

12-28-2017

## Revolution and World War I Civil Rights?: Transnational Relations and Mexican Consul Records in Mexican American Educational History, 1910-1929

Victoria-María MacDonald

*National Archives and Records Administration*, [vmmpm83@gmail.com](mailto:vmmpm83@gmail.com)

Gonzalo Guzmán

*University of Washington*, [gonzog@uw.edu](mailto:gonzog@uw.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/eduhist>



Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), [Digital Humanities Commons](#), [Educational Methods Commons](#), [Indigenous Studies Commons](#), [Oral History Commons](#), [Social and Philosophical Foundations of Education Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

**Let us know how access to this document benefits you.**

---

### Recommended Citation

MacDonald, Victoria-María, and Gonzalo Guzmán. "Revolution and World War I Civil Rights?: Transnational Relations and Mexican Consul Records in Mexican American Educational History, 1910-1929." *Education's Histories* 4 (December 28, 2017). <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/eduhist/vol4/iss1/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Education's Histories by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

---

## Revolution and World War I Civil Rights?: Transnational Relations and Mexican Consul Records in Mexican American Educational History, 1910-1929

### Cover Page Footnote

Dr. Victoria-María MacDonald is dedicated to weaving the voices of marginalized people into the dominant historical narrative. Her essays on Latinx history can be found in *The History of Education Quarterly*, *Harvard Educational Review*, and most recently (with Alice Cook), "Before Chicana Civil Rights: Three Generations of Mexican American Women in Higher Education in the Southwest, 1920-1965," in Margaret Nash, ed. *Women's Higher Education in the United States* (2017). She can be reached at [vmmpm83@gmail.com](mailto:vmmpm83@gmail.com). Gonzalo Guzmán is currently a Ph.D. Candidate in the Social and Cultural Foundations of Education at the University of Washington. His dissertation focuses on the role elementary schools have played in the construction of the Mexican and White races. He can be reached at [gonzog@uw.edu](mailto:gonzog@uw.edu). An anonymous benefactor provided the funding for this project. We are deeply grateful for his generosity and faith in the project's importance. Adrea Lawrence and Sara Clark have been fabulous editors, pushing our thinking and patiently awaiting revisions. We hope this work represents the enormous support, detail, and thought they both demonstrated. We deeply appreciate Benjamin H. Johnson's careful reading of this manuscript and the important questions he raised. From MacDonald: My colega Dr. Laura Kathryn Muñoz not only shared her enormous knowledge of Chicana/Latina history for this research but also provided boundless intellectual and emotional support. Hermana and amiga Dr. Ana Patricia Rodriguez gave me ganas when I was tired on the import of bringing Latino/a history out of the darkness of the archives. Dr. Guadalupe "Lupe" San Miguel, Jr. carefully read the manuscript and as always, provided trenchant and important feedback. Dr. Michael Rodriguez-Muñiz allowed me to talk about my ideas over many meals and walks—always pushing my thinking while being pulled by my famous/infamous German Shepherd "Josie." Dr. Tara Brown and Dr. Rosemary Traore provided infinite wisdom and advice; I am so thankful for their friendship. Gonzalo—what an exciting few years it has been with this project! I couldn't ask for a better co-author—your intellect, depth and breadth in all the cutting edge literature on borderlands, phenomenal research skills, and capacity to work with me on the spot across time zones, and virtually through various electronic devices—made it a sincere pleasure and intellectual exercise. We are grateful to Research Assistant Patricia García Gómez, M.A. Environment, Development & Policy, University of Sussex, United Kingdom, who translated with fidelity and detail Spanish language documents and helped bring the project to completion. Thank you to a special individual not only for wonderful companionship and gourmet meals, but getting me out of the archives into a fuller and more complete life. From Guzmán: I'd like to thank the tireless effort of my co-author, Dr. Victoria-Maria MacDonald; this article was a herculean effort, and its completion would have been impossible without her. Victoria, thank you so much again for your unwavering commitment to historical work! You are an amazing mentor. And I second all of MacDonald's kudos.



## Education's Histories

methodological grist for the  
history of education

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Kate Linthicum, "Mexico instructs its embassy and consulates in the U.S. to increase measures to protect immigrants." *Los Angeles Times*. November 16, 2016. <http://www.latimes.com/world/mexico-americas/la-fg-mexico-immigrants-20161116-story.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Examples include, Jennifer Medina, "Mexican Consulates Flooded With Fearful Immigrants." *The New York Times*. February 17, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/17/us/mexican-consulates-flooded-with-fearful-immigrants.html> and Nina Shapiro, "Mexican consul hits road to calm Trump post election fears in Washington state." November 27, 2016. Updated December 9, 2016. *The Seattle Times*. <http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/northwest/mexican-consul-hits-road-to-calm-trump-postelection-fears-in-washington-state/>.

## Revolution and World War I Civil Rights?: Transnational Relations and Mexican Consul Records in Mexican American Educational History, 1910-1929

*Victoria-María MacDonald and Gonzalo Guzmán*

### Prologue

On November 16, 2016, a Los Angeles Times headline blared, "MEXICO INSTRUCTS ITS EMBASSY AND CONSULATES IN THE U.S. TO INCREASE MEASURES TO PROTECT IMMIGRANTS."<sup>1</sup> Barely a week after President Donald Trump's election with promises of draconian anti-immigrant measures, news media described the efforts of Mexican consuls to prepare and protect for its nationals in the U.S. seeking protection, legal advice, or return to the homeland.<sup>2</sup> The long border between the two nations created in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), labor

---

*Dr. Victoria-María MacDonald is dedicated to weaving the voices of marginalized people into the dominant historical narrative. Her essays on Latinx history can be found in The History of Education Quarterly, Harvard Educational Review, and most recently (with Alice Cook), "Before Chicana Civil Rights: Three Generations of Mexican American Women in Higher Education in the Southwest, 1920-1965," in Margaret Nash, ed. Women's Higher Education in the United States (2017). She can be reached at [vmmppm83@gmail.com](mailto:vmmppm83@gmail.com). Gonzalo Guzmán is currently a Ph.D. Candidate in the Social and Cultural Foundations of Education at the University of Washington. His dissertation focuses on the role elementary schools have played in the construction of the Mexican and White races. He can be reached at [gonzog@uw.edu](mailto:gonzog@uw.edu). An anonymous benefactor provided the funding for this project. We are deeply grateful for his generosity and faith in the project's importance. Adrea Lawrence and Sara Clark have been fabulous editors, pushing our thinking and patiently awaiting revisions. We hope this work represents the enormous support, detail, and thought they both demonstrated. We deeply appreciate Benjamin H. Johnson's careful reading of this manuscript and the important questions he raised. From MacDonald: My colega Dr. Laura Kathryn Muñoz not only shared her enormous knowledge of Chicana/Latina history for this research but also provided boundless intellectual and emotional support. Hermana and amiga Dr. Ana Patricia Rodriguez gave me ganas when I was tired on the import of bringing Latino/a history out of the darkness of the archives. Dr.*

demands in the U.S., and revolving flows of immigrants have historically led to a strong presence of Mexican consulates in the U.S.—varying from approximately three dozen to fifty during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.<sup>3</sup> Consuls conduct traditional diplomatic matters, but they have also served to protect its citizens’ rights from discrimination and exploitation, particularly during waves of anti-immigrant hysteria and labor demands. During the tense border conflict and World War I eras, repatriation during the Great Depression, the long Bracero labor agreement (1942-1964), and Operation Wetback (1954), consuls have brokered the needs of its citizens with varying measures of success and political will. The election of President Donald Trump in 2016 and his anti-immigrant platform has severely impacted the Mexican community as one of the largest immigrant senders and Latino subgroups in the U.S.—triggering renewed action and expansion of resources at Mexican consul offices.<sup>4</sup> As of 2015, Mexicans represent the largest group of immigrants in the U.S. (26.8%). However, since the end of the Great Recession (2007-2009), Asians have outnumbered Latinos as the largest number of new arrivals.<sup>5</sup>

In this essay, we present evidence from a century ago of Mexican national parents via their consuls attempting to protect their children’s rights in the U.S. public schools. In the United States, public schools have idealistically served as an institution designed to assist in the integration of immigrants culturally, politically, and economically. The evidence herein, and in other histories of Mexican American education, question whether the historical and racial positioning of Mexican immigrants and their descendants (except for an elite segment) have ever been perceived as assimilable

---

*Guadalupe “Lupe” San Miguel, Jr. carefully read the manuscript and as always, provided trenchant and important feedback. Dr. Michael Rodriguez-Muñiz allowed me to talk about my ideas over many meals and walks—always pushing my thinking while being pulled by my famous/infamous German Shepherd “Josie.” Dr. Tara Brown and Dr. Rosemary Traore provided infinite wisdom and advice; I am so thankful for their friendship. Gonzalo—what an exciting few years it has been with this project! I couldn’t ask for a better co-author—your intellect, depth and breadth in all the cutting edge literature on borderlands, phenomenal research skills, and capacity to work with me on the spot across time zones, and virtually through various electronic devices—made it a sincere pleasure and intellectual exercise. We are grateful to Research Assistant Patricia García Gómez, M.A. Environment, Development & Policy, University of Sussex, United Kingdom, who translated with fidelity and detail Spanish language documents and helped bring the project to completion. Thank you to a special individual not only for wonderful companionship and gourmet meals, but getting me out of the archives into a fuller and more complete life. From Guzmán: I’d like to thank the tireless effort of my co-author, Dr. Victoria-Maria MacDonald; this article was a herculean effort, and its completion would have been impossible without her. Victoria, thank you so much again for your unwavering commitment to historical work! You are an amazing mentor. And I second all of MacDonald’s kudos.*

<sup>3</sup> Francisco E. Balderrama, *In Defense of La Raza: The Los Angeles Mexican Consulate and the Mexican Community, 1929-1936* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982); Carlos González Gutiérrez, “Decentralized Diplomacy: The Role of Consular Offices in Mexico’s Relations with its Diaspora,” Rodolfo O. de la Garza and Jesús Velasco, eds. *Bridging the Border: Transforming Mexico-US Relations* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 49-67. Consulados de México en el exterior, <https://directorio.sre.gob.mx/index.php/consulados-de-mexico-en-el-exterior>.

<sup>4</sup> On September 5, 2017 President Donald Trump continued his purge of undocumented immigrants through rescinding President Barack Obama’s DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivers) directive of June 12, 2012 and giving Congress six months to resolve its status. Mexican consuls have also offered support to these young people. See, for example, Patrick J. McDonnell, “Mexico Greets Trump’s DACA Decision with ‘profound regret.’” *Los Angeles Times* September 5, 2017. <http://www.latimes.com/politics/la-dreamers-decision-live-updates-mexico-greets-trump-s-daca-decision-1504635249-htmlstory.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Gustavo López and Jynnah Redford, “Origins of the U.S. immigrant population, 1960-2015,” and “Among new arrivals, Asians outnumber Hispanics.” *Statistical Portrait of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States*. Pew Research Center. May 3, 2017.

immigrants, or as a temporary pliable labor force for the powerful bordering *Norte*. Mexican immigrant and Mexican American parents have fought to access quality education for their children with mixed success since annexation in 1848. To the numerous other strategies Mexican Americans have utilized to fight for their children, including lawsuits, boycotts, and walkouts, we add to the historian's toolkit transnational diplomacy through countries' consuls.

As an ongoing project, we make five broad arguments stemming from the outcomes of this first set of discovered complaints. First, how the complaints were selected among thousands of complaints Mexican consuls received to the Department of State reveals critical periods when the Mexican government utilized its diplomatic negotiating strength vis-à-vis the United States to wield international diplomacy for educational rights; 2) the determination of parents, many of whom who could not afford lawyers, to access the highest quality education for their children, which, in their view, represented integration with "White" or "American" students, learn English, advance to junior and senior high schools permitting upward mobility, and exercise Fourteenth Amendment rights of equality under the law; 3) the archival evidence in these documents offer a historical counter narrative to ongoing perceptions from dominant communities that Mexican descent parents do not value education;<sup>6</sup> 4) this history adds to the scant historiography on the role of consuls in transnational conflict resolutions, with attention to issues that have received less historical treatment concerning parents, their children, and education; and, 5) this study also contributes to the micro and macro narratives of social, political, and economic conditions under which public education in U.S. history has extended—and denied—full access to children, particularly those of linguistic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds distinct from Euroamericans.

In addition to discussing the unique methodological challenges these documents present, and their historiographic placement in diplomatic, Mexican American, and educational history, we conclude with preliminary thoughts on why the consul strategy for Mexican parents may have been initially weak, peaked, and then ebbed during this era alongside geopolitical waves of the impact of the Mexican Revolution on the U.S., World War I tensions, labor shortages, the Great Depression, evolving Mexican American activist organizations such as the League of United Latin American

<sup>6</sup> Richard R. Valencia & Mary S. Black, "Mexican Americans Don't Value Education!": On the Basis of the Myth, Mythmaking, and Debunking." *Journal of Latinos and Education* 1, no. 2 (Jan. 2002). DOI: 10.1207/S1532771XJLEO102\_2.

Citizens (LULAC), and the Mexican government's shifting focus to the U.S. initiated Bracero labor program during World War II.

<sup>7</sup> Clemente N. Idar, "Tanto los niños Mexicanos como los Mexico-Americanos, son excluidos de las Escuelas Oficiales. El Cónsul Miguel E. Diébold reanuda sus investigaciones La Crónica." (Laredo, Texas) Dec. 24, 1910. For biographical information of Clemente N. Idar, his siblings and father Nicasio Idar who was editor of *La Crónica*, see Cynthia E. Orozco, "Idar, Clemente Nicasio," Handbook of Texas Online, accessed February 15, 2016, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fid04> and Teresa Palomo Acosta, "Idar, Nicasio," Handbook of Texas Online, accessed February 15, 2016, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fid02>. Idar's reference to the Japanese in this essay is an issue that had only recently been resolved between the Japanese and U.S. through diplomatic negotiations concerning school segregation in San Francisco in *Aoki vs. Deane* (1907). Charles M. Wollenberg, *All Deliberate Speed: Segregation and Exclusion in California Schools, 1855-1975* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 48-68. Translation of Spanish language materials in this essay by Patricia García Gómez.

<sup>8</sup> In addition to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, entitling Mexicans the choice to become naturalized U.S. citizens (and by default, considered white), a federal court in Texas ruled in 1897 that a "pure-blooded Mexican" could become a citizen. Unlike most racial legal cases concerning citizenship during this era, Ian Haney López points out, "*In re Rodriguez* is unique in that the court relied on treaties rather than cases to hold the applicant admissible to naturalization." *In re Ricardo Rodriguez*, 81 F. 337, 349 (W.D. Tex. 1897) Appendix A, Table I, "Racial Prerequisite Cases, 1878-1909," in *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*. 10th ed. (New York: New York University Press), 164. Similarly, Natalia Molina reinforces, "the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo never declared Mexicans to be white, just eligible for citizenship." See "In a Race All Their Own": The Quest to Make Mexicans Ineligible for U.S. Citizenship." *Pacific Historical Review*, 79 (2010): 170.

## Mexican Racial Subjectivity and U.S.–Mexico Relations

Don't think that we are looking for a scandal; we only demand a right. To the Japanese, the Irish, the Scottish, English, Italians and to some many other nationalities that arrive in large numbers immigrating to this country, are given no trouble with regard to attending the public schools of the States of the American Republic. Why are they placed for the Mexican and Mexican American? In light of which law? What constitutional principle? Are we perhaps not recognized as part of the white race? Have the articles of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo already been forgotten?<sup>7</sup>

The young future labor organizer and activist Clemente N. Idar penned these words under the headline, "Mexican as well as Mexican American Children are excluded from the Public Schools: Consul Miguel E. Diebold Resumes his Investigations," in his father's Laredo, Texas, newspaper *La Crónica* in 1910. Idar, like many of his fellow Mexicans of U.S. or Mexican birth, fought against segregation of their children in the public schools, and were insistent that their consular representatives bring this issue to the Mexican Ambassador in Washington, D.C. for attention and remediation. Through invoking the treaty signed at the end of the U.S.-Mexico War protecting the rights of Mexicans who resided in the former lands of Mexico, and naturalization rights to become American citizens Mexicans, he argued, were thus legally part of the White race and demanded treatment as such.<sup>8</sup>

In this essay we examine Mexican national parents' (those of the "Mexicanista" generation) use of diplomatic channels via Mexican consuls in the U.S. to protest and seek remedy from the segregation of their children into separate Mexican schools or with Black children in segregated Black schools from as early as 1910, whether based upon formally state-sanctioned policies, de facto community

<sup>9</sup> A note on terminology—we are using “Mexican” to denote individuals who were most likely born in Mexico and “Mexican American” to denote individuals born in the U.S. However, the birth, residency, and citizenship status of individuals is not always transparent, and we will indicate when that is the case. Generational terms were developed by Emilio Zamora, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> Correspondence from Mexican diplomats is in Spanish. The U.S. State Department provided English translations. A corollary, but not identical set of these records reside in the Archivo General de la Nación (General Archive of the Nation) in Mexico City. At this stage of our research we rely upon RG59 at the National Archives in College Park, MD, recognizing the entire files may or may not be exact duplicates.

<sup>11</sup> Additional consular letters regarding educational rights were found from other locations but follow-up correspondence could not be found. These cases represent those with complete sets (not always found together) and resolutions from the United States side between these years. Additional materials post 1929 will be discussed in another forum. The creation of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) in 1929 and the changing negative political winds during the Great Depression influenced our decision to choose this ending date. See [Table I, “Selected Mexico-U.S. Consul Cases-Education, 1909-1929”](#)

<sup>12</sup> In a future installment of this essay we also examine the numerous complaints from parents of violence against children and youth in public settings such as ball fields, playgrounds, and parks, in continuing efforts to exclude Mexican immigrants as part of the body politic. These cases do not include the better-known lawsuits against exclusion from public swimming pools, park, and private movie theaters in the World War II era.

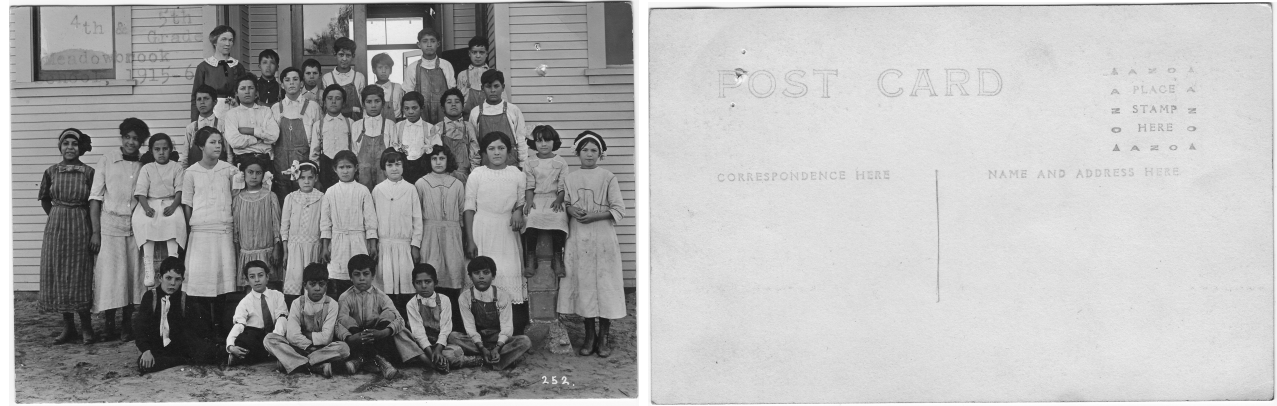


Image 1. San Bernardino, CA 1916 Mexican School Postcards. RG 59, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

decisions, or arbitrarily and individually decided.<sup>9</sup> These records are located in the U.S. State Department Records, (RG59), at the National Archives, College Park, Maryland (hereafter NARA II).<sup>10</sup> We unearthed over a dozen cases of discrimination that educational historians have not previously utilized, including one reproduced within Spanish-language newspapers.<sup>11</sup>

We situate these events during an era—that of the long Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) and World War I (1914-1918) period. This period received significantly less attention from historians in education, civil rights, and Latino/Chicano studies. We argue that the U.S. government’s concerns over Mexican insurrectionary activities along the border including El Plan de San Diego (1915); Pancho Villa and his followers’ invasion of Columbus, New Mexico (1916); U.S. suspicions about relations between Mexico and Germany during World War I, as evidenced in the Zimmerman Telegram (1917); and an American labor shortage during World War I provided a window of opportunity for Mexican parents to fight (sometimes successfully, often not) against the educational discrimination of their children in U.S. public schools.<sup>12</sup> We draw loosely from the concept of “Cold War Civil Rights,” proffered by historians of the post-World War II era that illuminated connections between geopolitics and domestic pressures for Black civil rights. Under the umbrella of what we

term “Revolution and World War I Civil Rights,” we demonstrate how the underlying contexts of empire, race, ethnicity, and transnationalism influenced Mexican parents to petition consuls for redress in educational matters, particularly exclusion from White or “American” public schools.

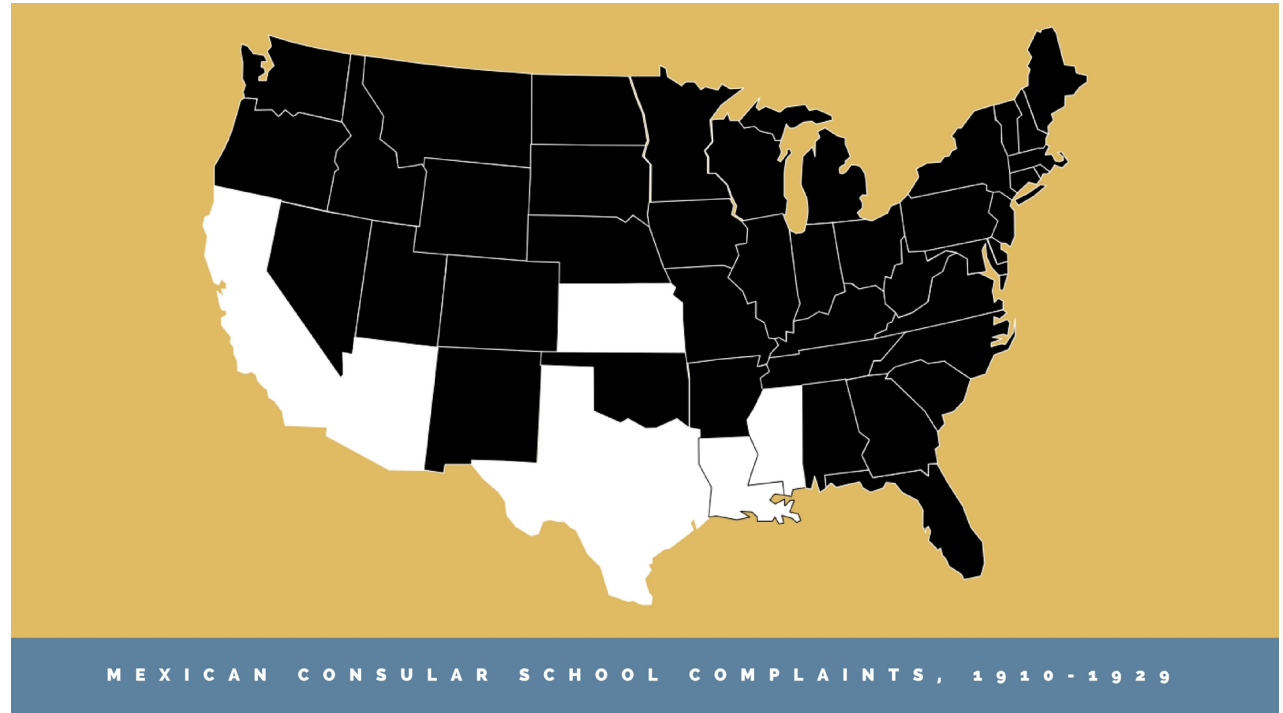
We further discuss how this work shifts the conventional periodization of Mexican American activism and self-agency in the realm of education as one beginning at least a decade earlier than the majority of documented U.S. legal cases concerning school segregation in the 1920s. During our research, co-author Gonzalo Guzmán discovered the parent-initiated *Francisco Maestas et al. v. George H. Shone et al.* (1914) in the Alamosa, Colorado School District. *Maestas* is now the earliest known lawsuit from U.S. born Mexican parents contesting segregation of their children into a Mexican school. The district court judge ruled in the parents’ favor, rejecting the segregation of *all* students of Mexican descent from White schools, whether or not they could speak English.<sup>13</sup> The newly emerging evidence from *Maestas* and these consul records point to the need for more diligent search in records to expand pre-1929 Mexican educational history. Parents did not always rely exclusively on consuls, and some hired lawyers either independently or from consul recommendations. Only Mexican nationals could utilize the consul strategy, however, as naturalized Mexicans or those born in the U.S. were no longer Mexican citizens. Thus, in *Maestas* (1914) and the next known lawsuit, *Romo v. Laird* (1925), the plaintiffs were U.S. citizens.<sup>14</sup> The incidents of discrimination regarding schooling and language policies discussed here are tucked among thousands of other Department of State records regarding labor exploitation, incarceration abuses, land rights, police brutality, kidnapping, peonage, and rape, among other violations of human rights.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Ruben Donato, Gonzalo Guzman, & Jarrod Hanson, “Francisco Maestas et al. v. George H. Shone et al.: Mexican American Resistance to School Segregation in the Hispano Homeland, 1912-1914,” *Journal of Latinos and Education*. (2016) (15pp.) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2016.1179190>.

<sup>14</sup> Laura K. Muñoz, “Romo v. Laird: Mexican American School Segregation and the Politics of Belonging in Arizona,” *Western Legal History* 26 (2013): 97-132. Preliminary findings of these documents presented in 2013, Victoria-María MacDonald and Gonzalo Guzmán, “Non-White on Arrival”: The Mexican Consul, Racial Segregation, and the Transnational Fight for Educational Equality, 1915-1919.” History of Education Society 53rd Annual Meeting, Nashville, TN, 2013. We emphasize that these records are distinct from the traditional records indexed under the U.S. State Department’s “Education” category that historians may access more readily and offer their own important value (although also underutilized). Instead, we discuss here documents indexed under the categories relating to “race relations,” or “discrimination.”

<sup>15</sup> Victoria-María MacDonald is indebted to John Nieto Phillips of Indiana University, Bloomington for alerting her to the first discovered cases, those of junior high segregation and high school exclusion in Kansas City briefly discussed in Victoria-María MacDonald, “Demanding their Rights: The Latino Struggle for Educational Access and Equity.” The National Park Service Latino Theme Essay. (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 2013). <http://www.nps.gov/history/heritageinitiatives/latino/latinothemestudy/education.htm>.





Consular directives during this era discouraged Mexican consuls from utilizing international diplomacy for the resolution of complaints. Instead, the Mexican government urged cultivating healthy relations with local *mutualistas* (Mexican community or advocacy groups), and working closely with local and state officials and courts to attempt resolution. Dependent upon finances, some consular offices provided legal funds or lawyers. Others maintained a list of “abogados consultores” (consulting attorneys) with whom to confer and recommend to Mexican nationals.<sup>16</sup> Mexican diplomatic officials selected these cases from among the hundreds or thousands they received each month at the more than four dozen consular offices throughout the U.S. to go forward for consideration. Lawrence Cardoso explains the official process from a Secretary of Foreign Relations’ circular dated November 11, 1916: If consuls were thwarted at the local levels and “justice could not be obtained,” they were to notify the Secretary and the Mexican Embassy in Washington,

<sup>16</sup> Juan Gómez-Quiñones, “Piedras contra la Luna, México en Aztlán y Aztlán en México: Chicano-Mexican Relations and the Mexican Consulates, 1900-1920,” in *Contemporary Mexico: Papers of the IV International Congress of Mexican History*, ed. James W. Wilkie, Michael C. Meyer & Edna Monzón de Wilkie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); Ernesto Hidalgo, *La Protección de Mexicanos en los Estados Unidos: Defensorías de oficio anexas a los consulados* (Mexico: Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, 1940); and Lawrence A. Cardoso, “Labor Emigration to the Southwest, 1916 to 1920: Mexican Attitudes and Policy,” in George C. Kiser and Martha Woody Kiser, eds. *Mexican Workers in the United States: Historical and Political Perspectives* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979), 16-32.

<sup>17</sup> Lawrence A. Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931: Socio-Economic Patterns* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), 65.

DC. Further, “after each case was studied on its merits, a decision would then be made as to presentation of a formal protest to the American government.”<sup>17</sup> Transparent examples of how the undoubtedly political and strategic selections at the consular, ambassador, and Secretary of Foreign Relations levels are not yet clear at this stage of the research (and may remain a secretive process without the benefit of oral histories or yet unfound memoirs).

Once selected as a matter to go forward to the U.S. Secretary of State, the Mexican government, through either the local consul or the Mexican Ambassador, crafted its demands, utilizing three principal rationales for why the U.S. government should intervene into local school affairs and provide a remedy to the segregation of Mexican children into separate schools away from White children. The first argument concerning the establishment of Mexicans as part of the White race was evident throughout the transnational correspondences. Mexican officials articulated how discrimination of Mexican immigrant children in American public schools violated the terms of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo concluding the U.S.-Mexico War. Article VIII stipulated, “those who shall prefer to remain in the said territories may either retain the title and rights of Mexican citizens, or acquire those of citizens of the United States. But they shall be under the obligation to make their election within one year . . . and those who shall remain in the said territories after the expiration of that year, without having declared their intention to retain the character of Mexicans, shall be considered to have elected to become citizens of the United States.”<sup>18</sup> Article IX then granted U.S. constitutional protection to Mexicans electing U.S. citizenship, “and be incorporated into the Union of the United States and be admitted at the proper time (to be judged of by the Congress of the United States) to the enjoyment of all the rights of citizens of the United States, according to the principles of the Constitution.”<sup>19</sup> Because U.S. immigration laws at the date of the Treaty (1848) only permitted individuals of the “White” race to become naturalized, Mexicans, by default, considered themselves part of the White race.

The second premise consuls emphasized was protection of U.S.-born children under the U.S. Constitution’s Fourteenth Amendment “equal protection” clause. The third rationale also hinged on the principle that Mexicans were part of the White race, but specifically protested school segregation

<sup>18</sup> “Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo; February 2, 1848,” The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy. Accessed March 4, 2016. [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/guadhida.asp#art8](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/guadhida.asp#art8).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Historians of the Mexican American experience have debated the “Whiteness” strategy of activists in numerous works. Although space does not permit a full analysis of this historiography, the consul records add depth and detail to Mexicanista attitudes towards US Blacks and will contribute to this discussion.

<sup>21</sup> Quotation from *El Tiempo*, 31 de enero de 1910 in Gomez-Quiñones, “Piedras Contra La Luna,” p.502.

<sup>22</sup> María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

<sup>23</sup> Laurence E. Prescott, “Journeying Through Jim Crow: Spanish American Travelers in the United States during the Age of Segregation,” *Latin American Research Review*, 42, no. 1 (2007), 3-28, doi: 10.1353/lar.2007. Conversely, Sarah E. Cornell explores the transnational role of consuls from the U.S. in Mexico who returned American slaves to the U.S., preventing them from legally residing in Mexico. “Citizens of Nowhere: Fugitive Slaves and Free African Americans in Mexico, 1833-1857,” *The Journal of American History* (Sept. 2013), 351-374, doi: 10.1093/jahist/jat253.

<sup>24</sup> See generational surveys in Tatcho Mindiola, Yolanda Flores Niemann, and Nestor Rodriguez, *Black-Brown Relations and Stereotypes* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002).

<sup>25</sup> Derrick A. Bell, Jr., “Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma,” *Harvard Law Review* 93 (1980): 518-533; Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); John David Skrentny, “The Effect of the Cold War on African-American Civil Rights: America and the World Audience, 1945-1968,” *Theory and Society* 27 (1998): 237-285; Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Robert Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

together *with* Black children (versus segregation into “Mexican only” schools). As evidenced in these records, parents considered placement with Black children or having Black teachers, not only a violation of the right to be considered part of the White race but a matter of pride and “humiliation” to Mexicans.<sup>20</sup> A laborer in 1910 Texas, for instance, is quoted as complaining to the consul, “nos trabajan como negros,” (they work us like Blacks), as a serious affront.<sup>21</sup> Formal racial categorizations (castes under Spanish colonial policy) had been eliminated during Mexico’s independence in 1821. However, Mexican nationals, several generations away from formal (although not informal) hierarchies carried with them strong vestiges of these colonial caste hierarchies based, among other characteristics, on race, ethnicity, Catholicism, and indigeneity. Blackness remained at the bottom of the hierarchy. American practices of racializing and segregating most Mexicans into a negative racial category with African Americans was distinctly repugnant to emigrés, as articulated in the documents and media.<sup>22</sup> Historical hints and contemporary sociological studies points to generational differences in attitudes towards Blacks that may explain some of these objections as well as the attitudes of consuls themselves, often from elite backgrounds who secured their positions as political “plums.”<sup>23</sup> Mexican Americans have shown more of a willingness to collaborate with African Americans than Mexican immigrants.<sup>24</sup>

Beginning with legal scholar Derrick Bell’s “interest convergence” argument from the 1980s which continued in the 1990s with a more direct connection to the Cold War, scholars such as Brenda Gayle Plummer, Peter Skrenty, Mary Anne Dzudiak and Robert Borstelmann articulated a “Cold War Civil Rights” argument regarding global tensions and domestic rights for Blacks.”<sup>25</sup> The U.S. government’s need to reconcile international publicity and vituperation of its shameful track record of African American civil rights with its leadership in the world for democracy and Cold War containment laid bare American hypocrisy. Emerging from World War II as a global leader defeating fascism and symbolizing democracy and human rights, a nation fighting a Cold War against communism, while subjugating its own people of color, harmed the perception and legitimacy of the U.S. as a guardian of these ideologies, policies, and values.

As we pivot the transnational lens away from the Cold War East-West compass to one oriented

North-South, and as we shift from a Black-White racial dynamic to that of racialized Brown Mexicans and Anglos, we create a new and narrower paradigm. However, we also maintain that Dzudiak's notions of transnationalism in the post-World War II era have implications for Mexican-U.S. relations in the early twentieth century. She writes, "following the transnational path of the story of race in America, we see that the borders of U.S. history are not easily maintained. An event that is local is at the same time international. 'Foreign' developments help drive domestic politics and policy. American history plays out in a transnational frame. The international context structures relationships between 'domestic' actors. It influences the timing, nature, and extent of social change. This suggests that an international perspective does not simply 'fill in' the story of American history, but changes its terms."<sup>26</sup> Historian Jordan Leiser, recently conceived the term "ethnic diplomacy," to describe efforts the U.S. State Department carried out during World War II in tandem with a wider network of government and non-governmental stakeholders to maintain amicable relations with Mexico as a war-driven need. Leiser defines "ethnic diplomacy," as "all forms and styles of diplomacy—including cultural, public, or traditional—conducted with the intent of combating racial discrimination against a perceived ethnic group."<sup>27</sup> His assertion, that "the willingness of the State Department—or any government body in the 1940s—to actively seek to combat racial prejudices of any kind is unheard of at this point in U.S. history," is unfounded in our research. However, he brings to the fore, along with Thomas Guglielmo's earlier work, how geopolitical events such as World War II opened windows of opportunity for the balance of powers between two nations to tilt towards the less powerful nation state and secure rights or privileges that otherwise might not be possible or acceptable.<sup>28</sup>

In the years before World War I, a Tejano journalist presciently warned the U.S. of the need for the two nations to work together and maintain harmony, despite unequal powers. In his critique of Mexican school segregation, Idar demanded that not only was it "necessary that the American community concede[s] greater guarantee, respect and consideration of our brothers and all the Latin American community of the American continent." He further warned, "if the rich and powerful nation of the North desires to become invulnerable to the attacks of the numerous enemies that will

<sup>26</sup> Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 17.

<sup>27</sup> Jordan Lieser, *Ethnic Diplomacy: Race, the United States, and Mexico during World War II* (PhD diss., West Virginia University, 2015), 3-4.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas A. Guglielmo, "Fighting for Caucasian Rights: Mexican Americans, and the Transnational Struggle for Civil Rights in World War II Texas," *Journal of American History* 92 (2006): 1212-37.

emerge on its path, as they become a first-class world power,” the two countries should have more respectful relations. He concluded, “Mexico and The United States seem to share a similar destiny, their governments and particularly their citizens, should cultivate relationships of the most honest and mutual consideration.”<sup>29</sup> Already by 1911, European tensions, and ongoing U.S.-Mexico border friction were building towards a context fruitful for Mexican nationals to pursue diplomatic paths in the fight against discrimination.

We set the Mexican Consul cases against the backdrop of the long Mexican Revolution and World War I eras. Ongoing border conflicts between the two nations from the time of annexation in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 and subsequent purchase of lands comprising southern Arizona in the Gadsden Treaty of 1853, contributed to hostility from Mexicans and retributory violence for decades. Tensions escalated in the first two decades of the twentieth century as revolutionaries sought refuge in the U.S. and rebels fought on both sides of the Rio Grande. Further, as the guns of World War I began across the ocean in 1914, American diplomats and leaders were eager to keep Mexico with the Allied powers. German nationals and immigrants in both the U.S. and Mexico were suspected of spying and collusion with the Mexican and Japanese governments. Rumored and actual plots such as El Plan de San Diego (1915) concerning invasions into the U.S. fueled anxieties in Washington.<sup>30</sup> Substantial American business investments in Mexico at all levels during Porfirio Díaz’s long reign (1876-1910) were viewed at risk as talk of socialism and anarchist-syndicalist ideology winds blew during the period of Revolution begun in 1910. Further, as war expanded on European soil, Mexico’s plentiful oil supplies were being eyed by both Central and Allied powers (Britain and the U.S. owned substantial interest in oil manufacturing). Despite the U.S.’ and Mexico’s pledged neutrality, American sympathies lay with England and its allies. Suspicious of Mexico’s neutrality stance, the British interception of the Zimmerman Telegram in 1917 further teetering the two countries towards war. The telegram, shared immediately with President Woodrow Wilson, unveiled a plot in which Germany invited Mexico to join the Central Powers. In exchange, while Mexico kept the U.S. busy on this side of the Atlantic, it would permit Germany to crush their enemies until more submarines could be built. In return for this assistance, Germany (and ostensibly

<sup>29</sup> Clemente N. Idar, “La Exclusión de los Niños Mexicanos de las Escuelas del Estado de Texas.” *La Crónica*, January 9, 1911.

<sup>30</sup> Benjamin H. Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); and Patrick L. Cox, “‘An Enemy Closer to Us than Any European Power’: The Impact of Mexico on Texan Public Opinion before World War I,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 105, (2001): 40-80.

with Japan's assistance) would help Mexico recover its lands lost to the U.S. through invasion in the U.S.-Mexico War.<sup>31</sup>

The outrageous specter of a German-Mexican invasion of U.S. lands became tinder for the spark that led President Woodrow Wilson to abandon his neutrality stance and enter World War I. Although Mexico maintained a neutral stance and disavowed alliances with Germany, the shifting post-revolutionary chaos of its leaders, rebels, and allies on both sides of the Rio Grande, manifested in fears of radicalism in the United States' backyard. Mexicans who fled to the U.S. in the decades between 1910 and 1940 tripled their numbers in the U.S. Their arrival altered the social fabric of American-Mexican relations from what some, especially in Texas, called "Old Mexicans," present since before the U.S. nineteenth century invasion, and "Newer Mexicans," generally considered poorer, darker, and rural, fleeing poverty, and violence, in the protracted struggles for power caused by the overthrow of the long *Porfiriato* (1876-1910). The cozy political and financial relationship between American elites in the government and private sector during the long dictatorship contributed to a transnational climate that placed little pressure on pre-1910 U.S. citizens to forego discrimination against Mexican nationals.<sup>32</sup>

The means through which Mexican parents utilized diplomatic versus legal avenues for redress can also redirect the places we look for sources and close the divide between the study of education in individual nation states. During the last three decades historians have increasingly incorporated concepts of transnationalism, but less so in education history. Definitions of "transnationalism" are both ubiquitous and often poorly defined.<sup>33</sup> Randolph Bourne coined this phrase in his 1916 essay, "Trans-national America," however contemporary U.S. historians only fully embraced transnationalism as a lens through which to view relations between nation states in the late 1990s.<sup>34</sup> For instance, in the 1999 special issue of the *The Journal of American History*, historians such as David Thelen explored the shift from a study of a single nation state in professional training to a transnational approach. Thelen argued that this angle would permit, "how people and ideas and institutions and cultures moved above, below, through, and around, as well as within, the nation-state, to investigate how well national borders contained or explained, how people experienced

<sup>31</sup> Jonathan Reed Winkler, *Nexus: Strategic Communications and American Security in World War I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013); Thomas Bogart, *The Zimmermann Telegram: Intelligence, Diplomacy, and America's Entry into World War I* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2012). While recent research has uncovered formerly classified documents, Barbara Tuchman's *Zimmerman Telegram* (New York: Random House, rpt., 1985) still merits its classic status in its clarity and focus on diplomatic intrigue.

<sup>32</sup> Gómez-Quiñones, "Piedras Contra la Luna."

<sup>33</sup> See Patricia Clavin, "Defining Transnationalism," *Contemporary European History* 14, in "Theme Issue: Transnational Communities in European History, 1920-1970," (2005): 1440-1464.

<sup>34</sup> Randolph Bourne, "Trans-National America," *Atlantic Monthly*, 118 (1916): 86-97.

<sup>35</sup> David Thelen, "The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History: A Special Issue," *The Journal of American History*, 86 (1999): 967; The American Historical Record and Contemporary European History also devoted special issues to the topic of transnationalism. See "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," Participants: C. A. Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Sabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol, and Patricia Seed, *American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (Dec. 2006): 1440-1464.

<sup>36</sup> David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>37</sup> Cited in George Edison, "Mexicans in the Sugar Beets of the Central West: A Summary of Reports." Source: Paul S. Taylor Papers, Carton 13, Folder 13: Sugar Beet Work Central West. Bancroft Library Archives, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>38</sup> Scholars such as Neil Foley employ these comparisons in works on labor, see *White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), and more recently, Cybelle Fox, *Three Worlds of Relief: Race, Immigration, and the American Welfare State from the Progressive Era to the New Deal* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

history."<sup>35</sup> While it is possible we develop a more tailored definition of transnationalism as it relates to educational history, Thelen's definition, along with Dzudiak's emphasis on geopolitical contexts, guides this essay of Mexican national parents, consuls, and U.S. educational policies.

Perhaps no other international relationship between the U.S. and another country is reflected in the fluid notion of transnationalism more than Mexico and the U.S. With over two thousand miles of contiguous border, a relationship built upon military conquest, annexation, and purchase of Mexico's northern half in the nineteenth century, a political economy dependent upon Mexican labor for railroad, manufacturing and then chiefly agricultural work, has maintained an often contentious and continuous cycle of immigration, deportation, and temporary labor policies between the two countries.<sup>36</sup> Leveraging the assistance of the Mexican consul added one more level of resources for Mexican national parents, a strategy unavailable to parents from U.S.-born groups such as Blacks and Native Americans, colonized Puerto Ricans and Filipinos, and even poor Whites. Reported to an employer informant, a Black laborer noted that in comparison to his Mexican peers, "The negroes have no country that might fight us."<sup>37</sup> We raise questions about what these cases say about schools and U.S. racial formation in the complex dynamics occurring between Mexicans and the U.S., Black people and Mexicans, and Whites both transnationally and within the American landscape.<sup>38</sup> We further suggest ways in which these documents from diplomatic representatives in other countries can be utilized to extend current research on educational discrimination against children whose parents immigrated from not just Latin America, but, for example, Asian nations, including the cases of Japanese in San Francisco, Nisei in Hawaii, and the Chinese in Mississippi. It is noteworthy that thus far it is only Chinese and Mexican immigrant children appearing as ones subject to segregation and discrimination (the Japanese school cases appeared prior to 1909 where the current study begins). While certainly far more research is needed in the State Department records, diplomatic records from Italy, Poland, Germany, and other countries with large numbers of children in the U.S. schools have not surfaced with complaints of discrimination or segregation in these records. This silence aligns with the general treatment of Mexican, Japanese, and Chinese peoples as distinct from European immigrants, whether from Southeastern or Northeastern Europe who were not segregated

<sup>39</sup> Joel Perlmann, "Historical Legacies: 1840-1920," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 508 (1990): 27-37.

from so-called "White" or "American" children in public schools. Nineteenth century German public schools and German language schools were voluntary and created by and for the German immigrant community prior to their disappearance as a result of World War I, and possess a distinct history.<sup>39</sup>

### **Mexican Consuls in the United States, 1900-1930, Historiography and Roles**

The official and unofficial roles of the Mexican consul during the period considered here occurred during a volatile time in Mexican history and Mexican-U.S. relations, bringing the two countries to the brink of war in 1919. Untangling the political quagmire of the consuls' status and role further challenges a deeply contextualized understanding of Mexican nationals' view of the consuls as advocates for their children's rights in securing educational access and opportunity. The basic diplomatic history definition of a consul is quite general. Broadly, a consul is an official appointed to represent his or her country in a foreign nation, facilitate commerce between the two countries, sponsor patriotic gatherings, issue visas, and protect and assist nationals whether visitors or residents, among other symbolic and official duties. A consul general is the highest rank followed by vice-consul, and consul (down to the consul of the fifth class if needed) in descending order. Individual nation-states create their own specific rules and guidelines for their diplomatic corps, which may vary depending upon the political relationship with the country. Mexico was no exception, and both the rules and consuls shifted rapidly between 1911 and 1920 to reflect the personal and political predilections of changing presidents in the chaotic post-Revolutionary decade.

The role of Mexican consuls in Mexican American/Chicano history has received surprisingly little attention from scholars. Historiographic assessments of the efficacy of consuls in protecting Mexican nationals (one of several responsibilities) is mixed and tilts towards a largely negative portrayal, particularly regarding laborers. However, these critiques vary greatly over time and with individual consuls and with the political orientation of the Mexican government and its leaders vis-à-vis the United States. The years considered here between the Revolution and Repatriation Movement of the



Great Depression, opened a window of opportunity for diplomatic negotiation.

Juan Gómez-Quiñones, in his little-known chapter on consuls published in 1976, critiqued the ineffectiveness of consuls in Texas between 1900 and 1920. He argued that U.S. business and political interests took precedence over the needs of Mexican nationals as workers and parents. Largely utilizing Spanish-language newspapers, such as *La Crónica*, and Mexican state department records, he demonstrated how consuls employed secret agents to subvert radical elements in the U.S. and measures which permitted diplomatic heads in Mexico City to withdraw consuls from their offices if they were too proactive in protecting nationals, particularly during the last gasp of the *Porfiriato* in the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>40</sup>

In comparison to Gómez-Quiñones' critical view, Francisco E. Balderrama offered a more benign assessment in the first English language book-length history of Mexican consuls published in 1982. Focusing on Los Angeles during the Great Depression, Balderrama examined the consular role in school segregation, labor, repatriation, and establishment of the local *Comités de Beneficiencia Mexicana*.<sup>41</sup> The influential and effective role of Consul Rafael de la Colina in the Los Angeles office, illuminates one element emphasized in his study. Consul de la Colina was able to leverage enough political capital in Mexico City to offset criticism (or even withdrawal from California) and protect many Mexican nationals. George J. Sánchez and Gabriela F. Arredondo, in contrast, largely examined the role of consuls in promoting Mexican nationalism, forming community organizations, and the creation of Mexican Spanish language and cultural schools for children. Based on studies in very different parts of the country, Los Angeles and Chicago respectively, both authors caution the limitations of their research. Sánchez notes, "Chicano historians have yet to explore fully the often contradictory role played by Mexican government officials in immigrant communities in the United States."<sup>42</sup> Arredondo similarly concludes the difficulty of clearly depicting a unified portrait of consular activities in Chicago during the interwar period.<sup>43</sup> Similar to historians who critically discuss the consuls' involvement in aiding the U.S. government with repatriation of both Mexican and U.S. citizens, Arredondo and Balderrama also balance this portrait with the humanitarian aspects of the Mexican government's financial assistance and transportation home during times of

<sup>40</sup> Gómez-Quiñones, "Piedras contra la Luna, México en Aztlán y Aztlán en México: Chicano-Mexican Relations and the Mexican Consulates, 1900-1920," in *Contemporary Mexico: Papers of the IV International Congress of Mexican History*, eds. James W. Wilkie, Michael C. Meyer & Edna Monzón de Wilkie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 496.

<sup>41</sup> Francisco E. Balderrama, *In Defense of La Raza: The Los Angeles Mexican Consulate and the Mexican Community, 1920-1936* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982).

<sup>42</sup> Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 109.

<sup>43</sup> Gabriela F. Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916-39* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

duress.

Gilbert G. González is one of the few historians who has exclusively focused on consuls. However, in *Mexican Consul and Labor Organizing* and subsequent chapters and articles, he emphasizes imperial domination as a key factor in consul relations. His focus on the 1930s reflects a particularly harsh time for Mexican nationals in the U.S. Ultimately, González concludes that the Mexican government sought to “incorporate México de afuera [on the outside] into a political ideology and social relations consonant with the interests of the ruling upper classes in Mexico.”<sup>44</sup> Surprisingly, he does not include their role in his classic and re-issued monograph on Chicano education, while he does make a call in his conclusion for more analyses of how international dynamics impact domestic policies.<sup>45</sup> Similar to other historians, González does raise the inadequacy of historical research on Mexican consuls in the U.S.

In contrast to repatriation and labor issues, F. Arturo Rosales, William Carrigan, and Clive Webb examine the role of consuls in mitigating violence and lynching against Mexicans. In this regard, Rosales points to a mixed, but slightly more favorable portrait of interventions on behalf of Mexican nationals wrongly accused of crimes, brutalized by police and mobs, and blamed for other violations of civil rights. The sheer number of cases brought to consuls overwhelmed the capacity of staff. Furthermore, as with all consular offices, consuls selected only a fraction of the complaints brought to them. The title of Rosales’ book, *¡Pobre Raza!* captures the dispiriting and seemingly endless number of discriminatory and brutal acts foisted upon Mexicans in the early twentieth century by the Texas Rangers, police, U.S. citizens, and soldiers.<sup>46</sup> In contrast to Rosales’s ambivalence towards the consul’s effectiveness, Clive and Webb offer perhaps the most positive evaluation of consular roles in their study of Mexican American lynching. In tandem with prevailing historiographic assessments, the authors note that diplomatic intervention “ebbed and flowed according to the strength and stability of their government and its broader relationship with the United States.” In these horrific acts of violence and power, the authors nonetheless contend that it was the consular and ambassadorial officials who provided the “most effective means . . . and persistently pressed the case for greater government action against lynch mobs.” Through detailed excavation of sources, the

<sup>44</sup> Gilbert G. González, *Mexican Consuls and Labor Organizing: Imperial Politics in the American Southwest* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 9; Gilbert G. González and Raul A. Fernandez, “Chpt. VI, Denying Empire: The Journal of American History on the Ideological Warpath,” in *A Century of Chicano History: Empire, Nations, and Migration* (New York: Routledge: 2003). Discussion of consuls is also muted in his *Labor and Community: Mexican Citrus Worker Villages in a Southern California County, 1900-1950* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

<sup>45</sup> Gilbert G. González, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2013/reissue of 1990).

<sup>46</sup> F. Arturo Rosales, *¡Pobre Raza!: Violence, Justice, and Mobilization among México Lindo Immigrants, 1900-1936* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999).

<sup>47</sup> William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, “Diplomatic Protest and the Decline of Mob Violence,” *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 128.

<sup>48</sup> Gustavo Cano & Alexandra Delano, “The Mexican Government and Organised Mexican Immigrants in the United States: A Historical Analysis of Political Transnationalism, 1848-2005,” Working Paper 148 (June 2007), Center for Comparative Immigration Studies. University of California, San Diego; Robert C. Smith, “Diasporic Memberships in Historical Perspective: Comparative Insights from the Mexican, Italian and Polish Cases,” *International Migration Review* 37 (Fall 2003): 724-759; Carlos G. Gutiérrez, “Decentralized Diplomacy: The Role of Consular Offices in Mexico’s Relations with its Diaspora,” (1997); and Jorge I. Domínguez and Rafael Fernández de Castro, *The United States and Mexico: Between Partnership and Conflict* (Routledge: New York, 2001).

<sup>49</sup> Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History?* 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 11, 16.

<sup>50</sup> Rachel Sherman, “From State Introversion to State Extensions: Modes of Emigrant Incorporation in Mexico, 1900-1996,” *Theory and Society*, 28 (1999): 835-878.

<sup>51</sup> Lawrence A. Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931: Socio-Economic Patterns* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980); Sherman, esp. 851-855.

authors conclude, “over the course of eight decades [1848-1928] their protests had a cumulative impact in promoting remedial and preventive action against mob violence.”<sup>47</sup>

Scholars from the fields of immigration, sociology, and political science incorporate historical summaries of the role of Mexican consuls to situate contemporary analyses.<sup>48</sup> History for these scholars is utilitarian and pragmatic. Grappling with what E.H. Carr called the “raw materials” of the historian’s job is not the purpose of these scholars—rather, they prefer that historians have already “processed” these facts.<sup>49</sup> The danger of course, is that each generation of historians provides fresh analyses of materials; and scholars from other fields have not necessarily caught up with changing interpretations. Rachel Sherman’s essay, for example, is cited and recited by her peers in international relations.<sup>50</sup> Drawing largely from Cardoso’s 1980 study, she concludes that the 1920s and 1930s represented the heyday of U.S. consuls in the pre-1980 twentieth century.<sup>51</sup> While Sherman may have drawn the correct conclusions from his research, the questions that Cardoso was asking from his primary sources are not necessarily the ones that historians over thirty years later are raising. Benjamin H. Johnson’s response to this essay, for instance, asks how our findings contribute to the historiography of consular offices’ effectiveness in assisting Mexican nationals. Rosales’s *¡Pobre Raza!* shows unrelenting violence and brutality against Mexican workers across many decades; and this research on schools points to continued growth in segregation despite consul protest. A simple answer to Johnson’s query is that the consul’s were ineffective in curtailing discrimination. However, from an education historians’ point of view, we became much more interested in interrogating from the sources questions regarding expectations parents held, what conditions were underlying the impulse to seek aid transnationally versus locally, and how these consul cases were predecessors to later domestic legal challenges. Specifically, In the narrower realm of U.S. educational history, how do we adjust our lenses to think of non-citizens’ perceptions, roles, purposes, and administrative hierarchies of public schools in the U.S.? What do we make of the growing evidence that so-called White “American” parents demanded that Mexican immigrant children be segregated away from their sons and daughters, via petitions, school board attendance, the collective power of the P.T.A., meetings with public officials, and in the case of Kansas City,

violence, even when school officials were willing to keep students integrated? And, as part of these analyses, how might we understand the home country's public educational system as a strong influencing factor shaping Mexican parents' expectations for American public schools?

Similar to many countries in Europe and Latin America, the public schools in Mexico in the early twentieth century were the province of the federal government; and in the post-revolution years, schools' were radicalized through their curricula and teachers.<sup>52</sup> Mexicanista parents may not have understood that the transnational negotiations the Mexican Embassy would carry out on their behalf were not federal government to federal government. Instead, locally based school operations in the U.S. required the involvement of multiple and hierarchical stakeholders including governors, state attorney generals, state superintendents of education, and county or city school boards. Testimony from principals and teachers was also gathered in some cases.

## Historical Roles

Mexican consuls were established in the U.S. shortly after the signing of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which secured the northern half of Mexico for the United States. The Gadsden Purchase of 1853 further enlarged the new U.S. territories. After the U.S.-Mexico War, consuls financially assisted Mexican nationals who wished to cross back over the new border into the newly reduced country of Mexico and forego U.S. citizenship. The consuls also protested discriminatory laws impacting Mexicans who elected to stay, such as the 1850 Foreign Miner's Tax designed to keep Latin Americans (and Asians) out of the Gold Rush fields.<sup>53</sup>

During the period studied here, consuls were directed to follow diplomatic protocols as outlined in the Organic Law of the Diplomatic Corps and the *Reglamento* [Rules]. Two additions were added to the 1902 rulebook governing the thirty-one consulates then present in the U.S. Juan Gómez-Quiñones argues that these additional rules were added specifically because of the deteriorating conditions in the U.S. for Mexican nationals: 1) consuls were prohibited from becoming involved in the politics of

<sup>52</sup> Mary Kay Vaughn, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997).

<sup>53</sup> Rosales, *¡Pobre Raza!*, 37.

<sup>54</sup> Gómez-Quiñones, “Piedras contra la Luna,” 496.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> These numbers should be taken with some caution as verification has proven difficult due to rapidly changing leadership in the 1910-1930 decades. Balderrama, *In Defense of La Raza*, states there were fifty-one consuls in 1931-2; see also Rosales, *¡Pobre Raza!*, 42.

<sup>57</sup> In addition to primary source materials below, the following historians have documented the extra-official consular activities. Michael M. Smith, “The Mexican Secret Service in the United States, 1910-1920,” *The Americas* 59 (2002): 65-85; Michael M. Smith, “Carrancista Propaganda and the Print Media in the United States: An Overview of Institutions,” *The Americas*, 52 (1995): 155-174; Juan Gómez-Quiñones, “Piedras contra la Luna,” 494-527; Rosales, *¡Pobre Raza!*, esp. chapter 3; and Gerald Horne, *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 139 passim.

<sup>58</sup> George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 115-119.

<sup>59</sup> Confidential Document File Note. “Regarding proposed establishment of Mexican schools in the U.S. and possible use of radical text books therein, to present Mexican citizens from becoming Americanized.” From Nuevo Laredo. Aguirre. September 10, 1927. File 811.42/216. Cross reference to File 812.42/138. RG59. NARA II.

<sup>60</sup> Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 115-119.

the country in which they resided, and 2) consuls should carefully protect the good relationship between the authorities and individuals with whom they interact as a result of their official role.<sup>54</sup> In 1910-11, the consular laws and guidelines were reformed, including steps to professionalize the diplomatic corps, and raise qualifications and salaries. Further, the Diplomatic Corps of Mexico was extended to include a *visitador general* [inspector general] and ensure responsibilities were being carried out among the numerous consuls.<sup>55</sup> Consular offices and roles were reformed again in 1918 under President Carranza, in response to the ill-treatment of Mexican workers in the U.S. and the rising numbers of émigrés, particularly during the Mexican Revolution. The number of consuls increased in the first decades of the twentieth century from thirty-one in 1902 to fifty-one by 1920 and sixty-two in 1928 on the eve of the Great Depression and Mexican Repatriation Movement.<sup>56</sup>

The actual roles of the Mexican consuls and consular offices in the U.S. during the turbulent years of 1910-1930 varied greatly from their prescribed guidelines by region (those closest to the border typically most impacted), office, and the personality of the consul. The U.S. side of the Rio Grande (or Rio Bravo in Mexico) was utilized as a site for exiled leaders to try and regain power or for new revolutionary leaders to launch political campaigns. The Mexican government relied upon and established budgets for consular offices to conduct espionage through the hiring of special agents, distributing propaganda through Spanish language newspapers, or establishing new ones, and engaging in other forms of clandestine behavior against “enemies of the state” or “subversives.”<sup>57</sup> Other activities were less blatantly political, at least from the point of view of the Mexican American community. In the 1920s, some consuls organized after school or Saturday classes in Spanish language and culture to counter complete assimilation and to cement bonds to the homeland, particularly in Los Angeles.<sup>58</sup> American informants, however, viewed these schools with suspicion, accusing them as possible sites of radicalism. One confidential U.S. State Department document cautioned the schools may have “possible use of radical text books therein, to prevent Mexican citizens from becoming Americanized.”<sup>59</sup> To date, historians have yet to uncover any evidence that the schools were sites of radicalism, and their demise was as rapid as they were created in the late 1920s due to lack of financial resources at the onset of the Great Depression.<sup>60</sup>

The number of petitions from Mexican nationals to the consul not only greatly exceeded staff and resources, but was politically calculated.<sup>61</sup> Archival records reflect a bias in the cases that the Mexican government pursued and reflect the political stances of leaders of a particular moment in history and their relationships to the U.S. Several documents allege school segregation, such as that in Charco, Texas in 1921 [see [Table I](#)]. The Mexican Embassy brought the complaint to the U.S. State Department and U.S. Secretary of State Charles E. Hughes, who requested an inquiry from Texas Governor Pat M. Neff. The governor responded that he would investigate “that the Mexican children at Charco, Texas are not admitted to the school attended by the white children.”<sup>62</sup> Unlike full cases discussed here where records illuminate the positions of stakeholders from the local school level all the way to the attorney general and secretary of state, the Charco case goes cold in Record Group 59. Which factors lead to some cases receiving full investigation and others ignored, dropped, or because of lost records, is still part of this work in progress and may never be fully resolved.

The shifting political winds of the Mexican Revolutionary Era (1910-1920) were particularly risky for a consul’s survival. During that short time Mexico had at least five official leaders, though more than nine staked claims to the presidency. Depending upon the type of political relationship the Mexican leader wished to cultivate with the United States, consuls found themselves replaced if they were too energetic in advocating the rights of Mexican workers, or maligned as traitors to their country by the expatriate community if ineffective at protecting Mexicans. For instance, Clemente Idar, praised Laredo Consul Sr. Don Miguel E. Diébold for questioning the conclusions of Don Francisco L. de la Barrera, chief of Mexico’s Department of External Foreign Relations for America, Asia, and Oceania, whose accusations of the segregation of Mexican children in Texas were “without foundation.”<sup>63</sup> Idar, with the cooperation of other U.S. Spanish language newspapers such as *El Eco Reynosa*, denounced the Mexican government’s conclusions based on evidence from only three counties, Webb, Zapata, and Duval, which housed affluent Mexican communities where segregation was rare, instead of the majority of rural South Texas where segregation was common. Diébold’s outspokenness resulted in his removal from the consul. Most likely, during the desperate twilight of Porfirio Díaz’s dictatorship, and in eagerness to keep in the good graces of the United States, Díaz

<sup>61</sup> Balderrama, 7.

<sup>62</sup> Letter to Texas Governor Pat M. Neff from Hon. Charles Hughes, Secretary of State, Austin, Texas, December 5, 1921 (311.12/443) RG 59. Letter from Governor Pat M. Neff to Hon. Charles Hughes, Secretary of State, Washington, D.C. December 9, 1921 (311.12/445). RG59. NARA II.

<sup>63</sup> Clemente N. Idar, “La Exclusion de los Niños Mexicanos en la Mayor Parte de las Escuelas Oficiales de Texas, es Positiva,” [“The Exclusion of Mexican Children in the Majority of the Public Schools in Texas is True.”] *La Crónica*. December 17, 1910, 1.

did not want to be seen critiquing internal U.S. affairs. While some consuls have received positive historical appraisal for their energetic defense of nationals, they have often operated at the whim of heads of state and their top diplomatic leaders.

In some cases, the questions of citizenship and who was eligible to use the consuls were raised. Were only Mexican nationals permitted, or could Mexican Americans also present grievances? Parents in the community of San Angelo, Texas protesting a decision by the school board to segregate their children, brought two lawyers and four parents to a meeting with the board. In order to add pressure, the parent committee also requested the aid of Consul Enrique Arnelas. The school board, concerned about the involvement of the Mexican government, argued, according to Arnolde de Leon, that “they could not profit from an appeal to the consul, as by Muñoz’s own admission, all the committee members were legalized Texas voters and bona fide American citizens, circumstances which eliminated the interference of the Mexican government on their behalf,” and they would have to go through the regular “legal American channels such as appealing to the higher board of education in the state.”<sup>64</sup> Thus, Anglo stakeholders in the city schools used citizenship as a rationale for not permitting them to use diplomatic intervention. Through more research, the parent committee did find that some of the parents were indeed Mexican nationals. While Consul Arnelas stated he had sent protests to the Mexican embassy in Washington, D.C., archival documents have not yet been found.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Arnold De Leon, “Blowout 1910 Style: A Chicano School Boycott in West Texas,” *Tejana* 2 (1976), 130-132.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

In contrast, the school superintendent in the Mission, Texas case provided as a rationale for stating that complainant José Longoria did not belong to the polity of the state of Texas or United States, and was thus ineligible to protest, stating [he] “is not a citizen of the U.S. being a native of Mexico, and refusing to become a citizen of the U.S.”<sup>66</sup> No evidence was offered that he had “refused” to naturalize, but this assumption was widely believed among many Anglo Americans at the time. For instance, contemporary Anglo observers expressed the opinion that Mexican immigrants preferred not to naturalize so that they could utilize the advocacy and protection of consuls, as the U.S. local, state, and federal justice system ranged from outright hostility to neglect. A researcher in the Imperial Valley of California in the late 1920s noted, “it has also been pointed out . . . that

<sup>66</sup> C.E. Godby, School Superintendent and Secretary of the Board, Mission, TX, to His Excellency, Gov. O.B. Colquitt, Austin, Texas, November 7, 1912, File: 811.42712. RG 59.

Mexicans who naturalize lose their right of appeal to their consuls for protection . . . . Just how conscious of this the Mexican laborers are, is not known, but judging from the extent to which appeals to the consulate are made, and buttons proclaiming the wearer a ‘*Ciudadano de Mexico*’ [Citizen of Mexico] are worn, there is at least a vague consciousness of this.”<sup>67</sup> Sociologist Emory Bogardus shared a similar opinion in his 1930 study, “by remaining a citizen of Mexico and by calling on the Mexican consul for assistance the Mexican immigrant often can secure justice, whereas if he becomes an American citizen, he feels helpless. He does not understand our courts and is not able to secure as adequate a hearing as if he remains a Mexican citizen.”<sup>68</sup>

Whether or not the rationale for maintaining Mexican citizenship pivoted on the opportunity for utilizing the consuls, immigrants did rely on them substantially as an augur of hope and assistance. Regarding complaints of the low naturalization rates of Mexicans, new work by historians Cybelle Fox and Irene Bloemraad presents far more persuasive evidence from the 1930 census explaining these rates among Mexican immigrants in this era, than just the ability to utilize consuls.<sup>69</sup>

### **“In Doing Mexico, Not A Favor, But Justice”: Transnationalism, Methodology, Historiography and the Consul Cases in Mexican American Educational History, 1910-1929**

*Mrs. Robert F. Garner, state chairman of public health, spoke of the work of the clubwomen in San Bernardino and laid emphasis on the segregation of the Mexican school children up to the fifth grade into separate schools. “In these schools we installed hot shower baths and bath tubs [sic],” said Mrs. Garner, “and for the first time many of the Mexican children had [sic] given baths and now had come to have a most enjoyable time on the occasion of the weekly bath. One hundred children in this way have been kept clean and have been shown a better way of living and can set a better example for their parents at home.*

<sup>67</sup> Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States Imperial Valley, University of California Publications in Economics* 6, no.1. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1930), 91.

<sup>68</sup> Emory Bogardus, “The Mexican Immigrant and Segregation,” *American Journal of Sociology* 36 (1930), 78.

<sup>69</sup> Cybelle Fox and Irene Bloemraad, “Beyond ‘White by Law’: Explaining the Gulf in Citizenship Acquisition between Mexican and European Immigrants, 1930.” *Social Forces* 94 (2015): 181-207.



*“It was questioned at first whether there might not be some objection to the segregation of the Mexican children but we tried the experiment and found that instead of creating ill feeling, it was decided help, as the American children were not held back in their studies by the Mexican children, due to lack of knowledge of the English language.”<sup>70</sup>*

<sup>70</sup> “Women’s Club Federation Pledged Support in County And City Welfare Efforts,” *The San Diego Union*, October 30, 1915.

<sup>71</sup> The report was contradictory considering a study of San Bernardino, CA schools in 1920 found that calls for separate schools for Mexican children were initiated by their parents and were based on racial and hygienic grounds. Wollenberg, *All Deliberate Speed*, 111. For a similar account in Pasadena, CA, see David Torres-Rouff, “Becoming Mexican: Segregated Schools and Social Scientists in Southern California, 1913-1946,” *Southern California Quarterly* 94 (2012): 91-127.

<sup>72</sup> Bryan Waters to Robert Lansing, July 12th, 1916, File: 311.12/144, RG 59, NARA II.

<sup>73</sup> R.B. Stover to Bryan Waters, July 11, 1916, *Ibid.*

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

<sup>75</sup> Bryan Waters to Robert Lansing, U.S. Secretary of State, July 12, 1916, *Ibid.*

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

The above excerpt is from a newspaper account of a presentation given by Mrs. Robert F. Garner at the San Diego County Federation of Women’s Clubs in 1915, regarding the work of clubwomen in the schools for Mexican children in San Bernardino.<sup>71</sup> Despite the clubwomen’s positive report on the segregation of Mexican children in schools, the policy resulted in protest from the Mexican government.

On July 11, 1916, R.B. Stover, the Superintendent of Schools in San Bernardino, California, wrote to Byron Waters, a local attorney, responding to allegations of mistreatment of “Mexicans in American territory by the Mexican consulate.”<sup>72</sup> To rebuke such claims Stover wrote a detailed letter of the schooling of Mexican children in the city schools. Stover indicated that over 375 Mexican children were enrolled in “two schools set aside especially for Mexicans.”<sup>73</sup> The letter emphasized the manual training and industrial arts focus of the schools including manual labor training and home economics training depending on the gender of the Mexican child.<sup>74</sup> Stover ended his letter by noting the “happy atmosphere” that pervades the schools. Waters forwarded the Stover letter to Robert Lansing, U.S. Secretary of State, with two postcards of Mexican classes in San Bernardino, closing with, “these schools and the appearance of these children is in marked contrast to the appearance of Mexican children the traveler sees in Mexico.”<sup>75</sup> From Stover and Waters’ Anglocentric view, the U.S. provided a better education to Mexicans than Mexico could provide and thus should not be objectionable.<sup>76</sup> Despite such nationalistic paternalism and assertions of superiority, San Bernardino would be a constant source of protest by the Mexican government and Mexican nationals regarding the mistreatment of its people in public schools.

For instance, Dwight Murrow, U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, received a petition from a group of

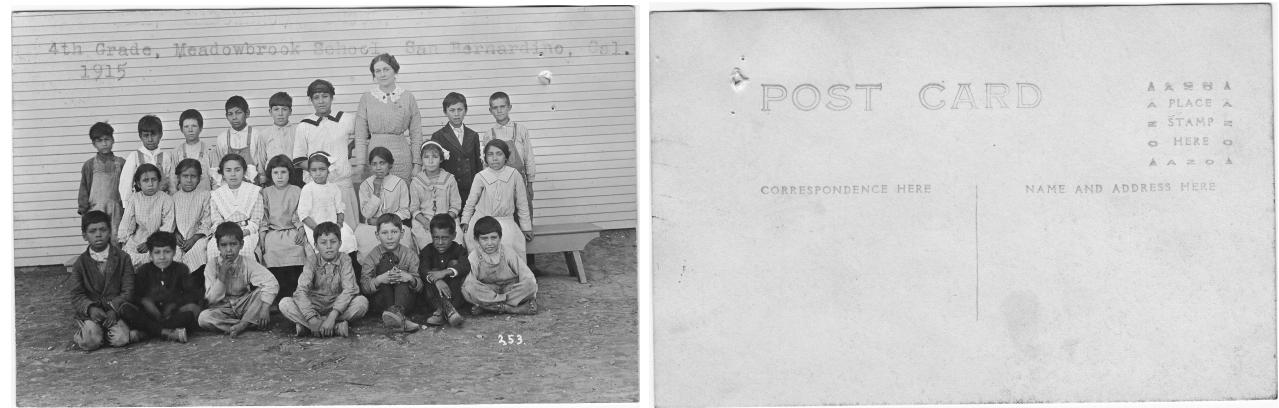


Image 2. San Bernardino, CA 1916 Mexican School Postcards. RG 59, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

<sup>77</sup> “Petition from Pupils of Agustin Rivera High School” 1929, File: 811.4016/103, RG 59 NARA II.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> “HUMILIATION FOR MEXICO,” Enclosure No.2, p. 1. File: 811.4016/103, RG 59 NARA II.

Mexican students at the Agustin Rivera High School in Mexico City on May 13, 1929 protesting the exclusion of Mexican students from the schools in San Bernardino, California.<sup>77</sup> Allegedly, the San Bernardino County School Board recently passed a measure forcing Mexican children into segregated schools intended for Black and Asian students.<sup>78</sup> Other accounts alleged that Mexican children were denied access to public schooling altogether unless they identified as “Oriental” or “Negro.”<sup>79</sup> The high school students found the treatment to be a humiliation to Mexico. In a provocative denouncement of racial prejudice in U.S. public schools the students of the Agustin Rivera school argued:

Present-day culture has done away with various ancient scientific prejudices, among which is discarded as absolutely discredited by learning THAT RACE; but if this were not so, it would be enough to remember the most elemental humanitarian principles, and above all the learned words of Washington: “My policy is very simple—friendly relations with all the nations of the world . . .” and those other words of the Apostle: “There is neither Jew nor Roman, Greek nor Scythian, but we are all one in Jesus

80 "Petition," Ibid.

Christ"—principles and standards which should be used by governments and the governed of all peoples of the earth in modifying the criterion of superiority.<sup>80</sup>

In one short two-page document, the Rivera high school students challenged racial segregation of Mexican children as unscientific, against Christendom, and counter to American values that professed friendly relations with all nations. An editorial on the petition from Mexico City printed in *La Prensa*, a Spanish language newspaper in San Antonio, Texas, hoped the petition would lead to a unanimous protest that the entire Mexican nation supported and swift intervention by Ambassador Murrow, "in doing Mexico, not a favor, but justice."<sup>81</sup> Despite the attention that segregation of Mexican children received in the Mexican press and diplomatic circles, these cases have received only passing or no attention by scholars of Mexican American educational and racial history.<sup>82</sup>

In recent years Borderlands and transnational scholarship has looked

81 "WITH REGARD TO RACES," Enclosure No.3, Ibid. Ultimately, the Mexican consul of Los Angeles, CA determined that alleged segregation in San Bernardino appeared to be the result of negative propaganda. See Morrow to U.S. Secretary of State, May 22, 1929, File: 811.42712/28, RG 59.

82 For passing references to Mexican protests regarding schooling segregation of Mexican children, see Balderrama, *In Defense of La Raza*, 56-57; Rosales, *Pobre Raza!*, 25.

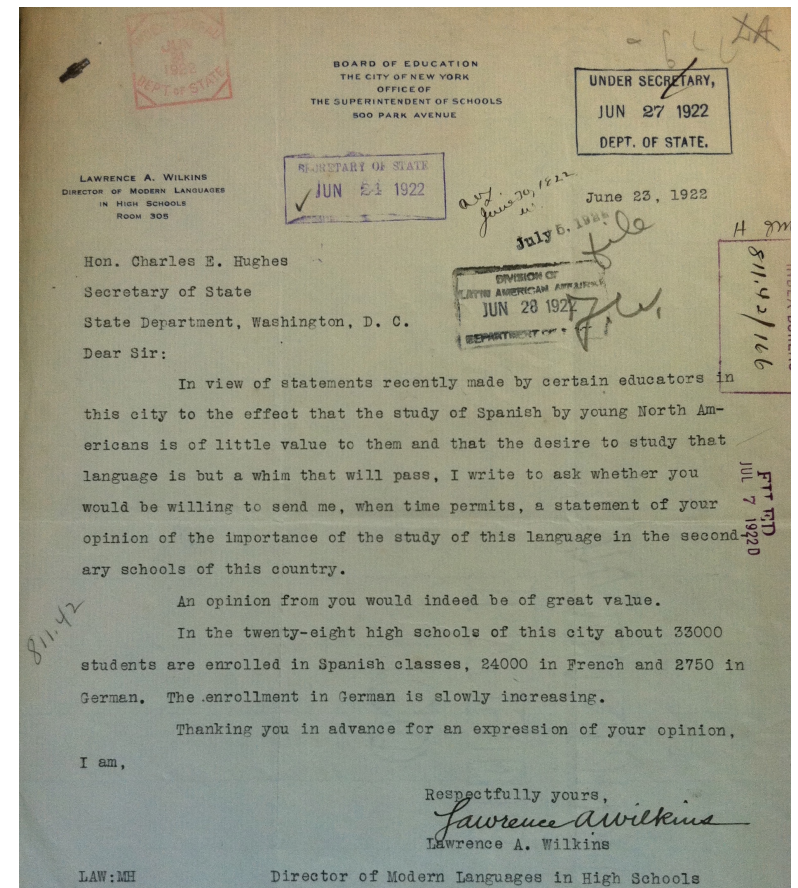
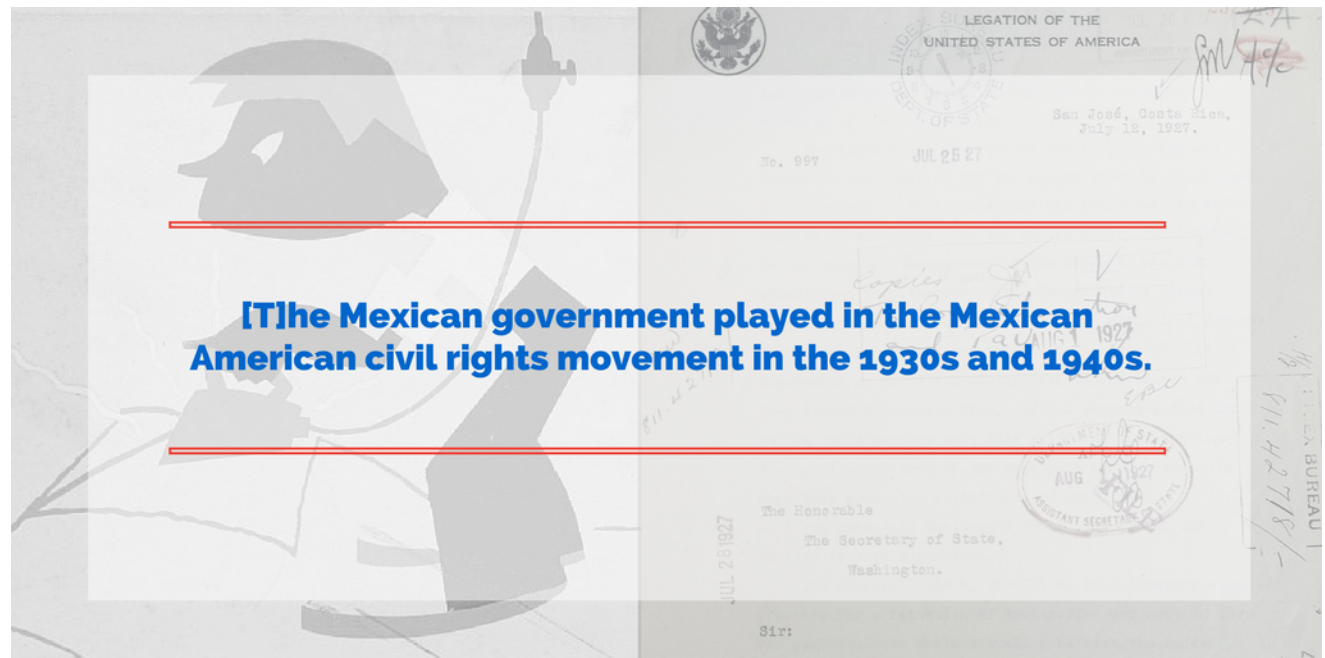


Image 3. U.S. State Department Correspondence, June 23, 1922. RG59 National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD

to federal archives and material in the both U.S. and Mexico to document a larger North American civil rights history. For instance, historians such as Gilbert González, Benjamin Johnson, Thomas Guglielmo, Cynthia Orozco, and George J. Sánchez, have documented the active participation and influential role the Mexican government played in the Mexican American civil rights movement in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>83</sup> However, public schools and schooling have received the least amount of attention in the scholarship. This is interesting considering U.S. politicians, social scientists, and interest groups largely considered the “Mexican problem” a schooling issue especially in the early 20th century.<sup>84</sup> For instance, opponents of Mexican immigration repeatedly linked the presence of Mexican immigrant and Mexican American children in schools as producing another race problem. In one telling testimony during the 1928 congressional hearings to restrict immigration from the Western Hemisphere, Henry Ward, of the Immigration Restriction League of Boston, Massachusetts, argued, “Other problems are also appearing in the horizon; for example *the school problem*, with its

<sup>83</sup> See Benjamin H. Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Benjamin H. Johnson, “The Cosmic Race in Texas: Racial Fusion, White Supremacy, and Civil Rights Politics,” *The Journal of American History*, 98 (2011): 404-419; Charles H. Harris & Louis R. Sadler, *The Plan de San Diego: Tejano Rebellion, Mexican Intrigue* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013); Gilbert González, *Mexican Consuls and Labor Organizing: Imperial Politics in the American Southwest* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999); Cynthia Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed: The Rise of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009); George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*; Thomas A. Guglielmo, “Fighting for Caucasian Rights: Mexican Americans, and the Transnational Struggle for Civil Rights in World War II Texas,” *Journal of American History* 92 (2006): 1212-37. See also Samuel Truett and Elliot Young, “Making Transnational History: Nations, Regions, and Borderlands,” in *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History*, eds. Samuel Truett and Elliott Young (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 1-32. Pertaining directly to Mexican American civil rights, see Emilio Zamora, *Claiming Rights and Righting Wrongs in Texas: Mexican Workers and Job Politics in World War II* (College Station: Texas A&M University, 1993); Julie M. Weise, “Mexican Nationalism, Southern Racisms: Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the U.S. South, 1908-1939,” *American Quarterly* 60 (2008): 749-777; Neil Foley, *Quest For Equality: The Failed Promise of Black-Brown Solidarity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>84</sup> This is especially true in the pre-Depression era, see Rosales, *¡Pobre Raza!*; Balderrama, *In Defense of La Raza*; and William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). See Gilbert González, *Culture of Empire: American Writers, Mexico, and Mexican Immigrants, 1880-1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003).



inevitable certainty of friction between native white children and the Mexicans, and the more serious racial problem of intermarriage and of interbreeding. Our great Southwest is rapidly creating for itself a *new racial problem*, as our old South did when it imported slave labor from Africa” (emphasis added).<sup>85</sup>

The history of Mexican American and Mexican immigrant school segregation is complex, often misunderstood, and still developing. Speaking to this complexity, historian Rubén Donato and legal scholar Jarrod Hanson recently argued, “Even those familiar with Mexican Americans’ education and historical experiences in the American Southwest are unclear about the intricacies of their segregation.”<sup>86</sup> The literature on the Southwest has largely argued that segregation, as applied to Mexicans in the U.S., was de facto with no official state sanction; instead segregation was established by local politics and customs. To this date no state statutes have been found which required or explicitly sanctioned the segregation of Mexican American or Mexican immigrant children in public schools. Note the distinction we make of schools that voluntarily were composed of Mexican children and taught by Spanish speaking teachers versus schools that Mexican children were involuntarily placed in separate from other children and without parental permission. Examples of these labeled “Mexican Schools,” or “Spanish Schools,” in rural Colorado are in the handwritten volumes of school director and school board archival records for the school districts of Conejo and Costillas, available at the Colorado Department of Archives and History in Denver.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, most Mexican Americans attended segregated schools, lived in marginalized neighborhoods, and toiled in the lowest sectors of the labor market stratified by race.<sup>88</sup> Overall, Mexican American educational history has largely been described almost exclusively in domestic terms or has only discussed the limited support by the Mexican consuls in civil rights legislation confined to the 1930s and 1940s.

<sup>85</sup> Testimony: Henry De C. Ward. Immigration From Countries of the Western Hemisphere. Hearings of the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization House of Representatives. Hearing No. 70. 1.5, (1928, p.), 14. For an excellent discussion of the role of “racial scripts” in U.S. immigration hearings in creating the Mexican race, see Natalia Molina, *How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014). For the role of miscegenation in maintaining white supremacy in the U.S., see Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 311.

<sup>86</sup> Rubén Donato & Jarrod Hanson, “Legally White, Socially ‘Mexican’: The Politics of De Jure and De Facto School Segregation in the American Southwest,” *Harvard Educational Review* 82 (2012): 203.

<sup>87</sup> Gross, *What Blood Won’t Tell*, 252. Historian Gilbert González complicates the “de facto” designation by arguing, “although there were no laws that mandated the practice of segregation, educators did invoke the state power granted to school administrators to adapt educational programs to the special needs of a linguistically and culturally distinct community,” in Gilbert Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation*, 45. A similar argument was presented by Meyer Weinberg in “De Facto Segregation: Fact or Artifact?” *Integrated Education*, 1 (1963), 30.

<sup>88</sup> Molina, *How Race is Made in America*, 2. See also, J. F. Murray, *Ninth Annual Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Colorado December 1894* (Denver: Smith-Brooks Printing, 1895), 37 and Nathan B. Cov, *Eighth Annual Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Colorado December 1892* (Denver: Smith-Books Printing, 1893), 153.

## "Such Procedure Might Cause International Complications with Mexico"

By integrating archival material from the Mexican consul complaints located in the U.S. Secretary of State records from the early 20th century (1910-29), we link the study of educational history to an understudied dynamic and turbulent time regarding U.S.-Mexico relations. Beginning before 1910 when the Mexican Revolution and U.S. labor recruitment prompted hundreds of thousands of Mexicans to migrate to the U.S., geopolitical dynamics began influencing schooling practices in the U.S. to a degree to which historians are still learning. With the centennial of the outbreak of World War I (2014) historians have called attention to the often marginalized historical import of the Great War to Americans. The United States' official late entry to the war—1917—was nevertheless preceded by years of diplomatic, financial, violation of neutrality agreements (with covert arms shipments), humanitarian aid and espionage, particularly of German immigrants in the U.S. As we argue here, fears over Mexico and Japan's alliance with the Central Powers undergirded many of the consular responses.<sup>89</sup> Conspiracies such as the Plan of San Diego of 1915 which called for an alliance of Blacks, Mexicans, and Native Americans to invade and retake Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and California, and kill all Anglo men in the Southwestern U.S., greatly aroused fears of a race war.<sup>90</sup> Revolutionary leader Pancho Villa and his men's armed invasion of Columbus, New Mexico in 1916, the first domestic invasion of the U.S. since the War of 1812 and subsequent retaliation of the U.S. through General Pershing's so-called "Punitive Expedition" into Mexico which lasted from March 15, 1916 until February 5, 1917, violated neutrality laws and inflamed Mexicans. According to Schuler, "the unauthorized presence of U.S. troops on Mexican territory created unprecedented tensions and intensified Mexican nationalism against the U.S."<sup>91</sup> Despite a surge of complaints registered at consuls throughout the Southwest of abuse and mistreatment in 1916, the governors of the border states of New Mexico, Texas, California, and Arizona denied any wrongdoing towards Mexicans, despite documented evidence to the contrary. For instance, in a stern encrypted telegram, U.S. Secretary of State Robert Lansing in 1916 pleaded with the governors of the Southwestern states during this "present Mexican crisis," encouraging state officials and residents to "exercise all possible moderation toward Mexican citizens." Lansing expressed concern about the

<sup>89</sup> For a brief introduction to World War I historiographical shifts among American historians, see Jennifer D. Keene, "Why World War I Matters in American History," *The American Historian* 3 (Feb. 2015): 22-27.

<sup>90</sup> Johnson, *Revolution in Texas*; and José A. Ramírez, *To the Line of Fire!: Mexican Texans and World War I* (College Station: A & M Press, 2009), 47-49.

<sup>91</sup> Friedrich E. Schuler, *Secret Wars and Secret Policies in the Americas, 1842-1929* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2010), 178.

<sup>92</sup> Telegram from Robert Lansing, Secretary of State to Governors of New Mexico, California, and Arizona. July 3, 1916. 311.12/125a. RG59. NARA II.

<sup>93</sup> Telegram from W.C. McDonald, Governor of New Mexico. Santa Fé, New Mexico to Secretary of State Lansing, Washington. July 6, 1916. See correspondence and clippings including, “Seven Villa Followers Who Must Die For Their Part in the Raid on Columbus.” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. May 3, 1916. 311.12/100 RG59. NARA II.

<sup>94</sup> Letter from J. Garza Zertuche, Consul for Mexico to William D. Stephens, Governor of the State of California, Sacramento, California. June 7, 1919. File No. 311.12/41. RG59. NARA II.

<sup>95</sup> R.P. De Negri, Consul General of Mexico to Hon. W.D. Stephens, Governor of California, Sacramento, Calif. June 7, 1919, San Francisco, Calif. NIGHT LETTER.

welfare of U.S. citizens attempting to leave Mexico as these practices “would tend to better [*sic*] situation of Americans remaining in Mexico.”<sup>92</sup> These diplomatic exhortations from Washington did not impress Governor W.C. McDonald of New Mexico, where Villa’s invasion had recently occurred. He retorted defensively to Lansing, “the fact is that the Mexicans must behave themselves in New Mexico. We shall not tolerate disloyalty either in act or word here longer. These people must learn that the United States laws are to be obeyed and we shall take such steps as we believe will accomplish this purpose.”<sup>93</sup>

Even after Germany and the Central Powers surrendered June 28, 1919 with the Treaty of Versailles, the U.S. maintained deeply held suspicions of Mexico’s loyalties. The artificial sentiments expressed in a 1919 consular correspondence between Mexican and U.S. officials at the state and federal level illustrate the role of these underlying tensions in securing concessions from the Americans. J. Garza Zertuche, Consul for San Francisco, wrote to California Governor William D. Stephens in 1919 with a list of grievances including segregation in schools, movie theatres, and mistreatment in jails in his consular jurisdiction. In concluding, Consul Zertuche asserted in the almost fawning polite language characteristic of diplomatic correspondence, that he was “sincerely confident” Governor Stephens would investigate the matter and the remedy, “will have an unmistakable and highly beneficial resonance in the sincere friendship which already exists, between the peoples of our respective two neighboring countries.”<sup>94</sup> Zertuche’s superior, Ramon P. De Negri, Consul General of Mexico for California, sent a Night Letter (confidential dispatch) that evening but with stronger words, threatening the Governor that if he did not, among other things, “order that Mexican children be granted the same rights and considerations afforded to the Anglo-Americans or to those of any other civilized race,” he would bring the issue to “our Embassy in Washington so that these deplorable incidents might be dealt with through diplomatic channels.”<sup>95</sup> In trying to keep the matter within California, De Negri nonetheless threw transnational weight into this threats, “I feel that I am interpreting the feeling of my countrymen thereby it being my duty to present to you as the highest authority of the state a most energetic protest against such acts as herein above referred to . . . [a]cts which I am sure shall deeply affect the feelings of the Mexican Nation and which would lead if

insisted upon to the provocation of sore antagonism instead of creating that good mutual understanding which both governments are so desirous of bringing about. This treatment must last no longer.”<sup>96</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

Although Governor Stephens may have believed this was private correspondence, the letters between both consuls and the Governor were leaked (or taken via spies) and entire copies appeared in newspapers throughout Mexico. U.S. diplomats and agents abroad found in their morning newspapers inflammatory nationalistic banner headlines with racial overtones, “UNDER ODIOS REGULATIONS THAT PROFOUNDLY WOUND OUR NATIONAL SENTIMENTS, MEXICANS ARE RESTRICTED TO ALLOCATIONS THE SAME AS THOSE FOR THE COLORED RACE.”<sup>97</sup> U.S. consul William Chapman in the city of Mazatlan scrambled to contact the Secretary of State in Washington, particularly since the articles stated that this matter had been taken through proper diplomatic channels to the Mexican Embassy and Washington, which it had not. Similarly, in the *Orientación Diario Independente* of Hermosilla, Sonora, editors angrily wrote, “It is without a doubt related to the dreadful maneuvers of the enemies of our race, that hope at all cost to humiliate us, make us feel their superiority. Fortunately, we believe that they will be unsuccessful, due to our foreign representatives taking on the responsibility to manage the abolition of this absurd measure before the superior authorities.”<sup>98</sup> Chapman tried to reassure Lansing that at least the local paper at Mazatlan also published the letter from De Negri to the Governor but “avoided such glaring adverse insinuations as appear in these headings.”<sup>99</sup> George Summerlin, *chargé d'affaires* for the United States also began to note headlines and articles in the Mexican newspapers, telegraphing the rulings and erroneous statements that the Mexican Embassy had ordered the U.S. to investigate. Summerlin rapidly sent a dispatch to Secretary of State Robert Lansing on July 23, 1919, assuring him that “No one attached to the Embassy has made any statement whatsoever regarding the incident.”<sup>100</sup> Similar to tactics utilized by the citizens and editors in 1910-1911 Laredo, Texas; Mexicans on both side of the border learned that if the consuls by themselves could not effect much change, the media could act as an accelerant to gain attention and add pressure to causes.

As evidenced in the above situation, one of the most interesting aspects of these Mexican consul

<sup>97</sup> Translation from: Letter to the Honorable Secretary of State, Washington (Robert S. Lansing) from W.E. Chapman American Consulate, Mazatlan, Sinaloa, Mexico, July 17, 1919. Subject; Clipping from *Orientación*, Published in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico. File # 311.12/417 RG59 NARA.

<sup>98</sup> *Orientación Diario Independente* (Hermosilla, Mexico). July 9, 1919. Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> W.E. Chapman, American Consul to the Honorable Secretary of State, Washington. July 17, 1919. Mazatlan, Sinaloa, Mexico. 311.12/417. RG59 NARA II.

<sup>100</sup> Letter from George Summerlin, *Chargé d’Affaires*, Mexico, July 23, 1919 to The Honorable Secretary of State. 311.12/421 RG59 NARA II.



101 For more on the racialization of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the U.S., see Thomas Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Laura Gómez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York City: New York University Press, 2009); Gilbert González, *Culture of Empire: American Writers, Mexico, and Mexican Immigrants, 1880-1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003); Ariela Gross, *What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 253-294; Kelly Lytle Hernandez, *Migra! A History of The U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of America Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 229-248; Natalia Molina, *How Race Is Made In America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014); David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987); Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 127-167; George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1995); Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19th Century America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979), 154-164; William B. Taylor, *Race And Classification: The Case of Mexican America*, eds. Iona Katzew and Susan Deans-Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009). For a treatment on modern Mexican race formation, see: Tomas Almaguer, "Race, Racialization, and Latino Populations in the U.S.," in *Racial Formation In The Twenty-First Century*, eds. Daniel Martinez HoSang, Oneka LaBennett, and Laura Pulido (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 143-161.



Image 4. "Mexican Children Are Excluded from California Public Schools," *Orientación* Headlines, RG 59, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

complaints in the Department of State records are their contribution to the growing scholarship on the racialization of "Mexicans" in the U.S.<sup>101</sup> Every case from 1910-1929, ranging from California to Kansas to Louisiana, involved the racial segregation or exclusion of Mexican children from American children on the basis they were not White (from an Anglo American point of view). For instance, in 1916, Mexican Ambassador Eliseo Arredondo wrote to U.S Secretary of State Robert Lansing, regarding the forced exclusion of Mexican students in Cheneyville, Rapides Parish, Louisiana. Specifically, school board member Mr. Ford, refused to allow Mexican children to attend the local White school because they were "mixed blood." Further, Mr. Ford's "determination" to keep the Mexican children out of school was such that he went "to the extent of menacing them and their

parents with violent personal injury if they insisted in entering the school building, and to this end, he stationed himself at the main entrance and actually forced the children to return to their homes” (emphasis added).<sup>102</sup> His physical obstruction of their admission evokes the actions of Alabama Governor George Wallace’s “stand in the schoolhouse door” in 1963 blocking African American youth from integration.<sup>103</sup> For those Mexican students who made it into the Cheneyville schools there were reports of teachers who refused to allow Mexicans to have a seat in their classrooms. The matter reached Mexican officials in a case in which, following diplomatic protocol, local interventions were unsuccessful and thus proceeded upwards to Washington. In a series of correspondence between Ivey Cannon (the owner whose land on which the Mexican families lived), Rapides Parish Superintendent, D.B. Showalter, the District Attorney (who noted “there is no law that would exclude from the white schools Mexican children”),<sup>104</sup> and Governor of Louisiana Luther Egbert Hall and numerous school officials, a slice of the intersection of Old South and transnational mores and culture is revealed. Landowner Cannon denounced that Mr. Ford and a teacher named, ““Old Johns”” . . . are trying to say they have negro blood in them [Mexican children] which they positively have not.”<sup>105</sup> In a response by diplomats on both side of the border, County Superintendent, D.B. Showalter sent a dispatch informin the high school principal that Louisiana had no state law allowing for the segregation of Mexican students, Mexicans were not mixed with “Negro” blood, and thus the school must admit said children.<sup>106</sup> The school principal appeared to want to wash his hands of the matter, and assured his superiors he had informed the accused of the state attorney’s ruling. The complexity of the “Cheneyville affair,” signifies the driving force to segregate Mexican students was based upon racial assumptions of Mexicans as non-White despite their legal status.<sup>107</sup> Further, in the narrow Black and White binary in this Jim Crow space and place, groups who were non-White fell into the only demographic most White Southerners were familiar with—Black—along with its “one-drop rule” of the segregated decades.

Mexican parents themselves, through their consular representatives, articulated their most vociferous objections to school segregation when school districts either attempted or placed their children in segregated Black schools, and/or under the tutelage of Black teachers. Deconstructing these

<sup>102</sup> Letter to Secretary of State Robert S. Lansing from Mexican Ambassador Eliseo Arredondo, February 21, 1916. Agencia Confidencial del Gobierno Constitucionalista de Mexico, Washington, D.C. 311.12/80, RG59, NARA II.

<sup>103</sup> E. Culpepper Clark, *The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Robert Andrew Dunn, “Stand in the Schoolhouse Door,” Encyclopedia of Alabama. <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1872>.

<sup>104</sup> Letter from D.B. Showalter, Supt., to Prof. J.M. Johnson, Principal of Cheneyville High School, Alexandria, La. Nov. 1, 1915. 311.12/80, RG59, NARA II.

<sup>105</sup> Letter from Ivey Cannon to Mr. Showalter, Parish Supt. Of the Office of Board of School Directors of Rapides Parish. Alexandria, La. Cheneyville, LA., Nov, 1915. 311.12/80, RG59, NARA II.

<sup>106</sup> Letter from D.B. Showalter, Supt., to Prof. J.M. Johnson, Principal of Cheneyville High School, Alexandria, La. Nov. 1, 1915. 311.12/80, RG59, NARA II.

<sup>107</sup> Laura Gómez, *Manifest Destinies*; Balderama, *In Defense of La Raza*, 57.

attitudes provoked several questions to understand the transnational nature of race prejudice towards Blacks. The liberation of Mexico from Spain in the early 1800s had included as one of its democratic principles, the *de jure* elimination of castes in all legal and administrative records. During the period which these consular cases occurred—the bloody and protracted 1910 Mexican Revolution—democratic ideals were also animated as the non-elite agricultural farmers continued to challenge land and power control by the state embodied in dictator Porfirio Díaz’s land policies.

Further, among the philosophical and ideological ideals promoted in post-revolutionary Mexican reforms were those of José Vasconcelos, superintendent of Mexico’s public instruction, who published in 1925 his instant classic, *La Raza Cósmica*. Through this essay and lectures, he argued that the mixing of Spanish, Native American, and African blood resulting in *mestizaje*, creating a strong Mexican fourth race.<sup>108</sup> Vasconcelos’s ideals were implemented into social policies at the school level. Mary Kay Vaughn in her study of rural revolutionary radical public schools on the Mexican side of the border, and Arturo Flores in his examination of how progressive American educators visited and imported many of these educational reforms to the U.S. convey that in principle, *mestizaje* was promoted in the curricula.<sup>109</sup>

We pondered to what extent Mexican immigrants arriving interpreted racial conditions based upon their observations and analysis of U.S. treatment of Blacks in the not only segregated but also inferior-resourced schools in this Jim Crow era. School consul cases concerning objections to students being placed with Blacks occurred not just in the Southwest where both Texas (a former slave state and Jim Crow locale) and California attempted to place Mexican children with Blacks, but also in Jim Crow Louisiana. However, consul reports rarely include any complaints or observations of the deficit conditions of Black schools compared to White or “American” schools, or lack of qualification of Black teachers. Rather, they were based upon the mere rumored or actual placement with Black children, teachers, or even holding classes in a Black church building (with only Mexican children).

Further evidence from consul cases regarding other forms of discrimination, not schooling, suggest that race prejudice against Blacks emanated from a cross-section of Mexican nationals, and was not

<sup>108</sup> José Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race / La raza cósmica*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997). Most scholars state that the essay appeared in 1925, although various dates appear for its actual publication. See, for instance José Vasconcelos, *La raza cósmica: Misión de la raza iberoamericana*. (Paris: Agencia mundial de librería, 1924).

<sup>109</sup> Mary Kay Vaughn, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*; and Ruben Flores, *Backroads Pragmatists: Mexico’s Melting Pot and Civil Rights in the United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

confined to school placements. For instance, in Leesville, Louisiana, the Mexican community objected to the burial of one of their compatriots, who had been allegedly murdered by an American, in a “negro cemetery” instead of the White cemetery. Sheriff J.L. Jones “ordered that Gonzales be buried in a cemetery for colored people, and as a number of Mexicans resented the action and thought of preventing it, the Sheriff then gathered all of his deputies and by force had the burial made as he desired.”<sup>110</sup> Given this incident occurred during the turbulent year of 1916, Mexican Agent Eliso Arredondo emphasized in his letter to Secretary of State Lansing, “this incident has caused a great excitement and friction between Mexicans and Americans likely to lead to trouble.”<sup>111</sup> In other cases, the presence of Black soldiers on the border, the so-called Buffalo Soldiers, caused complaint of mistreatment.<sup>112</sup> Interestingly, historians such as Gerald Horne in his work on African Americans and the Mexican Revolutionary period, argues that both Black soldiers and civilian African Americans found Mexico a hospitable environment regarding race relations, certainly an improvement over the nadir of race relations of Jim Crow America in the early decades of the twentieth century.<sup>113</sup>

Reading backwards into the history of Latin Americans and race in general, and Mexico specifically, revealed strong historic discrimination. Deep-seated antipathies to blackness stemming from the five hundred year long Spanish colonial racial caste hierarchy that placed Black slaves and subsequently free Black descent peoples at the bottom of the caste were carried transnationally. During the last two decades, historians, anthropologists, and social scientists have closely scrutinized questions surrounding race in Latin America.<sup>114</sup> However, arguments over whether class or caste is more significant in Latin American race relations continues to engage scholars and will most likely be an ongoing question.<sup>115</sup> The Spanish colonial *casta* policies affirmed the royal government and Catholic Church’s sanction of racial mixing with Indians and Africans, while still maintaining a hierarchy privileging those born in Spain (*peninsulares*) and their offspring born in the New World, *criollos*, two groups at the top of the racial/ethnic/Catholic baptized/slave status classification system. At times the *castas*, memorialized in the famous *Casta Paintings*, consisted of over forty categories of combinations of Native Americans, Spanish, and Africans. As historian María Elena Martínez

110 Letter from Eliseo Arredondo (*Agencia Confidencial del Gobierno Constitucionalista de Mexico*) to Robert Lansing, Secretary of State, Washington, D.C. November 27, 1916. The entire file includes correspondence between the Louisiana Governor, State Department, Parrish Sheriff, and other stakeholders regarding both the burial and inquest of the murder of Delfino Gonzales at a logging camp called Camp Ingalls in Vernon Parrish, Louisiana. File 311.12/201. RG59 NARA II. In this case Arredondo was not a consul but a government agent. He does appear as a consul in other years.

111 *Ibid.*

112 During 1916, Mexicans in Naco, Arizona complained of Black soldiers mistreating women. See Files 311.12/158 and 311.12/181 RG 59 NARA II.

113 Gerald Horne, *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

114 For a historiographic overview see Peter Wade, “Afro-Latin Studies: Reflections on the Field.” *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* (1) April 2006: 105-25; Ben Vinson III and Matthew Restall, eds. *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009); Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *Black in Latin America* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

115 Ann Twinam, “Introduction,” *Purchasing Whiteness: Pardos, Mulattos, and the Quest for Social Mobility in the Spanish Indies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

explained, “the main casta categories with specific portions of Spanish, Indian and black blood; made certain mixtures compatible with purity; and distinguished between people who descended from Spaniards and Indians and those who had African ancestry.”<sup>116</sup> These distinctions eventually influenced “colonial power relations, individual and group identities, and the Mexican definitions of purity, race, and nation.” According to historian James H. Sweet, the status of Afro mestizos and other mixed race individuals continued to decline in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in New Spain, drawing from centuries old biases against blackness under Moorish conquest.<sup>117</sup> Ramón Gutiérrez’s analysis that “the darker a person’s skin, the closer one was presumed to be to the physical labor of slaves and tributary Indians” seems to capture the continuing pigmentocracy in modern day Mexico.<sup>118</sup> One of the authors of this essay is still told by cousins living in Mexico that she *trabaja como una negra* (works like a Black woman). The phrase is used with both positive connotations regarding a respect for hard work and resilience while at the same time indicating that manual labor is not fitting to undertake given upper class social status, professional standing, and external physical attributes such as lighter phenotype and an absence of indigenous features.

Parents, through their consular representatives, insisted that the *White* status of Mexicans required their placement in only White schools. Complaints were lodged from the towns of El Centro, Brawley, and Santa Paula, California. In fact, Paul Taylor reported that one of the reasons that Mexicans established the Benito Juárez Society in El Centro in 1919 was “the desire for a school for Mexican children separate from the colored children . . . [in 1927] still seeking to work out a solution to the problem.”<sup>119</sup> Indeed, 1919 was the year that the San Francisco consul also received complaints concerning placement of Mexican children with Black children and with Black teachers. From San Bernardino, Mrs. Grace C. Stanley, County Superintendent reported, “no negro teachers are employed in the county,” but that “some negro children have been admitted.”<sup>120</sup> In 1921, residents of Charco, Texas objected that Mexican children were excluded from the “American” school and “required to go to a place where colored people assemble for religious worship.” This complaint did not indicate that they were being educated with Black children but merely taught in a Black church.<sup>121</sup> The same year, parents in Calipatria, California also reported being excluded from

116 María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 166-7.

117 James H. Sweet, “The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 54 (1997): 143-166.

118 Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 198-9.

119 Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States. Vol. I, Imperial Valley* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 64.

120 Report from Will C. Wood, Superintendent of Public Instruction of California to Honorable William D. Stephens, Governor of California. June 26, 1919. File 311.12/409. RG59 NARA II.

121 Charco, Texas. File No. 311.12/445 RG59, NARA II.

122 Letter from Charles Hughes, U.S. Secretary of State to the Governor of California, Sacramento, CA. October 28, 1921. Re: Calipatria, CA Oct-Nov. 1921. File 311.12/442. RG59 NARA II.

123 David Montejano states the first “Mexican school” was established in 1902 in Seguin, part of Central Texas. *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas, 1987), 160. We make a distinction between schools Mexican children were sent to against their parents’ wishes as part of a means to segregate and block opportunities for Mexican children versus public “Spanish” or bilingual schools parents supported such as those rural schools in Colorado called “Mexican Schools because the directors were Mexican American as well as the students. See, for example, J. F. Murray, *Ninth Annual Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Colorado December 1894* (Denver: Smith-Brooks Printing, 1895), 37; and Nathan B. Cov, *Eight Annual Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Colorado December 1892* (Denver: Smith-Books Printing, 1893), 153.

124 E.R.H., Embassy of Mexico in the United States of America. Translation. Number 163, to the Department of State, U.S.A., Washington, October 28, 1912. File: 811.42712/5. RG59. Alvey A. Adey, Acting Secretary of State to O.B. Colquitt, Governor of Texas, October 31, 1912, File: 811.42712/5.

125 C.E. Godby, School Superintendent and Secretary of the Board, Mission, TX, to His Excellency, Gov. O.B. Colquitt of Texas, November 7, 1912, RG 59, File: 811.42712.

126 Ibid.

127 The incident at Mission, TX shows how early English-only pedagogy was adopted for Mexican children at the onset of the 20th century. Traditionally World War I and associated nativist sentiment have marked the initiation and acceleration of the English-only movement in U.S. schools, see Carlos Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas, 1836-1981* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2004), 74-76.

128 In 1919, the California State Superintendent of Public Instruction responded to allegations by the Mexican government of racial segregation in schools by citing a pedagogical justification, not race or nationality see “California Segregation 1919.” File: 311.12/409, RG 59; “Charge Against Schools Denied: Will. C. Wood Finds That Mexican Children Segregated Only When Backward,” *The San Diego Union*, June 29, 1919, p.12.

White schools and placed in Black schools.<sup>122</sup> Supplementary sources such as local Spanish language newspapers and records in the Mexican Archives, Mexico City, might add more details to parental beliefs. While placement with Black children was cast in the press as the most objectionable form of segregation, segregation away from White or “American” children as they were often called, was similarly offensive.

Within this newly accessed archival research we position the educational grounds for segregated Mexican/Mexican American children that were set at least in the early 1900s.<sup>123</sup> In one telling example from 1912 Mission, Texas, the Mexican embassy supported José S. Longoria’s complaint that his children had been denied admission to the local public school with American children.<sup>124</sup> The Mexican embassy described Longoria as “an honest citizen and workman,” who also “duly contributes to the public expenses, which makes even more strange the refusal to receive his children in said public school.” The embassy requested the Department of State to begin “an investigation . . . that may make clear the true reasons for which Mexican children are not admitted to the public school.” Upon request from U.S. Acting Secretary of State Alvey A. Adey, the Governor of Texas asked the Superintendent of Mission Schools to explain the exclusion of Mexican children from the White school. Superintendent Godby angrily responded in longhand a letter setting forward a set of “facts,” utilized to deny Longoria’s daughter admission to the school. He stated, “Longoria’s daughter was denied admission to the school because she didn’t speak English and Mr. Longoria was not and refused to become a U.S. citizen.”<sup>125</sup> Additionally, Mission had a separate school for Mexicans, School No. #2, that the school board ruled Mexican or Spanish speaking children should attend until the 7th grade when they could transfer to the English-speaking school. He further argued that school board matters were local as stated in Section 203 of the Texas School Laws of 1911. The superintendent ended his procedural letter by noting that the English speaking school and Spanish/Mexican School were equal in facilities.<sup>126</sup> The superintendent failed to explain why Mexican children needed to be segregated until the 7th grade, especially if they received instruction in English only.<sup>127</sup> The 1912 Mission case highlights how quickly racial segregation based on pedagogical justification developed for Mexican Americans/Mexicans in the Southwest.<sup>128</sup>

Despite repeated interventions by the Mexican government on behalf of its diaspora in the U.S., few of the school complaints at this stage of research were resolved in favor of Mexican parents. Thus, while consuls may have been a beneficial source for instigating complaints, *Mexicanista* (Mexican generation) parents learned that diplomacy alone would rarely disrupt the local and state jurisdiction public schools received under the Tenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The time frame in which parents left Mexico most likely influenced their expectations for public schools in the U.S. Historian Benjamin Johnson introduces Tejano Progressives, in his book on El Plan de San Diego. Tejano Progressives could have deep roots on either side of the border but lived in the U.S. and were “small businessmen, skilled workers, or merchants.”<sup>129</sup> The ability to secure education for upward mobility was a prized goal among these early emigrants from the Revolution of the early 1910s, some of whom were political exiles. In *La Crónica*, a Laredo newspaper whose tone reflected Tejano Progressive beliefs, a 1910 editorial reflected the liberal values that accompanied the Revolution. “The ‘Mexican element’ [should] adapt a strategy to achieve the dignity and position that it deserves, leaving the shadow of ignorance that humiliates it, and this strategy is education.”<sup>130</sup> The author optimistically stated, “all lines of work are open for the educated Mexican,” and *La Crónica* was one of the most vociferous opponents of segregated Mexican schools, viewing Tejano Progressives as simply one among many immigrant groups arriving to the U.S. Parents who arrived later to the U.S., such as the shoemaker from Kansas City, Kansas, profiled in the next case, was the beneficiary of considerable federal pressure on the school in question, and a positive outcome.

The equality clause of the Fourteenth Amendment was invoked in two linked cases in Kansas City, Kansas in 1925. Victory was achieved for one set of students, but denied for another. In the first case, four Mexican boys were slated to enter a new junior high school, “New Major Hudson,” with their White classmates and were ordered back to the “Old Major Hudson” which was now designated as the Mexican school. The Mexican parents protested and sent the four boys to New Major Hudson on the first day of school. However, White parents in the collective form of the P.T.A. took matters into their own hands to force the boys out of the new school, threatening them with a mob and resulting in a rescue intervention by the police which shut down the school.<sup>131</sup> In a year

<sup>129</sup> Johnson, *Revolution in Texas*, 43.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>131</sup> “In the matter of the Investigation of the Mexican School situation at Kansas City, Kansas by W.C. Ralston, Assistant Attorney General of Kansas.” File 311.1215 RG59 Department of State, NARA II.

long siege between the school district, the U.S. Secretary of State, the Governor of Kansas, the Attorney General for the State of Kansas, local judges, and the Republic of Mexico through its ambassador, consulates, and parents—the four boys were ultimately excluded from exercising what *chargé d'affaires ad interim* José Benitez declared as their “constitutional rights under the Fourteenth Amendment.”<sup>132</sup> The parents ultimately withdrew their boys, and in a strategy utilized throughout the Juan Crow Southwest, enrolled their children in a Catholic school.<sup>133</sup>

Conversely, a victory was achieved the following year when four different Mexican youth were finally admitted upon the initiative and agitation by parent Saturnino Alvarado, a shoemaker in Kansas City. U.S. diplomats emphasized to the local officials that the lengthy and protracted New Major Hudson Case had caused considerable international negative publicity and urged quick resolution.<sup>134</sup> Victories, such as Argentine High School, taught parents utilizing diplomatic pressure that the winds of geopolitics could easily blow one direction or the other, resulting in uneven and fleeting benefits. Thus, even when local policies were reformed—on the ground level—in classrooms, the school bus, and playground—schoolmates and their parents could, and did, intimidate and bully Mexican children.<sup>135</sup> At Argentine High School in Kansas City, for instance, the four students were admitted, but hazing caused two students to drop out and purportedly no Mexican children enrolled again for years.<sup>136</sup> U.S. legal cases with precedent implications and legislation, however, offered more permanent resolutions long after international tensions or pressures ebbed or, as in the case of the Great Depression, when discrimination against Mexicans escalated. The consular cases described here were occurring during a period when few lawyers of Mexican descent were able to actively fight on their behalf. Alonso L. Perales was one of the few lone soldiers in the legal field during this era and his correspondence and dogged complaints on behalf of Mexicans also surface in these diplomatic records.<sup>137</sup> Furthermore, the League of United Latin American Citizens, or LULAC, the Mexican civil rights organization, was founded only in 1929, the end of this era. Although many *mutualistas* (mutual benefit organizations) existed throughout the country, particularly at the local level, LULAC was the first to be able to leverage resources and political capital through their emphasis on U.S. citizenship and a solid middle class membership base.

<sup>132</sup> Letter to His Excellency, Hon. Charles E. Hughes Secretary of State, Washington, D.C. Embassy of Mexico, Washington, D.C. February 4, 1925 from José Benitez, *Charge' d'Affaires ad interim* of Mexico. 311.1215. RG59 NARA II.

<sup>133</sup> Guadalupe San Miguel Jr. *Chicana/o Struggles for Education: Activism in the Community* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2013).

<sup>134</sup> Letter to Secretary of State, Robert S. Lansing from Manuel C. Téllez, Ambassador of Mexico, Washington, D.C. October 20, 1925, 3-5, File 311.1215. RG59 NARA II.

<sup>135</sup> MacDonald, “Demanding their Rights.”

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> See, Michael Olivas, *In Defense of My People: Alonso S. Perales and the Development of Mexican-American Public Intellectuals* (Houston, TX: Arte Pùblica Press, 2013).



A telling example of the limitation of the Mexican consuls protests was the increased racial segregation of Mexican children until the advent of World War II. In a report by the Mexican government in 1930 on attempts to segregate Mexican children in the U.S., including examples in Lemon Grove, California and San Antonio, Texas, Manuel E. Otáñera from the Mexican Foreign Ministry acknowledged the Mexican government's limitations:

The Mexican government, taking into consideration the sovereignty of each country to adopt and establish within its territory its principles of pedagogy that must regulate public education and identify the needs of students, according to their preparation and knowledge of the official language, has not deemed it necessary to formulate any complaint, as long as there are no measures which may indicate racial prejudices. The Mexican government has thus limited itself to closely observe the path of these events whose true end result should not be justified.<sup>138</sup>

<sup>138</sup> F. Arturo Rosales, *Testimonio: A Documentary History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Struggle* (Houston, TX: Arte Público Press, 2000), 152.

In this sense, the Mexican government was in the same predicament Mexican American civil right activists were in when combating racial segregation based on pedagogical grounds. Mexican Americans, especially in Texas, confronted a court system that ruled against arbitrary segregation of Mexican children but continually affirmed the soundness of educational segregation based on English language deficiency. Historian Carlos Blanton, rightfully called the “English language deficiency” argument the “language trap” since it formed the basis of de facto segregation of Mexican Americans throughout the Southwest.<sup>139</sup> Given that these cases were occurring in the late teens as the U.S. and Mexico teetered on the edge of war, a high level of skepticism should be employed in utilizing primary sources from both sides. Political posturing, chess games, and propaganda are revealed in correspondences that were formerly encrypted and information selectively released. U.S. Secretary of State Robert Lansing (1915-1920), whose signature appears on many of these documents in the consular cases, recalled in his memoirs how the fear that Mexico would unite with Germany entailed a toleration and indulgence of President Venustiano Carranza to whom the U.S. had given de facto recognition as head of Mexico. Some explanation for the U.S. Department of State's thorough

<sup>139</sup> Carlos Blanton, “A Legacy of Neglect: George I. Sanchez, Mexican American Education, and the Ideal of Integration, 1940-1970,” *Teachers College Record* 111 (June 2012), 6.

response (whether or not solved to the satisfaction of the parents) to several charges of discrimination and racism against Mexican children can be seen as a tightrope American diplomats walked. Lansing recalled in his memoirs,

In regard to Mexico the state of affairs had not materially improved and the attitude of the government toward the United States continued to be one of suspicion and repressed hostility. Carranza was as obstinate and defiant as ever. He utilized the popular antipathy for Americans as a political asset and refused all overtures by this government to render him friendly assistance. Still it was not time to break with this impossible old man. We had to swallow our pride and to maintain as good relations as possible with the de facto Government of Mexico. The state of the Mexican public mind was further excited in its opposition to the United States by the numerous secret agents of the German Government who were scattered throughout the country. We knew of the presence of these agents, some of whom were permanent residents, and of the propaganda which they were carrying on, but there was nothing which we could do to check them, and there was very little we could do to counteract their influence. It was a very uncomfortable situation. We could in the circumstances count on Mexico being an unfriendly neutral, if she remained neutral, of which there was at least a reasonable doubt.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>140</sup> Robert Lansing, *War Memoirs of Robert Lansing, Secretary of State* (Indianapolis, New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1935), 308. accessed February 29, 2016, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015001571010?urlapend=%3Bseq=11>.

In the months preceding the surrender of Germany, culminating in the end of the longest modern war of the time, U.S. officials were still nervous about Mexico's radical insurgents and possible disloyalty to the U.S.

How these delicate circumstances, occurring in the backdrop of World War I, played out in schooling policies are further revealed in the 1919 California consular cases. Numerous charges, some widely reported in the Mexican press and U.S. Spanish language press (both accused by the Americans as being propaganda and greatly exaggerated), of segregating Mexican students away from their White

counterparts into separate schools for Mexican or Black children captured the attention of the General Consul of Mexico, who ordered an investigation. California Governor William D. Stephens instructed his state superintendent of instruction to conduct a statewide inquiry into the extent of segregation of Mexican children in the Golden State. The lengthy report, which included potentially damning information on racial reasons for segregation, was censored. U.S. Secretary of State Robert Lansing asked assistant Wilbur J. Carr to only release the summary statement to both William E. Chapman, Esquire in the American Consul of Mazatlan, Mexico and George T. Summertone, Esquire, American *chargé d'affaires ad interim* in Mexico City. He asked Carr to write, “In reply I enclose herewith a copy of a report on the subject, dated June 26th last, which was made to the Governor of California by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the *last paragraph of which you may make public*” (emphasis ours). In the generic summary paragraph, California Superintendent of Public Instruction Will C. Wood, declared, “there has been no segregation of Mexican children in California on the grounds of nationality or race.” The note purposely deleted information contrary to their conclusion, “where segregation has been ordered, and this is true in only a few instances,” it was for the benefit of the children who could not speak English but “eminently desirable from the standpoint of the non-English speaking children themselves.”<sup>141</sup> In this posturing and deception, the truth was veiled over to smooth diplomatic relations during a tension-filled era globally and particularly for the U.S. in its efforts to lessen hostility from Mexico and Mexicans within its borders. For instance, many of the schools in California segregated Black and Mexican children together rendering the language angle moot since the African-American children, to our knowledge, spoke English. Interestingly, objections from Black parents of their children’s academic delay due to Spanish-speaking Mexican children placed in their schools (unlike Anglo parents), has not yet arisen in historical records such as school board minutes. Further, in the depositions for legal cases such as *Maestas* (1914) or *Delgado v. Bastrop* (1948) evidence revealed that many so-called “non-English speaking children” did speak English.

<sup>141</sup> Investigative Report in Letter to Honorable William D. Stephens, Governor of California. June 26, 1919 from Will C. Wood, Superintendent of Public Instruction of California. 311.12/42 RG59.

## Conclusions

Cold War tensions in the post-World War II era contributed greatly to the success of civil rights efforts, and particularly the successful U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954 and 1955) outlawing segregation of Blacks and Whites in public schools. In this exploratory essay, we limited the analysis of public school segregation to two countries and the impact of this fractured relationship for immigrants arriving into both an informal (regarding any laws on the books) and yet rigid racialized American setting. The status of Mexican students in the U.S., however, is only the example of one minoritized group arriving to the country and the ensuing impact on transnational relations. One of the most cited examples of international diplomacy and schools involves the segregation of Japanese children in 1906, not Mexicans. The case in California involved both federal and Japanese government intervention. In the end, San Francisco only rescinded its segregation attempt after Japanese immigration was severely restricted with the passage of the Gentleman's Agreement and the dismissal of the Japanese-American challenge to San Francisco school segregation in *Aoki v. Deane* in 1907.<sup>142</sup> The otherwise richly documented research on racial discrimination against Chinese pupils in Mississippi (resulting eventually in the U.S. Supreme Court case of *Gong Lum v. Rice* (1927), language policies, and other forms of educational Americanization in Hawaii towards Nisei and the Japanese in the 1920s, for instance, are curiously absent in their use of diplomatic exchanges from these State Department records.<sup>143</sup> Although we were not searching for records regarding discrimination against children of Asian descent in the U.S., numerous documents surfaced which scholars in this area may wish to pursue further. For instance, Ferdinand Mayer, the *chargé d'affaires* in Peking for the State Department's Division of Far Eastern Affairs reported on the impact of the Supreme Court of Mississippi ruling in *Rice v. Gong Lum* (139 Miss. 760, 104 So. 105). He sent to the legation in Tokyo and to Washington translations of a newspaper article published in the SHUN T' IEN SHIH PAO of May 13, 1925 with the headline, "AMERICA UNEXPECTEDLY OPPOSES YOUNG CHINESE STUDENTS." Mayer further wrote to "inform the Department that similar notices, conspicuously placed, have appeared in all the English-language newspapers in Peking."<sup>144</sup> As the inset boxes from the United Fruit Company and the New York

<sup>142</sup> Wollenberg, 67. For a similar example in Canada, see Timothy Stanley, "Bringing Anti-Racism into Historical Explanation: The Victoria Chinese Students' Strike of 1922-23 Revisited," *Journal of Canadian Historical Association* 13 (2002): 141-165.

<sup>143</sup> Sieglinde Lim de Sanchez, "Crafting a Delta Chinese Community: Education and Acculturation in Twentieth-Century Southern Baptist Mission Schools." *History of Education Quarterly* 43 (2003): 74-90. Eileen Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity: The Nisei Generation in Hawaii* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1994); "Asian Americans in the History of Education: An Historiographical Essay," *History of Education Quarterly* 41 (2001): 58-71; and "Introduction: Asian Americans and Educational History," *History of Education Quarterly* 43 (2003): 1-9.

144 Letter from Ferdinand Mayer, *Charges D’Affaires*, Peking, May 18, 1925 to Secretary of State, Frank B. Kellogg, Washington. 811.42/193. This letter and numerous others are linked to what the State Department classified as “Dispatch #2995” for the Mississippi cases. Correspondence also includes the plaintiff’s lawyers who raised an intriguing strategy from Arkansas. Their Attorney General invoked “that under Article 7 of the Burlingame Treaty of July 28, 1886, the right of Chinese children to attend schools in this country referred to schools exclusively under the control of the Federal government . . . . Thereupon, the Attorney General of Arkansas rendered an opinion in which he held that Chinese children could attend the white schools in that state.” See, for instance, letter from Brewer, Brewer, & McGehee, Attorneys at Law, Clarksdale, Mississippi to Hon. Frank B. Kellogg, Secretary of State, July 31, 1925. 811.42/194 RG59. These Mississippi records were originally found via a “Document File Note” (typically indicating a cross referencing) under case 811.4016/95 “Prohibition of attendance [sic] of Chinese students and students of white race in same schools in Mississippi.” See also “Document File Note” in file 811.42/182 ½ referring to correspondence from Secretary of State Charles Evan Hughes dated April 12, 1923 regarding “foreign Language Schools in California and Hawaii. Conversation with Japanese Ambassador regarding pending legislation.” The reader is directed to file 500.A4b/142 ½.

145 Philippa Strum, *Mendez v. Westminster: School Desegregation and Mexican-American Rights* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2010), 22-23.

146 Ruben Flores notes that Marcus is referenced in a 1935 report from the Mexican Secretary of Foreign Relations as a consulting attorney hired to represent Mexican citizens in U.S. courts. *Backroads Pragmatists: Mexico’s Melting Pot and Civil Rights in the United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 215; 328, n.13.

147 *Ibid.*, 79.

148 Flores also notes letters the Mexican Government sent to the appropriate legal stakeholders as appreciation for their work done on behalf of the Mexican people in *Delgado v. Bastrop* (TX) (1948) *Ibid.*, 277; 335, n.80.

State Board of Education above indicate, transnational exchanges over students, schools, and curriculum, occurred from numerous countries, and not just in the form of complaints.

We argue, however, that the use of transnational strategies among the large wave of Mexican families arriving around the time of the 1910 Revolution, also represents one stage of evolving measures to bring the U.S. public schools in alignment with their stated objectives and legal requirements to incorporate all children. Further, consuls worked behind the scenes to support parents in lawsuits. For instance, in Del Rio, Texas the consul provided funds to assist with a lawyer for the League of United Latin American Citizens’ (LULAC) first school desegregation lawsuit, *Salvatierra v. Del Rio Independent School District* (1930). While this lawsuit was unsuccessful, in the victorious, *Lemon Grove (CA) v. Alvarez* (1931), the San Diego consul offered funds to parent group, *El Comité de Vecinos* (The Committee of Neighbors) and provided the names of two lawyers they had previously utilized.<sup>145</sup> The 1940s, consuls were not directly involved with school desegregation cases, but nonetheless appeared as supportive parties in the 1946 case, *Mendez v. Westminster* (CA). Lawyer David Marcus, who had worked for the Los Angeles consulate in the 1930s, was recommended to the Méndez family.<sup>146</sup> At the trial, Marcus requested permission for members of the Los Angeles and Santa Ana, CA Mexican Consulate to sit in seats reserved for lawyers “as a matter of courtesy to the Mexican government.” Further, during the pretrial hearing he expressed hope that he and “the Mexican Government that I represent” could resolve the situation through “negotiation rather than litigation.”<sup>147</sup> As these glimpses reveal, the role of consuls has been overlooked, even when operating in conjunction with more accessible U.S. legal cases.<sup>148</sup> We thus suggest that in some cases parents learned that consuls alone were insufficient, but drew from consular resources for lawyer referrals, funds, and the Mexican government’s support. At this stage of the research, consul assistance appears to represent both an overlapping and chronological stage for strategies to eliminate segregation and other forms of discrimination directed towards children of Mexican national parents. As historian and legal scholar Laura Gómez has termed, Mexican Americans were legally White but socially “colored” and schools were the epicenter of this status; local understanding of Mexicans was in full display in desegregation struggles and parent protests that were crafted by diplomacy given the lack of state and local laws that marked the racial boundaries of “Mexican.” Additionally, this essay illuminates the role of public schools in creating

both empire and race pioneered by the work of historians Gilbert González and recently expanded on by the work of Clif Stratton. As Clif Stratton argued, “[S]chools within the bounded national space often served as domestic colonial institutions, espoused narratives that projected American power onto both foreign and domestic geographic and populations, and created distinctive paths to citizenship that many native-born and indeed many naturalized whites hoped would strengthen the boundaries of race and nation.”<sup>149</sup> Despite attempted diplomatic negotiations to stem the tide of marginalization and segregation of the majority of Mexican Americans, the United States’ “strength of nation” trumped respect of international treaties. Instead, the education of Mexican children was viewed as one requiring minimal investment: given Mexicans’ have perceived as a temporary and expedient labor force and thus ineligible and undesired for naturalization.

<sup>149</sup> Clif Stratton, *Education for Empire: American Schools, and the Paths of Good Citizenship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 3.



*Education's Histories* would like to thank Victoria-María MacDonald and Gonzalo Guzmán for their essay. We would also like to thank Benjamin Johnson for providing a thoughtful review of this essay.



#### Interested in writing with us?

Please send a brief description of your ideas to [educationshistories@gmail.com](mailto:educationshistories@gmail.com). We accept submissions on a rolling basis. All articles and essays are part of the open peer review process. Visit [www.educationshistories.org/submissions/](http://www.educationshistories.org/submissions/) for more information.

[www.educationshistories.org](http://www.educationshistories.org) · [educationshistories@gmail.com](mailto:educationshistories@gmail.com)

Adrea Lawrence & Sara Clark, co-curators

*Education's Histories*

methodological grist for  
the history of education