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Dr. George I. Sánchez, Mexican Americans, and the Transformative Impact of the Mask of Whiteness: 1946 – 1970

A Thesis in History

by

Joel E. Chapman

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PREFACE

When I embarked on this honors thesis project, I initially wanted to examine the history of Mexican American participation in what historians have designated as the "traditional" civil rights period from the early 1950s to mid-1960s. I imagined that there had to be a significant number of Mexican Americans in the South that participated in this movement and that my U.S. history textbook in high school had neglected to mention them. However, I soon realized that the reason why Mexican Americans were not included in the scholarship regarding the U.S. civil rights period was that they did not participate in this movement. This point was further illustrated when I corresponded with Maria Varela, a Mexican American who participated in the African American Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). She told me that she could not recall working with or encountering any Mexican American males during her civil rights work. However, it was through this initial research that I happened to come across the name of Mexican American civil rights activist, Dr. George I. Sánchez, and decided to look more deeply into his life and work. Fascinated by the fact that his professional career spanned from 1946 to 1970, I knew I had to get to know more about his leadership in Mexican American civil rights. My curiosity about Sánchez swiftly morphed into him becoming the primary focus of this project.

After analyzing the papers of George I. Sánchez and finding out that he was able to live through the two major racial identity movements among Mexican Americans living in the Southwest, I posed two historical questions about Sánchez and these movements. First, how did the writings and social activism of George Sánchez contribute

and add to the academic scholarship on Mexican Americans during the period between the 1940s to the 1970s? Second, how did Sánchez's personal challenge with race represent and reflect the shifts in racial identity that evolved in the Mexican American community through the 1940s–1970s, an identity dilemma that is being debated within the Hispanic community today? The main purpose of this project is to analyze the complexities of American society's definitions of race through the particular struggles of Mexican Americans to define their own racial identity.

These questions and their complexities are not only academic; they are also personal. When someone has asked me how I describe myself, there are a plethora of terms that I could use. My response could include: "Hispanic," "Cuban," "Dominican," "Latino," "American," or hyphenated versions of these identities. I often find myself saying my race is "Hispanic" and my ethnicity is "Cuban-Dominican." Throughout my primary and secondary education, when the time came to fill out standardized test personal information, I often found myself perplexed when I was asked to pick my race, since there was no box that said, "Hispanic." Therefore, I remember most often picking the "other" racial box, but I remember some instances where I selected the "white" box and even the "black" box.

My personal dilemma mirrors the shifting personal and group identity politics for Mexican Americans. Both have shaped the general thesis of this project. My research reveals that although the mask of whiteness, i.e., a white identity, was a sound Mexican American strategy in the 1940s, it was destined for failure as Jim Crow society saw pass this mask and continued to segregate and discriminate against Mexican Americans.

Although he at first championed Mexican American's white identity, George Sánchez eventually concluded that whiteness was merely a mask. Seeing the whiteness strategy as flawed, he became one of the first Mexican Americans to attempt to remove the mask of whiteness. However, this paper will demonstrate that once the mask was worn, it became interwoven into the Mexican American history and identity in the Southwest. Even Sánchez found it difficult to completely remove all aspects of the mask that he had worn for almost his entire professional career. As a result, the mask continues to be worn in varying degrees by Mexican Americans and even other Hispanic groups and this paper provides the context for us to understand these identity issues as historical phenomena.

The primary sources that I used for this project came from two main archival collections. A majority of my primary sources came from the Benson Latin American Collection located at the University of Texas at Austin. Through this archive, I was able to gain access to Dr. George I. Sánchez's personal letters, published works, period pieces that involved Sánchez, interviews that Sánchez had participated in, and other miscellaneous documents. These documents range in date, from 1946, when Sánchez already had an established career, to 1970, when Sánchez was near the end of his academic and activist career. Through careful analysis of Sánchez's papers, I saw how the mask of whiteness had a transformative impact on his identity as an activist and a scholar; on his interaction with the Mexican American community; and on his interaction with Jim Crow—its laws and practices. As a professor of History and Philosophy of Education at the University of Texas at Austin, Sánchez mainly focused on fighting school segregation in Texas. Given the school desegregation focus of his career, this

project examines court cases that dealt with the issues of school segregation and their larger impact on the Mexican American struggle against Jim Crow racism.

My other primary sources came from the Government Documents Collection located at Drew University. These sources include published reports by the United States Civil Rights Commission, which looked at broad societal inequities in areas such as education, segregation, and issues regarding identity that affected Mexican Americans during the 1960s. Also, these government documents allowed me to see how the United States government, that had legally classified Mexican Americans as white up, to the early 1960s, reacted when the Mexican American community chose to remove the mask of whiteness.

My secondary sources allowed me to place my findings regarding Sánchez and the transformative impact of the mask of whiteness in conversation with academic scholarship on the Mexican American community and the identity shifts that occurred among this group, from the 1940s to the early 1970s. Previous historians who analyzed Mexican Americans in the Southwest have asserted two accepted and established premises within the field. The first premise is that middle class Mexican Americans adopted a "whiteness strategy" during the early 1940s. In his book, *Brown, not White*, historian Guadalupe San Miguel Jr., accepted the premise that for many years Mexican American activists throughout the country had viewed themselves as white or Caucasian in order to obtain social justice and equal educational opportunity.[1] Historian Neil Foley

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[1] Guadalupe San Miguel Jr., *Brown, not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston* (Texas A&M: Texas A&M Press, 2001), xi.

also asserts that Mexican Americans from the early 1930s to the late 1950s, "began insisting on their status as whites, in order to overcome the worst features of Jim Crow segregation, restrictive housing covenants, employment discrimination, and the social stigma of being 'Mexican,' a label that in the eyes of Anglos, designated race rather than one's citizenship status."[2] My project takes this established premise and analyzes how the mask of whiteness impacted Dr. George I. Sánchez, as well as those with whom he interacted in the white and Mexican American communities.

The second established premise among historians was that the Chicano or Brown Power movement[3] of the late 1960s formed when the Mexican American community began to denounce and reject the whiteness strategy that they had been using since the 1930s. Historian George Mariscal asserts that the late 1960s to early 1970s was the period when Mexican Americans, as a community, began to publicly state that they were a distinct race and began their shift from whiteness. He writes that "during the long decade of the 1960s, Mexican American activists developed a complex critique of traditional assimilation and melting-pot discourses in order to transform themselves into

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[2] Neil Foley, "Becoming Hispanic: Mexican Americans and Whiteness," in *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism*, ed. Paula Rothenberg (New Jersey: Worth Publishers, 2002), 50.

[3] Scholars like Gregory Rodriguez and George Mariscal have used both of these terms to describe this movement, which began in the late 1960s. The Chicano movement instilled a new sense of racial pride and a new social identity among the Mexican American community. I subsequently use the term "Chicano" movement in reference to this period.

Chicanas and Chicanos."[4] These "brown-eyed children of the sun" rejected dominant versions of U.S. history, and began the arduous journey toward self-determination and self-definition.[5] Historian Gregory Rodriguez writes that this period, known as the Chicano movement, "was in large part driven by an identity crisis."[6] Mexican Americans sought to combat their social alienation, in part, with a renewed search for cultural rootedness. This new Chicano generation created a cultural renaissance where those involved began to pay homage to their pre-Columbian roots because to do so dovetailed with their goal of distinguishing themselves as separate from white America.[7] Using this premise, my project analyzes how Sánchez, who was one of the early advocates for the mask of whiteness, transitioned to operating in a society where the mask among Mexican Americans was no longer needed. As this thesis contends, Sánchez's wearing of the mask of whiteness for close to his entire professional career resulted in his inability to join the group of Mexican Americans who were advocating for total or complete separation from anything associated with white society, like the government. My analysis of Sánchez's papers illustrates the initial shift that occurred among the Mexican American community: a division between those who had worn the mask of whiteness for decades compared to those who were recently introduced to the concept of the mask.

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[4] George Mariscal, *Brown-Eyed Children of the Sun: Lessons from the Chicano Movement, 1965-1975* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 3.

[5] Mariscal, 3.

[6] Gregory Rodriguez, *Mongrels, Bastards, Orphans and Vagabonds: Mexican Immigration and the Future of Race in America* (New York: Vintage Book Publishers, 2007), 203.

[7] Ibid, 203.

There has been very little scholarship written on the main reasons why Mexican Americans rejected the whiteness strategy. One scholar, Steven Wilson, gave a reason in his article, "Brown Over 'Other White:' Mexican Americans Legal Arguments and Litigation Strategy in School Desegregation Lawsuits."[8] Using Mexican American lawyers like James DeAnda and John Herrera and the strategies they employed in their court cases from 1950–1970, Wilson asserts that these attorneys neglected to use the whiteness strategy after the Texas case because they viewed it as a "dead-end strategy."[9] He also contends that the rejection of whiteness by these Mexican Americans lawyers did not occur until the rise of the Chicano movement forced these lawyers to rethink the basis of Mexican Americans civil rights litigation.[10] Wilson is correct when he contends that Mexican Americans adopted an "other white" identity because judicial precedents prior to *Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, et al,*[11] relied on this strategy. However, due to his narrow topic, his work fails to describe why the larger Mexican American community, which included public intellectuals like Sánchez, rejected the whiteness strategy. As a result, my work helps to fill this gap in the scholarship by demonstrating how intellectuals, like George Sánchez, came to the realization that the use of the mask of whiteness was a failed strategy almost a decade before Wilson asserts the removal of the mask occurred.

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[8] Steven Wilson, "Brown Over 'Other White:' Mexican Americans Legal Arguments and Litigation Strategy in School Desegregation Lawsuits," *Law and History Review* (Spring 2003).

[9] Ibid, 20.

[10] Wilson, 21.

[11] *Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, et al.,* 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

The first chapter of this thesis provides a history of the Mexican American community in the Southwest and introduces the concept of the mask of whiteness. Chapter 2 demonstrates how leaders like Dr. George I. Sánchez fought for the right to wear the mask and began to make Jim Crow society aware that Mexican Americans were indeed white and deserving of the benefits and privileges that came with being labeled white. I analyze various desegregation cases in which Sánchez was personally involved as well as other activities in the Mexican American community that resulted in their legal classification as white. Chapter 3 will illustrate how Jim Crow society was able to see behind the mask of whiteness, as they knew the true identity of those who wore the mask. Jim Crow society was unyielding and unwilling to allow those they saw as racial imposters who wore the "mask of whiteness" to claim or partake in any of their white privilege. This chapter also highlights the societal conditions and key moments that ultimately caused Sánchez and members of the Mexican American community, during the early 1960s, to rethink the strategy of wearing the mask. Chapter 4 explains how Sánchez acted as a societal harbinger for a majority of Mexican Americans who began to remove the mask of whiteness during the end of the 1960s and early 1970s in what became known as the Chicano movement. Also, this chapter explains how this mask impacted activists like Sánchez who had worn the mask for nearly three decades in ways that were markedly different from its impact on Mexican American adolescents who had not developed the same affinity for the mask. Some youth were vehemently opposed to masking and instead regaled against whiteness as the enemy of Mexican American identity and equality. This range of masking, to unmasking, to no-mask-at-all created

varying identities during the Chicano movement, as divisions evolved between radical Chicano youth that advocated for total separation from whites, and activists like Sánchez, who continued to work with the American government to improve the plight of the Mexican American community. Chapter 5 illustrates how the lure of whiteness continues to divide various Mexican American and Hispanic constituencies as they seek to claim a racial identity. This division continues to confront not only Mexican American and Hispanic communities in the 21st century, but it also poses critical political and social questions about the meaning of race and the struggles for social justice and equality in contemporary American society.

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes the history of how racial identity shifts evolved in the Mexican American community beginning in the 1930s. Historians have acknowledged that Mexican Americans adopted a whiteness strategy in the 1930s in order to claim that they were white and not a member of a lesser race. However, around the year 1968, the Mexican American community rejected this strategy in order to claim a Mexican or minority strategy, thus distancing themselves from whites. Using the works and papers of Dr. George I. Sánchez, this project uncovers how public intellectuals, like Sánchez, came to realize that the use of the mask of whiteness was a failed strategy in the end of the 1950s, almost a decade before the Mexican American community as a whole came to this conclusion. This project also provides a historical case study that demonstrates the importance of race in America, as early Mexican Americans understood the consequences of creating the mask of whiteness, especially living in the Southwest during the 1930s, where Jim Crow segregation defined law, custom and behavior. Jim Crow stressed the superiority of whites while stressing the inferiority of anyone that was not considered white, like African Americans and even Mexican Americans who were wearing the mask of whiteness. Today, race still matters in America as the mask of whiteness is still being used. Various Hispanic groups, including Mexican Americans, still continue to wear the mask of whiteness, believing that it will provide them with more societal advantages and privileges. This division between those who do and do not wear the mask continues to confront not only Mexican American and Hispanic communities in the 21st century, but it also poses critical political and social questions about the meaning

of race and the struggles for social justice and equality in contemporary American society.

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Chapter 1

An Introduction to the Mask of Whiteness and the Complexities of Race

Scholars have defined race as a social and psychological construct and not merely an indicator of physical appearance. Although skin color is likely to play a role in the formulation of self-identity, it is nonetheless influenced by social characteristics.[12] Mexican Americans have had and still continue to have a difficult time defining their race in part due to their mixed racial origins, specifically white European and Indian blood. However, unlike the Caribbean, Brazil and even pre-Civil War Louisiana, the United States lacks a ready vocabulary to describe mixed race, in large part because race in America evolved as a binary construction: whiteness and the "other"—all "others." Thus, Mexican Americans could be described and conceptualized as either white or Indian,[13] but not both. America historically has had and continues to have a difficult time coming up with a racial label for Mexican Americans. For example, Mexican Americans were referred to as "Mexicans," "Mexican Americans," and "Latinos."[14] This chapter will provide a history of Mexican Americans in the Southwest prior to their creation of the mask of whiteness. The analysis will also illustrate how the Mexican American community, and activists like George Sánchez, understood the historical racial

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[12] Douglas Massey, "Racial Identity and the Spatial Assimilation of Mexicans in the United States," *Social Science Research* 21, no. 3 (1992): 236.

[13] Ibid, 239.

[14] In the sources for this project various societal identifiers have been used interchangeably to describe the history and contemporary lives of the people of Mexican descent. These identifiers include Mexicans, Mexican Americans, Latin Americans, and Hispanics. Throughout this project, I will use the term Mexican Americans to describe individuals of Mexican descent.

construction of Mexican Americans, and how they used this construction to create the mask of whiteness.

The reference to the "mask" is derived from Paul Lawrence Dunbar's (African American poet and intellectual), famous poem, "We Wear the Mask."[15] Scholars like James Smethurst, have interpreted the symbolism of the "mask" as a way for groups like African Americans to mask or hide their true identities and true emotions from the world. In addition to concealing one's true identity from the outside world, the wearer of the mask undergoes a process of self-reflection and internal soul-searching to find the true nature of his or her identity.[16] The reference to the mask resembles Du Bois's notion of "the veil" and "double consciousness" that prevented genuine African American self-reflection and self-consciousness, while provoking endless introspection about the nature of the self and identity.[17] Using Paul Lawrence Dunbar's "We Wear the Mask" as a symbolic reference, my thesis claims that Mexican Americans were able to create a self-imposed mask of whiteness, which provided a source of legitimacy for society to label them as white.

The racial situation was quite complex for Mexicans living in the Southwest region, as they did not fall under any of the traditional categories of white or black that had been established in the Southwest by the 19th century. According to Mexican

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[15] Paul Lawrence Dunbar's 1896 poem, "We Wear the Mask," includes the important lines: "We wear the mask that grins and lies, It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes, This debt we pay to human guile, With torn and bleeding hearts we smile."

[16] James Smethurst, *The African American Roots of Modernism: From Reconstruction to the Harlem Renaissance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 33.

[17] Ibid, 35.

intellectual Jose Vasconcelos, Mexicans were a "mixed race people" and he attributed this mixed racial notion to the racial caste (*casta*) system implemented during Spanish rule in the 18th century.[18] At the top of the racial caste system were the Spaniards born in Spain and since the Spaniards did not prohibit interracial marriages between European Spaniards and the indigenous Aztec people, the racial paradigm in the country blurred and became ambiguous.[19] This cemented the notion that the more "drops of white (Spanish) blood" people had, the closer they rose to the top of the racial hierarchy. A subsequent national identity developed in the form of a light-skinned ruling class, where any level of blackness was seen as a racial contaminate that could be corrected only through the purification of "white blood."[20]

However this purification process of the country proved to be difficult when Mexico abolished slavery in 1829, thereby becoming a haven for runaway slaves and Black Seminoles. The slave owners on what became the modern day Texas side of the border often crossed over to capture blacks to sell, or to return runways, creating tension between U.S. settlers and Mexican citizens within the Texas border. This tension was further fueled by these American settlers' belief that Mexicans, or Spaniards, were not white by American standards. Whites in the United States constructed Mexico as a country inhabited by nonwhites.[21] A decade later, Mexican military defeats in the Texas

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[18] Mario Marcel Salas, "Mexico," in *The Jim Crow Encyclopedia: Greenwood Milestones in African American History*, ed. Nikki L. M. Brown and Barry M. Stentiford (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2008), 520.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

Revolution of 1836 and the Mexican American War of 1846-1848 crystallized the American ideology of Anglo racial supremacy. These events confirmed an American worldview that interpreted the enslavement of Africans, destruction of Indians, and conquest of Mexicans as part of preordained natural order.[22] As a result of the Texas Revolution in 1835-1836, the Treaty of Guadelupe Hildago signed at the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848, and the 1853 Gadsden Purchase, the United States annexed what is known today as the Southwest region, including California, New Mexico, Arizona and Texas. These rapid changes that occurred within a single generation, from 1835-1853, placed Anglo settlers in direct contact with Spaniards, Mexicans, and American Indians already living in those territories.[23] In the second half of the nineteenth century, Anglo settlers in California regarded Mexicans as racially inferior "half-breeds" due to their indigenous and African heritage. These racist stereotypes of Mexicans in the Southwest derived, in large part, from white contempt of Mexicans' Amerindian heritage and alleged "mongrelization."[24]

Prior to the self-imposition of the mask, large numbers of Mexicans travelled to the United States during the early 20th century. This migration added to the existing 19th century Mexican population living in the U.S. For example, the most attractive destination, Texas, experienced a Mexican population increase from 71,062 in 1900 to

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[21] Salas, 521.

[22] Garcia, 371.

[23] Ibid, 372.

[24] Ibid.

683,681 in 1930. California, the second most attractive state had 368,000 Mexicans move into the state by 1930. A total of around 1 million Mexican immigrants moved into the Southwest region during the first thirty years of the century.[25] In 1910, a flood of Mexicans and their families poured into the U.S. Southwest in order to escape the ravages of the civil revolution occurring in Mexico.[26] Also, the Mexican revolution impacted every aspect of Mexican life: politics, economics, culture, and society itself. The upheaval that Mexico experienced during the 1910s and 1920s was one of the few true peasant revolutions of the 20th century, as farmers and agrarians were the main catalysts in this conflict.[27] These were the people who lost their land, which was their only source of income. Also, due to the massive violence, looting, and burning that occurred during this revolution, Mexicans crossed the U.S. border not only from the northern Mexican states along the international border, but also from central plateau states such as Jalisco, Guanajuato, and Michoacán.[28]

There were other compelling factors that influenced Mexican migration to the United States. The U.S. Southwest region mirrored the homeland territory for Mexicans, especially for those residing in the northern Mexican states. The climate and terrain in the Los Angeles area were virtually identical to the arid lands that the Mexicans had left in

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[25] Manuel G. Gonzales, *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States*, 2nd ed. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2009), 121.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Gonzales, 117.

[28] Alan J. Watt, *Farm Workers and the Churches: The Movement in California and Texas* (Texas: Texas A&M, 2010), 25.

Mexico. U.S. historian John Chavez contends that Mexicans saw themselves as indigenous to the region, a perception that made it easier for them to make the move.[29] Another reason was simply distance; the Southwest was the most accessible part of the United States for these impoverished people. Many Mexican immigrants were lured into the Southwest area by the encouragement and financial aid extended by family members who had already made the journey, what some historians have called a prime example of a chain migration.[30] In spite of the multiple push and pull factors, the most important and compelling attraction for Mexicans who came to the Southwest area was the abundance of jobs available to them during this period. Mexicans were able to find work as laborers on construction sites, in public work systems (specifically working on the railroads), in service and food establishments, in lumber camps, and on ranches. The overwhelming majority, however, came to work in three main industries: mining, railroad maintenance, and agriculture.[31]

When a Mexican worker was able to find a job, the hours were long, wages were pitiful, and there was neither overtime pay nor health benefits. The living conditions of migrant workers were just as bad with many living in isolated labor camps, populated by thousands of temporary Mexican residents. Sanitation was usually poor and since many Mexicans lived next to the fields where they worked, they endured not only the stench of rotting crops, but also invasions of insects and rodents attracted by the agricultural waste.

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[29] Gonzales, 121.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Joel Chapman, "A Shift in Perspective": The Interaction between Methodist Missionaries and Mexican Immigrants in the Los Angeles Area from 1913-1945, History Capstone: Drew University, 9 December 2013, 5.

Leading to massive outbreaks of diseases like tuberculosis and the 1924 influenza outbreak in Los Angeles.[32] Due to these unfavorable conditions, children of these Mexican laborers had little time to go to school and receive a quality education. Those who were fortunate enough to go to school mostly wound up being taken out of school after a few months of classroom instruction to work and support their families. When Mexican children academically fell behind their Anglo peers (who went to school year round) schools in the Southwest placed Mexican students in separate classrooms. Supporters of school segregation between Mexicans and whites knew that if Mexicans were deemed white and could not be segregated solely by race, they could still be segregated based on their academic performances and levels of academic achievement.

In the early 20th century, California public schools implemented assimilation-orientated Americanization programs in effort to "de-Mexicanize" children. For example, schools often forbade children from speaking Spanish or bringing Mexican food to school, stressed dominant Anglo-Protestant values while denigrating Mexican heritage, and prepared Mexican students for a life of manual labor.[33] During this age of "scientific racism," that included the advent of intelligence testing in the early 20th century, Mexicans in southern California became associated with a natural propensity towards crime. Also, it was during this period of the early 20th century that anti-Mexican discrimination evolved, expanded and became commonplace in the form of police

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[32] Chapman, 5.

[33] Justin D. Garcia, "Hispanics/Latinos," in *The Jim Crow Encyclopedia: Greenwood Milestones in African American History*, ed. Nikki L. M. Brown and Barry M. Stentiford (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2008), 372.

brutality; racial profiling; substandard schooling for Mexican American children that prepared them for a life of low wage, physical labor; and stereotypes of Mexican Americans as "dirty," "lazy," "cowardly," "criminal-prone," "violent," and "hypersexual." [34]

Mexican Americans living in this region responded to anti-Mexican racism with different and opposing philosophies throughout the 20th century. However, most historians agree that from the 1920s through the 1950s, Mexican American civil rights organizations like the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) promoted a strong assimilation-orientated agenda as a means of securing full social, economic, and political incorporation into American life.[35] A desire to obtain "whiteness" factored prominently into this assimilation philosophy, and Mexican American leadership at the time expended great energy, advocating the idea that Mexican Americans were a white ethnic group (along the lines of Irish and Italian Americans) rather than a nonwhite minority.[36] According to historian Neil Foley, the history of Mexican Americans in the Southwest is thus more than the history of their "becoming" Mexican American or Hispanic; for many, especially those of the middle class, it is also the history of their becoming white.[37]

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[34] Garcia, 372.

[35] Ibid, 373.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Foley, 9.

The Mexican American political strategy to fight for a white classification succeeded. In the early 1940s, U.S. courts ruled that Mexican Americans were "white" and the federal government in the mid-20th century officially counted Mexicans as "white" in the 1940 U.S. Census and in similar reports. However, there was a sharp discrepancy between the Mexican Americans' legal classification as "white" and how they were treated by Jim Crow society, as the general American public had constructed the belief that Mexican Americans were non-white and racially inferior.[38] A century of racist stereotypes about Mexican Americans had cemented their inferiority in the minds of white Anglos and resulted in *de facto* segregation (segregation by custom) instead of *de jure* segregation (segregation by law). In 1934, a Nueces County Texas school board member declared, "I don't believe in mixing. They (Mexicans) are filthy and lousy – not all, but most of them."[39] Another school official admitted, "We segregate for the same reason that southerners segregate the Negro. They are an inferior race, that is all."[40] Mexican Americans were discriminated against like any other minority group in the Southwest when it came to societal institutions like education, employment, and housing. A Mexican American civil rights activist, Dr. George I. Sánchez, emerged during this period to fight against racial discrimination, primarily the long standing practice of segregating Mexican and Anglo students in public school.

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[38] Garcia, 372.

[39] United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Mexican American Education Study*, April 1971, 12. Accessed at Drew University Government Documents collection.

[40] Ibid.

Dr. George I. Sánchez, writer, educator, and civil rights advocate, was born on October 4, 1906, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He earned his Bachelor of Arts from the University of New Mexico in 1930 and subsequently went on to receive his Master of Science degree in Educational Psychology and Spanish from the University of Texas in 1931. In 1934, he earned his Doctor of Education degree from the University of California, Berkeley.[41] In 1940, Sánchez became a professor in the Department of History and Philosophy of Education at the University of Texas at Austin, and president of LULAC from 1941 until 1942. Sánchez served as president of the Council on Education of Spanish-speaking People in the Southwest from 1945 to 1950 and the director of the American Council of Spanish-speaking People from 1951 to 1959.[42] Also, Sánchez was closely involved with the Central Texas Affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union, John F. Kennedy's Citizens' Committee for a New Frontier Policy in the Americas, the Migrant Children's Fund, the National Council of Agricultural Life and Labor, the Texas Council on Human Relations, the United States Peace Corps, and the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs among many other organizations.[43]

During the late 1930s to early 1940s, George Sánchez and members of the Mexican American community began to wear a mask of whiteness to strengthen their claim to whiteness and the privileges that they believed they would attain through the use of the mask. While Mexican Americans wore this mask, their true cultural identity and

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[41] "Biographical Sketch," University of Texas at Austin, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/utlac/00069/lac-00069.html (Accessed March 22, 2014).

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

Mexican heritage was subsequently kept hidden from those outside of their community. The mask enabled Mexican Americans to have the appearance that they belonged in the same racial category as their white peers and it granted short-term benefits for them. For example, legal institutions began ruling in their favor when it came to ending segregation in public schools and jury selections. However, white society quickly saw through the mask and subsequently, refused to surrender any of its white privilege to Mexican Americans. The problem for Mexican Americans was that once they realized this masked appearance had not improved their conditions as a community and a race, some Mexican Americans removed their masks. Sánchez was one of the first to do so and to embrace his true Mexican identity. Other Mexican Americans refused to do so, and to this day still wear the mask of whiteness.[44]

Why did Mexican Americans create and self-impose the mask of whiteness, although the use of that mask made the wearers neglect their Mexican heritage and culture? A four-year-old boy and his mother who were approached by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in 1959 provide valuable insight. This account goes as follows:

> A Negro[45] mother was one day giving her 4 year old little boy a bath, and when she told him to scrub hard he asked, "If I scrub hard enough, will I become white." She said, "No you are colored, and you will always be colored." To this he had a very laconistic answer. He said, "It is better to be white." I [Father Theodore Hesburgh] asked her if she had said anything in answer to what he had

[44] Wearing the mask of whiteness has proven to be historically problematic for Mexican Americans and other races, as these groups continue to experience educational and societal inequality.

[45] This was a term used to describe what we would call African Americans today. From the 18th century to the late 1960s, "negro" was considered to be the appropriate way to refer to American-born people of African descent.

> said. She replied, "What could I say? Isn't it really better to be white? Aren't you assured of a better education? Of a better opportunity for making a living? Of a better house, of a better neighborhood, of better associations, if you happened to be born in the United States as a white person, as distinguished from being born as a Negro.[46]

Mexican Americans, like this four-year-old boy, knew that "it was better to be white," as it would provide them with better access to education, meaningful employment, and the ability to procure more opportunities. Sociologist Paula Rothenberg has established that systems like Jim Crow supported the claim that to be white is simply to be human.[47]

Jim Crow refers to the construction of racial stereotypes that developed in Northern minstrel shows of the mid-19th century and expanded to include negative images of black people in material and popular culture in the 20th century.[48] This was the infamous system in which the quality of legal, political, and social citizenship from the right to vote, whom one could marry, and one's ability to testify in court down to where one could sit in a theater, out of which drinking fountain one might drink and when (or whether) one might use the municipal swimming pool had everything to do with race.[49] Likewise, the rise of the Jim Crow system was an integral part of the ideal reality of the "New South,"[50] and resurrecting this pre-Civil War ideology preceded to again

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[46] U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *The National Conference and the Reports of the State Advisory Committees to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights*, 1959, 18. Father Theodore Hesburgh served on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights from 1957 to 1972.

[47] Paula Rothenberg, *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism* (New Jersey: Worth Publishers, 2002), 2.

[48] Lillie Edwards to Joel Chapman, 12 April 2014, "Re: New Introduction," personal email.

[49] Smethurst, 5.

[50] Smethurst, 7.

give the power and privilege to only those who were white.[51] This privilege has been institutionalized and woven into the fabric of the United States, and subsequently protected through racial systems like Jim Crow, where only those truly deemed to be white were able to partake in these special benefits.[52]

The main ideology of Jim Crow imagined a biracial society in which one was either black or white.[53] Even prior to Jim Crow's entry into law, custom, and popular culture, no other variables determined social and racial status: neither education, degree of skin pigmentation, family history and accomplishments, nor freedom itself. However, as Jim Crow emerged after the U.S. Civil War and Reconstruction to close the small window of opportunity that had opened briefly for black equality, social justice, and political participation, Southern Anglo society began employing the "one-drop rule."[54] The "one-drop rule" was an ideological way that Jim Crow society began defining blackness as opposed to whiteness based on an individual's ancestral lineage. Under this rule, it was enough to assume that even a miniscule amount of "black blood" (or having only one black ancestor) classified a mixed-race person "black."[55] Historically, the one-drop rule had been used only in America to distinguish people with a distinct black

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[51] Rothenberg, 2.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Thomas Brown, "Jazz," in *The Jim Crow Encyclopedia: Greenwood Milestones in African American History*, ed. Nikki L. M. Brown and Barry M. Stentiford (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2008), 406.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Sherita L. Johnson, "One-Drop Rule," in *The Jim Crow Encyclopedia: Greenwood Milestones in African American History*, ed. Nikki L. M. Brown and Barry M. Stentiford (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2008), 606.

African heritage and those with a "pure" white European heritage. This rule played an important role in Jim Crow society,[56] as it continued the long-standing tradition of identifying and separating only two races, white and black, and at the same time continued to promote racial notions of white supremacy and black inferiority. However, this rigid racial construct only allowed an individual to be solely white or black, not a mixture of both. This failure to define a racial category for individuals with mixed heritage,[57] especially for light-complexioned, mixed race "black" people, allowed thousands (if not tens of thousands) of these people to undermine the "purity" of whiteness and "pass," i.e. to live as a "white" persons without detection.[58]

Today, the lure of whiteness continues to divide various Mexican and Hispanic constituencies along both race and class lines in their fractured, and often fractious, struggles for civil rights.[59] Historian Ian F. Haney López contends that conflicting understandings of Mexican identity currently co-exist in the United States. "Many non-Mexicans consider Mexican Americans to be racial inferiors, although many also consider them to be an ethnic group rather than a race."[60] Mexican Americans are almost

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[56] I use the term Jim Crow society to collectively define the individuals and societal institutions that subscribed to the Jim Crow ideology of racial, white superiority and the need to segregate the races that society viewed as socially inferior.

[57] The large increase in the number of mixed offspring can be attributed to the common practice of miscegenation and sexual relationships, most often between white men and black female slaves producing offspring of various complexions over two hundred years of slavery, from the 17th to the 19th centuries in the British North American colonies and the United States.

[58] Johnson, 606.

[59] Foley, 57.

[60] Ian F. Haney López, *Racism on Trial: The Chicano Fight for Justice* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2003), viii.

evenly divided in whether they think that they are white, and some insist that Mexicans are a cultural group and not a race. López correctly points out that the question of Mexican identity mirrors a larger conundrum that applies to all Hispanics. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, when given a chance to choose the racial identity that best describes them, 48% of Hispanics selected white, while 42% percent opted for "some other race."[61]

This thesis will demonstrate how the evolution of George I. Sánchez's attitude from "whiteness" to "Chicano" reflects the early shifts in identity that historians have chronicled in the Mexican American community during the mid 1940s to the end of the 1960s. During the 1960s, George Sánchez and supporters of the Chicano movement felt that they were creating and adopting a new racial identity, similar to the ways they had adopted a white racial identity in years past--a racial exchange, so to speak, from white to Chicano. However, the confusion seen today inevitably occurred when governmental agencies, like the Census Bureau, told these Mexican Americans who just escaped from the whiteness identity that "Chicano" or "brown" was an inadequate racial identifier for Mexican Americans. America treated, and continues to treat and regard, "Mexican" as an "ethnic" identity and not as a "racial" identity. Despite the support from scholars, like López, who contend that Mexicans should be considered no less, though no more, a race than whites, blacks, Asians, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders (some of the categories used in the Census), for all of these categories exist as races only to the extent

[61] López, viii.

that they have been socially constructed as such.[62]

[62] López, ix.

Chapter 2

George Sánchez and the Self-Imposition of the Mask of Whiteness

This chapter will demonstrate the history of how George Sánchez and the Mexican American community were able to self-impose the mask of whiteness during the apex of Jim Crow in the 1930s. The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) played a major role in the advocacy for the rights of Mexican citizens. LULAC, formed in 1929 to unite a number of Mexican American fraternal organizations in Texas, was the most important organization advocating on behalf of Mexican Americans.[63] This organization consciously promoted both "Mexican pride" and "100% Americanism." Early LULAC leader, Alonso Perales, stated how this organization primarily emphasized the importance of its members learning how to read and write English. Furthermore, LULAC made American citizenship a requirement for membership in its organization, orienting itself toward protecting the rights of citizens and distancing itself from Mexican nationals and "wetbacks."[64] LULAC wanted to show Jim Crow society that it and its members were Americans, Mexican-Americans, and that they were not in any way associated with those Mexicans that illegally crossed the U.S. border. Lastly, members of LULAC successfully lobbied for the 1940 U.S. Census to categorize Mexican

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[63] Anthony Quiroz, *Claiming Citizenship: Mexican Americans in Victoria, Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005) xii.

[64] Ariela Julie Gross, *What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2008), 17.

Americans as white unless "definitely Indian or some race other than white."[65]

Prior to the 1930 U.S. Census, Mexican Americans had been classified as white. However, the 1930 Census Bureau decided to use the classification "Mexican," which scholar Patrick Lukens contended hastened the erosion of Mexican American civil rights.[66] Following this 1930 Census, El Paso LULAC members successfully protested the Census's classification of Mexican Americans as "colored" and was able to get the Census Bureau to change the racial status of Mexican Americans back to white. El Paso attorney and president-general of LULAC, Frank Galván, who on October 8, 1936, urged all LULAC members and various LULAC chapters to take the matter to their respective Congressional representatives, headed the protest.[67] The protests succeeded. On October 15, 1936, Census Bureau director William Lane Austin issued a circular that stated, "Mexicans are white and must be classified as white."[68] Austin later stated that his decision was made in haste and in August 1939 he was prepared to reverse this policy and return to classifying Mexican Americans as Mexican. Only the efforts of the State Department and the FDR administration prevented him from doing so.[69] Major successes like this one served to strengthen Mexican Americans' claim to whiteness and would play an important role in future desegregation suits that sought to claim that Mexican

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[65] Gross, 16.

[66] Patrick D. Lukens, *Quiet Victory for Latino Rights: FDR and the Controversy over Whiteness* (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2012), 3.

[67] Ibid, 102.

[68] Lukens, 103.

[69] Ibid, 13.

American and white students were at the same societal level. If Mexicans were white, LULAC would argue, they should not be segregated into separate schools or classrooms within the same school.

One of the earliest desegregation cases that helped advance the cause for Mexican American student educational equality in the Southwest region was the *Mendez, et al. v. Westminster School District of Orange County, et al.* (1946) California case.[70] This suit was based on the complaint by a group of children with Spanish last names that several school systems, presuming that the children were Spanish-speaking, had segregated them into separate schools from those attended by English speaking children.[71] One of the ways that school districts around the Southwest were able to segregate children was mostly based on the fact that they either spoke Spanish or had a Spanish sounding last name. The plaintiffs in this case argued that because Mexican school children were considered "White," alleged discrimination was based not on race but on national origin.[72] This case was brought before Judge Paul McCormick who ruled the following on February 18, 1946:

> We conclude by holding that the allegations of the complaint have been established sufficiently to justify injunctive relief against all defendants restraining further discriminatory practices against the pupils of Mexican descent in the public schools of defendant school districts. The equal protection of the laws pertaining to the public school system in California is not provided by furnishing in separate schools the same technical facilities, text books and courses of instruction to children of

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[70] *Mendez, et al. v. Westminster School District of Orange County, et al.*, 64 F.Supp. 544 (S.D. Cal. 1946).

[71] George I. Sánchez, "Concerning the Segregation of Spanish Speaking children in the Public Schools," 1951, 10.

[72] Richard Valencia, *Chicano Students and the Courts* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 26.

> Mexican ancestry that are available to the other public school children regardless of their ancestry. A paramount requisite in the American system of public education is social equality. It must be open to all children by unified school association regardless of lineage.[73]

Judge McCormick's ruling is significant because it was one of the first courts in the Southwest region to grant Mexican Americans the ability to be protected under Section 1 of the 14th Amendment.[74] This ruling also illustrated how California's school districts practiced a policy of class discrimination and segregation against persons of Mexican or Latin descent. Denial of equal protection for Mexican American children under these laws set a precedent for other courts in the Southwest to use.[75] This precedent made it clear that Mexican Americans by law were entitled to enjoy the privileges afforded to white American citizens. School segregation solely based on race denied Mexican Americans due process to an equal and quality education. Rejecting Judge McCormick's decision, the school systems involved appealed to the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco. The appeal was heard before seven judges, who on April 14, 1947, unanimously affirmed the decision of Judge McCormick in his district court.[76]

Since 1946, Sánchez had been working on a survey comparing educational facilities for Mexican and white students in several Texas communities to build a strong

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[73] Valencia, 26.

[74] Section 1 of the 14th Amendment states: All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law, which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

[75] Sánchez (1951), 10.

[76] Sánchez (1951), 10.

school desegregation case and prove his theory.[77] Feeling inspired by this California's district court decision, Dr. George I. Sánchez initiated the Mexican Americans fight to end school segregation in the state of Texas. Sánchez began battling unjust school segregation through his main strategy of contacting the Texas State Superintendent of Public Instruction, L.A. Woods. On March 22, 1946, Sánchez sent Superintendent Woods a copy of Judge McCormick's ruling in the *Mendez* case. Sánchez wrote, "I thought you would be interested in the inclosed [sic] court decision. As you read it through you will note that the facts and the conclusions apply exactly to the many similar situations in Texas."[78]

In another letter penned on February 11, 1947, Sánchez writes to L.A. Woods:

> I want to pass on comments on certain segregated schools for 'Mexicans.' The discriminatory treatment of the so-called Latin American children is a shameful situation - made more so by the fact that across the street is a fairly decent school from which they are excluded. It seems to me that it is high time that school authorities put an end to this sort of thing. A highly similar situation exists at Kennedy, from the report that shows unsanitary conditions, pitiful overcrowding, hand me down equipment, etc. We know that that reasoning is not sound for the other children are being well taken care of or at least they are being taken care of far better than these children who are forced to attend a segregated school. There is no doubt in my mind that discriminatory practices such as those suggested above are illegal, both as regards state law and as regards the federal constitution [sic]. These Mexican children and their parents are being arbitrarily deprived of fundamental rights without due process of law. One of these days that is going to be brought home forcefully, and then there is going to be consternation and wailing and mourning by school authorities, and by school districts that have allowed these disgraceful conditions to persist and that have invested large sums of the public's money in what are going to be illegal institutions. To soften this inevitable blow, I think that all of us have a special responsibility to have these

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[77] Sánchez to Roger Baldwin, 24 May 1946, Folder 18, Box 2, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[78] Sánchez to L.A. Woods, 22 March 1946, Folder 11, Box 34, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

improper practices corrected right away.[79]

Sánchez was convinced that if a court in Texas were presented with the information that Mexican Americans were being discriminated against and segregated in separate school buildings based on the fact that they spoke Spanish, any judge would rule in their favor. As Sánchez writes, "I am convinced that the arbitrary physical segregation of children in separate school buildings because of language and/or nation-racial considerations is pedagogically unsound, unconstitutional, and contrary to the most fundamental principles of American education."[80]

In 1948, with Sánchez's backing and support, *Delgado et al. v. Bastrop Independent School District of Bastrop County, et al.* (1948)[81] set the foundation for school desegregation throughout Texas. When Minerva Delgado, a local Mexican girl, requested to attend a white school, which was closer to her home, her admission was denied by P.J. Dodson, the local school superintendent. In response to the Delgado request to send their daughter to the white school, Dodson responded that Minerva would have to attend the Manor Ward School, which was designated for Mexican American children, until she learned to speak English.[82] Sánchez was not the primary attorney on the case, but one of the main attorney's who represented Minerva Delgado was Mexican

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[79] Sánchez to L.A. Woods, 11, February 1947, Folder 19, Box 34, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[80] Sánchez to L.A. Woods, 18 February 1947, Folder 19, Box 34, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[81] *Delgado et al. v. Bastrop Independent School District of Bastrop County, et al.* (1948), No. 388 Civil District of the United States, Western District of Texas.

[82] Joel Vela, "The Education of the Mexican American: The New Emerging Underclass," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 2, no. 14 (July 2012): 170.

American attorney, Gus Garcia, a close friend of Sánchez. In correspondence with Roger Baldwin of the Texas Civil Liberties Union, Sánchez describes Garcia as "young, intelligent, courageous, and a hard worker. If I had the funds I would retain him to follow through with suits in these other fields."[83] However, this did not stop Sánchez from assisting Garcia in preparing his case and giving him helpful pointers on how to attack the unlawful segregation of Mexican American students in Texas. In a 1948 letter written to Baldwin, Sánchez wrote:

> We have been working right along preparing our case in the suit against the segregation of Mexican children in Texas. We have included a couple of new wrinkles in this suit-damages and joining of the State Board and the State Superintendent. Our chances of winning these points seem very good. If we win any one of them we will have automatic state-wide enforcement of whatever principles we win on the basic issue against the school districts.[84]

In the *Delgado* case, Garcia and Sánchez worked on presenting two succinct points to convince the court to rule in their favor. The first point was that the segregation of children of Mexican descent was unconstitutional, especially since there was no state constitutional or state legislative provision expressly authorizing the state to segregate these children. The second point was that the cases upholding segregation of Negroes had no application since those cases upheld segregation of a different race; Mexican Americans were legally of same race as Anglo Americans.[85] These were two strong arguments as the Texas law that gave the state the authority for the segregation of

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[83] Sánchez to Roger Baldwin, 29 June 1948, Folder 18, Box 2, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[84] Sánchez to Roger Baldwin, 15 April 1948, Folder 18, Box 2, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[85] Vela, 175.

students in public schools of the State of Texas on account of race or descent did not specifically mention the segregation of Mexican Americans. The law that established school segregation based on students' race was Section 7, Article VIII, of the Constitution of Texas.[86] Section 7 of Article VII stipulates, "Separate schools shall be provided for the white and colored children, and impartial provision shall be made for both."[87] Translated in another way, this Jim Crow statute segregated anyone the state defined as having even a drop of black blood as black, according to the law of hypo-descent.[88]

Judge Rice, who presided over the case, agreed with the points that Sánchez and Garcia introduced before the court. On June 15, 1948, Judge Rice ruled that:

> The regulations, customs, usages and practices of the defendants, Bastrop Independent School District of Bastrop County, et. al, and each of them in so far as they or any of them have segregated pupils of Mexican or other Latin-American descent in separate classes and schools within the respective school districts of the defendant school districts heretofore set forth are and each of them is arbitrary and discriminatory and in violation of plaintiff's constitutional rights as guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the US and are illegal.[89]

This ruling made it clear that this Texas District Court felt that Mexican American students were considered white as Judge Rice's reasoning relied heavily on the ruling handed down in the *Mendez* case. In both cases the courts ruled that the constitutional

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[86] George I. Sánchez, "Instructions and Regulations," 1945-1950, Folder 19, Box 34, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[87] Section 7 of Article 7 in the Texas State Legislature. This statute was repealed on August 5, 1969. http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/CN/htm/CN.7.htm

[88] Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 1999), 98.

[89] Sánchez (1950), 13.

rights of Mexican Americans were violated as their due process and guaranteed privileges under the Fourteenth Amendment were not properly administered. This court also ruled that the defendant in the case, L.A. Woods, was "permanently restrained" and "enjoined from in any manner, directly or indirectly," segregating pupils of Mexican or other Latin-American descent in separate schools or classes.[90]

A few weeks after the *Delgado* decision, Sánchez was made aware that certain schools were still confused as to what constituted school segregation and if their particular school district was in violation of the recent court decision. Later in 1948, school officials in Texas claimed to have set up special schools for Mexican children who spoke no English. These schools were designed to help close the achievement gap between these students and white students in the same age group, but neither Sánchez nor the Court bought this argument. Sánchez writes in a letter to Superintendent L.A. Woods:

> I have a newspaper clipping from a Lubbock, Texas newspaper regarding the segregation of "Mexicans." As I read the story, both the county and the city school authorities are very much confused over what constitutes segregation. They seem to admit that they have maintained some schools where only 'Mexicans" have attended; but, since they have not segregated all "Mexicans," they feel that they are not practicing segregation. They do not seem to be aware of the fact that, even if they do not segregate all "Mexicans" the separation of any of them (even when the school has been 'set up especially for their benefit' as they claim) is illegal.[91]

In response to Sánchez's poignant concern, state Superintendent Woods, wrote to Sánchez that he would soon be sending out instructions and regulations to help alleviate

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[90] Sánchez (1951), 14.

[91] Sánchez to L.A. Woods, 16 July 1948, Folder 19, Box 34, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

Sánchez's worry about the continuation of unlawful school segregation.[92] This document entitled, "Instructions and Regulations: To All School Officers of County, City, Town and School Districts," helped clear up certain misconceptions in the Texas educational community. Woods's instruction guide clarified that the reference to "colored children" in Section 7 of the Article VII had been interpreted consistently by the Texas courts and legislature, as including only members of the Negro race or persons of Negro ancestry. These courts had held that the segregation of schools did not apply to members of any other race.[93] This was a major victory for Mexican American advocates like Sánchez and Garcia as well as Mexican organizations like LULAC, which had been pushing for legal recognition that Mexican Americans were white. Despite LULAC's success in getting the U.S. Census to classify Mexican Americans as white in the 1940 census, Jim Crow's recognition of Mexican American whiteness had been sparse; sparse, that is, until Mexican Americans were able to win court cases that ruled against the segregation of Mexican American students.

Superintendent Wood's 1948 school instructional document further stressed the point that "the regulations, customs, usages and practices of any county, city, town, or school district segregating pupils of Mexican or other Latin American descent in separate classes or schools are (arbitrary, discriminatory, and) in violation of the constitutional rights guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States,

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[92] L.A. Woods to George Sánchez, 27 July 1948, Folder 19, Box 34, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[93] Sánchez (1945-1950), 36.

and were therefore forbidden."[94] However, the instructions permitted separate classes in the first grade for any students who had language difficulties, whether the students were of Anglo, Mexican, or of any other origin.[95] This language clearly enforced the *Delgado* decision for all school officials and administrators to understand and at the request of the state Superintendent to take "all necessary steps to eliminate any and all segregation that may exist in your school or district contrary to these instructions and regulations."[96] This important document crafted by the Texas State Superintendent gave Sánchez and others like him a glimmer of hope that an equal educational system in Texas was on the horizon for Mexican American students.

To solidify this position, two years later, on May 8, 1950 the Texas State Board of Education issued a statement of policy pertaining to the segregation of Mexican-American children. In this statement the State Board of Education recognized that the purpose of the law was to ensure that the public schools of Texas operate so as to provide equal educational opportunity for all children, and to eliminate any form of segregation not authorized by the Constitution and laws.[97] The Board also recognized that the segregation of children of Mexican American origin from Anglo American children in the public school program was contrary to the law.[98] To ensure that school districts were following the established laws, the Texas Board of Education told the Commissioner of

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[94] Sánchez (1945-1950), 36.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Sánchez (1945-1950), 36.

[97] Sánchez (1945-1950), 15.

[98] Ibid.

Education to advise local administrators and local school boards to comply with the newly passed laws and regulations which made the segregation of Mexican American children unconstitutional. With newly created government institutions working on the side of Mexican Americans, the Mexican American community began to believe that the mask of whiteness had produced the societal results that they had sought.

By 1950, Mexican Americans had achieved legal recognition of whiteness in the two Southwestern states with the highest concentration of Mexican Americans: California and Texas. Mexican Americans successfully used the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and even the established Jim Crow laws to illustrate that they were white. If they were white, not black, then they were white. If they were white, they deserved white privilege. These Mexican Americans were able to distinguish themselves from undocumented Mexican immigrants, thereby proving they were as "American" as whites. At the same time that Mexican Americans were fighting to be included in the same category as whites, they also illustrated how their racial experience and surroundings were significantly different than the racial experience of African Americans living in their Southwestern communities.

Reflecting on the two cases that helped propel the rights of Mexican children, Sánchez concluded that (1) segregation was illegal and (2) homogenous grouping created segregation within schools.[99] Sánchez concluded that school authorities could not legally set up a separate school for children of Mexican descent. He realized that segregation practices had also evolved as long standing custom: a custom sometimes approved and

[99] Sánchez (1951), 15.

encouraged by the Spanish-speaking people themselves. Nonetheless, whether by "custom, usages, and practices" or regulations, segregation was illegal.[100] Targeting homogenous classroom grouping, Sánchez reasoned that if all the children in the lower half (slow section) of a given grade were Spanish-speaking, and were placed in a separate classroom, and all or nearly all those in the upper half of the grade were white students, then that school's arrangement was unlawfully segregating students.[101] According to Sánchez, instead of homogenously grouping students based on racial assumptions schools needed to separate students in 1st grade classrooms[102] on the basis of various scientific and standardized tests that would be given to all first grade students. These standardized tests would produce Anglo students with a wide variety of scores. Sánchez asserted that students of both Mexican and Anglo descent were bound to have students that excelled and needed to be placed in an advanced class, while there were other students that struggled and needed to be placed in a lower tier class.[103]

Sánchez believed that segregation was contrary to American educational principles. He wrote:

> The inculcation of democratic ideas and habits, the whole notion of a unitary school, the idea of Americanism and Americanization, and all such broad and basic attributes of what we regard as the American pubic school are negated by

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[100] Sánchez (1951), 15.

[101] Ibid.

[101] Sánchez (1951), 15.

[102] Previously stated in the 1948, "Instructions and Regulations," documented promulgated by L.A. Woods, which only permitted the separation of races during the 1st grade for educational purposes.

[103] Sánchez (1951), 15.

> the very nature of the segregated school. The genius of our powers of assimilation, and of our powers of Americanization, lies largely in our public school-a school that is indeed a melting pot and training ground for democracy. Elsewhere in the country the Italians, the Irish, the Poles, and many other large immigrant groups became American primarily through two processes: (1) their participation in social and economic endeavors on an equal footing with native Americans; and (2) especially their participation in the regular, public American schools alongside native American fellow students. One shudders to think what would have been the result had each of these groups been segregated educationally 'because they did not know English.[104]

In this piece, Sánchez draws an interesting parallel between Mexican Americans and the Irish who upon arrival in America were rejected by Anglo American society, but through the process of assimilating into American culture and thereby becoming white, the "Irish ceased to be green."[105] This comparison between the Irish and Mexican Americans allowed Sánchez and the Mexican American community to model a mask of whiteness that resembled the one that the Irish had created upon arriving in America. Scholar George Lipsitz contends the common racial sentiment in the nation after WWII was that to be "American" meant that you had to be white.[106] As a result, when Sánchez talked about how these groups became American, he was essentially saying that these groups became white. Also, the process of Americanization that groups like the Irish and Italians went through allowed them to fall under the cloak of whiteness and therefore enjoy white privileges. This is the main reason why activists like Sánchez and Garcia

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[104] Sánchez (1951), 39.

[105] Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (Routledge: New York, 1995), 3. In this book, Ignatiev described how the Irish became socially labeled as "white" through participation in American labor unions and political institutions like the Democratic Party. However, Ignatiev does not address the issue of public education.

[106] George Lipsitz, "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness," in *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism*, ed. Paula Rothenberg (New Jersey: Worth Publishers, 2002), 61.

fought hard for Mexican Americans to be categorized as white, as well as to undergo the Americanization process that they felt would lead to success both in the classroom and in society at large.

Mexican Americans fought for educational equality during the 1940s and their claim to racial whiteness was made possible in that particular region of the country due to Jim Crow. George Sánchez and other Mexican American leaders fought for the whiteness category for Mexican Americans, specifically in the field of education where Mexican Americans were finally seeing positive results. However, victories in the education sphere and schools considering Mexican American students as "white" did not successfully uproot the Jim Crow system that had been in place since the beginning of American Reconstruction in 1867. Jim Crow had been designed to give all the power and privilege to only whites and to keep everyone else on the margins of American society. In the minds of white elites, groups on the margins, like African Americans, could not threaten their power and chip away at the cemented racial hierarchy already in place in the Southern part of the United States.

Despite being legally classified as white, Mexican American leaders soon realized that Jim Crow society also included Mexican Americans on the list of marginalized groups. The next section, discusses how white elite leaders and institutions continued to treat Mexican Americans in the same discriminatory and racist fashion, regardless of their legal status of whiteness. It appeared that the redefinition of the Mexican American identity in the Southwest was insufficient to break through the enrooted, racist and discriminatory Jim Crow attitudes towards Mexican Americans. In the words of an Anglo

clerk: "We serve Mexicans at the fountain but not at the tables. We have got to make some distinction between them and the white people. The Negroes we only serve cone."[107]

It was during this time that social scientists began to chronicle racial attitudes and perceptions that whites had towards other ethnic and racial groups. In 1950, Professor Eugene S. Richards of Texas A&M studied the attitudes of the white students in various Southern universities towards ethnic minorities. Before he made the questionnaire asked college professors and judges in the region for their opinions towards these minorities and their responses were built into his questionnaire. Richards then asked 1,672 white college students from major Southwestern colleges and universities across various states to fill out his questionnaire.[108] According to the results from Table 1, white students held very negative attitudes and opinions towards Mexican Americans. For example, 58.9% of respondents felt Mexican Americans "possess a low moral standard" and around this same percentage held the opinion that these people "will steal" and "are dirty and filthy people."[109] To compare white college students' attitudes towards Mexican Americans to their attitude toward other minority groups, Richards developed two tables.[110] Table 2 results show that when measuring attitude toward all the minority students, white college students selected the highest number of negative statements towards Mexican Americans,

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[107] United States Commission on Civil Rights, "Mexican American Education Study," April 1971, 11.

[108] E.S. Richards, "Attitudes of College Students in the Southwest toward Ethnic Groups in the United States," *Sociology and Social Research* 35 (1950): 23.

[109] Appendix, Table 1.

[110] Appendix, Tables 2 and 3.

thereby indicating a strong, negative reaction against them.[111] Table 3 reveals an attitude score towards Mexican Americans at an extremely negative 45 minus, while Native and Foreign born whites, along with Filipinos, enjoyed an extremely positive 55 plus attitude score.[112]

The significance of Richards's findings was that they illustrated white college students had accepted many of the stereotypes concerning ethnic groups in the United States that were prevalent in Jim Crow society. These white college students who attended colleges and universities in the Southwest held very negative attitudes towards African Americans and Mexican Americans, the two main races that segregation and Jim Crow aimed to subordinate. Richards wrote in his report that the only way to change or alter these negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities was for schools at all levels, ranging from primary to the university level, to properly instruct its students on the positive aspects of these ethnic groups.[113] In addition, colleges and universities needed to hire more social science teachers and offer a wider array of courses dealing with ethnic groups in order to turn these negative attitudes into more positive ones.[114] Lastly, Richards's findings highlighted the grim reality that negative attitudes and stereotypes against groups like Mexican Americans had existed prior to the 1950s and would likely continue to exist as these students matured into adulthood. It was these societal attitudes

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[111] Richards, 27.

[112] Ibid, 28.

[113] Richards, 28.

[114] Richards, 29.

that led Jim Crow society to view Mexican Americans as “racial imposters” and enabled this Southwest society to peek behind the mask thereby revealing the true “Mexican” identity of Mexican Americans.

Chapter 3

Jim Crow Society Unmasking George Sánchez and Mexican Americans

During the mid-1940s district courts in the Southwest that had operated under Jim Crow laws began classifying the children of Mexican Americans as white. It was also around this time that the United States Census Bureau began reclassifying Mexican Americans as white. During this period, the Mexican American community, especially members of their middle class, began to wear the self-imposed mask of whiteness. This chapter illustrates how Jim Crow society, relying on racist and negative stereotypes about Mexican Americans, used any means necessary to sustain white privilege. The primary strategy was the continued use of *de facto* segregation, especially in the field of education that saw Mexican Americans continue to fall behind their white peers, academically.

In 1950, a report by the Texas State Department revealed the stark reality that the ending of school segregation among whites and Mexican Americans would be a significant challenge. [115] The report accurately describes how the practice of segregating Mexican children had been brought to the attention of federal courts in two cases: the *Mendez* case in California and the *Delgado* case in Texas. In both cases, the practice was found to here been in violation of the Mexican right to due process guaranteed under the Fourteenth Amendment. In spite of the fact that such segregation had been deemed

[115] Document had no official title or date, 1945 – 1950, Folder 19, Box 34, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

illegal, school systems in Texas continued to segregate these two groups.[116] Public school systems in Texas had followed the practice, at one time or another, of segregating Mexican children from the Anglo children. This segregation meant keeping the children of these two racial groups in separate buildings and if that could not be accomplished, children were placed in separate classrooms in a common school building. This racial segregation had been the status quo for the past couple of decades, thus, in some instances, school leaders felt that certain segregation practices were legal: "free choice" in transferring policies to other schools, the homogenous grouping of students in specific schools, and the creation of "neighborhood" schools.[117]

In other instances, school authorities were aware that they were blatantly defying the new state laws that made racial segregation unconstitutional, but sincerely believed that no one would call them out on their complete disregard for the law. However, George Sánchez was savvy to these underhanded tactics and he made these tactics public in a pamphlet entitled, "Concerning the Segregation of Spanish Speaking Children in the Public Schools."[118] In this work, Sánchez analyzed and described the segregation tactics like the ones listed above that white school officials began to use to defy superintendent L.A. Woods and the school desegregation orders he wanted to implement throughout the state of Texas. For Sánchez, one of the most effective segregation tactics employed by white leaders that wanted to keep the racial status quo was their use of

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[116] Texas State Department of Education Pamphlet, 1950, Folder 19, Box 34, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[117] Ibid.

[118] George I. Sánchez, "Concerning the Segregation of Spanish Speaking children in the Public Schools," 1951, 10.

gerrymandering.[119] Sánchez felt that Texas school officials created zones or boundaries that were either primarily composed of Mexican Americans or white students, therefore effectively keeping these students apart. Sánchez wrote, "Such an elementary subterfuge is so obvious that there can be little doubt that gerrymandering has been practiced – particularly if it can be determined that the 'Mexican' school is more conveniently situated for some of the children from the privileged zones than is the 'Anglo' school."[120]

Another segregation tactic Sánchez described in his pamphlet was the establishment of neighborhood schools. These were schools whose zone lines coincided with ethnic boundaries and due to natural barriers (e.g., a highway, railroad tracks, etc.) school officials effectively divided the districts into Mexican and white neighborhoods. According to Sánchez, the facilities provided to Anglo students were obviously far better than those provided for the Mexican American students and was yet another example of an unlawful segregation tactic. Sánchez also noted how railroad tracks and main traffic arteries were questionable natural barriers, as these obstacles could be overcome through the construction and establishment of overpasses, underpasses, and traffic lights. He wrote, "In light of the numerous ways that there are for controlling such hazards, it was absurd to subordinate supinely the education of children to the dictates of a railroad track or of a well-traveled street."[121]

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[119] Sánchez (1951), 10.

[120] Ibid, 19.

[121] Sánchez (1951), 20.

The last tactic described by Sánchez in his pamphlet was the segregation strategy known as free choice. School officials using this approach encouraged children and their parents to freely choose which school they would attend the upcoming year. However, as a result of established customs or other forms of indirect pressure, school districts wound up seeing that one of the two schools in the area would be mostly composed and attended by Mexican children while the other school was mostly composed of white students.[122] Sánchez provided an example of how in 1949, the Del Rio school system promoted school segregation through their segregation tactic of free choice. The State Superintendent's office looked into this claim and it confirmed that the Del Rio school system was indeed guilty of employing segregationist tactics. The Texas State Superintendent's office concluded that desegregation could not depend upon free choice.[123]

During this period scholars questioned why Texas school systems continued the practice of segregating Mexican American students, even after new state laws and regulations had made the segregation of white and Mexican students unconstitutional. Early 20th century education specialist Marie Hughes[124] asserted that segregation functioned on the assumption that one group was inferior to another in all aspects. Due to the lack of communication between these groups and as a result of segregation,

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[122] Sánchez (1951), 19.

[123] Ibid, 20.

[124] Marie Hughes worked for many decades in the field of education of Spanish-speaking people. She was a specialist in the field of education and she was employed by various public school systems, by colleges, and by a state Department of Education. Furthermore, she served with the American Council on Education Inter-group Education Project.

subsequent myths and rumors about each group made it inherently difficult for these groups to come together and function under the same roof.[125] Hughes accurately contended that segregation would continue to exist in the Southwest due to the simple fact that whites truly believed that they were superior to any other race. Another scholar, Professor Arthur Campo, acknowledged at a 1946 Regional Conference on the Education of the Spanish-Speaking in the Southwest[126] that aside from linguistic and social retardation, segregation had an "unsalutary effect upon immature minds of children, whose conclusion is that segregation is a means of separating the undesirables from the more fortunate."[127]

Professor Campo's analysis reinforced the assumptions of the period that the main emphasis and goal of segregation was to keep a majority of the white folks from the undesirable Mexican laborers. One last sentiment that was shared during the conference came from Professor Loyd Tireman[128] who shared his personal experience in New Mexico where native Spanish-speaking and native English-speaking children played and worked together in harmony in school systems that encouraged the interactions of these students. Tireman also proposed that both groups should be mixed up together and treated

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[125] Sánchez (1951), 51.

[126] In 1946, this was the first regional conference on the education of Spanish-speaking people in the Southwest. It was held in Austin, Texas to discuss issues like bilingualism in primary and secondary education.

[127] Professor Arthur Campo was a professor of Modern Language and Director of the Division of Language and Literature at the University of Denver.

[128] Professor Loyd Tireman was a Professor of Education at the University of New Mexico and he had many years of experience studying and working in the field of education of Spanish-speaking people.

alike, and by doing so society would develop true Americans.[129] Through their statements, these scholars illustrated how and why segregation practices continued throughout the Southwest once Jim Crow supporters began to peer behind the Mexican American's mask of whiteness. Jim Crow society saw unmasked Mexican Americans as inauthentic and began to use the Mexican Americans claim to the mask against them.

This was the main issue presented before the Supreme Court in the 1954, *Hernandez v. Texas,* 347 U.S. 475 (1954*)*.[130] The facts of the Hernandez case involved Pete Hernandez's alleged murder of a man named Joe Espinosa. Hernandez believed that he had a better chance at justice if members of his community of peers heard the evidence. However, he faced a dilemma: the Jackson County district, had not allowed a Mexican American to serve on any jury, grand or petit, during the past twenty-five years.[131] *Hernandez* dealt with the systemic exclusion of Mexican Americans from serving on juries in Texas, with the exclusion being based and justified on the argument of Mexican American whiteness. Since only whites were allowed to serve on the juries, the argument was that Mexican Americans were adequately represented.[132] According to historian Ignacio Garcia, when it came to jury discrimination cases, the courts understood that segregation and discrimination could only be maintained if Mexican Americans were

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[129] Sánchez (1951), 57.

[130] *Hernandez v. Texas*, 347 U.S. 475 (1954).

[131] Lupe Salinas, "Gus Garcia and Thurgood Marshall: Two Legal Giants Fighting for Justice," *Thurgood Marshall Law Review*, no 3. (Spring 2003): 13.

[132] George I. Sánchez, "School Integration in America," 1958, Folder 12, Box 66, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

seen as white.[133] African Americans frequently challenged jury discrimination. Having another racial minority demand similar equal rights and legal protection under the law came as no surprise to white Texans. Officially, these white leaders had to do what they refused to do in other social spheres: proclaim Mexican Americans as white.[134] On the other hand, Mexican American community leaders like Gus Garcia and George Sánchez chose to operate within the concept of not who they were, but how they were treated. As a result, Mexican Americans could be both white in the way that wanted to be treated and Mexican in order to be given legal remedies by the courts.[135]

This is the strategy that lawyers for Hernandez, Gus Garcia, John J. Herrera, and James De Anda, decided to use at the trial court, which saw the court rule in their favor.[136] When the case was brought before the Supreme Court, they argued that the racial attitudes in Jackson County framed and approached Mexican Americans as Mexican and not "white." The Court specifically noted that Hernandez's initial burden in substantiating the claim of group discrimination was to prove that persons of Mexican descent constituted a separate class in Jackson County, distinct from whites.[137] Yielding to the court's demand, Hernandez's attorneys quoted "responsible officials and citizens" who admitted that Anglo Texans distinguished "white" from "Mexican." They also

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[133] Ignacio Garcia, *White but not Equal: Mexican Americans, Jury Discrimination, and the Supreme Court* (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2009), 81.

[134] Garcia, 81.

[135] Ibid.

[136] Wilson, 9.

[137] Salinas, 13.

provided an explanation to the Supreme Court how the jury selection process in Texas, effectively eliminated Mexican Americans from jury consideration, by revealing how the County Commissioners selected potential jurors from a list of property taxpayers. Although the names of many Mexican Americans were included on tax rolls as "citizens, householders, or freeholders," those names never appeared in the jury selection pool. The attorneys argued that qualified Mexican Americans must have been excluded on the basis of their Spanish surnames.[138]

The Supreme Court agreed with Hernandez's attorneys and ruled that Mexican American exclusion from juries was unconstitutional. The Supreme Court announced its decision in *Hernandez* on May 3, 1954.[139] Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote the opinion of the unanimous Court to reverse Hernandez's conviction because the justices had concluded that the "systematic exclusion of persons of Mexican descent from service as jury commissioners, grand jurors, and petit jurors" had indeed deprived him of due process and equal protection of the laws. The Court condemned this practice as obvious discrimination based on "ancestry or national origin."[140] Warren noted further that whenever the existence of "a distinct class" could be demonstrated, and it can be shown that the laws "as written" and applied single out that class for different treatment not based on some reasonable classification, [then] the guarantees of the Constitution have

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[138] Wilson, 9.

[139] http://www.oyez.org/cases/1950-1959/1953/1953_406; http://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/347/475

[140] Wilson, 9.

been violated.[141] Lastly, Chief Justice Warren's ruling revealed his approach to de facto segregation tactics and the need for new policies that would provide equal treatment under the law. From the perspective of historian Carlos Blanton, this was yet another example of the Mexican whiteness strategy in action, outside the sphere of education.[142]

George Sánchez had his own reaction to this verdict. He writes in a letter to ACLU President Roger Baldwin:

> As you probably know, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a unanimous decision, by Chief Justice Warren upholding every point in our brief on the *Hernandez* case. In the decision, the Court emphasized that a class cannot be treated "differently." This is of the utmost significance because, though the principle had been enunciated before, it had not been made quite clear. Since this case had several ramifications (for instance, "Mexicans" are legally "white" – so the issue was clearly on the matter of class-apart), the decision is a very broad one. More particularly it gives a powerful precedent for our attack on segregation in public housing – to say nothing of the use that the precedent can be put to by other groups, including the Negroes.[143]

In this letter Sánchez described the strategy that Garcia and his fellow attorneys used, which was for Mexican Americans to be labeled as a "class-apart" in this circumstance, but to be recognized as "white" otherwise. Sánchez determined to apply the whiteness label to try and combat the discrimination that Mexican Americans faced in housing. Later in this letter, Sánchez describes how he got the "ball rolling on this issue twelve years ago" and "nursed the *Hernandez* case along which included writing a substantial

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[141] Wilson, 9.

[142] Carlos K. Blanton, "George I. Sanchez, Ideology, and Whiteness in the Making of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement, 1930 – 1960," *The Journal of Southern History* 72, no. 3 (Aug., 2006): 590, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27649149.

[143] George Sánchez to Roger Baldwin, 11 May 1954, Folder 20, Box 2, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

part of the brief."[144] Despite primarily working on ending school segregation in Texas, Sánchez's involvement in this jury discrimination case demonstrated his determination to fight segregation, no matter where he found it being practiced. The *Hernandez* case exemplified how Mexican American leaders rallied together and as a community were able to fight against the segregation they faced as a community under Jim Crow laws. In unified collaboration, these activists came up with strategic and complex racial arguments that enabled Mexican Americans as a community to further their cause as a distinct race while at the same time they continued to cling on to their whiteness identity. Their work on dismantling discrimination illustrates the inherent complexities of race and the fluidity inherently found in constructing false categories to define human society.

Two weeks after the *Hernandez* decision the Supreme Court ruled on another important case: *Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, et al.,* 347 U.S. 483 (1954).[145] On May 17, 1954 the Supreme Court overturned its prior ruling in *Plessy v. Fergusson,* 163 U.S. 537 (1896)[146] where it had deemed "separate but equal" facilities (e.g., schools, bathrooms, railcars, etc.) to be constitutional. Chief Justice Earl Warren delivered the court's opinion that in the field of public education, the doctrine of

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[144] George Sánchez to Roger Baldwin, 11 May 1954, Folder 20, Box 2, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[145] *Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, et al.,* 347 U.S. 483 (1954). This was the Supreme Court case that ruled that segregation against African Americans was unconstitutional. It differs from the *Brown v. Board of Education,* 349 U.S. 294 (1955) where the Supreme Court ruled on the specific remedies and reliefs that the plaintiffs in the 1954 *Brown* case could obtain.

[146] In *Plessy v. Fergusson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896), the Supreme Court ruled that the "separate but equal" provision of private services mandated by state government is constitutional under the Equal Protection Clause. According to the research database LexisNexis, the Court rejected the petitioner's argument that the separation of the two races stamped one race with a badge of inferiority.

"separate but equal" had no place and that separate educational facilities were inherently unequal. Furthermore he wrote that the plaintiffs in the case, by reason of the segregation complained of, were deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment.[147] This was a major victory for African American civil rights activists, like Thurgood Marshall, and legal civil rights groups like the NAACP, as the Supreme Court explicitly stated that as a race, African Americans had and continued to be unjustly discriminated against. Lastly, the Supreme Court in this case justified Sánchez's main contention that educational segregation is harmful to students like Mexicans. As Warren argued, "We [The Court] come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does."[148]

However, the *Brown* decision did not have any immediate, positive impact on the Mexican American community. According to historian Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *Brown* had no appreciable impact on ongoing Mexican American desegregation litigation during the first decade of its implementation. Mexicans already had received the legal remedy that separate educational facilities between whites and Mexican Americans were not equal. Furthermore, in the two state cases, *Mendez* and *Delgado*, Mexican Americans in the Southwest area had already received the legal ruling that the segregation of Mexican children had violated the U.S. Constitution; specifically it violated their

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[147] 347 U.S. 483 (1954).

[148] Ibid.

Fourteenth Amendment right that dictated that no state could infringe on the rights of an American. As a result, the mask of whiteness was no longer needed. The *Brown* decision had placed Mexican American children and African American children in the same legal position on fighting school segregation. *Brown* had led to a shift in the community's litigation strategy for achieving equality of opportunity in the United States and for improving academic achievement in Hispanic schools.[149]

George Sánchez recognized this shift in a letter to ACLU director Roger Baldwin in the year following the 1954 *Brown* decision:

> I have been giving a great deal of thought to the new status of the segregation of Negroes. The more I think about it the more concerned I am that, maybe, the Negro attorneys may start off on the wrong foot. They are now on exactly the same footing as are "Mexicans" and the tactics that have worked for the latter, and the precedents that we have established, now apply to the Negro children who are segregated in public schools. I hope the Negro attorneys see this.[150]

Sánchez acknowledged that the legal precedents that the Mexicans had established in cases like *Delgado* were applied to African Americans through *Brown*. Also, Sánchez witnessed the different strategies African Americans and Mexicans used: African Americans operated at the national level, while Mexican Americans continued to battle against school segregation practices at the state level.

After *Brown*, Sánchez focused his attention on analyzing the progress of ending segregationist practices against Mexican Americans throughout various Texas school districts. In a 1955 letter penned to Baldwin, Sánchez described successful rulings in

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[149]Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., "The Impact of Brown on Mexican American Desegregation Litigation 1950s to 1980s," *Journal of Latinos and Education* 4, no. 4 (2005): 221.

[150] Sánchez to Roger Baldwin, 2 June 1955, Folder 20, Box 2, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

Carriso Springs and Kingsville districts in Texas. In both of these districts, the local district court ruled that the continual segregation of Mexican Americans violated state law.[151] With these court victories, Sánchez again saw some of the benefits that the mask of whiteness could provide the Mexican American community. During the mid-1950s, Mexican Americans were successfully fighting discrimination. According to Sánchez,

> Never in the history of Austin has the City Council deigned to recognize the Mexicans as a group. Last city election, several of us put our heads together and worked out a strategy that paid off – we batted one thousand! Our support was crucial in several cases – and we were the winners grateful, and the incumbents surprised! So much so that, for the first time in history, the entire city council, and wives-husbands, accepted an invitation to a cocktail party in my house offered by the leaders of the Mexican group! We had a grand time – and time- and again we made it clear that all we wanted was a square deal for the East Side (Districts located in Austin Texas).[152]

This was a major achievement for the Mexican American community in Texas, as white politicians began to realize how Mexican Americans played a critical role in local elections. Prior to the 1950s, many Mexican Americans were prevented from voting by Anglo society through exclusionary tactics like the poll tax. The physical act of registration was often an intimidating process for many Mexican Americans who were suspicious of Anglo institutions and authority.[153] However, fighting in World War II for the cause of equality strengthened the political and social aspirations of Mexican Americans in the United States. In Los Angeles, Mexican Americans accounted for one-tenth of the population, but comprised one-fifth of the war dead. Partly because of such

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[151] Sánchez to Roger Baldwin, 26 August 1955, Folder 20, Box 2, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Quiroz, 100.

sacrifices, the war brought optimism to Mexican Americans and many began feeling that their ardent patriotism ensured the recognition and fair treatment the community deserved.[154] This attitude change led to the emergence of Mexican American political organizations like the American Citizens' Social Club (ACSC) and the American G.I. (Government Issue) Forum. These organizations gave Mexican Americans the realization that they could, if they organized and worked together as a race, have a voice in local politics. Furthermore, these organizations conducted poll tax drives in the 1950s and 1960s, effectively raising the political consciousness of voting Mexican Americans and positioning Mexican Americans to assert what they felt were their fundamental social and political rights.[155]

On August 27, 1955, the mayor of Austin, Texas invited George Sánchez to meet with him and an editor of two of the town's local newspapers. Upon arriving, Sánchez was asked by this editor how he could assist the Mexican American community. Sánchez reports that he suggested such things like a more generous "playing-up" of the achievement of members of the minority groups and the employment of more African Americans and Mexican Americans at his newspapers.[156] In this response, Sánchez acknowledged the existence of racial stereotypes in the Southwest, as he went on to say that it was not uncommon for newspaper articles to pen, "Juan Garcia, a Mexican American, was caught in a raid on a bawdy house," or "John Jones, a Negro, stole a loaf

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[154] López, 73.

[155] Quiroz, 101.

[156] Sánchez to Roger Baldwin, 27 August 1955, Folder 20, Box 2, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

of bread."[157] Sánchez understood that newspapers played a critical role in the dissemination of information, whether true or false, and stereotypes, whether the individual intended to or not.

In addition to dealing with racial stereotypes, Sánchez confronted discrimination at his place of employment at the University of Texas at Austin. As Sánchez writes:

> These and numerous other activities have not done me any good in my standing with the powers-that-be (The Board of Regents, and the "Administration" of the University). I am now involved in a crucial argument with the "Administration" over a persistent refusal to increase my salary (while that of my colleagues, who do less professionally than I do, has been regularly advanced) because of my "outside behavior." They all admit that, on the basis of professional criteria, I deserve a "very substantial, a large" increase in my salary – but that the Board of Regents are not happy over my (sic) outside activities. So I am, in effect, paying around $1,500, a year to indulge in the defense of law and order! How much more I will have to pay remains to be seen – for I am fighting the differential treatment tooth and nail![158]

Discrimination in the workplace happened at all levels, from the lowly Mexican farmer to the highly educated, Mexican American college professor. Even though Mexican Americans were legally white, they still were seen as outsiders in the white Texas community. White university leaders were getting nervous about what they called Sánchez's "outside behavior." White elite leaders saw Sánchez's behavior as unruly and disruptive because he directly challenged Jim Crow in order to give Mexican Americans equal access to education throughout the Southwest. These university leaders were nervous because they knew that Sánchez would not stop his fight for educational equality for all Mexican Americans until he was convinced that school segregation had been

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[157] Sánchez to Roger Baldwin, 27 August 1955, Folder 20, Box 2, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[158] Ibid.

dismantled. In reality, however, it still existed. They knew that Sánchez and activists like him were a threat to their privileged existence. He demanded social and political equality, yet society and the university Board were not ready to give it to him and other Mexican Americans. Despite Sánchez's claim to be white, these school leaders did not care and their actions towards Sánchez, such as denial of a higher salary, were retaliatory.

While Sánchez fought his own employment discrimination, another school desegregation case was being fought. This case, *Hernandez v. Driscoll Consolidated School District* (1957 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 4784)[159] was the first post-Brown school desegregation case to be brought on behalf of Mexican Americans.[160] Nine-year old Linda Perez enrolled in the Driscoll CISD in September 1955 and she was promptly placed in the "Mexican class." Famed civil rights attorney, James DeAnda, accompanied the Perez family to the school the next day and he soon discovered that many other English-speaking students had been placed in Mexican classes. In fact Linda Pere was the only Mexican American the superintendent had allowed into an English-speaking first grade classroom during the dozen years that he had been running the Driscoll district. Despite *Delgado*, teachers assessed English aptitude without exams and apparently assumed that no Mexican American student could speak or understand English.[161]

In 1957, the American G.I. Forum filed suit against the Driscoll Consolidated Independent School District for segregation and their charge was that the Driscoll CISD

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[159] *Hernandez v. Driscoll Consolidated School District,* 1957 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 4784 (S.D. Tex. Jan. 11, 1957).

[160] Wilson, 10.

[161] Ibid.

had developed and utilized a system of "beginners' classes" for the first scholastic year, then for the next three years--"low first," "high first," and a segregated second grade--without testing all students.[162] DeAnda's pretrial memorandum concisely described the legal grounds for the lawsuit and also clearly revealed his perception that *Brown* had changed little for Mexican Americans. He stated that, according to earlier judicial rulings, if "Mexicans, being members of the Caucasian or Caucasoid race," were segregated in separate buildings or classes, they were being denied equal protection of the laws.[163] On January 11, 1957, the judge on the case, Judge Allred, passed a memorandum opinion condemning Driscoll CISD's practices because the district had clearly violated existing rules and the plaintiffs were seeking only to force compliance with them. Allred limited himself to restatements of earlier rulings.

The segregation of Mexican Americans was permissible as long as the criteria for separation were not arbitrary. He referred to the ruling in *Delgado* that language handicaps might justify segregation only upon a credible examination and declared the Driscoll method of administering segregation was "not a line drawn in good faith." The first and second grade segregation at Driscoll CISD was "unreasonable race discrimination against all Mexican children as a group."[164] "If scientific or good faith tests were given the result might not weigh so heavily, but when considered along with the other facts and circumstances . . . it compels the conclusion that the grouping is

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[162] V. Carl Allsup, "Hernandez v. Driscoll CISD," Handbook of Texas Online, http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/jrh02 (accessed March 24, 2014).

[163] Wilson, 10.

[164] Ibid.

purposeful, intentional and unreasonably discriminatory."[165] Judges in the region were still applying the *Delgado* decision when it came to Mexican Americans and gave little consideration to the *Brown* decision.

For Sánchez this was a "smashing victory," but one that he was initially afraid to recommend to go to court.[166] He wrote, "The case was filed against my advice – and then the lawyers sat back and were about to lose by default when the G.I. Forum and I stepped in to try and salvage the case. We got new lawyers, and then worked like dogs working out strategy. The upshot was that we won."[167] However, Sánchez knew there was a high chance that the current Texas legislature would pass legislation to circumvent the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown* decision. According to Sánchez, the main goal of these bills would be to again segregate students by race. Even though he felt that the bills would eventually be declared unconstitutional, the bills aimed at African Americans, would be applied to Mexican Americans and all other groups or classes.[168] This meant that practices challenged in the *Hernandez* (1957) case would be re-legalized and re-authorized by Texas state law. Sánchez rightly pointed out that Mexican American education rights would be set back a quarter of a century.[169]

In 1958, George Sánchez wrote a scholarly article titled, "School Integration and

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[165] Wilson, 12.

[166] Sánchez to Roger Baldwin, 25 April 1957, Folder 20, Box 2, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[167] Ibid

[168] Ibid.

[169] Ibid.

Americans of Mexican Descent." In this short piece, Sánchez highlights that the segregation of Mexican Americans had been entirely capricious at the will and the whim of local, school boards and school administrations.[170] Ten years after the *Mendez* case that ruled school segregation was unconstitutional, school segregation was still affecting Mexican communities in the Southwest and continued to be what Sánchez called "a real and a very live issue."[171] In a subsection titled, "At the Bottom of the Scale," Sánchez writes this about Mexicans:

> This population group is, speaking generally, at the bottom of the scale, socially and economically … As a rule "that Mexican" is poor, poorly educated, in poor health, and lowly. Suffice to say that, through the years, these people have been disadvantaged because of the times, the geography, historical setbacks, the governments. They have had a terrific uphill climb to keep their heads above water, which in most cases they have barely done.[172]

This is one of the few times Sánchez openly criticized the government for its discriminatory practices and Jim Crow for keeping Mexican Americans in a second-class position. A second-class position that had kept Mexican Americans poor and uneducated, also had fueled stereotypes that these people were inherently lazy, unintelligent, and destined to work on farms and in factories.

Similarly, the significance of this piece comes from Sánchez's ethnic description of Mexican Americans as Indo-Hispanic. Using the term "Indo-Hispanic" allowed Sánchez to claim the best of both worlds, racially speaking. As he writes, "Indians or Native Americans had been primary or native inhabitants of the Southwest since time

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[170] Sánchez (1958), 2.

[171] Ibid.

[172] Ibid.

immemorial. One should remember, further, that the Southwest is part of what once was called 'New Spain'; and that the descendants of the Spanish colonials of New Spain also belong here. As Spaniards these people had permanent settlements in the Southwest here, in what is now the Southwest of the United States, as early as 1598."[173] In the 1940s-1950s Sánchez had asserted that modern Mexican Americans were a racial mix of both white and native (Indian) blood, which allowed the Mexican Americans during this period to highlight the white blood in them and distance themselves from the native side. However, by the end of 1960s and early 1970s, Mexican Americans in the Southwest began to reclaim to their indigenous origins. Since race is socially constructed, Mexican Americans began subscribing to their "Indo" heritage after decades of claiming their Spanish colonial heritage in the Southwest.

Sánchez began to construct this new identity a decade before the 1968 Chicano movement. In 1958, he highlighted the key premises that made this movement so popular among the Mexican American youth as well as the Mexican American middle class who had grown tired of the lack progress being made toward racial equality. As Sánchez wrote:

> The "Mexican" is not an immigrant in southwestern United States, no matter how recently he came here from some other part of former New Spain. And thereby hangs a tale. He is not impelled by the driving motives to become an "American" that drive the immigrant who fled Italy, or Germany, or Greece in comparatively recent years. He is at home and at ease about his culture, his language, his belongingness here, just as is the Navajo, or the Apache. Like the Indians, the Indo-Hispanic 'Mexicans' did not ask the United States to come here! They are not "150 percent Americans," but just people who are in their land of long standing and who belong with that land and its government. So it is with a unique brand of hurt that these Americans react when relative newcomers to the

[173] Sánchez (1958), 3.

> Southwest, the so-called Anglos, treat them as though they did not belong and force them to take differential treatment, second-class citizenship.[174]

Sánchez asserted a new premise. Mexican Americans were the rightful owners to the Southwest and would have still been in control of territory had not the United States unlawfully stolen the land away from previous generations of Mexicans.

The next chapter will demonstrate how the underlying principles of the Chicano movement echoed the sentiments and beliefs that Sánchez had been purporting before the movement flourished in 1968. George Sánchez's papers and statements, like the one above, shed light on what caused the rise of angry, frustrated, and disappointed rhetoric among traditional Mexican American civil right leaders who had previously subscribed to the LULAC philosophy of accommodation and assimilation into American society, i.e. into whiteness. The next chapter will demonstrate how the rise of the Chicano identity in the Mexican American community was a reaction to Jim Crow society's continual efforts to prevent Mexican Americans from achieving racial equality after peeking behind their mask of whiteness. Despite the fact that the mask allowed Mexican Americans the legal recognition of being white, their educational and societal attainment did not change as Jim Crow society repeatedly told Mexican Americans, "You are white, so what?" Mexican Americans continued to be discriminated against in schools, in housing, and in places of employment resulting in the adoption of a new, socially constructed Mexican American identity: an identity that promoted Mexican culture and heritage.

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[174] Sánchez (1958), 3.

Chapter 4

The Self-Removal of the Mask by Sánchez and Mexican Americans

In the late 1950s, Mexican American civil rights leaders like Sánchez grew extremely frustrated with the lack of Mexican's achievement in education and in American society. Consequently, Sánchez began to acknowledge that he had to remove the mask of whiteness, since the mask had not produced the results for which he had fought. This chapter reveals that when others in the Mexican American community decided to remove their masks, like Sánchez, a battle in their community developed over the definition of the "true" identity of a Mexican American. Young supporters of the Chicano movement wanted to create a new, radical identity that was independent of the government and free of any influence of the mask that their parents and grandparents had worn. On the reverse, Sánchez continued to assert that while Mexican Americans were indeed a "class-apart," they needed the United States government to provide assistance, aid, and the metaphorical "boots" that the white society had stolen from Mexican Americans during the apex of Jim Crow.

In 1959, the United States National Conference and the Reports of the State Advisory Committees to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights the U.S. government acknowledged school discrimination on a state-by-state basis. However, the report failed to mention discrimination against Mexican Americans; they were not even mentioned when the government analyzed states like California and Texas, both with a large population of students that were of Mexican American descent. Why were these students

of Mexican descent not included in this groundbreaking government report? Since society considered these students to be legally whites, perhaps the report ignored their ethnic marker. Another possibility could be that school discrimination against Mexicans ceased to exist in this period and therefore there was no information to include in the civil rights report.

However, one can rule out the second answer because on June 23, 1959, Sánchez wrote to Albert Armendariz,[175] former LULAC President, about the dangerous direction that LULAC had taken under their current president, Felix Tijerina. As Sánchez penned, "Here comes Tijerina, the expert and savior, in the great tradition of the segregation of Mexicans, saying 'a little bit of segregation is good'! Shades of Del Rio, of Price Daniel, of Driscoll![176] Slight pregnancy for unmarried girls is OK [sic]![177] Sánchez contended that segregation was still being practiced in Texas and he was very disappointed in LULAC's president, Felix Tijerina, for his public opinion justifying slight segregation of Mexican American children. Sánchez sarcastically compared "a little bit of segregation" to "a little bit of pregnancy in unmarried girls." Sánchez's disappointment stemmed from the fact that former LULAC presidents, including Sánchez himself, had fought against any form of segregation against Mexican Americans. Sánchez did not believe that any

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[175] Albert Armendariz was the 22st president of LULAC. He served a one-year term, beginning in 1953.

[176] Price Daniel was the attorney in the *Delgado v. Bastrop* where he stated that it was okay to segregate Mexican children through the third grade because they did not know English.

[177] George I. Sánchez to Albert Armendariz, 23 June 1959, Folder 14, Box 22, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

Mexican American leaders, especially the president of LULAC, would tolerate any form of segregation of Mexican Americans.

Sánchez took personal offense at Tijerina's comment that limited or temporary segregation was acceptable. Sánchez wrote to all LULAC members that, "LULAC was founded on the philosophy of equality, of equal treatment – anti-discrimination, anti-segregation. The very life of LULAC, through the early years, had been a life of struggle against practices that resulted in differential treatment, discriminatory treatment, for persons of Spanish descent."[178] Sánchez rejected Tijerina's strategy of accepting even the slightest form of segregation. Instead of appeasing prominent white members of society, Sánchez advocated fighting for equal rights, signifying that his mask of whiteness was about to be removed. He wrote:

> It comes as a matter of especial shock and amazement to me that LULAC's name has been used to support legislation in Texas that endorses segregated treatment of little children solely because they speak only Spanish. I remember the days when we in LULAC would have fought to last drop of our blood in opposition to the idea that, because some of our children know only Spanish when they started school, they could be segregated in public schools.[179]

During the early 1960s, members of the Mexican American community, both young and old, were beginning to see through their self-imposed whiteness mask as they realized that achieving equality with their white in education, employment, and legal rights, was a far-fetched idea. It was during this period that Mexican Americans realized that the government's civil rights and "equality for all" rhetoric had not materialized into

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[178] Sánchez to LULAC, 1959, Box 22, Folder 14, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[179] Ibid.

tangible, positive results for the Mexican American community. When in 1963 President John F. Kennedy delivered a commencement speech at the San Diego State College in California, he promised to fight for the right for every child to have a quality and equal education, yet time after time these state and governmental officials continually failed to live up to their promise. In this speech President Kennedy commented:

> If our nation is to meet the goal of giving every American child a fair educational break, we must move swiftly ahead in both areas. We must put more resources into the undernourished sectors of our educational system. And we must recognize that segregation in education – and I mean the de facto segregation of the North as well as the proclaimed segregation of the South – brings with it serious handicaps to a large percentage of our nation's population … Our goal must be an educational system in the spirit of the Declaration of Independence – a system in which all are created equal. We need to strengthen the freedom of research, inquiry and judgment, which is the glory of our civilization. Our schools must present our children with all the facts about their world and their heritage – not just those, which support a single viewpoint or party line. For education is the instrument of freedom, and indoctrination the weapon of tyranny – and the difference between education and indoctrination best sums up the difference between ourselves and our adversaries abroad.[180]

The Mexican American students present at this speech and activists like Sánchez, who would have been made aware of the President's remarks, would have been exuberant after learning that the most powerful man in the country hinted that the United States would no longer tolerate any discriminatory practices in the field of education. However astute members of the community would have taken these words at face value, as whatever policy or task a politician vowed to accomplish for the Mexican community more likely than not, never materialized. President Kennedy highlighted a basic tenet of the Chicano cultural movement when he stated that schools around the country needed to

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[180] Remarks of President Kennedy, San Diego State College, San Diego, California, 6 June 1963, Paul Andow Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

present its students with the proper story of their heritage. Learning about one's history from a written piece, like a textbook, added credibility and a sense of believability for those who read it, especially among Mexican American students who grew up in a society that praised the exploits of the white community, while neglecting Mexican culture. The drive to revive the Mexican culture in their communities was the main reason why Mexican American adolescents formed groups like the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) and the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MECHA) that demanded the creation of inclusive curricula at Southwestern universities. These new curricula would primarily focus on the history and culture of Mexican Americans, and introduce this topic to students who were unfamiliar with the history of these people. The ability to learn about their heritage would instill a racial pride in the Mexican American youth who enrolled in these courses.

On March 1964, a group of Mexican American citizens approached the Weslaco School Board to request the ending of de facto segregation practices in that school district.[181] For Mexican Americans that resided in Texas, the continual practice of school segregation must have seemed like a daily slap in the face, especially when the President of the United States had asserted that he and the United States government would not stand for the continual de facto segregation. Activists, like Sánchez, reached a boiling point, as he could not fathom why school segregation was still occurring. It had continued even after 1948 when Superintendent L.A. Woods had given all Texas school districts a

[181] LULAC to George I. Sánchez, 14 March 1964, Box 14, Folder 22, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

school instruction guide that declared that segregation of Mexican American children was unconstitutional.

As Mexican Americans in the Southwest figured out what to do as a race moving forward, African Americans similarly fought for social equality. The African-American Civil Rights movement entered its final phases of litigation and mass movement in the 1950s – 1960s. Inspired by great leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; the NAACP litigation team led by Thurgood Marshall; and the mass movement local activism of organizers such as Rosa Parks, Ella Baker, Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and Bayard Rustin and James Farmer of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), African Americans brought national and even global awareness to racial injustices they had faced and continued to confront in America. They were able to grab society's attention through the use of nonviolent techniques like bus boycotts, restaurant sit-ins, and well-organized marches.[182] Historians have probed the interaction between these two major minority movements in the Southwest region.

The general consensus had been that Mexican Americans who wore the mask did not want to be associated with a group that could potentially damage their advances in society, no matter how small. In 1956, a couple of years after the *Brown* decision, G.I. Forum official, Manuel Avila rebuked a bulletin that G.I. Forum executive secretary Eduardo Idar, Jr. sent that vaguely promoted the unification of African and Mexican civil rights groups. Avila states, "I only hope this does not hurt our cause, but I can already hear the Anglos saying, 'those nigger lovers,' look it came out of their official organ with

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[182] Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), 4.

their blessing … To go to bat for the Negro as a Mexican American is suicide."[183] LULAC President, Felix Tijerina, declared, "Let the Negro fight his own battles."[184] African-American leaders in the community, aware that Mexican Americans eschewed joining in a coalition with them, in turn rejected working with them. Reverend D. Leon Everett[185] of the NAACP refused to join with Mexican Americans in fighting discrimination because, "There is every reason to believe they are anti-Black … let them fight their own battles."[186]

Lead historian in this field of racial interactions between African Americans and Mexican Americans, Brian Behnken, refutes this narrow scholarship that has emerged on the relationship between African Americans and Mexican Americans in the Southwest during the civil rights period. He asserts that black-brown relations during the civil rights period were complex, varied, and hardly as static as historian Carlos Blanton claimed it was. In addition to these strong racial animosities between the groups, there were other factors that inhibited a unified movement, like the geographical distances between ethnic communities, the use of divergent tactics, and differences in leaders of various groups.[187] Behnken noted that it was ironic that African-Americans and Mexicans did not end up

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[183] Brian Behnken, "The Movement in the Mirror: Civil Rights and the Cause of Black-Brown Disunity in Texas," In *The Struggle in Black and Brown: African American and Mexican American Relations During the Civil Rights Era, ed. Brian Behnken* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 49.

[184] Behnken, 50.

[185] A local leader of the Texas chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

[186] Behnken, 50.

[187] Ibid.

unifying given that both groups generally held low wage, menial jobs, and both groups were subjected to lynching[188] and violence at the hand of white mobs. [189] This complicated relationship between African Americans and Mexican Americans during the civil rights period parallels the complex relationship that early Mexican civil rights leaders like Sánchez had with African American civil rights leaders. Sánchez's relationship with famed civil rights attorney, Thurgood Marshall, illustrates this point. Working as an attorney for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.) and aware of the *Delgado* decision, Marshall contacted Sánchez in 1948. In a response to Marshall's 1948 inquiry about the work Sánchez and the Mexican American community were doing in fighting segregation in Texas school systems, Sánchez wrote that he doubted that his affidavits would be of any assistance to Marshall, as those affidavits were pointed specifically towards a denial of the pedagogical soundness of segregation that was based on the "language handicap" excuse.[190]

Furthermore the two groups differed in their approach to end school segregation. Sánchez believed that the Mexican American community needed to continue using its strategy of suing through state courts. He wrote, "Suing the state school superintendent worked wonders for us in Texas – we have cleaned up more than a dozen recalcitrant school districts that way and are about to eliminate the segregation of 'Mexican' forever

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[188] In 1968, there were 50 documented (probably more) lynchings of individuals of Mexican descent. Behnken, 52.

[189] Behnken, 6.

[190] Sánchez to Thurgood Marshall, 6 July 1948, Folder 8, Box 34, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

by one stroke."[191] African American civil rights leaders like Thurgood Marshall knew that his federal success in *Brown* opened the door for African Americans to seek legal remedy throughout all American courts. He was quoted in a Texas newspaper contending:

> We are now in the last stages of desegregation and more and more people are climbing on the desegregation bandwagon … We will welcome them aboard. There is room for as many as want to get on. But no mistake about this, there is room for only one driver on that bandwagon and that is the NAACP.[192]

This strong statement by Thurgood Marshall showed his commitment to African Americans and their fight for educational equality. Despite the difference in strategies, Sánchez held great reverence for African-Americans and activists, like Thurgood Marshall. In a 1966 speech he stated:

> I have the highest regard for the efforts made in behalf of the U.S. American Negro. In fact, maybe I could be called a pioneer in promoting his betterment in our society. I served as Research Associate for the Julius Rosenwald Fund of Chicago in the late 30's, and I traveled throughout the South seeking ways to make the Negro's lot better. I worked closely with the great Charles S. Johnson, with Horace Mann Bond, and with other Negro leaders. So I am no stranger to the Negro and his problems and I am not envious of his progress."[193]

Although Sánchez did not directly participate in the African American civil rights movement, he was aware of the progress and tremendous strides that African Americans were making with the passage Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 had already established the United

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[191] Sánchez to Thurgood Marshall, 6 July 1948, Folder 8, Box 34, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[192] Sánchez to Roger Baldwin, 20 June 1955, Folder 20, Box 2, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[193] White House Conference on the Spanish-speaking, 26 October 1966, Folder 31, Box 73, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

States Commission on Civil Rights whose main goal was to investigate and report on all levels of government to ensure all citizens' civil rights were protected.[194] During its first decade of existence, the commission was an integral player in key civil rights legislation involving desegregating schools, enforcing voting rights, and banning discrimination of employment. Reports issued by the Commission on discrimination and education helped set the framework for Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The dilemma for Mexican Americans and leaders like Sánchez was that the U.S. Civil Rights Commission spent most of its time and energy tackling the blatant segregation that occurred against African Americans, while failing to tackle the *de facto* segregation issues affecting Mexican Americans.[195] Realizing their current situation, Sánchez and the Mexican American community began to take a serious look at whether their strategy of wearing the mask yielded the desired results. With the African civil rights movement as a source of inspiration, it was only a few years until Mexican students, and even Sánchez himself (indirectly), admitted that whiteness had failed them. As a result, a new Chicano identity swept across the Southwest or by the end of the 1960s.[196]

Sánchez brought the regional issues affecting Mexican Americans to the attention of a national audience on October 26, 1966, in a speech he gave at the White House

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[194] The Leadership Conference, "U.S. Commission on Civil Rights," http://www.civilrights.org/enforcement/commission/.

[195] The first Civil Rights Commission publication that dealt with Mexican American issues was the 1968 publication entitled "The Mexican American: A Paper Prepared for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights."

[196] Legal scholar, Ian Haney López asserts a similar point. Behnken, 20.

Conference of the Spanish-speaking. Critical of having been excluded from planning the conference,[197] Sánchez expressed his displeasure in his speech, stating:

> As many of you know, I have been working professionally in the area involving our Spanish-speaking people for 43 years. Where was I when this conference was planned? Behind the door, I guess – or up in the attic where we hid the lunatic child! Do I sound bitter (as I asked the other conference)? Well, I am bitter. We Americans of Mexican descent belong here, whether we were here since Juan de Oñate, as some of my people were, or whether we came across the border a day or so ago. This (the Southwest) is our country. As Indians, and we Mexican-Americans are part Indian, we were here from time immemorial. Even as Spaniards, paraphrasing Will Rogers, we could have sent a welcoming delegation to great John Smith at Jamestown. We are not immigrants! But we have been treated as such, and worse.[198]

This powerful statement echoed the sentiments that Sánchez had expressed in his 1958 article regarding school integration. However, the key difference was that his audience in his 1966 speech included powerful American politicians and leaders while his 1958 article was meant for an academic community. Sánchez's use of strong language demonstrated how he felt this was a very critical speech to alert the nation to the discrimination that Mexican Americans had endured.

Later in his speech, Sánchez takes a verbal jab towards the white elite leaders in his community and in the country. This portion of his speech signaled a shift from the early appeasement and assimilationist strategy promoted by groups like LULAC.

> Let us not talk about the education of the Spanish-speaking people. Rather let us talk about the education of the 'Anglo' dominant group! What is wrong with those fellows? We did not ask to be made second-class citizens (nay, third class) in our own homeland. Why were we not educated? Why are we not, now? Why

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[197] White House Conference on the Spanish-speaking, 26 October 1966, Folder 31, Box 73, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[198] Ibid.

> hard on the 'problems of the Spanish-speaking people?' Our principal problem is the dominant group, and their officials.[199]

Sánchez ended his speech with a few reasons why he had grown extremely frustrated and bitter towards the American government and white society in general. His first reason was that he could not understand why the American government had not focused on improving the education of Mexican students in the Southwest despite holding conferences that had already exposed the problem affecting these particular students.

> Personally, I am tired of these (I am sure) well-intentioned conferences – and I would have stayed away from this one were it not that the White House called it. I don't want conferences; I want action. Talk is cheap. Too many years ago I suggested that the United States could partially salve its conscience for the takeover of the Southwest by making special provisions for the education of the youth of that area whom it had deprived of their lands and of their heritage.[200]

Another reason for Sánchez's frustration at this stage in his career was that he realized the negative impact that inadequate schooling had had on the Mexican American youth, the same youth who would spearhead the identity movement a few years later. He asserts:

> Where will this conference lead us? Will positive steps be taken to raise the scandously low level of education of my people? In Texas, says the 1960 U.S. Census of Population, Persons of Spanish Surname, my people who are 17 years of age or older have an average of 4.7 years of schooling (without evaluating the quality of that schooling!), while even the lowly Negro has 8.1.[201]

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[199] White House Conference on the Spanish-speaking, 26 October 1966, Folder 31, Box 73, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[200] Ibid.

[201] White House Conference on the Spanish-speaking, 26 October 1966, Folder 31, Box 73, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

Sánchez's personal rejection of whiteness as a means for gaining social mobility became a harbinger for the new movement among Mexican Americans to remove the mask of whiteness and create a new racial identity, otherwise known as the Chicano movement. Who could blame Sánchez? Up to this point, Jim Crow society had decided that Mexican Americans were legally classified as white, yet the educational level of Mexican Americans seriously lagged behind that of almost any other race, including whites and African Americans. Sánchez could not rationalize why the U.S. government had not increased its attention and federal aid to Mexican Americans when the statistics, like those in the 1960 U.S. Census, illustrated that they were in desperate need of assistance. Sánchez publicly questioned why Mexican Americans were not given socio-economic opportunities like certain aid and educational programs that were implemented to help close the achievement gaps of certain minority groups, like African Americans. He critiqued the U.S. government when he declared:

> We say to the Spanish-speaking, stay in school, get more education. I have heard kids say, What for? We are still limited to pick-and-shovel jobs, and we do not need a high school diploma or a college degree for that.' I agree. What executive positions do we hold in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission? Not one. With the Civil Service Commission? None. And so it goes, though we are not without qualified personnel. So, don't tell me that the problem is with the Spanish-speaking! Just give us a square deal and we will find our way up the social and economic scale. Just don't expect to have us pull ourselves up by our bootstraps when you have stolen our boots! Forget about the problems of the Spanish-speaking. Let the government save its energies for an examination of its conscience![202]

Sánchez's remarks, "Just give us a square deal and we will find our way up the social and economic scale. Just don't expect to have us pull ourselves up by our bootstraps when

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[202] White House Conference on the Spanish-speaking, 26 October 1966, Folder 31, Box 73, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

you have stolen our boots,"[203] sums up the sentiment shared by many who initiated the Chicano identity in the years following this powerful speech.

In regards to the creation of a new Chicano identity, during an interview later in his professional career, Sánchez offered his take on the origin of the term "Chicano." As he stated, "If one writes out the "Mexicano" and drops the first syllable, one has "xicano" which is pronounced "Chicano."[204] When asked if the term "Chicano" has any sort of derogatory connotation, Sánchez responded, **"**None whatsoever. This is being accepted throughout the Southwest, even among my people of Northern New Mexico who have always insisted upon being called Spanish Americans. They don't want to be called Latin Americans and they would fight if you called them Mexicans or Mexican Americans. But this happy term, "Chicano" is being accepted.[205]

Following his speech at the White House, Sánchez took over as Chairman of the Mexican-American Joint Conference of Texas. He penned a letter to his fellow Mexican American peers like Ed Idar, Jr. from LULAC, writing that "the time has come when we who have been in the front ranks of the fight on behalf of our people should get together to coordinate our efforts and, as a group, to call a spade a spade before our government officials. As I have been saying with frequency lately, talk is cheap – let us get some

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[203] White House Conference on the Spanish-speaking, 26 October 1966, Folder 31, Box 73, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[204] Sánchez interview with *National Elementary Principal*, November 1970, Folder 2, Box 74, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[205] Ibid.

action."[206] Sánchez brought to their attention the educational problems affecting Mexican Americans: high drop out rates, the lowest educational attainment rate in the country, and a very low Mexican enrollment in higher education. Moving forward, the main strategy that Sánchez employed was going directly to the United States government offices so that federal agencies could provide remedies for Mexican Americans. Sánchez abandoned his reliance on local and state remedies, which had clearly failed for many decades. According to Sánchez, the problem affecting Mexicans had gotten worse instead of better.[207] In a letter he penned to Senator Ralph Yarborough[208] Sánchez referred to Mexican Americans as a "minority group" in need of assistance from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). He writes, "I (Sánchez) continue to be disturbed over reports that, other than through your efforts, there are no significant programs directed to the benefit, educationally, this second largest 'minority group' in the nation. In the Southwest, we number 5 million (in Texas, 2 ½), have acute socio-economic problems, and seem not to be getting any discernable relief."[209]

While Sánchez was working on yet another strategy to advance the rights for Mexicans in the Southwest, he received support from an unexpected source, LULAC. LULAC, since its founding, believed that Mexicans should assimilate into American

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[206] George I. Sánchez, 1966, Folder 19, Box 20, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[207] George I. Sánchez to Dr. Clarence Faust, 1 February 1967, Folder 19, Box 20, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[208] Senator Ralph Yarborough was a Texas U.S. Senator from 1957 – 1971.

[209] George I. Sánchez to Senator Ralph W. Yarborough, 16 January 1967, Folder 19, Box 20, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

culture and adopt an American identity. However, they too began to move away from this whiteness strategy and ideology. This is evident in the 1967 letter that Alfred J. Hernandez, President of LULAC, wrote to George Sánchez. In this letter, Hernandez recalls how he regretted not being at a meeting where Sánchez and fellow Mexican American civil rights activists discussed Sánchez's new strategy and how it could help Mexican Americans improve their status and equality. Hernandez wrote, "On the whole I endorse the position taken by the group. It represents the position, that for sometime [sic] has been taken by people who are dedicated in the uplifting of our fellow Mexican-Americans in Texas and the Southwest. I too agree that as always there is bound to be opposition but on the whole the Mexican-Americans are beginning to unify in their effort as they had not done heretofore."[210] Hernandez hinted at the possible formation of a "movement" among Mexican Americans, roughly a year and a half before the Chicano movement grew in popularity in 1968.

Alfred Hernandez was not the only notable Mexican leader who began pushing for a unified Mexican movement in 1967. Lauro Cruz, member of the Texas House of Representatives from the 23rd district from 1967–1971, wrote to George Sánchez:

> A call to arms of the political muscle of the Mexican-American in Texas has sounded. We have too long endured the indignities and injustice of being relegated to the whims and wishes of a small power-mad group of men who have perpetuated their dynasties in our Texas. The Mejicano, they believe will tolerate his heavy foot simply because we had in the past. Well, he is mistaken "el jigante politico de Tejas ha dispertado." (The political giant in Texas has been awakened.) We have existed in economic slavery too long, we have the political strength, unity of purpose and dedication of spirit so let us now move on to a greater tomorrow as a united people dedicated to a greater America through the

[210] Albert Hernandez to George I. Sánchez, 18 January 1967, Folder 19, Box 20, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

> strength of all its people and not just a greedy chosen few. Remember "united we stand and divided we fall.[211]

Congressman Cruz's frustration and combative tone reflects the same position that was beginning to evolve throughout the Mexican American community. According to Cruz, since Mexicans had "tolerated the heavy foot of the white man," the white, Anglo society would continue to oppress them both socially and economically. However, he asserted that the "political giant" had been awakened in the Texas Mexican community and a unified Mexican American response was on the horizon to tackle the oppression and discrimination against Mexican Americans for many decades. "United we stand and divided we fall," became the underlying motto for participants in the Chicano movement as Mexican Americans soon became unified under a brand new, socially constructed identity by 1969. This identity (as Sánchez stressed to the other Mexican Texas Congressman during this period, Congressman Henry B. Gonzales) reinforced the removal of the mask and the legal classification of "white" that government authorities had used to identify Mexicans since the 1954 *Hernandez* decision. Sánchez described instead of the mask of whiteness assisting the plight of the Mexican American race, it had allowed the government to look past them. For example, a Head Start Program in Travis County enrolled 400 African Americans but only 70 Mexicans, who statistically speaking were in greater need of educational assistance. Then why was this the case? As Sánchez

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[211] Representative Lauro Cruz to George I. Sánchez, 3 February 1967, Folder 19, Box 20, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

writes, "Authorities did not think of Mexicans as a class apart! We are a "class apart" and I am damned well glad of it, when I look around me!"[212]

At the same time another distinct movement occurred in the Mexican American community: the Mexican farm worker's movement organized by Cesar Chavez. The farm worker's movement occurred primarily in California among Mexican field laborers and the group that mainly represented them and their interests, the United Farm Workers from 1965 to 1972.[213] Under this movement, Mexican farmers and laborers organized strikes, rallies, and protest marches throughout the Southwest, like the famous historic march that happened in Texas on March 1967. It was in reference to this march that Congressman Lauro Cruz wrote a letter to George Sánchez that described this "historic march to Austin, where these Mexican workers rallied to obtain a decent wage for all Mexican workers."[214]

Up to this point, Sánchez had been silent about the farm workers since he had spent most of his time and energy battling to end school segregation, improving the education of Mexicans Americans and fighting discrimination against Mexican Americans in businesses, in universities, and in governmental offices. This example illustrated the importance of class and its relationship to the mask of whiteness within the Mexican American community. The members of the Mexican American community that

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[212] George I. Sánchez to Congressman Henry B. Gonzales, 6 February 1967, Folder 19, Box 20, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[213] J. Craig Jenkins and Charles Perrow, "Insurgency of the Powerless: Farm Worker Movements (1946-1972)," *American Sociological Review* 42, no. 2 (Apr., 1977): 250.

[214] Representative Lauro Cruz to George I. Sánchez, 10 March 1967, Folder 19, Box 20, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

wore the mask of whiteness tended to be middle and upper class Mexican Americans like Sánchez. In the eyes of the Mexican American community, leaders and activists like Sánchez, were the best representatives of their race to show the white community that Mexican Americans deserved equal societal privileges. However, there was no indication that Sánchez interacted with Mexican field workers and even identified with them, as they were not part of his whiteness strategy. Mexican field workers tended to have little to no formal education, lived in poorer districts, and many were undocumented immigrants, which played into the stereotypes that Jim Crow had created to describe Mexican Americans. In order for the mask of whiteness to work in their eyes, Sánchez and middle-to-upper class members had to make an early distinction between themselves and migrant Mexican farm workers, who were not entitled to wear the mask.

Despite this established ideology among the Mexican Americans who wore the mask, Congressman Cruz attempted to get Sánchez to join with these protesters by appealing to Sánchez's compassionate nature, when he reminded Sánchez that these Mexican laborers were paid such low wages that they could not afford to educate themselves and their children, thereby undermining the educational achievements of all Mexican American students in the Southwest. He also resorted to flattery to convince Sánchez to join his cause:

> The children and people are looking up to you with despairing, but hopeful eyes, waiting for that door to open to that televised America which they see and hear about but have never been able to obtain. I urge you to let your letters pour into the Speaker Ben Barnes's office and tell him you want a Wage Bill of $1.25 an hour.[215]

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[215] Representative Lauro Cruz to George I. Sánchez, 10 March 1967, Folder 19, Box 20, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

Although Sánchez's response to Representative Lauro Cruz was not documented, Cruz's attempt to reach out to Sánchez illustrates how the Mexican community worked on bringing distinct movements together in order to form a united Mexican political bloc. The beginning of a cross-dialogue between individuals and groups that ordinarily would not have contacted one another was crucial for the formation of a group identity among the Mexican American community residing in the Southwest region.

In 1968, Sánchez got involved with a student led Mexican American cultural organization known as Mexican-American Student Organization (MASO), at the University of Texas at Austin, where he worked as a professor. MASO's mission was to improve the plight of the Mexican American in Texas and to raise awareness about their community's decades of high levels of poverty and low educational achievement. In their charter, MASO students believed that Mexicans currently found themselves to be "physically and mentally outside the established social parameters of the American Dream."[216] MASO was one of the early Mexican student groups to develop in the Southwest region. By the fall of 1967, organizations had emerged on several college campuses in Los Angeles and on two campuses in Texas. At St. Mary's College in San Antonio, Texas it was named the Mexican American Youth Organization and at the University of Texas at Austin it was called the Mexican American Student Organization, later changing its name to the Mexican American Youth Organization.[217] These students

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[216] Mexican American Student Organization (MASO) Correspondence Files, 1968, Folder 10, Box 54, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[217] Carlos Munoz, *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (New York: Verso, 1989), 58.

saw themselves and lower income Mexican Americans who were not granted the ability to wear the mask of whiteness, as hostages of a society, which demanded their loyalty and their cheap labor in order to make substantial profits.[218] The sentiment shared among MASO students was that none of them would ever be truly free American citizens until the entire Mexican American community was liberated from its subservient position in American society.

These MASO students introduced to the University of Texas administration a strongly worded set of proposals to motivate the Board of Trustees to introduce a series of Mexican-friendly policies, what students viewed as "realistic proposals." They warned the university to refrain from responding with "empty rhetoric [sic]."[219] The first recommendation they proposed was for the university to establish a Mexican-American studies program as part of another new program, the Minority Studies Institute. This proposal called for courses in government, history, and sociology—specific courses that would instruct Mexican students about their past achievements and contributions that were either forgotten or ignored. MASO students wrote, "Our Mexican-American culture has been bastardized or suppressed in a land where our ancestors had established ancient civilizations long before the first European 'discovered' them."[220] The significance of a Mexican cultural program like the one proposed at the University of Texas was that it was designed to instill a sense of cultural pride and a new idea of a "Mexican" identity

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[218] Munoz, 58.

[219] Ibid.

[220] Ibid.

within the Mexican American community. These students contended that this new program would, "build pride and self-confidence in Mexican-Americans, commodities that are often missing due to a lack of knowledge as to who and what we are."[221] Lastly according to them, a program like this would promote understanding between other Mexican student organizations like La Raza, as it would produce better understanding of each other's background and contributions. Essentially breaking down any barriers among Mexican American students, thereby by allowing them to come together and form a unified movement.

The first request by these students demanded that the University of Texas needed to institute special recruitment and admission policies to reach out to Mexican students who statistically tended to come from economically deprived areas around the Southwest. One way to do this would have been to institute special summer programs for Mexican students. These programs would be designed to bring Mexican students up to par with the other racial groups and thereby allow these students to succeed in college and ultimately graduate.[222] Another request asked the university to increase financial aid to economically deprived students and provide these students with financial resources, scholarships, and even loans to lower the cost of their undergraduate tuition. Another additional request was for the University of Texas to provide jobs for students whose family income was less than $4,800 a year. This improvement in the work-study program would definitely assist these students who were primarily of Mexican American descent

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[221] Munoz, 58.

[222] Ibid.

in paying for and staying in college. The last request would have established a Human Relations Council that would include the presidents of MASO and the Afro-Americans for Black Liberation (AABL). The Council would be tasked with investigating any alleged charges of discrimination on the University campus and provide these students with greater agency within the campus.

On March 3, 1968, Mexican Americans students in the Los Angeles (LA), as a collective group, walked out of their high school in protest of their unequal educational facilities. Over ten thousand students participated in this weeklong strike that paralyzed the city of LA for an entire week and garnered national attention. A *Los Angeles Times* reporter interpreted this Mexican student strike as "The Birth of Brown Power." [223] According to historian Carlos Munoz, this strike accomplished something much more important than shaking up school administrators or calling public attention to the educational problems of Mexican American youth. The strike was the first major mass protest explicitly against racism undertaken by Mexican Americans in the history of the U.S.[224] This was the first time students of Mexican descent had marched en masse in their own demonstration against racism and for educational change. This strike moved student activism beyond the politics of accommodation and integration, which had been shaped by the prior Mexican-American generation and the community's middle class leadership.[225] The strike of 1968 went beyond the objectives of Castro and others

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[223] Munoz, 64.

[224] Ibid.

[225] Munoz, 65.

concerned only with improving education. It was the first loud cry for Chicano power and self-determination and it served as the catalyst for the formation of the Chicano student movement as well as the larger Brown Power Movement of which it became the most important sector.[226]

The fervor and passion of these Mexican American students that spearheaded the Chicano movement caused an immediate response from the United States government. A few months after the LA student strike, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights prepared a paper entitled, *The Mexican American.*[227] This was one of the most comprehensive government documents produced during this period, as it primarily analyzed racial and social inequalities that shaped Mexican American life in the Southwest. Also, this document claimed what Sánchez had made already known for almost a decade before this report was published: Mexican Americans were a heterogeneous, not a homogenous, group. The paper states, "Mexican Americans constitute a distinctive but highly heterogeneous group, which is one of the oldest in the country. If anything the sense of common identity is probably stronger now than it ever was in spite of the general tendency of the dominant society to ignore or suppress it and in spite of many years of overt and covert discrimination."[228] This was one of the earliest instances where the U.S. government acknowledged that Mexican Americans have removed their mask of

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[226] Munoz, 65.

[227] U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *The Mexican American*, 1968. Accessed at Drew University Library.

[228] U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1.

whiteness and constituted a racial group that had formed their own identity: a Chicano identity.

A section entitled, "Growing Frustrations," describes some of the sources of frustration within the Mexican American community. This report describes the introduction of new programs designed to reduce poverty and inequality in the Mexican American community, but these programs were accompanied by growing frustration among many Mexican Americans, who up to this point had perceived little or no improvement in the general status of the community.[229] A survey conducted in 1964 among unemployed Mexican Americans in Los Angeles revealed that "close to 90% had noticed" no results whatsoever from civil rights or Fair Employment Practices Commission legislation anywhere.[230] Throughout the Southwest as a whole, more than a third of all Mexican American families lived in "official" poverty, on incomes of less than $3,000 per year, with a Mexican being seven times more likely than an Anglo to live in substandard housing. Furthermore, Mexicans were averaging several fewer years of education than either the Anglo or other nonwhite populations, as Sánchez had been stating throughout the Southwest region for the many years.[231]

A passage in the report stated:

> Lack of Anglo understanding and of attention [sic] to these characteristics has been extensive, not only at the national level, where it is virtually complete but in the Southwest itself. The result is that although all minority groups are the victims of misunderstanding and stereotyping, Mexican Americans appear to be

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[229] U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 3.

[230] Ibid.

[231] Ibid.

> particularly subject to such stereotyping. Many Anglos still think of Mexican Americans as being primarily engaged in farm labor.[232]

Despite the hard work done by Mexican American leaders like Sánchez since the mid-1940s, up to this point the plight of Mexican Americans had remained a regional problem. However, events in the Mexican American community, like the massive student protest movement in California had such a significant impact on the nation that the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights issued its first report dealing primarily with Mexican Americans a few months later.

This report gave the following gruesome statistics regarding the education of Mexican American students in the Southwest. In the Southwest, Mexican Americans had an average of about eight years of schooling, or four years less than Anglos, and two years less than other nonwhites. In Texas, where Sánchez and MASO students resided, 40 percent of all Mexican Americans were functionally illiterate.[233] Obviously the dropout rate among Mexican Americans was very high, with most students leaving school by eighth or ninth grade. High dropout rates at the high school level then come as no particular surprise and they appear more ominous when they occur in urban settings. In 1966, two predominantly Mexican high schools in Los Angeles had dropout rates of 53.8% and 47.5% percent.[234] Overall, Mexican American enrollment in college was extremely low relative to their population in the Southwest. According to Table 4, there were around 4.3 million Mexican Americans living in the Southwest during the year

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[232] U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 4.

[233] Ibid, 26.

[234] U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 26.

1969, and 85.9% of all the Mexican Americans found in the United States resided in this part of the country. Lastly, according to Table 5 around 7% or 72,000 of all the college students enrolled in Southwestern colleges and universities were of Mexican descent. Taking this 7% from the entire Mexican American population in the Southwest, of around 4.36 million, illustrated that 1.7% of the entire Southwestern Mexican American population was enrolled in college around the early 1970s.

This report also connected these statistics to student protest when it asserted:

> Mexican Americans make many specific complaints, which included: crowded and run down facilities, large class size, poor counseling and guidance, poor vocational education, testing and tracking practices that isolate Mexican Americans within schools if they are not in segregated schools, inappropriate textbooks and other teaching materials. It is clear, that there is also a more general and overriding concern: that the schools function as mirrors of some of the more destructive attitudes of the dominant society.[235]

This "destructive attitude" saw Anglo society continue to segregate Mexican and Anglo students from one another, even after the Texas State Superintendent ruled in 1948 that it was unconstitutional. It was these attitudes that instilled in the minds of these Mexican American students that the Spanish language was inferior to English and therefore was not socially acceptable to be used in public.[236] As a school principal of an integrated Mexican and Anglo school in a rural California district, told the Commission, "Mexican American students are seated behind Anglos at graduation ceremonies because it makes for a better looking stage."[237] Mexican students in organizations like MASO and MEChA

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[235] U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 27.

[236] Ibid, 28.

[237] U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 27.

(Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) had enough of witnessing their educational needs and concerns being overlooked by their local and state governments.

Another important reason that these students decided to speak out and rally their fellow students was to combat the prevailing uncaring and defeatist attitude among their peers. An excerpt from a 1967 Colorado State Government report on Spanish-surnamed people that was included in the U.S. Commission Report, found that the lack of aspiration in any Spanish surnamed student was probably not the failure of Mexican American students to accept prevailing cultural goals, but it reflected their awareness that they could not make it. Assuming that they had the ability, as do many Spanish-surnamed students who drop out of school, "it is the educational system and the majority society, which kill his or her aspiration, not an inner deficiency."[238] This mirrored an earlier sentiment that Sánchez expressed at the White House when he described the main young Mexican students' attitudes towards getting a quality education, in the question, "What for?" These Mexican American students realized that it was critical for this attitude to be eradicated from within their communities and replaced with an attitude of fighting for educational change and an attitude of making a positive difference in their community. This could only come with the attainment of a quality education.

Lastly, these students were fighting against societal notions that they were inferior to Anglo students while at the same time forging an identity that valued their cultural Mexican heritage and confronted these notions of racial inferiority head on. This report revealed that the curriculum currently taught in the Southwest did not inform both

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[238] Ibid, 28.

Mexican American and Anglo students about the substantial contributions to the Southwest made by the Mexicans and Mexican Americans and the rich history of the Spanish-speaking people. Denied full status as Americans ("They are told they're Americans and yet they're treated as Mexicans," a school counselor in Los Angeles said) the Mexican American students were also deprived of the chance to gain an understanding of and pride in their heritage.[239] Therefore, Mexican American students in places like the University of Texas were steadfast in their demands to expand their curriculum in order to learn more about their Mexican culture and to educate their community about their ancestors were able to accomplishments. As a Los Angeles high school told the Commission:

> The teachers' negative opinion of Mexico would not bother me so much, except that this is the only image portrayed to us here in American of what we are. We look around for something to be proud of, we question our parents, but all they tell us, 'just be proud you are a Mexican,' because they are too busy working or taking care of the little kids or too uneducated to tell us all we have to be proud of …all the thousand things we have to be proud of. And since they cannot tell us these things and the schools will not, we begin to think that maybe the Anglo teacher is right, that maybe we are inferior, that we do not belong in his world, that, as some teachers actually tell students to their faces, we should go back to Mexico and quit causing problems for America.[240]

This sentiment illustrated the conundrum faced by many Mexican American teens in the region as they grew up in a country to which they felt a strong connection, but clearly American society did not feel the same way about them. As the report asserted, the crisis in identity was obviously acute for many Mexican American youngsters. A Mexican American teacher in a Los Angeles school noted differences in behavior between native-

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[239] U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 30.

[240] Ibid, 31.

born Mexican Americans and Mexican-born students at a Cinco de Mayo assembly. The Mexican youngster knew who he was and had no difficulty, while the Mexican American youngster was very much ashamed, very insecure.[241] According to sociologist, Sheldon Stryker, there is a reciprocal relationship between the self and society, and society influences the self through its shared language and meanings that enable a person to take the role of the other, engage in social interaction, and reflect upon oneself as an object. The latter process of reflexivity constitutes the core of selfhood.[242] However, the problem for Mexican Americans was that society had rejected them and their culture in traditional Anglo society so Mexican students' sense of self was severely and negatively affected by the society that they found themselves in, unlike students who grew up in their native land of Mexico. These students naturally had a stronger sense of self, as their Mexican identity was continuously and positively reinforced because Mexican culture was accepted and promoted in Mexico. This was the type of identity that these Mexican American students longed to create in their Mexican American communities throughout the Southwest region in order to improve their sense of self. This was what the Chicano identity movement tried to accomplish.

The report ended with the appropriately titled section, "Growing Sense of Identity." In this section, the Commission on Civil Rights concluded that the most pervasive force among Mexican Americans of the late 1960s was a growing sense of identity and a quest for unity to achieve equality of opportunity in every phase of life. In

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[241] U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 31.

[242] Jan E. Stets and Peter J. Burke, "A Sociological Approach to Self and Identity," in *Handbook of Self and Identity*, edited by Mark Leary and June Price Tangney (New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2003): 129.

cities and towns throughout the Southwest, Mexican Americans were coming together in issue-orientated and action-committed organizations.[243] These groups like MASO and activists like Sánchez stressed the common theme of the urgent need for unity, greater communication, greater group awareness, the development of political strength, the development of clear definitions of purpose and methods of operation, and the need for coalitions with other minority groups to achieve common goals.[244] In addition to this, the recently formed Mexican American Anti-Defamation Committee in Washington, D.C. was tasked to eradicate the advertising industry's stereotype of Mexican-Americans as a "sombrero-wearing, siesta loving and shiftless creature."[245] Lastly, this Commission understood that the main force behind the Mexican American movement for equal rights lay in the mounting interest and activism of young Chicanos who needed to be credited with pushing their elders into more active roles in the drive for human dignity.[246] This should not come as a surprise, as a majority of older Mexicans still had trouble letting go of mask of whiteness that groups like LULAC supported beginning in the late 1940s. Mexican American teens had no direct association with these groups, so they found it easier to reject the notion of whiteness and passive assimilation into American culture in favor of an identity that promoted the rights and identity of the Mexican people. As the

[243] U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 66.

[244] Ibid, 67.

[245] U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 68.

[246] Ibid, 69.

report asserts in its conclusion, the U.S. Government accepted the desire for identity among the Mexican community as illustrated below:

> The level of organization, of awareness, and of identity is constantly rising. The impact of improved communications through an increase in the Chicano press, a struggling network of barrio newspapers and magazines, is a significant addition to the effort to develop philosophy and ideology among Chicano groups. La Raza has become more than a slogan: it has become a way of life for a people who seek to fully realize their personal and group identity and obtain equality of rights and treatment as citizens of the United States.[247]

On April 19, 1969, George Sánchez gave a speech to the University of Texas MASO members. In this speech, Sánchez used the Spanish language to communicate with the MASO students, and titled it "Soy Mexicano" or "I am Mexican."[248] Sánchez told the MASO members that this organization has the potential to accomplish great things and should be expressed to those in charge, in a neat and orderly fashion; instead of "gritos insensatos por las calles, ni con elocuentes mentiras y desatinos (Screaming foolishly through the streets or employing eloquent lies and false statements)."[249] This statement hinted at the early division that was already occurring in the Mexican American community as senior members of the community like Sánchez did not subscribe to what these members considered unlawful and violent civil protests initiated by "radical," youthful Chicano protesters. Sánchez went on to discuss how a former MASO member had betrayed them and starting spreading the lies that MASO members get their political agenda from the works and writings of Fidel Castro. "Que Disparate!"

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[247] U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 69.

[248] While Sánchez wrote and spoke this speech in Spanish, I have translated his written speech into English.

[249] George I. Sánchez to MASO, 19 April 1969, Folder 33, Box 73, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

or "What nonsense," Sánchez stated, as he went on to assert that all of the ideas and political strategies that MASO employed came solely from them and their club members and that they had no political, ideological leader like Castro.[250] Sánchez distanced himself (as well as MASO) from other Mexican American student activists of the period. Historian Carlos Munoz writes that Mexican American student activists were exposed to a more radical politics during the early 1960s "as Leftist political organizations resurfaced from the underground where they had been driven during the McCarthy era."[251]

Sánchez also described how an unnamed person was spreading gossip that MASO; Pete Tijerina, director of Mexican American Legal Defense (MALD); and even Sánchez himself were "anti-gringo" or "anti-white," a claim Sánchez contended was utter nonsense as some of his best friends were whites and his and MALD's record illustrated mutual cooperation between whites and Mexicans.[252] Sánchez writes in Spanish, "Si vamos a sobar lomos, hagámoslo con el bienestar de nuestro pueblo, nuestra comunidad, nuestra patria a pecho (If we are going to rub backs [with whites], lets do it only for the good of our people, our community, and our homeland that we hold near to our chest)."[253] Sánchez's framed the Chicano movement as anti-whiteness, not anti-white.

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[250] George I. Sánchez to MASO, 19 April 1969, Folder 33, Box 73, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[251] Munoz, 52.

[252] George I. Sánchez to MASO, 19 April 1969, Box 73, Folder 33, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[253] George I. Sánchez to MASO, 19 April 1969, Box 73, Folder 33, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

Mexican Americans, like Sánchez, were escaping the confines of the self-imposed mask while at the same time establishing a new and independent identity that did not have to be anti-white. Mexican Americans took off the mask of whiteness that they had been wearing for decades and instead adopted an identity that promoted Mexican American identity, heritage, and pride.

The critical years from 1968–1969 saw the formation of the Chicano movement as a social phenomenon placed in the "context of the politics of identity," with students acting as the driving force for social change within the Mexican community.[254] However, this movement failed to create an identity that was accepted by all Mexican Americans due to the complicated and lasting legacy of the self-imposed mask of whiteness. Even in this speech to youthful, MAYO students, Sánchez described how working with white elite leaders could be beneficial for their community and their quest for improved social, educational, and living conditions. However, these Mexican American students did not want to have anything to do with whites and the American government. Their newly adopted Chicano identity proclaimed independence from whites and the United States government as the protector of white supremacy and the privileges of whiteness.

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[254] Garcia, 7. This precept is also accepted by notable historians like Carlos Munoz and Juan Gomez-Quinones..

Chapter 5

The Legacy and Impact of the Mask of Whiteness on America

The previous chapters chronicled how Sánchez and members of the Mexican American community had initially adopted the mask of whiteness and responded when Jim Crow society peeked behind the mask to see the Mexican American's true identity. As this paper has demonstrated, George Sánchez was one of the first prominent Mexican Americans to remove the mask and to beckon the Mexican American community to follow his lead. Near the end of his professional career, George Sánchez participated in a few interviews including one done with Dr. George Rivera, Jr. from a local newspaper, *La Luz.* While Sánchez called for and removed his own mask of whiteness, the Mexican American identity he wanted to create differed from the identity promoted by radical members of the Chicano movement. When Dr. Rivera, Jr. asked Sánchez to comment on the "resistive culture that has been termed Mexican-American culture," Sánchez responded:

> Yes, that is a mistaken notion that the Mexicanos of the Southwest resist becoming Americanized. We have to remember that this was New Spain and we did not ask the United States to come here. Whereas the other immigrants, Italians and others, felt that they had to become 150% Americans, whereas we did not. We belong here; we have no compulsion to become completely Gringoized; no, under no compulsion. We have no objection to speaking English and being patriotic American citizens and all that. So they say we resist Americanization and that is not true. It is simply that the English speaking Americans resist Latinization, you see because this is our country, and we are perfectly at home here.[255]

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[255] Sánchez interview with *La Luz*, May 1976 (Says 1976 but I am assuming a typo. As Sánchez passed away in 1972), Folder 3, Box 74, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

Here Sánchez describes the basic premise of the Chicano movement, which was to embrace one's Mexican heritage, but his views dramatically differed from those of the Chicano youth. Sánchez admitted that he had no problem finding a balance between taking pride in one's own heritage while at the same time speaking English and remaining loyal to the dominant, white American society. Sánchez's perspective did not resonate with passionate Chicano advocates who called for Mexican Americans to completely reject American society and speak Spanish, not English, in public. The "Chicano generation activists had adopted the New Left's politics of 'oppositional identity' and joined them in decrying 'the dominant ideology.'[256] Some within the movement felt Mexican Americans had for too long been cheated by tacitly agreeing to the whiteness in name only and would rather be proud of their Indian blood than uncertain about their white status.[257]

In 1970, the *National Elementary Principle* journal conducted one of Sánchez's last interviews. Similar to the *La Luz* interview, this one revealed Sánchez's innermost sentiments about issues affecting the Mexican American community. The *National Elementary Principal* interviewer questioned Sánchez on what he felt the effect of Chicano Youth groups like MAYO, MECHA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) and UMAS (United Mexican American Students) has been on "Anglo dominated" institutions. Sánchez responded by saying:

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[256] Rodriguez, 204.

[257] Ibid, 205.

> The effect has been both positive and negative. The negative effect has been that the work of MAYO and of Jose Angle Gutierrez[258] is regarded as radicalism tearing down the established order. A very positive effect has been that the Anglo community is beginning to realize there are Mexican Americans around and that they constitute a powerful force that can become a dangerous force unless given assistance, unless given education. Now if those 1 million voters are ignorant, backward, frustrated, and so on, then we have a potentially explosive situation. So it is to the advantage of the dominant community to see that these people are given equal opportunity. Otherwise, the dominant community will suffer. In other words, enlightened self-interest should cause society to improve the status of the Mexican American.[259]

Sánchez was displeased with radical Chicanos that were making society view them as anarchists who called for the downfall of the oppressive United States government. One of the founders of MAYO, Jose Angle Gutierrez, publicly stated that one of the main missions of MAYO was to foster "an obsession with cultural pride" and "militancy against the gringo."[260] To Gutierrez and other militants, Chicanos needed to liberate themselves by becoming masters of their own destiny, owners of their resources, both human and natural, and a culturally separate people from the gringo.[261] Radical Chicano zealouts went on to define the boundaries of proper Chicano behavior and ideology by labeling dissenters the equivalent of race traitors. This strategy was particularly effective when employed against older Mexican American politicians who found Chicano rhetoric offensive. Historian F. Arturo Rosales asserts, "Chicano militants

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[258] Jose Angle Gutierrez is an attorney and professor at the University of Texas at Arlington in the United States. He was a founding member of the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) in San Antonio in 1967, and a founding member and past president of the Raza Unida Party, a Mexican-American third party movement that supported candidates for elective office in Texas, California, and other areas of the Southwestern and Midwestern United States.

[259] Rodriguez, 205.

[260] Ibid, 203.

[261] Rodriguez, 211.

ritualistically hurled the *vendido* (sellout) epithet at Mexicans in power and retaliated harshly if they did not comply to their demands."[262] There was no one unifying ideology among the entire Mexican American community as the battle over what would be the new Mexican American identity raged between radical Chicano youth and activists like George Sánchez who realized that in order for the Mexican American community to improve, it needed assistance from the American government.

George Sánchez's response to the *National Elementary Principal* described what he felt was the main benefit of the Chicano movement: American society recognizing that Mexicans Americans were not white; they were a minority group in need of aid and assistance. Sánchez's reiteration that Mexican Americans could achieve social justice and racial equality through traditional means, like voting, highlighted that unbeknownst to Sánchez, the mask of whiteness had left a permanent imprint on his way of thinking. Sánchez had lived and operated under this mask for nearly half of his professional career and he enjoyed some instances of legal and societal success as a result of the wearing of the mask. When Sánchez removed the symbolic mask, having realized its limited effectiveness, and after he felt that the mask had not produced its intended effect, a part of the mask remained.

When the Mexican American community began to remove the mask of whiteness some found it more difficult than others to completely shed the mask that had been a part of their identity for close to half a century. Members of this community included original founders like Sánchez and original members of LULAC who had fought in the late 1930s

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[262] F. Arturo Rosales, *Chicano! The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Publico, 1997), 192.

and early 1940s to give Mexican Americans the ability to wear the mask of whiteness. When it came time to give up the mask, some like Sánchez readily gave it up as it had shaped their identity, but not after it had permanently affected their societal outlook; others were pressured by radical Chicano supporters to become a nationalist zealot.[263]A small majority refused to relinquish the mask and continued to wear and display it proudly. These radical Chicano supporters who were primarily young adolescents and only wore the mask of whiteness for a short period of their lives did not experience the same lasting impact as someone like Sánchez, once they removed the mask.

Lastly, this *National Elementary Principal* interview illustrated the contemplative side of Sánchez, who at the end of his career, grappled with the following question: "What positive societal benefits did the wearing of the mask, give Mexican Americans as a community?" The interviewer, asked a similar version of this question, and Sánchez response was that "very little progress has been made. The relative position of Mexican Americans in the Southwest is essentially the same as it was ten years ago. This doesn't mean that they have not reached a higher grade of attainment. However, the rest of the population has not stood still either, so the situation is essentially the same."[264] The stagnation of societal problems for Mexican Americans and the continued academic gap for Mexican Americans students were the main reasons why Sánchez decided to take off the mask of whiteness. Sánchez remarked how the University of Texas at Austin had around 35,000 students enrolled and only 250 Chicanos, leading him to believe that these

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[263] Rodriguez, 210.

[264] Sánchez interview with *National Elementary Principal*, November 1970, Folder 2, Box 74, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

practices were discriminatory in nature.[265] As long as the Mexican American community continued to wear the mask of whiteness, American society could promise that equality for all whites would happen, when in reality it had no reason to invite these "racial imposters who improperly wear this mask " to come and join them in their exclusive, symbolic masquerade balls. When asked if societal equality for Mexican Americans can occur in the near future, Sánchez responded by saying, "It is still rhetoric. It is not a reality."[266]

What were the advantages and disadvantages of the Mexican American community's mask of whiteness? The mask influenced by class and ideology effectively divided those wore the mask from those who did not. As a result, Mexican Americans were unable to create a unified or "collective group" identity at any stage in their history. Dr. John Ogbu, a former professor of anthropology at the University of California, wrote that the term "collective identity" referred to people's sense of who they are, their ''we feeling'' or sense of ''belonging.''[267] According to him, collective identity among a certain group forms when a group of people experience some communal connection which usually results in being collectively subjected to the treatment of another group like a dominating "other," such as in the case of African Americans in the United States

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[265] Sánchez interview with *National Elementary Principal*, November 1970, Folder 2, Box 74, George I. Sánchez Papers, Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin.

[266] Ibid.

[267] John J. Ogbu, "Collective Identity and the Burden of 'Acting White' in Black History, Community, and Education," *The Urban Review* 36, no. 1 (March 2004): 3.

and colonization of Asia and Africa.[268] Collective identity usually develops because of people's collective experience or series of collective experiences such as, warfare, conquest, colonization, forced labor, mass emigration, imposition of an outcast status, and enslavement. Mexican Americans could not rally and unite against the "dominating other" because the mask allowed them to allegedly partake in the experiences of the dominating other.

Even though Mexican Americans claimed they were a class-apart in cases like *Hernandez*, they continued to wear the mask of whiteness throughout this period all the way up to the 1960s. Despite a majority of Mexican Americans removing the self-imposed mask, there were no collective experiences that they could use to form a homogenous group collective identity. While the Chicano youth expressed that the Mexican American people had been conquered by white, Anglo society, their message did not resonate with Mexican Americans who still had the lasting imprint of the mask on their personal psyche like a George Sánchez for example. Scholars like Scott Hunt and Robert Benford indicate that one of the benefits of a group having a collective identity is that it builds group commitments and uniformity.[269] They write, "collective identities facilitate group commitment by enhancing the bonding to leadership, belief systems, organizations, rituals, cohorts, networks, and localities."[270] Mexican American

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[268] Ogbu, 3.

[269] Scott A. Hunt and Robert Benford, "Collective Identity, Solidarity and Commitment," in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* ed. David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kries (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004), 448.

[270] Hunt and Benford, 448.

community leader, Cesar Chavez, came closest to representing a communal civil rights activist who unified Mexican Americans as a race. The lack of racial unity among Mexican American persisted in the decades following the Chicano movement. According to the 1980 U.S. Census Bureau report, 55% of Mexican Americans identified themselves as "white" and only 38% of the respondents gave a response that was coded as "Spanish Race."[271]

With a lack of a collective or unified group identity among Mexican Americans, this social conundrum became further exacerbated when they were approached by other groups who wanted to identify with the Mexican Americans' plight for educational equality. During this interview, the interviewer references how Cubans and Puerto Ricans felt that Mexican Americans had excluded them in the pursuit for social change and racial progress. Sánchez response was, "I don't know the situation but generally I would disagree. Puerto Ricans have isolated themselves. They are very insular and don't know the Southwest and their problems. We are two different people."[272] Sánchez felt that Cubans were very similar to Puerto Ricans. "Most of the Puerto Ricans and most of the Cubans have some element of a Negro background, which places them in a different category in society from the Mexicanos of the Southwest whose other background is Indian rather than Negro. We are Indo-Hispanic. They are not."[273] If Sánchez refused to lump groups together solely because groups like the Puerto Ricans and the Cubans shared

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[271] Massey, 239.

[272] Sánchez (1970), 4.

[273] Ibid.

the Mexican American native tongue, Spanish, and all three races were colonized by Spain, then why did the United States assume that placing all Spanish speaking groups under the umbrella term "Hispanic."

The problem with the term "Hispanic" is that the homogenization of all Spanish affiliated groups under a single, collective identity has made it difficult for society to address and resolve the most pressing issues affecting certain groups. How Hispanics identify themselves affects the political clout of Hispanics and other minority groups. Studies have found that African-Latinos tend to be significantly more supportive of government-sponsored health care and much less supportive of the death penalty than Hispanics who identify as white, a rift that is also found in the broader white and black populations.[274] The 2012 election results illustrated that a majority of Hispanics favored President Barack Obama over GOP contender Mitt Romney. However, there was one glaring exception: Cuban Americans.[275] While 64 percent of Mexican Americans and 67 percent of Puerto Ricans said they would vote for the Obama/Biden ticket in November, only 39 percent of the Cuban Americans polled said they would vote for the Democratic side.[276] Gary Segura, a political science professor at Stanford, asserts, "This lack of

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[274] Mireya Navarro, "For Many Latinos, Racial Identity Is More Culture Than Color," *New York Times,* January 13, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/14/us/for-many-latinos-race-is-more-culture-than-color.html?pagewanted=1&_r=2 (accessed March 24, 2014).

[275] Fox News Latino, "Cuban Americans Lean Republican, Other Latinos to the Left, Poll Shows," September 20, 2012, http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/politics/2012/09/20/cuban-american-voters-lean-toward-right-other-latinos-to-left-poll-says/ (accessed March 24, 2014).

[276] Fox News Latino, n.p.

political unity among Hispanics weakens their political effectiveness as a group."[277]

This paper has demonstrated how race is socially constructed. Mexican Americans, for example, have the ability to claim that are white one day, and then American Indian the next. Historic figures like George Sánchez were able to select the racial category that they felt would provide the Mexican American community with the greatest societal opportunity, which is why the mask of whiteness was initially created over eighty years ago. New Zealand historian, Sir Sidney Mead, quipped, "History, in brief, is an analysis of the past in order that we may understand the present and guide one's conduct into the future."[278] Living in a society where "race matters"[279] its critical for American society to ensure that Hispanics do not have to repeat the past and continue to live in a culture where a societal mask is needed to adequately enjoy all the benefits that come with belonging to a particular race. Instead, as a nation we need to continue to make societal strides to ensure, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. famously proclaimed, that we live in a society where individuals will "not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

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[277] Navarro, n.p.

[278] Ferenc M. Szasz, "Quotes about History," George Mason History News Network, http://hnn.us/article/1328 (accessed March 24, 2014).

[279] This is reference a- book written by Dr. Cornel West entitled, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).

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APPENDIX

Table 1. Statements Checked Most Frequently For the Ethnic Groups in the United States by White College Students in the Southwest

Statement	Percent	Statement	Percent
American Indians		**Chinese**	
1. Are brave people ……..	65.0	1. Possess civic pride ……..	71.8
2. Are artistic ……...	64.5	2. Are good workers ……..	61.6
3. Are peaceful and friendly ……..	62.6	3. Are artistic……	61.0
4. Are loyal and trustworthy …….	53.3	4. Are loyal and trustworthy……	58.7
5. Are ignorant people …….	52.5	5. Will cooperate with others ……	58.1
6. Possess a good character …….	52.3	6. Are peaceful and friendly	56.6
7. Should be given more opportunities	48.9	7. Are industrious ……	56.6
8. Are physically attractive ……	44.6	8. Have contributed to civilization …	56.1
9. Are good neighbors ……	42.5	9. Help to keep wages ……..	52.1
10. Are honest and truthful ……..	42.2	10. Possess a good character ……..	50.6
Japanese		**Mexicans**	
1. Are spreaders of disease ……	70.7	1. Posses a low moral standard ……	58.9
2. Are industrious ……	57.3	2. Will steal ……	58.0
3. Are artistic ……	53.2	3. Are dirty and filthy people ……	57.1
4. Help to keep wages low ……	49.6	4. Help to keep wages low ……	56.4
5. Are mean and sly ……	45.7	5. Are spreaders of disease ……	55.8
6. Are good workers …….....	44.4	6. Are lazy and shiftless ……	54.1
7. Should be barred from the U.S. …	43.1	7. Are artistic ……	52.2
8. Possess a low moral standard …...	40.8	8. Are ignorant people …… …47.4	
9. Are interested in educ. advancement	40.8	9. Act inferior to other groups ……	44.1
10. Possess constructive imagination …	38.2	10. Should be given more opportunities …	39.8

Source: Data adapted from E.S. Richards, "Attitudes of College Students in the Southwest toward Ethnic Groups in the United States," *Sociology and Social Research* 35 (1950): 25.

Table 2. Number of Positive and Negative Statements Checked by White College Students for the Ethnic Groups in the United States

Ethnic Group	Total	Positive		Negative	
	Number	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1. Native-born Whites	25,074	21, 721	86.7%	3,353	13.3%
2. Foreign-born white	23,081	18,168	78.7%	4,913	21.3%
3. Chinese	22,264	15,860	71.2%	6,404	28.8%
4. Indian	20,678	13,565	65.6%	7,113	34.4%
5. Jew	18,928	12,188	64.8%	6,740	35.2%
6. Filipino	16,311	10,499	64.4%	5,812	35.6%
7. Japanese	20,405	10,142	49.7%	10,263	50.3%
8. Negro	21,706	8,585	39.6%	13,121	60.4%
9. Mexicans	20,768	8,021	38.6%	12,747	61.4%

Source: Data adapted from E.S. Richards, "Attitudes of College Students in the Southwest toward Ethnic Groups in the United States," *Sociology and Social Research* 35 (1950): 27.

Table 3. Attitude Scores of White College Students Toward Ethnic Groups in the United States [a]

Ethnic Group	Attitude Score
1. Native-born whites	55 plus
2. Foreign-born white	55 plus
3. Filipino	55 plus
4. Chinese	51 plus
5. American Indian	43 plus
6. Jew	27 plus
7. Japanese	5 minus
8. Negro	35 minus
9. Mexican	45 minus

Source: Data adapted from E.S. Richards, "Attitudes of College Students in the Southwest toward Ethnic Groups in the United States," *Sociology and Social Research* 35 (1950): 28.

[a] Attitude scores range from 55 minus (extreme negative) to 55 plus (extreme positive).

Table 4. Spanish Origin Population for the United States and for the Five Southwestern States, November 1969

(In Thousands)

	United States		**Southwest**		**Southwest as a percentage of United States**
	Number	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**	
TOTAL	9,230	100.0	5,507	100.0	59.7
Mexican American	5,073	55.0	4,360	79.2	85.9
Puerto Rican	1,454	15.8	61	1.1	4.2
Cuban	565	6.1	82	1.5	14.5
Central or South American	556	6.0	170	3.1	30.6
Other Spanish[a]	1,582	17.1	835	15.2	52.8

Source: Data adapted from U.S Bureau of the Census, *Persons of Spanish Origin in the Untied States*, November 1969. Population Characteristics, Series P-20, No. 213, February 1971, Table 1.

[a] This category includes persons identifying themselves as “Spanish American” or “Spanish” and also persons reporting themselves as a mixture of any of the Spanish origin categories

Table 5. 1970 Undergraduate College Enrollments by State and Ethnic Group

	Arizona	**California**	**Colorado**	**New Mexico**	**Texas**	**Southwest**
Ethnic Group	Number Percent	Number Percent	Number Percent	Number Percent	Number Percent	Number Percent
Anglo	53,738 87.6%	477,641 82.3%	73,758 90.4%	22,168 76.1%	242,456 83.5%	869,761 83.4%
Mexican American	4,252 6.9%	35,902 6.2%	4,284 5.2%	5,564 19.1%	22,131 7.6%	72,133 6.9%
Black	1,274 2.1%	33,317 5.7%	1,853 2.3%	565 1.9%	22,343 7.7%	59,392 5.7%
Indian	1,382 2.3%	5,441 0.9%	736 0.9%	613 2.1%	1,876 0.6%	10,039 1.0%
Oriental	675 1.1%	27,758 4.8%	980 1.2%	207 0.7%	1,467 0.5%	31,087 3.0%
Total	61,321 100.0%	580,059 99.9%	81,611 100.0%	29,117 99.9%	290,264 99.9%	1,042,372 100.0%

Source: Data adapted from United States Commission on Civil Rights, "Fall 1970 Survey of Institutions, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office for Civil Rights, Report II: Mexican American Educational Series."