrison you can do this, you have people power and that’s how we got back into the Froebel<sup>11</sup> thing, we marched, we walked out of school...we did walkouts..two o’clock we’re walking out, or 11 o’clock, or this period, we’re walking out.”<sup>12</sup>

What this suggests is that perhaps the particular political consciousness raising and practices in Chicago during the civil rights era took on a unique form of its own that differs somewhat from other regions of the country such as the Southwest. For instance, Dionne Danna asserts that, “One of the important dynamics of Harrison was the unity of

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<sup>10</sup> Benito Juárez High School was constructed in the Pilsen community in 1977 after a long hard fought battle with the Chicago Board of Education forged by parents, students, and community activists.

<sup>11</sup> Froebel School was a branch of Harrison High where freshmen attended before transferring to Harrison in their sophomore year. Froebel was located about four miles away from North Lawndale in the Pilsen community that was predominantly Mexican by the late 60’s and early 70’s.

<sup>12</sup> Maria Díaz, Interview with author, February 17, 2008. Chicago, Illinois.

Black and Latino students. New Breed's demands included the establishing of language laboratories as part of their fourteenth demand which called for innovative educational improvements to 'develop each Harrison student to his highest potential.'"<sup>13</sup> According to one report, 'school disorders' at Harrison started in the school lunch room on October 7, 1968.<sup>14</sup> This report stated that a group Negro students caused damage to the lunch room and were demanding only Negro teachers to teach Afro-American History. This report observed that approximately 300 mostly Negro and Puerto Rican students then refused to attend classes in the afternoon periods and decided instead to stage a demonstration at the Board of Education in downtown.<sup>15</sup>

In any event, aside from revealing and concealing dominant notions of 'race,' the discursive practices of the popular press along with school administrative officials, as well as police officers, serve as naturalized understandings of events that leave taken for granted versions of history in tact while simplifying complex historical social processes along the way.

Some newspaper articles which I examined suggested that, similar to the educational demands drafted in a 'manifesto' by African American students at Harrison High School, Mexican-origin students also constructed a manifesto of their own. For example, on October 10, 1968, the *Chicago Daily News* reported that, "Spanish-speaking students at Harrison presented Burke with their own 'manifesto' Thursday requesting a Spanish-speaking teacher of Latin American history and an assistant principal who

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<sup>13</sup> Dianne Danna, *Something Better for Our Children: Black Organizing in Chicago Public Schools, 1963-1971*. (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 75.

<sup>14</sup> Intelligence Division, Chicago Police Department, October 7, 1968, Red Squad Records, Box 211, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

speaks Spanish.”<sup>16</sup> One report observed that the ‘Latins’ demands for TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) teachers and Spanish-Speaking principles and counselors, were in principal Burke’s opinion, very difficult to hire.<sup>17</sup> In addition, this report noted also that on October 17, 1968, a general assembly was held at Harrison High School for the purpose of addressing various dissenting students and community leaders.

According to this report, of the 500 community people in attendance, 100 were mothers and the ‘Latins’ were displeased with principal Alexander Burke whom they felt was waffling around their issues by stating that he did not have the authority to grant any demands.<sup>18</sup> Another report observed that present at a Latin American student walkout and protest at Harrison High were various representatives from LADO (Latin American Defense Organization) and OLAS (Organization of Latin American Students).<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, Joseph Boyce of the *Chicago Tribune* stated that, “Participants besides the New Breed included the Concerned Parents and Concerned Residents of Lawndale, representatives of the white community and a Spanish-speaking group calling itself the Latin Action Committee, which yesterday submitted its own demands to Burke for more Spanish-speaking faculty members and Latin American history and culture classes.”<sup>20</sup> This suggests that Mexicano parents and community activists in the Little Village community formed a united front to press the Harrison board for school reform.

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<sup>16</sup> *Chicago Daily News*, October 10, 1968, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Intelligence Division, Chicago Police Department, October 17, 1968, Red Squad Records, Box 211, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Intelligence Division, Chicago Police Department, October 15, 1968, Red Squad Records, Box 211, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>20</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, October 11, 1968, p. 2.

Pointedly, omitted from the newspaper coverage was the extent of student involvement as well as their complete demands to the Harrison administration.

The interviews with Vince Estrada and Maria Díaz who attended Harrison High and participated in student walkouts between 1968-1976 serve as evidence that some of the demands by Mexican-origin students included the hiring of an Latin American History teacher, more Latino teachers, effective bilingual education programs, repairs in the school building, and a new larger school to deal with over-crowdedness. As Maria Díaz recalled:

“First, we did walkouts because the building was crumbling, also...they knocked down Froebel and got rid of Froebel as a result of the early walkouts so everybody came from Pilsen right to Harrison in Little Village, you know, so everybody meshed and that took care of it. Then, our walls were crumbling, we were overcrowded, we wanted more Latino teachers...so again we got organized and we did walkouts in 71’ because other schools in the area were getting rehabbed and we weren’t, so we did them and as a result we also did a petition writing, we were very vocal at the school and at that time, the administration took us very seriously that they got us interviewed through the Atlanta. We told them, look at our building, go inside the school and look at our walls, you know. We were being sentenced, you know, because we fought, we were the ones living in this crap, you had lead pipes in there, you know. And so in 1976, it finally ended and the building got fixed and painted and it looked really, really nice. But the building was overcrowded by all the students who came from Froebel in Pilsen and had to go West to Harrison...So, those students needed a school in Pilsen...<sup>21</sup>

Vince stated that, “All I remember is that we did the marches at Harrison for getting Latin American History and Latino teachers and we protested with students at Froebel.”<sup>22</sup> As mentioned in the above excerpt, one of the issues affecting all students at Harrison High was over-crowdedness. In 1968, Harrison had about 3,000 students and the Little Village Community Council believed that both Farragut and Harrison High were overcrowded

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<sup>21</sup> Maria Díaz, Interview with author, February 17, 2008. Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>22</sup>Vince Estrada, Interview with author, February 17, 2008. Chicago, Illinois.

and thus pressed the Chicago board of education to provide a new high school in the South Lawndale community.<sup>23</sup> The board of education responded by building mobile classrooms at Farragut High to deal with over-crowdedness. According to a school board report obtained by the *Chicago Tribune*, nearly 15,000 students were enrolled in Marshall, Farragut, Harrison, and Austin High Schools yet the schools were built to serve only 10,000 students. Nevertheless, at Farragut, in order to relieve the double-capacity enrollment, 17 mobile classrooms were installed along with a 6.88 million dollar project to built a new wing that would hold a capacity of 1,200 students.<sup>24</sup> The construction of trailer classrooms dubbed “Willis Wagons” to ‘manage’ over-crowdedness was part of the legacy that former superintendent Benjamin Willis (1953-1966) left which represented one way of effectively enforcing neighborhood segregation.<sup>25</sup>

Interestingly, I was able to obtain a document with the actual list of Mexican-origin student demands at Harrison High thanks to the Chicago Police Department ‘Red Squad’ Records that were well archived by the Chicago Historical Society. Influenced by the House Committee on ‘un-American’ activities, specialized police units were formed in collaboration with the FBI, CIA, U.S. Department of Justice, and the 5th Army Intelligence Unit.<sup>26</sup> These units which numbered in the hundreds across American cities reached their peak during the sixties and became known as ‘red squads.’ Propaganda from right-wing groups and federal sources labeled persons involved in civil rights

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<sup>23</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, October 17, 1968.

<sup>24</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, December 5, 1968.

<sup>25</sup> See Dorothy Shipps, *School Reform, Corporate Style: Chicago, 1880-2000*. (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2006)., p. 67.

<sup>26</sup> See Frank Donner, *Protectors of Privilege: Red Squads and Police Repression in Urban America*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). Also see, Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars Against Dissent in the United States*. (Boston: South End Press, 1990).

movements as ‘communists’ or ‘fellow travelers.’<sup>27</sup> According to Donner, Chicago became a major city of political surveillance since; “In addition, it was the headquarters of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the site of the 1968 Democratic Convention, which stimulated new surges of repressive police activity in response to organized protests.”<sup>28</sup> Hence, during the late 60’s, students as well as social and political activists increasingly became targets of intelligence operations and the Chicago Subversive Unit (SU) became an eye for Mayor Richard J. Daley.

Nonetheless, sometime during early October 1968, Mexican-origin students at Harrison drafted a list of demands for presentation to the Harrison High administration. On October 10, 1968, over 300 Mexicano students staged a walkout at Harrison High School. On October 14, 1968, a Mexican-origin student spokesman, Salvador Obregon read their list of grievances and demands at a school assembly.<sup>29</sup> The document was titled, “Latin American Manifesto of Harrison High School” and the grievances and demands made by the students were as follows.<sup>30</sup> The demand for appropriate bilingual counselors, teachers, and staff reflected the unique needs of Mexican-origin students for quality bilingual education programs. The demands also reflected among other things a new political consciousness of racial and cultural pride. This is evidenced by a demand for Latin American history and culture classes and demand number nine which stipulates recognition of a soccer team. Harrison High previously only had football, basketball, and track as major organized sports, which were well represented by African American

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>29</sup> This was obtained from the 1968 Harrison High Year Book: *the Harrisonian*. Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>30</sup> See Appendix A.

students.<sup>31</sup> As mentioned previously, the majority of ‘Latino’ students at Harrison were Mexican-origin and a significant amount of students were from Mexico where soccer represents the most popular national sport. Salvador Obregon who is a first-generation Mexican became the official spokesperson of the Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS) at Harrison. He recalled that:

The majority of active members of OLAS were Mexicano or Chicano. In that era, there were very few who were second-generation Mexicanos. The students who were in the organization, their parents had migrated from Mexico here to Chicago. The majority were born in Mexico and brought here, like I was when they were 5 years old and some even older. There was a mix of students some Puerto Rican, some Colombian with the majority being Mexican. So, when I gave speeches representing the organization, I would emphasize Mexicano issues and stereotypes that Anglos had against Mexicanos...I used phrases like, ‘we will no longer be sleeping under a cactus with a sombrero under our head.’<sup>32</sup>

According to Obregon,

“The actual name OLAS was something that we thought of with the help of Dolores Guerrero...We had to come up with something because people were calling us ‘communists’ and ‘trouble-makers.’ It was after a series of organizational meetings at the church, restaurants, and peoples houses that we came up with the name OLAS.”<sup>33</sup>

Obregon went on to describe how this unfolded:

“I remember presenting this question: What are we doing here? Are we just causing trouble? I remember someone saying, ‘no man, we’re making waves.’ So, I said, all right...we are a bunch of students who are making waves. And that’s when we said, we are an organization of what? Latin American students making waves...After the conference in Detroit, I began to see the term OLAS as, we had waves coming in from California, from New York, from the Southwest, and waves from the Midwest. So you had all these waves coming at you from

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<sup>31</sup> This was confirmed by an examination of the 69’ Harrison High Year Book, *the Harrisonian*. Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>32</sup> Salvador Obregon, Interview with author, February 3, 2010. Phoenix, Arizona.

<sup>33</sup> Salvador Obregon. Interview with author, February 3, 2010. Phoenix, Arizona.

all sides which led to a huge combustion. Again, there was no centralized planning, it just happened that way. It was all about justice.”<sup>34</sup>

Salvador Obregon remembers how the predominantly Mexican-origin OLAS members were careful with arriving at an official title of the Latino student organization at Harrison. He narrates,

We did not want to individualize it. Again, the thought was, we’re doing this not just for the Mexicanos or Chicanos, we’re doing this as a Latino organization because the guys we played soccer with, for example, were students who were a mix of Latinos. The majority were Mexican but I remember a guy by the name of Manuel Arcos who was also in the mix, and he was Colombian...We called him, El Colombiano, that’s what we called him. And then a few students were Puerto Rican so to have put the Mexicano or Chicano label, in our opinion back then, would have been inappropriate, it would have excluded people...When we had impromptu meetings, I remember emphasizing to the other students that we could not use identifiers like Mexicanos, Colombianos, or Puerto Riqueños because it just would question our validity and what we were doing. No, it has to be a united front...all Latinos, and that’s how we came up with OLAS. <sup>35</sup>

Ms. Dolores Guerrero who was the only Mexican-origin staff member at Harrison recalled the situation at Harrison which compelled Latino students to stage walkouts:

When I was at Harrison High School, the students had to constantly be walking out in order to receive a good education and the Mexican students were aware that there was a Black manifesto that called for Black counselors, teachers, and teaching African American history and other services that students needed in order to be successful in school. Well, there was nothing for Mexican students at Harrison. Instead they were being threatened that if they were identified as participating in any walkouts, they were gonna call immigration and deport them...Well, that’s when Mexicano students began began to worry about belonging in the school. They saw themselves as people who needed to act on what they were receiving...So, they began to see themselves as part of community leaders. Nobody was doing anything and and Black students had their demands

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. The acronym OLAS in Spanish literally translates to waves in English.

<sup>35</sup> Salvador Obregon, Interview with author, February 3, 2010. Phoenix, Arizona.

so Mexicano students began to see that they too could demand changes and not simply be a silent minority.<sup>36</sup>

Salvador Obregon who was the official spokesperson of the Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS) representing the Latino student body at Harrison remembers quite vividly what initially moved him to get involved with organizing students on campus to make demands: “Well, here I was on the verge of graduating from high school with serious thoughts of going to college. What was customary back then all the students had an opportunity to meet with their academic counselors. My academic counselor was a gentleman by the name of Robert Hansen.<sup>37</sup> When I sat down with Mr. Hansen, he asked me, “o.k. Sal what are you gonna do when you graduate?” My response to him was:

Well, I was thinking of going to college.” I remember the look on his face very distinctively saying, “college?, you want to go to college Sal?” I said, well yes, I think my grades are good and that I could get into a college of some sort. His response was, “but Sal, you’re Hispanic. Hispanics don’t go to college Sal. Hispanics learn a vocation.” I’ll be more than happy to get you into some program at Washburn. I did have some experience working a part-time job at office printing press. He said, “I could put you in a program at Washburn to become an office printer or something.” But I said, I want to go to college. He said, “Hispanics don’t go to college. It is well known that the vast majority of Hispanics who go to college never finish, they drop out after their first or second year.” That being the case, instead of going to college and wasting two years, you could devote those two years learning profession and in less than two years, you can get out and start earning money to help support your family. And I was shocked. It is something that I held inside me because back then being a first-generation Mexicano on 18th street, we didn’t have any support system at Harrison, any counselors per se. At that time, Dolores Guerrero was basically a tutor. She never became a full counselor or teacher at Harrison. So, I became angry and I left that office confused because I was unsure of what my next move would be. After that, I realized that there was a lot of turmoil after

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<sup>36</sup> Dolores Guerrero, interview with author, May 7, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>37</sup> This was confirmed by cross-referencing it with the 1969 *Harrisonian* yearbook. Mr. Robert Hansen is listed and pictured in the faculty section as a counselor. p. 25

the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King and Black students had introduced a manifesto at Harrison. So, I sat in on a couple of their meetings out of interest. I would go home after school and look at some of the stats at the school and noticed that the vast majority of students at Harrison were Mexicano but we didn't have representation, counselors, teachers, other than Barbara Chavez who was the Spanish teacher and she was Cuban. I'll get to her later because Cubanos in that era who were leaving Cuba were not thought of as getting political in the U.S. She even once told me privately, "I think what you're doing is important, but don't get me involved because I'm Cubana and I need to stay in the background and keep my mouth shut and keep my job." Um...so then after listening and reading the Black manifesto and realizing that we really didn't have any representation at Harrison, I got to look at some funding issues at school and a big percentage was funded for extracurricular activities and clubs which were all geared to Black students at Harrison. And here we were trying to organize a soccer team. We played right there in the Boulevard right in front of the school all the time. And that's when we realized that, hey, Black students are getting everything and we can't get nothing, no counselors, teachers, or a soccer team? Why are we being taught a history that excludes us? No one knew, for example, Thomas A. Edison is Latino. His full name is Thomas Alba Edison. And like Thomas Edison, I questioned, how many more Latinos, Chicanos, Mexicanos have contributed to the success of this country and we were not being taught that...just Washington and Jefferson. So, after the meeting I had with Mr. Hanson, my anger developed into a real inquisitiveness. I started to question everything...why? Why are we Latinos being treated so different? Why are we not getting any attention at Harrison?

On October 14, 1968 an assembly was held at Harrison High with 500 community folks (mainly concerned parents) present. Principal Alexander Burke along with Superintendent Mr. Drayton and District Superintendent Mr. Cheatham were also in the audience. After student Sharron Matthews who represented the New Breed student organization presented the Black manifesto to a very receptive audience, Salvador Obregon addressed the assembly and presented the Latin American manifesto which was received by a standing ovation.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Intelligence Division, Chicago Police Department, October 14, 1968, Red Squad Records, box 211. Chicago Historical Society.

At the request of the associate superintendent, principal Alexander Burke responded to the demands by holding a meeting with students to discuss their grievances. Burke attended the meeting with armed policemen and the official purpose of the meeting was to discuss and evaluate the situation at Harrison during the week of October 7, 1968. Present at the assembly were various community organizations such as the Concerned Parents and People of Lawndale, the Latin Action Committee, faculty members, and administrative heads.<sup>39</sup> According to the minutes recorded in that meeting, Ms. Dolores Guerrero<sup>40</sup> who was listed as a ‘Latin American consultant at Harrison’ but whose official title was, “Counselor Spanish Resource Teacher,”<sup>41</sup> mentioned her position as a liaison for the school between Latino students and their parents at Harrison High. She also stated that a major issue was the lack of communication with Mexican students and parents because of their inability to speak English. She thus requested more bilingual counselors, teachers, and facilities to aid Latino students.<sup>42</sup> Student demands were not being met by the school administration so walkouts continued to occur at Harrison throughout October of 1968. On October 16, 1968, the *Chicago Daily Defender* reported that 300 students of “Latin American descent” walked out of Harrison High to make demands for more Latin American teachers and counselors.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> The Spanish teacher who happened to be Cuban was the only other Latino member of the faculty and her position, according to student spokesperson Salvador Obregon during the Latino student walkouts was not to get politically involved.

<sup>41</sup> Dolores Guerrero, Interview with author, March 23, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>42</sup> Intelligence Division, Chicago Police Department, Minutes, “Discussion and Evaluation of the Situation at Harrison During the Week of October 7, 1968.” Red Squad Records, Box 211, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>43</sup> *Chicago Daily Defender*, October 16, 1968. p. 3.

One report observed that a meeting comprised of parents and students of Harrison High was held at St. Procopius School in Pilsen on October 17, 1968.<sup>44</sup> According to this report, this meeting was held in Spanish and presided over by a local Mexican Reverend who was president of the Latin-American Ministerial Association. The purpose of the meeting was to go over the demands and grievances of ‘Latin American’ students at Harrison and inform parents what was happening at this school. The report noted that two petitions were presented at this meeting asking parents to support the students in their protests against school conditions at Harrison High and to demand a new high school in the Pilsen area.<sup>45</sup> The meeting ended with ‘Latin’ student representatives from Harrison informing everyone in attendance that another walkout was being planned that would take place Monday October 21, 1968.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, on October 21, 1968 the *Chicago Daily Defender* reported that approximately 400-500 Latin American Students walked out of Harrison High since their demands were failing to be met.<sup>47</sup> Following the lead of schools Superintendent James F. Redmond, the *Daily Defender* noted that Principal Alexander Burke adopted a ‘get tuff’ position as he warned all students participating in the, “Liberation Monday” school boycott that they would be suspended.<sup>48</sup>

The Harrison administration initially responded to the Latino student demands by attempting to intimidate the student leaders. Principal Alexander Burke identified

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<sup>44</sup> Intelligence Division, Chicago Police Department, October 18, 1968, Red Squad Records, Box 211, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> *Chicago Daily Defender*, October 21, 1968

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 5. According to the *Daily Defender*, the first ‘Liberation Monday’ kept approximately 30,000 students out of Chicago schools. A city-wide boycott of high schools was called by Black students for Monday with participating Latino students from Harrison and Tuley Park High since they too felt that their student demands were not being met.

Salvador Obregon as the leader representing the Latino student body. Obregon

remembers a confrontation he had with the principal:

When I started making speeches and stuff, that's when the threat of Mr. Burke started. He said to me, 'you need to cool it or we're gonna deport you.' And I said, on what grounds? Mr. Burke said, as an 'undesirable alien'. So, they had done their homework and they knew that all I had was a green card since I did not become a citizen until I came out of the army. So, that's what he threatened me with which excited me even more. I said, you want to deport me and I've been living in the U.S. since I was a kid? So, all that did was ignite me more.<sup>49</sup>

As mentioned previously, the Chicago Police Department in collaboration with the FBI had an active (SU) 'subversive unit' operative in Chicago during the late 60's. A major tactic of these 'red squad' units was to hire informants whose primary task was to identify and document any activities by 'trouble-makers.' Students involved in protests increasingly became targets for these units to keep a close watchful eye on. Obregon recalled the highly politically charged climate during the walkouts:

I remember that I felt that we were being spied on by some infiltrators in our meetings and Dolores Guerrero advised me to speak to someone from the Department of Health Education and Welfare to serve as my legal advisor. He wasn't my attorney, but I remember that one of the things he advised me was on how to say things...how to phrase things properly. He told me, you can't say you organized a school boycott. You say that, and someone gets hurt in the walkouts by the police, and they'll say that you were inciting a riot. So, don't ever say that you are going to organize a boycott. You are going to tell them that you are going to organize a demonstration; not a boycott. Because boycott is too confrontational but you can demonstrate and exercise your right to civil disobedience. So, they send this gentleman and he would go with me to meetings that we held and when I made speeches, he would follow me home to make sure that I got home safe. things were very dangerous back then.<sup>50</sup>

Ideological differences existed among the local Mexicano community in Chicago during the late 60's. Hence, not all members of the Mexicano 'community' in Little

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<sup>49</sup> Salvador Obregon. Interview with author, February 3, 2010. Phoenix, Arizona.

<sup>50</sup> Salvador Obregon. Interview with author, February 3, 2010. Phoenix, Arizona.

Village were in agreement with the student boycotts at Harrison. Assuming a more conservative stance, the Mexican Chamber of Commerce, for example, displayed strong opposition to the student walkouts. According to Dolores Guerrero,

“The business folks, like Arturo Velasquez, who owned all the jukeboxes in the restaurants and was friends with Daley were the so-called community leaders at the time. People like Paul Vega of the Mexican Chamber of Commerce, believed that we didn’t need to ask for anything. He wanted to give us money to stop the walkouts. He offered to give money for the soccer team. So, Mr. Vega used to attend church meetings and meetings at Harrison and attempt to stop the student walkouts. So, we were actually fighting with our own people in this struggle and that’s part of the story.”<sup>51</sup>

Salvador Obregon also recalled the lack of support by the barrio business elite:

Again, the ideology of the Mexican business owners was, these are just rebellious kids who don’t want to go to school. On 18th street, you had all these Mexican businesses, you had Mr. Velasquez, the juke box owner of all the restaurants, and they were not happy about our walkouts. Their position was, ‘how in the hell do you get all these Mexican kids demanding this shit...who are they?’ When we went to them for donations to support us, they would tell us, ‘we don’t support trouble-makers.’<sup>52</sup>

Nevertheless, the Chicago Board of Education did not respond to the Mexican-origin student demands at Harrison until one year later. One of the responses by the Chicago Board of Education was to transfer Alexander Burke and bring in principal Sam Ozaki. Mr. Sam Ozaki was the first Asian American (specifically Japanese American) principal ever to be appointed in Chicago Public Schools and he began his post at Harrison in 1969. Ozaki recalled various social and racial tensions that existed in the turbulent times of the late 60’s:

“My appointment began in 1969. In those days, in order to become a principal, a written and oral exam had to be taken when there was a need of a principal. If

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<sup>51</sup> Dolores Guerrero Interview with author, June 16, 2009, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>52</sup> Salvador Obregon, Interview with author, February 3, 2010. Chicago, Illinois.

you passed the written exam, you had to go before an oral board and then you received an appointment at a high school...It just so happened that the few Black principals that were there understood that in the oral examination, if you looked the wrong way, if your accent was not just right, they could knock you out of contention. So they had what you call a 'mock oral' for me so when I did go in front of the board, I was better prepared. I remember that as fellow minorities, they were aware of the political climate and what I was up against and I was grateful for that."<sup>53</sup>

Mr. Ozaki went on to reflect upon his appointment of Harrison High:

"At that time, Harrison High was roughly about 40% Latino, 40% Black, and 20% White and as I mentioned previously, there were just a few Black principals and Harrison High was not all Black but 40% and uh...I think the Board reasoned that, who did they want to replace Alexander Burke with? They didn't want a White principal there, since students were unhappy with some of the White administrators there and so forth and they had just a few Black principals and 40% Latino and 20% White. So they didn't want to appoint a White principal and they didn't want to appoint a Black principal and they didn't want to appoint a Latino principal, so there is one other principal that is neither Black, White, or Brown: that's me a Japanese American. So that's the way they did it... They figured that maybe this non-White, non-Black, non-Brown principal, maybe he will fit in."<sup>54</sup>

Interestingly, one of the students who was very active during the Harrison High walkouts of 68' and 69' also concluded that the decision by the Board to bring in Mr. Ozaki was one of appeasement for Black and Latino students: "The Blacks were demanding a Black principal and we were demanding a Latino principal and we wanted Latin American studies and Blacks wanted Afro-American studies so they gave us that, but to put the two ethnic groups at peace, they put Sam Ozaki who is Japanese American as principal. He was put in the middle of the situation."<sup>55</sup> Another concession for Mexican-origin students was to bring in a Mexican-American assistant principal, Mr.

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<sup>53</sup> Sam Ozaki, Interview with author, March 23, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Victor Ortiz, Interview with author, April 14, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

Henry Romero, to Harrison High. Mr. Romero served as the foreign language consultant to the Board of Education. With his assistance, a “language aid class” was proposed in consultation with parents and community leaders.<sup>56</sup> The *Chicago Tribune* noted that the purpose of this class was to instill pride for Spanish-speaking students. In addition to tutoring and language laboratories being offered, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that 150 students would participate and that a 25 member committee included topics that would stress both Latin and Anglo-Saxon cultures.<sup>57</sup> Curiously, Mr. Romero even consulted with leaders of two local street gangs, the Latin Gents and Latin Counts, “to help promote the program.”<sup>58</sup> However, the proposal was unclear with respect to student credit for this class since enrollment was to be voluntary and school officials had not given it approval yet.

The other compromise from the Harrison administration was to recognize soccer as a school sports team that met demand number nine from the Mexican-origin students’ manifesto. Principal Ozaki recalled that once soccer was incorporated into an organized sport, Harrison developed one of the best soccer teams throughout the Chicago Public School system:

“You know one of the things is that in 1973, you know we had a lot of kids from Mexico at Harrison High School and we won the state soccer championship that year. And of course when we won the city championship and were going to go down state to play for the state championship, there were concerns expressed by other schools that you know, these Mexican students probably are not eligible and they raised all kinds of concerns but we fought all that and went down state... We won the state soccer championship and that was the only Chicago Public School to ever win a state soccer championship.”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, February 9, 1969.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>59</sup> Sam Ozaki. Interview with author, March 23, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

However, Ms. Dolores Guerrero who was the Counseling Spanish Resource staff person at Harrison High between 1968-1972 and was quite encouraging to Mexican-origin students, remembers that principal Sam Ozaki was initially not sympathetic at all with the idea of instituting a soccer team at Harrison:

“So then what happens is that I got involved heavily with the Mexican students at Harrison and I started to get pressure from Mr. Ozaki who told me, ‘they are investigating you because you have meetings with students’, but we developed the Latino manifesto because Mexican students had nothing at Harrison...One of the demands was for a soccer team and the administration actually accused me of introducing a ‘communist’ sport, soccer, to the students. They didn’t seem to understand that soccer is a huge part of Mexican culture; it has nothing to do with political ideologies!”<sup>60</sup>

The reference of soccer being tied to ‘communist thinking’ by principal Ozaki represents the highly charged political climate of the time. As previously mentioned, during the late 60’s, the Chicago Police Department in collaboration with the FBI had an active ‘subversive unit’ with countless informants throughout the city which habitually labeled numerous students and social activists ‘communist’ at the time. So it was not uncommon for that label ‘communist’ to be frequently used by many folks.

Principal Ozaki was caught in a very compromising position which forced him to negotiate between competing demands and pressure from the student body on the one hand, and from the Chicago Board of Education on the other:

“Yea, it was just the beginning of the student power movement, Black and Brown power movements and it was tuff because the students and the community demanded things and on the other hand you had the Board of Education, and then you had the teachers union, so I was trying to play middle management between all the conflicting groups.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Dolores Guerrero, Interview with author, May 7, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>61</sup> Sam Ozaki, Interview with author, March 23, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

Besides Dolores Guerrero, very few other teachers or staff demonstrated support for the Mexican-origin student walkouts at Harrison. While Black students representing the New Breed at Harrison had the broader support of some Black progressive teachers, Latino students had to rely solely on Ms. Guerrero. As Salvador Obregon narrated:

The only teacher that came out and just showed us a lot of support and had a lot of courage to help us was Dolores Guerrero and she put her job on the line. Black teachers were afraid to support us too. The only Black teacher that expressed some indirect support to us was a print shop teacher by the name of Mr. Wright.<sup>62</sup> During all these boycotts, I remember him giving me a card that he printed on his letter press and on this card with big red letters read: Have you seen an American Indian lately? If not, why not? For him to have given me that card, was to me, an indirect way of acknowledging that what I, what we were doing, was right. That was his way of saying, “you’re on the right track.”<sup>63</sup>

Nevertheless, on March 9, 1969, Lieutenant governor Paul Simon spoke to a crowd of 50 persons representing among other organizations city high schools with significant numbers of Latino students and told the crowd that a legislation would be called to create a two-year commission to “study the problems of Latin-Americans in Illinois.”<sup>64</sup> At this meeting, Paul Simon stated that, “the Latin community has the highest high school dropout rate of any ethnic group in the state.”<sup>65</sup> In attendance that day was Ms. Dolores Guerrero, Spanish language resource director of Harrison High School, who asserted that she was the only Spanish-speaking staff member at the school which had about 1,200 Latino students. She went on to state that Harrison had not done enough for students who speak no English and called for the urgent need of bilingual counselors.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>This was cross-referenced with the 1969 *Harrisonian* yearbook. Mr. Robert Wright is listed and pictured in the faculty section. p. 36.

<sup>63</sup> Salvador Obregon, Interview with author, February 3, 2010. Phoenix, Arizona.

<sup>64</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, March 9, 1969., p. 13.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

Mr. Henry Romero, assistant principal of Harrison High, was also present at the meeting and was quoted saying, “we need more money, Illinois is 46th in states in aid to education, but we also have to exploit local resources.”<sup>67</sup>

On May 22, 1969, at the request of the Latin American Alliance for Social Advancement (A.L.A.S.), a community coalition of Mexican-origin persons, district 19 superintendent Alflorencia Cheatham agreed to provide more Latin American faculty members and courses for Harrison High School.<sup>68</sup> According to A.L.A.S., the alarming 50 percent drop out rates for Latino students was largely due to “language problems.”<sup>69</sup> By June 1969, the school board determined that a concerted effort was necessary to curtail the high drop out rate among Latino students due to “lack of English language comprehension.”<sup>70</sup> District 19 superintendent Cheatham stated that he intended to offer a bilingual program funded through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act for students at Harrison High School in the Fall.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, Cheatham even considered the possibility of creating a teacher exchange program between district teachers and their counterparts in Mexico City. Part of the new bilingual program entailed the hiring of four teachers and two teacher aids to supplement the instruction of mathematics and language arts at Harrison.<sup>72</sup> The *Chicago Tribune* reported that the program was proposed by the Latin American Alliance for Social Advancement (L.A.S.A), a local community action

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. A8.

<sup>68</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, May 22, 1969.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, June 15, 1969., p. 13.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

group, yet the Tribune noted that, “Some of the requests from the alliance mirrored those demands first presented to the Harrison administration by students last October.”<sup>73</sup>

In September 1969, a federally funded bilingual pilot program was implemented throughout Chicago Public Schools. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, the United States Office of Education allocated \$154,000 for 720 children attending Chicago Public Schools.<sup>74</sup> Harrison High was one of the designated schools where the bilingual instruction pilot would take place. Edwin Cudecki, then director of foreign languages for the board of education, stated that a survey was taken which found that of the 36,270 non-native English speaking children in Chicago Public Schools, 29,000 were Spanish speakers of which approximately 16,200 children were in some TEASL (Teaching English as a Second Language) program.<sup>75</sup> Cudecki admitted that contrary to previously held beliefs that bilingual instruction was actually damaging to the child, current research found that two languages was now seen as a national asset.<sup>76</sup> By 1971, the Chicago Board of Education found that out of a total 59,778 Latinos enrolled in Chicago’s public elementary and high schools, 37,266 were children whose first language was Spanish and who needed additional help in English.<sup>77</sup> Many local community activists felt that Spanish-speaking children were being misplaced into classes for the “educably mentally

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, September 14, 1969.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, December 16, 1971.

handicapped” on the basis of psychological tests administered in English and by non-Spanish speaking psychologists.<sup>78</sup>

In 1969, Latino community organizations such as ADELANTE (a coalition of Mexican-origin and Puerto Ricans from the barrios) and the Mexican American Educational Council (MAEC) which, according to Dolores Guerrero, “started because of the walkouts” expressed their position for adequate funding to implement bilingual education programs in schools in a letter addressed to the State of Illinois Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.<sup>79</sup> According to Guerrero, what they received for asserting this proactive position instead were handbooks on Latin America for teachers to conduct various workshops. Guerrero stated that the response by the Superintendent was, “a direct insult to us.”<sup>80</sup> Apparently, Superintendent Ray Page directed this letter to his assistant, William Bealmer. In a letter dated March 31, 1969, assistant superintendent Bealmer stated that, “Some misunderstanding must remain concerning the aims and responsibilities of Title III of the National Defense Education Act. Foreign language workshops were initiated to improve instruction in foreign language classrooms, usually in high schools. A Handbook on Latin America for Teachers was developed for use in workshops designed to help teachers present more information about Latin America in

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<sup>78</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, December 16, 1971. For an excellent critique of psychometric standardized tests and the historical inequalities they have reproduced for Mexican American students, see Richard R. Valencia, “Educational Testing and Mexican American Students: Problems and Prospects” in Jose F. Moreno, Ed. *The Elusive Quest for Equality: 150 Years of Chicano/Chicana Education*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Review, 2007). Valencia argues for the importance of appropriate language status assessments for limited English proficiency (LEP) students prior to any type of academic assessments. In the end, Valencia asserts that oral language proficiency tests are in crucial need of much further development.

<sup>79</sup> Dolores Guerrero. Interview with author, June 16, 2010. Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>80</sup> Dolores Guerrero. Interview with author, June 16, 2010. Chicago, Illinois.

Spanish classes.”<sup>81</sup> The letter went on to state, “...We are especially sympathetic to the Spanish speaking children in the Chicago area. Although the Office has been able to sponsor some TESOL workshops in that area, Title III, NDEA, lacks sufficient funds and also lacks authority for implementing programs and workshops in bilingual education. The Chicago Board of Education has submitted a proposal for bilingual education to the U.S. Office of Education under Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Act. Although Mr. Seelye reviewed this proposal, allocation of funds will be made to Washington, D.C. Implementation of the proposal will be the responsibility of the Chicago School District.”<sup>82</sup> The letter ended by clarifying that the Title III, NDEA, Department, “has never been charged with the responsibility to meet the needs of the Latin American Community.”<sup>83</sup> The assistant superintendent argued that the Latin American children and teachers of Latin American children were not the “primary targets” of the program, “This concept is in error since our aim was to help the teachers of any students who are enrolled in Spanish classes and *any* other teachers who present units on Latin America to the students of their classes.”<sup>84</sup> Dolores Guerrero added, “So, this was the type of response we would receive for trying to do the right thing, but we kept trying.”<sup>85</sup>

Educational historians have pointed out that when the Soviet Union first launched the satellite Sputnik, in 1957, U.S. politicians blamed the poor quality of American public

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<sup>81</sup> William Bealmer, Assistant Superintendent Division of Instruction. State of Illinois Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, March 31, 1969. Letter courtesy of Dolores Guerrero.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Dolores Guerrero. Interview with author, June 16, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

schools for the country's failure to be the first in space.<sup>86</sup> The cold war fear that the Russians had surpassed American technology sparked a wave of curriculum reform that culminated with the passage of the 1958 National Defense Education Act (NDEA). This federal legislation provided funds to primarily educate mathematicians, scientists, engineers, as well as modern language experts to ensure U.S. military hegemonic dominance.<sup>87</sup> One of the central conflicts that President Dwight Eisenhower faced, Spring points out, was the belief that the federal government should not interfere in the control of local schools on the one hand, with the idea that federal education funds were needed to support America's global power on the other.<sup>88</sup> As the letter by the Illinois superintendent indicates, the federal NDEA was never intended to assist Latino communities with language and cultural issues or with the implementation of bilingual education programs. Furthermore, the responsibility for implementing bilingual education programs was left to the discretion of the local Chicago School Districts. In the end, "The result was legislation that gave grants to local schools to improve science, math, and language programs. Local schools and states had to apply for these grants. There was no requirement that local schools accept federal money or federally sponsored programs."<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> See, for example, Clarence J. Karier, *The Individual, Society, and Education: A History of American Educational Ideas*. (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1986); pp. 320-326; Joel Spring, *Conflict of Interests: The Politics of American Education*. (New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 2005); James W. Fraser, *The School in the United States: A Documentary History*. (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2001). pp. 222-225.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Joel Spring, *Conflict of Interests: The Politics of American Education*. (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2005).

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 3.

According to Salvador Obregon, “By the time Carlos Herredia named the student group at Loop OLAS, I was gone and the majority of the 15 core OLAS members were gone from Harrison. Our walkouts were entirely Harrison student led.”<sup>90</sup> However, new student college organizations were also founded in Chicago during the late 1960’s. These new student activists began to organize and speak out against various educational inequalities in 1968. The emphasis of this new type of leadership was evident at Loop College campus when several students formed the Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS). O.L.A.S. was the college student group responsible for providing support and assistance organizing the walkouts with Mexican-origin students from Harrison High in 1969. One of the co-founders of this organization was Carlos Herredia who graduated from Harrison High in 1967:

“We founded OLAS in 1968 at Loop College which is now Harold Washington College. We used to get together, five or six of us, who were primarily Mexican and Puerto Rican and we came up with the idea of having an organization for Latinos on campus...And then we hooked up with a group of African American students on campus and we started to put pressure on the administration to give us our own newspaper. They then gave us our own newspaper, office, a budget, and the name of our newspaper was the Third World. It was a bilingual newspaper. We had articles on issues affecting African Americans students too. So, we formed this coalition in the Loop College campus. We then formed a theatre group which was called, El Teatro de La Raza. We used to do skits and improvise a lot. Cultural affirmation was one of our main themes. We used to focus on the issue of the ‘vendidos’ (sell-outs); those Latinos who thought of themselves as Gringos. We set up OLAS which was partially inspired by the Chicano Movement, but what we were doing was not searching for an identity, but actually affirming it, because many of us knew quite well where we came from.”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Salvador Obregon. Interview with author, February 3, 2010. Phoenix, Arizona.

<sup>91</sup> Carlos Herredia, Interview with author, March 2, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

The Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS), according to Carlos, also had a transnational character to it as they kept abreast of and responded to news from Mexico as well as Latin America:

“So, we had this Latin American vision and this Mexican connection because some of us were following the events in Mexico with the student movement in Mexico City. So, some of us were in contact with some of the students over there in Mexico. They used to send us information, write to us, send us flyers, newspaper clippings from the movement in Mexico. We had a couple of rallies to protest the actions of the Mexican government against the students...the infamous 1968 student massacre in Mexico City.”<sup>92</sup>

In 1969, OLAS helped organize the Mexican student body at Harrison High School:

“So, we used to go to different high schools and establish chapters; we went to Harrison, Bowen, and St. Mary’s High in Little Village, Pilsen, and South Chicago...So we would go down there to Harrison High and meet with students when they walked out, we would be with them providing support. We also provided support in terms of building an effective strategy with the Harrison administration. We used to meet with some of the student leaders on Sundays at a Church on Ashland and Madison near Warren Boulevard, along with Dolores Guerrero of the Bilingual Center at Harrison and just develop a strategy for Harrison High School.”<sup>93</sup>

Not only was OLAS pressing for more recruitment efforts of Latino staff and faculty at Loop College, but they also sponsored cultural awareness events, which sought to bring high school students together with leaders and activists of the Chicano Movement. One of the most significant national events that took place in the late 60’s was the National Chicano Youth Conference in Denver, Colorado. OLAS was responsible for mobilizing high school students to go to the conference:

“In 1969, there was the Crusade for Justice in Denver, Colorado with Corky Gonzalez which called for a national conference. The National Chicano Youth Conference. So, a delegation from Chicago got together and a number of us from

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<sup>92</sup> Carlos Herredia, Interview with author, March 2, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>93</sup> Carlos Herredia, Interview with author, March 2, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

OLAS and students from Harrison, Bowen, and St. Mary's high school and another groups of folks who were not students, street gang members like the Latin Kings from the boulevard, and Latin Counts from 18th street, we all went together in buses to Denver...And so there was difference in opinions as to who was the legitimate representatives of the Mexican community; the street gang members or the college and high school students? So, we had this discussion going on during the bus ride because we had our differences but it was an opportunity for all of us to come together.<sup>94</sup>

The National Chicano Youth Conference in Denver, Colorado sparked a new political and intellectual consciousness for OLAS and students at Harrison High. Victor remembered the significance of this event. He stated:

“So, we got to Denver and that was the first time we heard Corky Gonzalez speak. Man, Corky was a really good speaker; he spoke from the heart. He used to be a boxer before he became an activist...so, the conference opened my eyes to the political aspect of the term Chicano. If you didn't go to the conference, you didn't really understand what Chicano stood for...there were maybe twelve students all together who went from Harrison High to the conference.”<sup>95</sup>

Carlos reflected on the social and political meaning of the conference:

So, we went to Denver to the National Chicano Youth Conference and it was an eye opening experience for a lot of people. For the Southwest Chicanos couldn't believe that there were Mexicans in Chicago. It was there at the Chicano Youth Conference the document El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan<sup>96</sup> was put together right there at the youth conference. The guy responsible for drafting it and putting it together was a Chicano poet Alurista, Alberto Alurista. The idea was to develop the concept of Chicanismo, brotherhood, carnalismo and the origins of Mexicans which is not just in Mexico but in the Southwest. Aztlan is the Southwest according to Aztec mythology and this gave it legitimacy. And this inspired a lot of people all over the country.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Carlos Herredia, Interview with author, March 2, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>95</sup> Victor Ortiz, Interview with author, April 14, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>96</sup> The resolutions from the conference were incorporated into a plan; 'the Spiritual Plan of Aztlan', a document that connected liberation to an indigenous cultural and political legacy. Alurista's poetics challenged the perception of Mexicans as a recent migration. He provided a historical foundation for Mexican pride and a response to the continuous racism that Chicanos experienced in the U.S. See Carlos Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement*. (New York: Verso Press, 1989); pp. 75-78.

<sup>97</sup> Carlos Herredia, Interview with author, March 2, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

Hector Rodríguez who graduated from Harrison in 1971 and was active in student walkouts in 69' also reflected upon the meaning of the conference:

See in 1969, a lot of us from Chicago went to the Chicano Youth Conference in Denver, Colorado. We organized a whole group of buses here to go there. And there were students at Harrison who went because everybody that lived in Pilsen and Little Village went to Froebel and Harrison. So, all these were Harrison students that lived in Pilsen and we organized these buses to go to the conference in Denver. So, when that happened and we came back, we came back all radicalized and politicized about this concept of 'Chicano' and this whole manifesto and we became part of this whole bigger national movement.<sup>98</sup>

The teatro (theatre) groups that were formed by OLAS and were later utilized by students at Harrison High School, were inspired by Luis Valdez' Teatro Campesino at the National Chicano Youth Conference as well. These theatre groups were particularly active in providing cultural and political ideological messages in their acts. Carlos recalled the influence this had on them:

There were all kinds of theatre workshops at the conference that were led by Luis Valdez and his brother Daniel Valdez who were teaching folks how to put together skits. So, there were a lot of improvisations. We would go on stage and act out parts without scripts. And when we came back to Chicago, we said, hey, that's a nice vehicle for cultural identification so we put together or own theatre group. That was our first Chicano theatre group like the Teatro Campesino<sup>99</sup> and we would go to high schools and perform and Harrison was one of them. And of course, our entry into high school was to say, 'look, we are college students and want to talk to high school students about going to college' which is what we did but we also threw in the political and cultural message. As a matter of fact they kicked us out of Harrison once because they felt that our presentation was too political.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Hector Rodríguez, interview with author, October 17, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>99</sup> A political theatre initiated by Luis Valdez, which became affiliated with the United Farm Workers. The theatre later became a general avenue of disseminating a message of political awakening using symbols of cultural affirmation, class solidarity, continuously projecting a message of cultural resistance. For example, the Virgin de Guadalupe and other Mexican religious and cultural symbols were used by the United Farm Workers and Cesar Chavez to mobilize and unite the U.S. Mexican community in support of social justice for agricultural workers. See Carlos Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement*. (New York: Verso Press, 1989).

<sup>100</sup> Carlos Herredia, Interview with author. March 2, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

Hector also developed the political theatre at Harrison called, Teatro Zapatista. He remembers becoming part of the theatre group at Harrison:

OLAS was reaching out to high school students to promote them to go to college. So, they recruited us to go to college. I got recruited as well as other students. But before that, OLAS was also part of a cultural organization, they had a teatro group, a theatre and we became a part of that at Harrison. And we actually organized a performance there at Harrison for the Pan-American assembly. So, we asked to participate in that and do a play in there. Of course, they didn't know what we were gonna do. So, we did this play called, the 'American Dream' which was all about identity, Chicano identity. We're not hippies, we're not White, We're not Black, we are Chicanos. And the play was also against the Vietnam War at the time. We highlighted the high number of Mexicano soldiers that died in the Vietnam War disproportionate to the population in the country. So, we were protesting all that. One of the scenes addressed that. So, nonetheless, the whole play was very unpatriotic. And that shows you the different political views because Dolores Guerrero was our official sponsor. But the one that organized the Pan-American assembly was the Spanish Club teacher who was from Spain and very conservative. She didn't like what we were saying, criticizing the U.S. with the flag and everything. So, she was closing the curtains on us and then Dolores was opening them up and they were fighting back and forth both of them during the play...and of course, we finished it, they let us do it. That was like turning teatro as a weapon for social justice.<sup>101</sup>

Interestingly, the student theatre group was never officially part of any student organization at Harrison High. The students that were politically active utilized the school space of the Bilingual Center that Ms. Dolores Guerrero was in charge of, to plan, strategize, and organize political consciousness raising activities, like the theatre, to challenge the dominant cultural hegemony at Harrison High:

“There were really no official school groups we belonged to. We were doing teatro and had a newsletter, ‘People of the Sun’, but we were not official. We were always, ‘undocumented’ (laughter), ‘unregistered’, you know, not really part of the school organization. No one was really sponsoring us. I mean Dolores Guerrero was sponsoring the Bilingual Center and she got in trouble a lot of times

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<sup>101</sup> Hector Rodríguez, interview with author, October 17, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

for supporting us. She got called down to the office for that, for the stuff we were doing in the teatro.”<sup>102</sup>

Victor also remembers that in 1971 a play was produced by members of the Mexican-origin student theatre group at Harrison which was inspired by the National Chicano Youth Conference,

“The last year I was at Harrison, ‘American Dream’, a skit that was created by Rodolfo ‘Corky’ Gonzalez, was put on by us at school. Hector, myself, and a few other students organized it. Dolores Guerrero really encouraged us to do this and she really got into hot water with Sam Ozaki for it. At that time, it was considered too radical, you know.”<sup>103</sup>

It must be noted that the student theatre and use of the Bilingual Center as a cultural space were formed quite creatively by Mexican-origin students at Harrison since their unique needs and diverse ideologies were being ignored by the administration,

See Ozaki didn’t want us to have another student organization. He told us, ‘you have the Spanish Club already’ and we told him, man, that’s a chump club. We used to meet in the Bilingual Center with Dolores Guerrero in a space which used to be in the basement where wood shop was held. We had a choice of studying in the library or studying at the Bilingual Center instead of going to study hall or the library... We used to go and just hang out there and talk to Dolores, study, and plan events too.<sup>104</sup>

By 1971, city-wide Latino school boycotts were in full force in the city of Chicago. One report noted that, the Chicano Youth Organization (CYO), a Mexican-origin youth organization located in South Chicago collaborated with members of ASPIRA, a Puerto Rican organization with headquarters on the Northwest side to coordinate various school demonstrations.<sup>105</sup> According to this report, the city-wide

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<sup>102</sup> Hector Rodríguez, Interview with author October 17, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>103</sup> Victor Ortiz, Interview with author, April 14, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>104</sup> Victor Ortiz, Interview with author, April 14, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>105</sup> Intelligence Division, Chicago Police Department, May 10, 1971, Red Squad Records, Box 249, Chicago Historical Society.

“Latin school boycotts” were to take place at Bowen High School in South Chicago and Tuley High School in the Northwest side of the city.<sup>106</sup> In addition, La Raza Unida’s, (a coalition of 33 Chicago Latino Organizations) education committee, decided that other schools that were to participate in the school boycotts on May 10th and 11th, 1971 were: Harrison High, Kelly High, Lake View High, Wells High, Tilden Tech High, Burns High, Richards High, and Anderson High located throughout the city of Chicago.<sup>107</sup> The *Daily Calumet* reported that, Ron Maydon, a chief spokesperson for the Chicano Youth Organization was quoted saying, “This is a people’s movement and our objective is to unify all the Latinos whether they are Mexican, Puerto Rican or Indian. We are all part of La Raza” ...The goal of the La Raza movement is to create a power base for the people of brown skin. The ultimate goal is Aztlán. That means the promised land.”<sup>108</sup> According to Shirley Cayer of the *Daily Calumet*, over 200 persons representing the coalition of Latin American Organizations (CLAO) were heard shouting: Chicano Power! Puerto Rican Power!, Indian Power!.<sup>109</sup>

### Summary and Conclusion

Newspaper coverage of the 1968 walkouts at Harrison unwittingly omitted Mexican-origin student participation as makers of their own history in their quest for equal education during the late 1960’s. Harrison High was plagued by over-crowdedness, a dilapidated building, high drop-out rates, and a lack of bilingual/bicultural teachers,

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Intelligence Division, Chicago Police Department, April 26, 1971, Red Squad Records, Box 249, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>108</sup> *The Daily Calumet*, March 23, 1971., p. 2.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

staff, and curriculums. Mexicano students organized walkouts to demand the Harrison administration to meet their unique linguistic and cultural needs which included the incorporation of soccer as an organized sport.

The organization of Latin American Students (OLAS) was the university student organization that assisted students at Harrison organize effective walkouts. The student teatro was influenced by the 'Chicanismo' of the National Chicano Youth Conference in 1969 and was then used as a vehicle for cultural affirmation and political consciousness-raising by Mexicano students at Harrison. In addition, the Bilingual Center, with the encouragement of Ms. Dolores Guerrero, the only Mexican teacher in the late 60's, also served as an extra curricular cultural, political, and intellectual space to strategize and organize various Mexican-origin student activities at Harrison. Finally, coalitions were formed between various Mexicano and Puerto Rican organizations to make demands to the board of education and provide support for student school boycotts.

The evidence suggests, as opposed to media coverage, that the politics of protest and confrontation that manifested at Harrison High during the late 60's is a testament of how Mexicano students became makers of their own history at this high school which failed to respond to their unique needs in spite of the growing Mexican-origin student population. Working class students of Mexican-origin responded to their invisibility by organizing school walkouts and making demands for the institutionalization of effective bilingual-bicultural programs, which included the hiring of qualified teachers, counselors, and principals. The list of demands also reflected a political consciousness of increased

racial and cultural pride. This was evident in the demand for soccer and inclusion of Latin American history.

Interestingly, in 1968, Mexicano students at Harrison expressed a 'Latinismo' at Harrison High by strategically avoiding cultural nationalist labels in the naming of their student organization despite being the majority of the Latino student body. The formation of a united Latino front under the banner OLAS is a testament of a distinctive pan-Latin American identity which created a rather interesting coalition of Latino (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Colombian) students at Harrison.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE MEANING OF 'CHICANISMO' IN CHICAGO AND THE FROEBEL HIGH PROTESTS

Despite the fact that the term 'Chicano' never really quite popularized the public imaginary in Chicago,<sup>1</sup> the spirit of 'Chicanismo' was manifested by students at Harrison High School. The evidence suggests that the Chicano movement in Chicago had no simple unity but was instead quite messy. The identities and ideological proclivities constructed by various Mexican-origin groups were indeed, complex, fragmented, and heterogeneous. For example, one student who was active in the Harrison High school walkouts and participated in the National Chicano Youth Conference, described the meaning of 'Chicanismo' in this way:

See it was a matter of uniting folks. In Chicago, for example you had newly arrived Mexicanos, the brazers<sup>2</sup>, who didn't speak English, you had Mexicanos who spoke English but fell into gangs, and then you had Mexicans who were more politically conscious who identified with the Anti-War movement, you had those who were more like hippies. So, you had all those kind of people. So, 'Chicano' was a way of uniting all of us. We had a common identity, we all had the same culture of Mexican descent, language, music, food, uh, oppression, so it brought us together politically.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In Chicago, very few Mexicans raised in the U.S. identify themselves as 'Chicanos' or 'Mexican Americans'. For the most part, the pervasive category of self-identification is simply 'Mexican.' On this point, see Nicholas De Genova and Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas, *Latino Crossings: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and the Politics of Race and Citizenship*; also see, Maria de Los Angeles Torres, "In Search of Meaningful Voice and Place: the IPO and Latino Community Empowerment in Chicago" in Gilberto Cardenas, ed. *La Causa: Civil Rights, Social Justice and the Struggle for Equality in the Midwest*. (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 2004). p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> 'Brazier' is a colloquial label that emerged in Chicago during the 60's and 70's to refer to newly arrived rural Mexican immigrants.

<sup>3</sup> Rosa Gamboa, Interview with author, October 17, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

Hector expressed 'Chicanismo' the following way:

You see, back then, to be 'Chicano' meant that you recognized your Mexican history. So, to become a Chicano you said you were asserting That you were Mexican, that you were part of the United States, and that you can also deal in this new culture... We went further back to the Indians, the Aztecs, to that culture, to Aztlan, so we were even here before you foreigners. You guys are foreigners, you guys are invaders, we're not Immigrants. We've been here all the time. You guys came to us. You know, we might have crossed the river, but you guys crossed the ocean, that kinda stuff... So that was the Chicano declaration that manifested. You know, this was going on all over the Southwest; all these struggles had already been in fruition. So, we said, hey, we identify with that. We identify with those brothers and sisters who are fighting over there because we are fighting over here for the same thing... discrimination, disrespect for our history, poor schooling, all the negative stereotypes we see on TV, the Frito Bandito, so this was an opportunity, a movement to identify with and fight back and challenge all that... so that's why we used 'Chicano'. We identified ourselves that way. Even though I'm Mexicano, I see the term as a political stand. It's a political consciousness.<sup>4</sup>

Victor who graduated from Harrison High in 71' and was an active participant of the Harrison High walkouts, described the meaning of 'Chicanismo' the following way,

It was more of a political label for us which as part of a larger movement. Well, there were a lot of students that did not want to be called Chicano at Harrison, they simply called themselves, Mexican. So, the conference opened my eyes to the political aspect of Chicano. If you didn't go to the conference, you didn't really understand what Chicano stood for. It inspired me to know my history and go to college.<sup>5</sup>

Interestingly, Salvador Obregon stated that he was totally unaware of the Chicano movement which was capturing the political imagination at the national level in 1968.

According to Obregon,

The only time I became aware of the Chicano movement was when Dolores, I, and other members of OLAS took a trip to Detroit, Michigan for a conference and then I realized, walkouts are happening in California?... Cesar Chavez is organizing farmworkers. We didn't know any of that. How were we going to

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<sup>4</sup> Hector Rodríguez, Interview with author, October 17, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>5</sup> Victor Ortíz, Interview with author, April 14, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

know what was happening in the Southwest when we're at Harrison high school in Chicago, man. What happened to Cesar Chavez? We didn't know about that. We did not know or use the phrase Chicano Power, that was something out of California...In 68' OLAS didn't use Chicano Power. The first time I heard that phrase was when I went to the conference in Detroit. That's the first time I became aware of how the Chicano movement was taking off in California with the walkouts over there in L.A. We didn't know what was happening in California with Chicanos, in New York with Puerto Ricans...we were isolated in Chicago. By the time Carlos Herredia named the the student group at Loop OLAS, I was gone and the majority of original core members were gone from Harrison. Our walkouts were entirely Harrison student led.<sup>6</sup>

What the above excerpts suggest is that 'Chicano' was used as a alliance-building ethno-political label by student activists in Chicago which allowed them to identify not only with the Chicano Movement in the Southwest, but with the struggles of other noncitizen Mexican-origin students as well. In sum, the National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference sponsored by Rodolfo 'Corky' Gonzales' Crusade for Justice in Denver, Colorado sparked a new political consciousness for youth activists which galvanized students at Harrison High and OLAS at Loop College. This developed an intellectual and political ethos in Chicago that resulted in the creation of the teatro. During the late 60's and early 70's, college and high school student activists saw this as an opportunity to seize the moment and demand change to meet their unique linguistic and cultural needs. To be sure, various ideological and philosophical differences existed among progressive organizations in Chicago attempting to forge change and meet the unique needs of the Mexicano communities in Pilsen and Little Village.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Salvador Obregon. Interview with author, February 3, 2010. Phoenix, Arizona.

<sup>7</sup> Representing the variety of political backgrounds were, "socialists (and their different factions), tercer mundistas, Mexicanistas, Chicano nationalists, cultural nationalists, assimilationists, and liberals. All these tendencies were represented in the political organizations: Brown Berets, La Raza Unida Party, Pilsen Neighbors, LULAC, GI Forum, Mexican-American Political Organization and student organizations.", Raul Ross Pineda, *Rudy Lozano, his life, his people*. (Chicago: Taller de Estudios Comunitarios, 1991)., p. 29.

## Pilsen and Chicanismo in Chicago

Between 1960 and 1970, some 9,000 of the 16,000 Mexicanos who had lived in the Near West Side were displaced by urban renewal, the construction of the Eisenhower Expressway, and the expansion of the University of Illinois Chicago Circle Campus.<sup>8</sup> As a result, Mexican-origin folks started to settle in Pilsen in increasingly larger numbers which practically transformed the previously Eastern European (Czech) enclave to a predominately Mexican settlement.<sup>9</sup> Mary Gonzalez, a prominent Mexican American community organizer, observed that:

“Pilsen was virtually born out of the 60’s. The first organized groups that came here were the Brown Berets and the Socialist Worker Party. Mexican groups that became organized simultaneously in the sixties were Mujeres Latinas En Acción, El Valor, and El Hogar del Niño. All these groups were born right alongside political organizations.”<sup>10</sup>

For example, eminent Mexican activist Dr. Jorge Prieto observed that:

“The Grape Boycott, organized nationally and internationally by the late Cesar Chávez and his United Farm Workers Union, sparked a major social movement in Chicago. As a result of boycott activities, many social activists were brought to the struggle. Community based organizations were established to support the boycott or as a result of the boycott. Some of the groups established in the 60’s and 70’s include: the Pilsen Neighbors Community Council, the Mexican American Community Council of South Chicago, and El Valor.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Louise Año Nuevo Kerr, “*The Chicano Experience in Chicago, 1920-1970.*” diss., University of Illinois at Chicago, 1976.192.

<sup>9</sup> According to Malynne Sternstein, Pilsen was an alias taken from a tavern, Hostinec u mesta Plzne that was established on today’s Carpenter Street and 19th Place which was named after a famous brewing town in Bohemia. See *Czechs of Chicagoland.* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> Mary Gonzalez, interview with Juan Andrade Jr. as quoted in, “*A Historical Survey of Mexican Immigration to the United States and an Oral History of the Mexican Settlement in Chicago: 1920-1990.*” diss., Northern Illinois University, 1998. 231.

<sup>11</sup> Jorge Prieto, Interview with Juan Andrade Jr., as quoted in, “*A Historical Survey of Mexican Immigration to the United States and an Oral History of the Mexican Settlement in Chicago: 1920-1990.*” diss., Northern Illinois University, 1998. 82.

Further evidence of the growing Chicanismo in Pilsen during the late 60's was the transformation of Howell Settlement House in 1970 from a Protestant-supported social service mission aimed at Bohemian immigrants to Casa Aztlán, a non-sectarian Chicano operated center which housed a health clinic.<sup>12</sup> The Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS) at Loop College was also very politically active during this time and ended up being housed in Pilsen. Carlos Herredia remembers that:

And what we did was uh...we got a community location in Pilsen, a space. We got a space in an old church that closed down. A priest allowed us to use two rooms there which became our community and college base. So, on Sundays we had meetings and we had students come from different high schools and colleges and the idea was to share our experiences and strategize about what was happening at the high school and university level. We were also very supportive of the farm workers movement, the boycott of lettuce and grapes. So, when Cesar Chávez came to Chicago, we were there at the rally at St. Francis of Assisi Church. So, we were heavily involved in a number of issues in the community of Pilsen. We got a chance to work with El Centro de La Causa, and Pilsen Neighbors although we had our ideological differences like any organization... Casa Aztlán changed its name from Howell House as a result of the National Chicano Youth Conference in Denver. After the Denver conference, the basic idea was to break away from the White dominated structures that have controlled our communities for years.<sup>13</sup>

Hector Gamboa, founding member of Compañía Trucha, a political street theater group modeled after El Teatro Campesino which became housed in Casa Aztlán, remembers that:

That's why Casa Aztlán came about. It came about because of the Chicano Movement in Chicago. See, in 69, a lot of us from Chicago went to the Chicano Youth Conference in Denver, Colorado. So, Casa Aztlán formed when all these folks came back from the conference. We said, we want to change the name because it was called Howell House or something before. So, we said, we want to change this and make it more our community. We want to reclaim it as our center,

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<sup>12</sup>Louise Año Nuevo Kerr, "The Chicano Experience in Chicago, 1920-1970." diss., University of Illinois at Chicago, 1976. 197.

<sup>13</sup> Carlos Herredia, Interview with author. April 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

for our community, for our purposes. So, they turned it into Casa Aztlán... When we came back from Denver, we decided to take it all over, we kicked out the board and installed a new board, a community board, just like they did in the Crusade for Justice in Denver. So, basically we were modeling it after that. That's why in the murals we put a big picture of Corky Gonzalez. This guy named Ray Paton who was one of the first muralists in Pilsen. He's the one that did all the murals inside Casa Aztlán. And then later, we get the murals outside and Marco Raya helped with that. So then out of Casa Aztlán, El Hogar Del Niño was formed. Mujeres Latinas en Acción also came out of there and Latino Youth came out of there. The Brown Berets set up shop there in Casa Aztlán during that time too.<sup>14</sup>

Victor also remembers the significance the Chicano Youth Conference in Denver had on forging a Chicanismo in Chicago:

There used to be a lot of activities at Casa Aztlán too which used to be part of Hull House before. There were many people from Howell House who went to the Chicano Youth Conference in vans and that really opened their eyes so they came back and they started putting murals up and changed the name to Casa Aztlán. I remember they also brought some street gang members with them like the Ambros and Latin Counts to the conference in Denver. Casa Aztlán was focusing more on street gangs in Pilsen while we were more focused in the high schools.<sup>15</sup>

The legacy of the Harrison High School Walkouts of 68' and the spirit of Chicanismo continued into the 70's with the politics of protest at Froebel High in Pilsen. On September 16, 1975 ground was broken for the construction of Benito Juárez High School after a long-awaited hard fight to have it built in Pilsen.<sup>16</sup> Dr. Joseph Hannon, superintendent of schools said, "This school is more than a board reality. It is the direct result of a community that refused to take 'no' for an answer."<sup>17</sup> Benito Juárez High finally opened its doors in 1977. This long hard battle began with numerous boycotts at

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<sup>14</sup> Hector Gamboa, interview with author. October 17, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>15</sup> Victor Ortiz, interview with author, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>16</sup> William J. Adelman, Pilsen and *The West Side: A Tour Guide to Ethnic Neighborhoods, Architecture, Restaurants, Wall Murals, and Labor History with Special Emphasis on Events Connected with the Great Upheaval of 1877*. (Chicago: Illinois Labor History Society, 1983). p. 61.

<sup>17</sup> As quoted in Ibid.

the Froebel Branch of Harrison High. Initially, boycotts began on April 4, 1972.<sup>18</sup> The Chicago Tribune reported that a Latin American protest movement sponsored by the community group, Latin American Alliance for Better Education, was occurring to demand high quality bilingual instruction throughout several city schools.<sup>19</sup> According to the article, 25 percent of the student body from the Froebel Branch of Harrison High walked out on this day and 50 percent had walked out earlier that week.<sup>20</sup>

Picketing and student boycotts continued for a third day as students continued to demand better bilingual instruction.<sup>21</sup> According to the *Chicago Tribune*, 27 percent of the students at Froebel walked out of their home room classes to join pickets on this day.<sup>22</sup> One report observed that on March 21, 1972, 75 persons representing the Chicano Youth Organization (CYO) were demonstrating in front of the Froebel School demanding more Mexican-American teachers.<sup>23</sup> This report concluded that the CYO was affiliated with the Coalition of Latin American Organizations; a larger united front which formed in Chicago to make demands to the board of education.<sup>24</sup> On March 30, 1972, Mr. Burrell Maschek, principal of Froebel High School, was interviewed by an informant from the Chicago Police Departments' intelligence division. During this interview, Mr. Maschek stated that persons wearing Brown Berets and field jackets had entered his school and were seen talking to students.<sup>25</sup> According to this report, Principal Maschek told these

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<sup>18</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, April 4, 1972.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, April 6, 1972.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Intelligence Division, March 21, 1972, Chicago Police Department, Red Squad Records, Box 249, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Intelligence Division, March 30, 1972, Chicago Police Department, Red Squad Records, Box 249, Chicago Historical Society.

people not to come into his school but was ignored by these persons calling themselves the Brown Berets.<sup>26</sup> On April 5, 1972, approximately 50 percent of the student body at Froebel was absent and many students were seen taking part in marching and demonstrating in front the school.<sup>27</sup> Demonstrators were seen carrying placards which demanded the replacement of faculty with bilingual teachers and a curriculum which reflected the predominately Mexican American student body.<sup>28</sup> According to this report, principal Maschek stated that members of the Brown Berets have been present at every demonstration and are easy to identify in their distinctive uniforms.<sup>29</sup>

On April 6, 1972, 33 persons of “Mexican descent” including the Brown Berets were seen marching in front of Froebel chanting slogans and handing out handbills calling for people in the entire 19th school district to join in the demonstration.<sup>30</sup> The handbills were asking parents to join the picket lines in front of Froebel and take their children to “freedom Schools” at Casa Aztlán, Gads Hill Center, or El Centro De La Causa.<sup>31</sup> On the early morning of April 7, 1972, about 25 Mexican youth were seen in front of the Froebel school doorway chanting slogans and demands.<sup>32</sup> According to reporting investigators some of the youth were wearing clothing known to belong to the Brown Berets.<sup>33</sup> On April 9, 1972, 50 percent of the student body at Froebel refused to

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Intelligence Division, April 5, 1972, Chicago Police Department, Red Squad Records, Box 249, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Intelligence Division April 6, 1972, Chicago Police Department, Red Squad Records, Box 249, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Intelligence Division, April 7, 1972, Chicago Police Department, Red Squad Records, Box 249.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

attend class to protest for quality bilingual instruction.<sup>34</sup> According to the *Chicago Tribune*, the boycotts were being sponsored by the Latin American Alliance for Better Education which was attempting to make the Board of Education comply to a list of 18 demands.<sup>35</sup> Part of the demands entailed the hiring of administrative positions in Latino communities with bilingual and bicultural personnel in addition to implementing more adequate bilingual and bicultural curriculums.<sup>36</sup>

A second set of protests began June 5, 1973.<sup>37</sup> At stake was the issue that the Chicago Board of Education planned on closing down Froebel and transferring all students to the main Harrison High building in South Lawndale. The *Chicago Sun-Times* reported that the Froebel branch was, "...the scene of a disturbance between police and protesting Latin students."<sup>38</sup> Students, parents, and community activists came together and marched to schools superintendent James F. Redmond's office which was blocked by security guards. The *Sun-Times* asserted that, in the end, Pilsen residents were unable to meet with the superintendent. Scott Jacobs of the *Chicago Sun-Times* stated that according to a spokesperson, "Pilsen neighborhood parents have been protesting the closing because the Latin students would be swallowed up in the larger Harrison High building...They are seeking construction of an entirely new facility within the community."<sup>39</sup> Another concern for parents, students, and community activists was that

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<sup>34</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, April 9, 1972.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 5, 1973.

<sup>38</sup> *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 9, 1973.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

Harrison had an unusually high drop-out rate, plagued by daily street gang conflicts, and located too far away from Pilsen.

On June 5, 1973 the *Chicago Sun Times* headlined an article, “8 Cops Hurt, 9 Seized in School Furor” which reported that, “The melee erupted after a contingent of adults went to the school board to protest a proposal before the Board of Education that Froebel be shut down next Fall and its 400 students transferred to Harrison High School.”<sup>40</sup> The article went on to assert that approximately 200 parents and community residents had occupied and picketed the Froebel branch school in the early morning. In addition, parents occupied the principals office and called members of the school board asking them to come to Froebel and discuss the new school issue.<sup>41</sup>

On June 5, 1973, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that eight cops were hurt and nine persons arrested in a school battle which was caused by six parents who staged a sit-in in the principal’s office: “The group was protesting the school system’s plans to close the 88-year old building, located in the Spanish-speaking Pilsen community.”<sup>42</sup> The article went on to state that most students had left the building and those that remained were joined by ‘violent demonstrators’ who hung a sign in front of the school building which read, “Chicano takeover for a new high school.”<sup>43</sup> According to the *Chicago Tribune*, the closing had been recommended by school superintendent James Redmond’s staff on the grounds that Froebel was in poor condition and that there was room for students at Harrison.<sup>44</sup> One journalist concluded that the community felt that the decision to close

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<sup>40</sup> *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 5, 1973.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, June 5, 1973.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

Froebel was done without consulting them which went against a number of previous meetings with school board officials over a period of five months which had resulted in an agreement for the construction of a new high school.<sup>45</sup> According to this journalist, several speculations were made by concerned parents and community activists with respect to the real motives of the school board to close down Froebel. These motifs ranged from whisperings that such a decision came directly from City Hall, to suspicions that gentrification caused by the construction of University of Illinois Chicago Circle Campus was removing working-class Mexicans in order to make room for new middle-class urban dwellers.<sup>46</sup> Juan Morales, a Mexican-American resident of Pilsen stated, “If we are going to maintain this community, we need a new school.”<sup>47</sup> A press release stated: “Its time for a school whose curriculum will not make our children feel inferior and ashamed of their own language, culture, and brown faces.”<sup>48</sup> Finally, one reporter stated that a major reason for calling for a new school was, “...a burgeoning consciousness of ‘chicanismo’” in the community.<sup>49</sup>

On June 6, 1973, the *Chicago Today* reported that community frustration in Pilsen was caused by the lack of board action over an eight month campaign for the construction of a new high school which led to the take-over of the Froebel branch of Harrison High School and a confrontation with the police.<sup>50</sup> According to one report, approximately 100 dissident students were observed marching in front of Froebel High School this day and

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<sup>45</sup> *Chicago Sun-Times*, June 5, 1973.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> *Chicago Today*, June 6, 1973.

could be heard chanting: Viva La Raza! Si Se Puede! ‘Chicano Power!.’<sup>51</sup> This report also noted that placards were being carried by students which read: “We Are Tired of a Shitty Education” “We Are People-Not Fuck Ups” “Do it Now, Not Tomorrow” “We Want a Chicano High School”<sup>52</sup>

Another report observed that a flyer was posted throughout the Pilsen area calling for a Froebel boycott and public park rally scheduled for the 6th, 7th, and 8th of June. The flyer, it was noted, was calling upon “sympathy protesters” from Tilden and Harrison High Schools, along with Cooper upper grade and Pickard Elementary school.<sup>53</sup> The actual flyer also listed the program for the rally which was being planned which included: teatro, speakers, bands, and workshops on Chicano awareness.<sup>54</sup> The flyer also included the following statements: “The majority of us are unable to attend college because of the lousy education we receive. We need our own high school in our own neighborhood!,” “The Board of Education refuses to meet with our people. They refuse to give La Raza a new high school!”<sup>55</sup> On June 13, 1973, the Board of Education voted 8 to 1 in support of constructing a new high school in the predominately Mexican community of Pilsen.<sup>56</sup> The *Chicago Tribune* noted that, “the Boards action was considered somewhat unusual because the board made a commitment to build a new school before a specific site was picked or all studies completed on the proposed school.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Intelligence Division, Chicago Police Department, June 6, 1973, Red Squad Records, Box 211, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Intelligence Division, Chicago Police Department, June 6, 1973, Red Squad Records, Box 286, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, June 14, 1973.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

The next key issue for parents, students, and community activists became choosing potential sites for the new high school. Hence, a list of possible community sites in Pilsen was submitted to the Board of Education. Assistant superintendent Dr. Joseph Hannon responded that a list of possible sites had been selected in consultation with Lou Pagonis, a Department of Urban Renewal official with the aid of Alderman Fred Roti and community leaders.<sup>58</sup> Superintendent Hannon went on to contend that Pilsen was experiencing a declining high school enrollment which would undermine the demand to have a new high school built.<sup>59</sup> Leonard Aronson of the *Chicago Today* reported that, “Hannon denied the fear that the school board was reluctant to build a new school in Pilsen because the community was slated for urban renewal, which would displace the Mexican-American community demanding it.”<sup>60</sup> However, nothing conclusive was given by the board so students, parents, and Pilsen community activists continued to protest for a second day.

On June 6, 1973, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that, “Chicago police were called to the Froebel Branch of Harrison High School where student and community protesters were demonstrating against tentative plans by the Board of Education to close the branch and send students to Harrison.”<sup>61</sup> Edith Herman of the *Chicago Tribune* reported that during the lunch hour 150 youths gathered across the street to discuss demands for a new high school.<sup>62</sup> According to Herman, the main reason a new school is being requested is

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<sup>58</sup> *Chicago Today*, June 6, 1973.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, June 6, 1973.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

to meet the needs of the predominantly Mexican-American community.<sup>63</sup> Juan Morales, president of Pilsen Neighbors Community Council (PNCC), stated that the sit-in would not have exploded if board members would have simply met with protesters and talked to them at the school on Monday June 5.<sup>64</sup>

On June 7, 1973 the *Chicago Today* reported that, “Members of the Pilsen community planned to march from Harrison Park at 18th street and Damen Avenue to the Board of Education’s downtown offices today to dramatize their demands for a new high school.”<sup>65</sup> According to the *Chicago Today*, Pilsen community leaders were extremely frustrated with the lack of decisive board action. One protester, Ramiro Borjas, addressed the crowd of 400 young folks at Harrison Park and stated, “We have to go to the leadership. We have to go where it’s at. The person we really have to talk to is Richard J. Daley.”<sup>66</sup> On this day, according to one report, 20 persons representing various local community organizations met with the principal of Froebel High School, informed him that their grievances had been drawn up, and presented him with their demands. They also instructed him to get in touch with the area superintendent.<sup>67</sup> This report stated that protesting students had been asked by community activists to stay at Dvorak Park in order to avoid any violent altercations with the police.<sup>68</sup> Interestingly, this report also noted that in order to avoid any other “flair –ups” with the Chicago Police, community activists met with leaders of local street gangs (Ambrose, Spartans, Counts, Deuces) so

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> *Chicago Today*, June 7, 1973.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Intelligence Division, Chicago Police Department, June 7, 1973, Red Squad Records, Box 249, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

that they, in turn, could explain the situation to all the protesting students waiting in the park for the results from the meeting with board officials.<sup>69</sup> Interestingly, it appears that street gangs were also somewhat politicized at this moment in history.

On June 11, 1973, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that, “Leaders in the Mexican community say the protests are needed because ‘no one will listen to us. Nobody cares.’”<sup>70</sup> Indeed, seven days after the first school boycott, the Board of Education had failed to produce a specific date for the construction of a new school in Pilsen which only caused further frustrations for protesters. Edith Herman of the *Chicago Tribune* stated that, “No one denies that something has to be done with Froebel. One of the oldest schools in the city, it is called a ‘barn’ even by local school officials.”<sup>71</sup> One community activist, Ramiro Borja, asserted, “We’re not talking just another high school...putting the same old system into a new building won’t solve anything. We want a new kind of community input. The kind of place where they don’t call our children wetbacks, like some teachers at Harrison do.”<sup>72</sup> Parents and students continued to boycott and organize picket-line demonstrations at Froebel until September, 1974.<sup>73</sup>

Pilsen Neighbors Community Council (PNCC), an Alinsky-style organization, took the lead in organizing Pilsen-wide public school boycotts which continued to press the Chicago Board of Education for the purchase of land for a new high school in the community. According to one report, from September 2 through September 10, 1974, 25

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, June 11, 1973.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> *Chicago Sun-Times*, September 11, 1974. This article reported that the school boycotts, which were 85 percent effective, were finally called off at the end of its 5th day. Although the project was approved in 1973, concerned parents felt that the School Board was delaying the acquisition of land for the new high school.

members of PNCC helped organize picket-line demonstrations at the following eight schools: Cooper Upper Grade Center, Jirka Elementary School, Komensky Elementary School, Jungman Elementary School, Walsh Elementary School, Pickard Elementary School and Whittier Elementary School.<sup>74</sup>

In short, Benito Juárez High School was finally built in 1977 after a long hard fought battle with the Chicago Board of Education. Mexicano parents, students, and community activists organized themselves to become history makers as they made demands to school officials who were failing to meet the real needs of Mexican-origin students. At issue was the inferior education Mexicano students were receiving which was due in part to overcrowded dilapidated facilities, lack of effective bilingual-bicultural education programs with qualified teachers, counselors, staff and a school curriculum which did not reflect the student body or local community decision-making input. The legacy of the Harrison High School walkouts of 68' and the spirit of Chicanismo continued then into the mid 70's with the politics of protest at Froebel and the emergence of new community activists in Pilsen.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Intelligence Division, Chicago Police Department, September 10, 1974, Red Squad Records, Box 249, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>75</sup> Juan Mora argues that, "A new generation of Mexican activists emerged in the 1970's in the Pilsen neighborhood. In part they were influenced by the Chicano, Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War movement of the 1960's. For the most part, however, this new political generation matured as a result of local conditions. The poor quality of education, housing, services, and discrimination in employment, in Pilsen and other neighborhoods, produced a new generation of leaders who had lost confidence in the older and conservative Mexican organizations and their assimilationist approach to politics." As quoted in Raul Ross Pineda, *Rudy Lozano, his life, his people*. (Chicago: Taller de Estudios Comunitarios, 1991)., p. 29. David Badillo points out that Chicago boycotts continued into the 80's, well beyond the height of the Chicano Movement, this time against Jewel supermarket brands of lettuce. See "From La Lucha to Latino: Ethnic Change, Political Identity, and Civil Rights in Chicago" in *La Causa: Civil Rights, Social Justice and the Struggle for Equality in the Midwest*. Ed. Gilberto Cárdenas. (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 2004)., p. 41.

## Summary and Conclusion

Although ‘Chicanismo’ has taken on a variety of meanings, all definitions stress a positive self-image or cultural pride while placing little reliance on conventional forms of political activity.<sup>76</sup> Historian Ignacio M. García argues that the Chicano Movement has gone through a number of identifiable phases and that, “In the fourth phase, Chicano activists engaged in oppositional politics. They developed platforms, manifestos, and tactics that best represented an oppositional strategy to the American mainstream.”<sup>77</sup> In short, García contends that the Chicano Movement produced a “militant ethos” which encouraged Mexican American activists to accept Chicanismo, a complex set of ideas which included cultural nationalism, self-determination, militancy, and the politics of opposition.<sup>78</sup>

The evidence suggests that the politics of protest and confrontation that manifested at Harrison High during the late 60’s and Froebel High in the 70’s, is a testament of how Mexicano students became makers of their own history at these high schools, which failed to respond to their unique needs in spite of the growing Mexican-origin student population. Working class students of Mexican-origin responded to their invisibility by organizing school walkouts and making demands for the institutionalization of effective bilingual-bicultural programs, which included the hiring of qualified teachers, counselors, and principals. The list of demands also reflected a

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<sup>76</sup> See John A. García, “The Chicano Movement: It’s Legacy for Politics and Policy” in David R. Marciel and Isidro D. Ortiz, Eds. *Chicanas/Chicanos at the Crossroads: Social, Economic, and Political Change*. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996). Also see Ignacio M. García, *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos among Mexican Americans*. (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1997).

<sup>77</sup> Ignacio M. García, *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos among Mexican Americans*. (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1997), p. 6.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

consciousness of increased racial and cultural pride. This was evident in the demand for soccer and inclusion of Latin American history.

The formation of the teatro as a strategy to convey political and ideological messages was also a quite innovative and creative aesthetic expression. The Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS) was the college student organization which after 1969 assisted Mexican-origin high school students at Harrison High organize their strategies and tactics for school reform in order to meet their unique needs.

Lastly, the legacy of the Harrison High School Walkouts of 68' and the spirit of Chicanismo continued into the mid-70's with the politics of confrontation at the Harrison branch of Froebel High in Pilsen. Although the notion of 'Chicano' never quite popularized the public imagination of most Mexicans in Chicago, Mexicano students, parents, and community activists forged a spirit of Chicanismo to fit their unique circumstances and local context for urban school reform during the height of the civil rights era.

## CHAPTER 6

### REVISITING THE PAST TO INFORM THE PRESENT AND SHAPE THE FUTURE

What lessons can we draw from this study? One important historical lesson is that social change occurred through the direct action of ordinary individuals. Students, parents, and community activists created urban school reform through local grass-roots organizing efforts. Indeed, it is important to recall that the passage of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 occurred *as a result of* civil rights activism across the country. More current local examples include the Pilsen hunger strikes demanding better educational services for CPS elementary schools of the mid-90's and the 2001, nineteen-day hunger strikes staged by fourteen community residents of Little Village demanding the construction of a new high school in order to alleviate overcrowding of their only local public high school (Farragut). In 1998, the construction of Little Village Lawndale High School (LVLHS) had been promised by the Chicago Public School board, but was put on hold for ostensibly monetary issues. Almost four years later, continuous pressure from hunger strikers (a group of mostly Mexican mothers), community activists, and local politicians led to the opening of LVLHS campus in the fall of 2005.<sup>1</sup> In many ways, this most recent social movement is also a testimony

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<sup>1</sup> For a more rich detailed account and analysis of this popular social movement see, Gabriel A. Cortez, *Education, Politics, and a Hunger Strike: A Popular Movement's Struggle for Education in Chicago's Little Village Community*. diss. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2008.

to the continual legacy of the Little Village and Pilsen school boycotts of late 60's and mid-70's.

Second, educational historians have pointed out how in their quest with solving certain social, political, and economic problems, elite public school reformers have always sought the 'one best system' in top-down fashion.<sup>2</sup> The most current educational reform is the No Child Left Behind legislation which has 'framed'<sup>3</sup> accountability of academic achievement as evidenced through measurable high-stakes testing assessments. Here, immigrant Mexicano second-language learners will continue to score low on standardized tests therefore presumably failing to close the achievement gap. Paradoxically, despite effective bilingual education programs and curriculums being fought over in the 60's and 70's to address the 'language barrier' of (ELL) English Language Learner students, the 'drop-out', or push-out rate for Latino children remains unusually high.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, overcrowded schools continue to be a pressing issue for the Little Village and Pilsen communities of Chicago. Ironically, it seems that poor and working-class Mexicano students in Chicago Public Schools are still facing the same concerns that were prevalent in the 60's and 70's.

To be sure, cultural deficit thinking continues to taint many educator and school administrators' views who perceive Mexicano students' culture and language as deficits

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<sup>2</sup> See David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995); David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1974).

<sup>3</sup> See Kevin K. Kumashiro, *The Seduction of Common Sense: How the Right has Framed the Debate on America's Schools*. (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2008). Also see Nell Noddings, *When School Reform Goes Wrong*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2007). Noddings argues that the language of 'accountability' as couched by the NCLB act elides more pressing issues such as poverty, health, and safety which require a democratic moral commitment or 'responsibility' on the part of teachers, administrators, and policy makers.

<sup>4</sup> The 2000 U.S. Census Bureau estimated that 88,000 Latinos between the ages of 16-24 from Chicago were dropouts.

to overcome rather than strengths to cultivate.<sup>5</sup> These deficit models essentially blame Mexicano students and communities for lacking certain attributes (e.g., the tendency to minimize the importance of formal education or parents lack of involvement in the education of their children). Furthermore, in the case of bilingual education, there continues to be a dominant cultural and linguistic bias which presumes that (ELL's) English Language Learners are in dire need of remedial education. Throughout Chicago public schools 'transitional bilingual education' programs assume 'subtractive' approaches which aim at substituting English for Spanish as rapidly as possible. Moreover, what is also overlooked in these deficit models is that, often times, bilingual education programs are staffed by under-qualified inexperienced teachers who are ill-equipped to implement high quality bilingual education.<sup>6</sup> Yet, as critical educational scholars have repeatedly pointed out, the 'funds of knowledge' approach demonstrates how language minority communities can actually enhance instruction in schools. The 'funds of knowledge' approach operates on the premise that all students already have knowledge via lived experiences which enables educators to potentially capitalize on the rich resources communities may provide for learning.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Tara J. Yosso, *Critical Race Counterstories along the Chicana/Chicano Educational Pipeline*. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Griselda Peña, "Bilingual Education: The Problem of Ambiguity and Poor Professional Development" U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement Educational Resources Information Center. (2002).

<sup>7</sup> See Norma Gonzalez, Luis. C. Moll, Cathy Amanti eds., *Funds of Knowledge: Theorizing Practices in Households, Communities, and Classrooms*. (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005); Tamara Lucas, Rosemary Henze and Ruben Donato, "Promoting the Success of Latino Language-Minority Students: An Exploratory Study of Six High Schools," in Antonia Darder, Rodolfo D. Torres, Henry Gutiérrez eds., *Latinos and Education: A Critical Reader*. (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), pp. 373-397; Luis C. Moll, "Bilingual Classroom Studies and Community Analysis: Some Recent Trends" *Educational Researcher*. 21:2 (1992): 20-24.

Indeed, for over twenty years, Jim Cummings has researched bilingual education, educational reform, and written extensively about second language learners and their success in schools.<sup>8</sup> For Cummings, schools tend to reflect the power structure of the wider dominant culture and therefore student-teacher interactions are directly associated with relations of power in the classroom as well as educational outcomes. Hence, any transformative pedagogy that focuses on empowerment, Cummings reminds us, must first affirm the unique cultural, linguistic, and intellectual resources that children bring to the school. Here, Cummings' acknowledgement of second-language learners' identities as rich resources to tap into rather than deficits 'to fix' is crucial. In short, Cummings' research sheds lights on how classroom effectiveness for ELL students is largely dependent on student identity negotiations and teachers' attitudes and behaviors in affirming those identities. In the end, by affirming the lived experiences and rich resources available within language minority communities, the teaching and learning bonds between teacher-student interactions become stronger and trusting which lead towards more favorable academic outcomes.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See Jim Cummings, "Empowering Minority Students: A Framework for Intervention." *Harvard Educational Review*. 56:1. (1986): 18-36; *Language, Power, and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire*. (Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters LTD, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> See Jim Cummings, *Language, Power and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire*. (Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters LTD, 2001); 246-283. For another classic 'constructionist' study on the effectiveness of recognizing previous and present linguistic, cultural, and cognitive abilities of second-language learners also see Henry T. Trueba, *Success or Failure? Learning and the Language Minority Student*. (Scranton, PA: Harper Row, 1987); Henry T. Trueba and Concha Delgado-Gaitan eds., *School and Society: Learning Content Through Culture*. (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1988). Also see Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (New York, NY: Continuum, 1970).

Recently, a considerable body of research has demonstrated the academic success of Dual Language programs for Spanish and English language learners.<sup>10</sup> Similar to the ‘funds of knowledge’ approach, Dual Language programs are built on capitalizing on the students’ strengths in speaking two languages. Research continues to document how Dual-Language programs best foster bilingualism, academic achievement, and cultural pluralism.<sup>11</sup> However, in order to implement effective Dual Language programs, much sustained organization as well as communication and collaboration is imperative between knowledgeable administrators, well-trained bilingual teachers, and active parents.<sup>12</sup> In 1968, Latino students at Harrison high demanded bilingual teachers and classes as integral components of the school curriculum and interestingly, one of the demands of the New Breed Black student organization at Harrison was the establishment of ‘language laboratories’. Clearly ahead of their time, both African American and Latino students at Harrison, one may argue, were already demanding ‘Dual-Language programs’ before the concept was even coined. If only the school administration would have responded favorably to the demands of the student body, we may have avoided experiencing the problems we have today.

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Eugene E. García, *Teaching and Learning in Two Languages: Bilingualism and Schooling in the U.S.* (2005); Sonia W. Soltéro, *Dual Language: Teaching and Learning in Two Languages*. (2004); Leo Gomez, David Freeman, Yvonne Freeman, “Dual Language Education: A Promising 50-50 Model.” *Bilingual Research Journal*, 29:1(2005):145-164; Lisa Winstead, “Authentic Language Opportunities: An Alternative Dual Language Model” Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) San Francisco, CA, 2006); Carmen A. Rolon, “Succeeding with Latino Students” *Principal* (November/December 2005):1-13.

<sup>11</sup> See Valverde, Leonard A.; Armendariz, Gloria J. “Important Administrative Tasks Resulting from Understanding Bilingual Program Designs.” *Bilingual Research Journal*, 23:1 (1999): 1-10; Robert A. Peña, “A Case Study of Parental Involvement in a Conversion from Transitional to Dual Language Instruction”, *Bilingual Research Journal*, 22: 2 (1998): 237-59.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Lliana Alanís, Mariela A. Rodriguez, “Sustaining a Dual Language Immersion Program: Features of Success” *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 7:4 (2008): 305-319.

Finally, inquiry-driven processes of multicultural ‘public sense-making’<sup>13</sup> are required of teachers and administrators if they are to adopt community-inclusive practices that open up potential mutual learning opportunities with the very communities they purport to serve. It remains to be seen whether Chicago public schools or even the recent popular Charter school movement, which has been influenced by the neo-liberal free-market ideology of the wider ‘choice’ movement, will allow such public democratic spaces to flourish.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See Colleen L. Larson, Carlos J. Ovando, *The Color of Bureaucracy: The Politics of Equity in Multicultural School Communities*. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001). Larson and Ovando argue that a crucial aspect of this type of sense-making centers on teachers and administrators recognizing the limitations of their own (bureaucratic) logic which often perpetuate systems of inequity, and engaging instead in critical conversations and collaborative dialogues with students and parents whose racialized lived experiences differ from their own.

<sup>14</sup> Although the charter school movement has initial roots in progressive equity agendas, the charter concept has been hijacked by some conservatives and neo-liberals who are guided by ‘free-market’ privatization principles. At issue here for many critics is the fear of losing local democratic public control to the hands of private corporate interests. For a nuanced discussion of the progressive possibilities of school choice and participatory democratic potentialities of charter schools, see Eric Rofes and Lisa M. Stulberg eds. *The Emancipatory Promise of Charter Schools: Toward a Progressive Politics of School Choice*. (New York, NY: State University of New York Press). For examples of the privatization of American public schools and the corporate control of charter schools see, David Hursh and Pauline Lipman, “Renaissance 2010: The Reassertion of Ruling-Class Power through Neo-Liberal Policies in Chicago” in David Hursh, *High-Stakes Testing and The Decline of Teaching and Learning: The Real Crisis in Education*. (Landham, MD: Rowman Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008): 97-120; Kenneth J. Saltman, *The Edison Schools: Corporate Schooling and the Assault on Public Education*. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005).

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## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEWS AND NEWSPAPER RESOURCES

#### Interviews

Salvador Obregon, Interview with author, February 3, 2010. Phoenix, Arizona.

Maria Díaz, Interview with author, February 17, 2008. Chicago, Illinois.

Vince Estrada, Interview with author, February 17, 2008. Chicago, Illinois.

Dolores Guerrero, Interview with author, March 23, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

Sam Ozaki, Interview with author, March 23, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

Victor Ortiz, Interview with author, April 14, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

Carlos Herredia, Interview with author, March 2, 2009. Chicago, Illinois. Hector

Hector Rodríguez, Interview with author, October 17, 2009. Chicago, Illinois.

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Newspapers

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*Chicago Daily Defender.*

*Chicago Sun-Times.*

*Chicago Tribune.*

*Chicago Daily News.*

*Chicago Today.*

*Daily Calumet.*

## APPENDIX B

### “LATIN AMERICAN MANIFESTO OF HARRISON HIGH SCHOOL”

We the Latin-American students of Harrison High School feel that the administration of our school has not been sensitive to our needs nor willing to make the necessary changes which are so badly needed. We feel that their reluctance to change present conditions and their foot-dragging in facing the needs of the students are creating an atmosphere in the school where little learning is possible. The administration must bear much of the responsibility for the present situation. The administration must provide for the needs of the Latin-American students. We comprise 35 to 40 percent of the student population, yet we are receiving as inferior education that will undoubtedly cripple our chances for future success. The administration had not and is not sympathetic toward our problems. The fact that many of us do not speak or understand English well is a source of frustration. Our frustration is even greater when we realize that the administration refuses to establish programs to meet this need. Instead the administration ignores us. The administration has not begun to understand the importance of having people of our own cultural background as teachers, counselors, and administrators in the school. We need these people with whom we can identify and emulate. It is our feeling that the Board of Education system tries to make us inferior by its failure to institute

Latin-American History courses and other social studies that portray our significant cultural contributions. We therefore submit our following demands:

1. We demand three qualified bilingual Spanish American counselors to be assigned by November 1, 1968. (We demand counselors not disciplinarians).
2. We demand two required years of Latin-American culture and history, And taught by qualified bilingual Latin-American teachers. We further demand that books will be used which have an open point of view of history that will contribute to the dignity and respect of Latin American People.
3. We demand that special TESL classes be instituted for the non-English speaking students and that these classes become an integral part of the school curriculum.
4. We demand that at least eight qualified, bilingual TESL teachers be assigned to Harrison High School by October 21, 1968.
5. We demand that special programs be developed by local universities to meet the special needs of Spanish-speaking students problems.
6. We demand a Spanish-American assistant principal.
7. We demand two bilingual persons to be assigned as clerks to the office staff and that five bilingual persons be assigned as teachers aids and two bilingual school community representatives.
8. We demand that monthly Spanish meetings of the PTA be conducted By a community authorized Spanish-speaking person.
9. We demand that the administration recognizes the soccer team and provide a qualified instructor and necessary equipment for the team's Participation in city-wide competition.
10. We demand that this organization of Latin-American Students of Harrison be recognized by the school administration as an official

mediator and bargaining agent for the Latin-American students and their problems.<sup>1</sup>

WE DEMAND THAT OUR PRESENT GRIEVANCES BE GIVEN IMMEDIATE ATTENTION BECAUSE WE THE LATIN AMERICAN STUDENTS OF HARRISON ARE UNITED AND DETERMINED TO INSURE THAT THESE URGENT DEMANDS ARE MET FOR THE WELFARE OF OUR SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY.

#### Better Teachers: Higher Standards

1. Competent teachers preferably bilingual
2. Courses in history geared to instill pride in our own heritage
3. Bilingual counselors, community representatives and teacher aides
4. Initiate program recruitment with pay incentive
5. No reprisals

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<sup>1</sup>Intelligence Division, Chicago Police Department, "Latin American Manifesto of Harrison High School Presented by the Students", Red Squad Records, Box 211, Chicago Historical Society.

## APPENDIX C

### “NEW BREED BLACK MANIFESTO OF HARRISON HIGH SCHOOL”

1. Recognition of the student group New Breed as a bargaining agent.
2. Recognition of the Concerned People of Lawndale as a community bargaining agent.
3. Addition of the contributions of Black people in all courses.
4. More Black teachers and a Black assistant principal at the school.
5. One year requirement for Afro-American history courses.
6. Repairs for the school building.
7. Better food in the cafeteria.
8. More homework for students.
9. Insurance for school athletes.
10. Use of more educational television and radio.
11. The resignation of principal Alexander Burke.
12. Improvement of present educational programs.
13. Improvement of community resources to develop each Harrison student to their highest potential.
14. The establishment of language laboratories to develop each Harrison student to their highest potential.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Dionne Danns, *Something Better for Our Children: Black Organizing in Chicago Public Schools, 1963-1971*. (New York: Routledge, 2003).