

Week 6
The
Marginalized
Raise their
Voices

Week 7

Local Hero

The American School: 1642—2000

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Hispanic/Latino Americans: Exclusion and Segregation

The early educational struggles of Mexican American and Puerto Rican American citizens, particularly over language usage, affected other Hispanic/Latino groups who immigrated into the United States after 1960. The cultural labels *Hispanic* and *Latino* require definition before embarking on a discussion of citizenship and educational issues. The terms are problematic as an inclusive expression for widely disparate cultural groups.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Who is the "we" Christy Haubegger, editor of *Latina* magazine, refers to when she claims, "Just as we become more American, America is simultaneously becoming more Latino. This quiet *revolucion* can perhaps be traced back to the bloodless coup of 1992, when salsa outsold ketchup for the first time."¹ Which groups of U.S. citizens identify themselves as Latino? Why does Haubegger use the word "Latino" instead of "Hispanic"?

One answer is that Spanish usage creates a common identity of being Hispanic or Latino. This identity is strengthened in struggles to gain recognition for bilingual education programs in U. S. public schools. Under the subtitle "Languages of Latino Self-Formation," Juan Flores and George Yudice contend, "the conditions for identity-formation, in all its dimensions . . . have been largely provided by the struggle over how to interpret language needs."²

However, the language issue is complicated by the fact that many of those labeled as Hispanic or Latino, such as Mayan Americans from Guatemala, arrived in the U.S. speaking only their native tongues and without a knowledge of Spanish. The existence of non-Spanish-speaking Native American groups throughout Mexico, Central America, and South America complicates the problem of defining Hispanic and Latino.

Another complicating factor is the meaning of Hispanic within the context of the commemoration of El Día de la Raza (The Day of the Race) when, on October 12, 1492, Columbus landed in the Antilles. For some, this date represents the birth of the Hispanic people as a new hybrid race created from a mixture of Africans, Europeans, and Native Americans. Within the framework of "La Raza," Hispanic includes most Mexican, Central American, Caribbean, and South American peoples, including French-speaking Haitians, Portuguese-speaking Brazilians, and English-speaking Trinidadians. However, the concept of La Raza excludes those Native Americans who have no African or European ancestors and those of European ancestry living south of the United States who have no African or Native American forebears. Theoretically, the concept of La Raza would also include under the heading "Hispanic" the many U.S. citizens who are descended from enslaved Africans brought to the United States who also have European and Native American ancestors.³

The term "Hispanic" can also be traced to the early nineteenth century when Simon Bolivar, the liberator of South America from Spanish rule, dreamt of a pan-American republic that would extend from the tip of South America up the west coast of what is now the United States (during Bolivar's time California was part of Mexico). In this sense, Hispanic encompasses all peoples living in areas not under the control of the United States or Canada.

The terms "Latino" and "Latin America" also have their origin in dreams of a pan-American union. The term "Latin America" was coined by Chilean author Francisco Bilbao in 1858 to distinguish between the supposedly cold and rigid temperament of Anglo-Saxons and the hypothetically warm and light-hearted souls of others living in the Americas. Also, the use of the word "Latin" broke the direct connection with Spain. Rather than "Spanish America" it was now "Latin America." For this reason, many people prefer the term "Latino" because "Hispanic" is associated with Spanish cultural imperialism.

"Latin America," as opposed to "Spanish America," encompasses all speakers of Latin-based languages including Portuguese-speaking Brazilians and French-speaking Haitians. However, similar to the problems encountered with the term "Hispanic," Native American peoples who do not speak French, Spanish, or Portuguese are theoretically not included in the terms "Latino" or "Latin America." In addition, at least technically, French-speaking Canadians would have to be called "Latinos."

While recognizing the difficulties associated with the terms "Latino" and "Hispanic," I am going to focus on the educational struggles associated with the two largest Latino groups—Mexican Americans and Puerto Rican Americans. This focus is justified by the historical educational struggles of these groups and their large representation within the Hispanic/Latino population. Using the term "Hispanic," the 1990 U.S. census reported the four largest groups constituting more than 80 percent of Hispanic Americans by country of origin as, in descending order, Mexican American (61.5 percent), Puerto Rican American (12.2 percent), Cuban American (4.8 percent), and Dominican American (2.4 percent).⁴ Language usage is the most important educational issue confronting these Hispanic/Latino groups:

ISSUES REGARDING MEXICAN AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP

The existence of La Raza strongly influenced Anglo-American attitudes toward their southern neighbors. Popular Anglo-American writers in the nineteenth century argued that the mixture of Spanish conquerors and Native Americans resulted in "wretched hybrids and mongrels [who were] in many respects actually inferior to the inferior race itself."⁵ At the time, Anglo-Americans did not consider the Spanish as "white" and therefore believed they were an inferior race. Some American leaders hoped that Anglo-Americans would eventually displace all of La Raza. Representative William Brown envisioned "the Anglo-Saxon race, like a mighty flood [spreading over] all Mexico."⁶ This flood of Anglo-Saxons, Brown hoped, would eventually cover all of Central and South America, creating republics whose "destinies will be guided by Anglo-Saxon hands."⁷

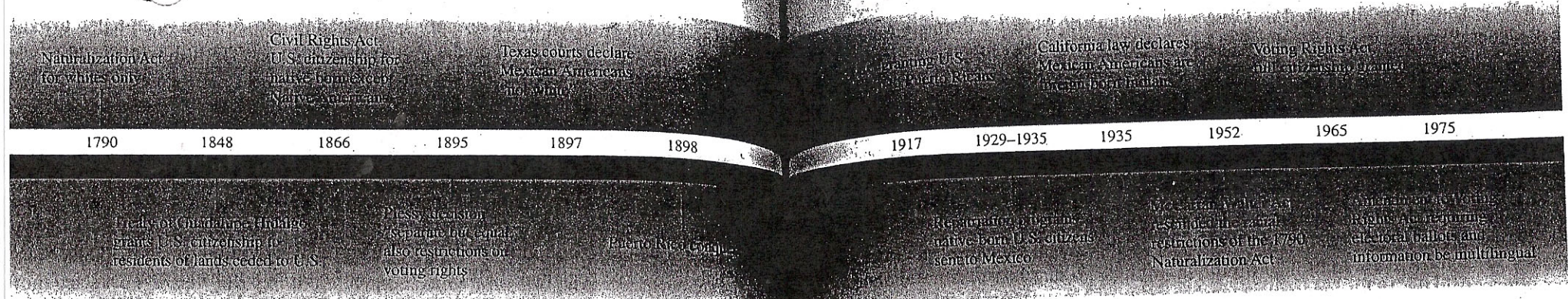
Mexicans were often singled out as the worst of La Raza, perhaps because most Mexicans are either Native American or "mestizos" (people with a combination of Native American and European ancestry), and there has been so much prejudice against both Native Americans and mestizos. At the time of the invasion of Mexico in the 1840s, Secretary of State James Buchanan and Secretary of the Treasury Robert Walker expressed their views that northern Europeans, which they identified as Anglo-Saxon, were the superior racial group. Within the racial ideology of these American leaders, Mexican mestizos were a substandard racial mixture because they were descended from an inferior European race and Native Americans. The Mexican-American War was, among other things, a race war.

The struggle over inclusion of Mexican Americans and other Hispanic Americans as full citizens of the United States became a serious issue in 1848 with the ending of the Mexican-American War and the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. During treaty negotiations, the Mexican government demanded that Mexicans remaining in their lost territories become U.S. citizens. This demand created a dilemma for U.S. leaders.

Today, few U.S. citizens are aware of the importance of this war for the territorial expansion of the United States and the disaster for Mexico in losing almost one-half of its total territory. At the war's conclusion, the United States added territory that included major parts of the future states of California, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, and Texas. While many U.S. citizens fail to remember the territorial gains, Mexicans are constantly reminded of their loss by the huge monument standing at the entrance to Chapultepec Park in Mexico City commemorating the young Mexican boys who died trying to defend the spot against the invading U.S. military.

The events leading to the Mexican-American War occurred during the period of the racial and cultural genocide of the Five Civilized Tribes as they were removed from the Southeast to Indian Territory. In the area that is now Texas, U.S. settlers had been waging a war that culminated in 1837 with the Mexican government accepting the loss of part of its land and recognizing Texas as an independent nation. While the Five Civilized Tribes located on land just north of Texas and organized their governments, the U.S. settlers controlling the nation of Texas

HISPANIC/LATIN CITIZENSHIP TIME LINE



formed a government and debated whether or not they should remain independent or allow themselves to be annexed by the United States.

The idea of manifest destiny combined with scorn for La Raza fueled the increasing friction between the United States and Mexico. In the minds of some Anglo-Americans, the United States was destined to rule the continent because of its Protestant culture and republican form of government. In the minds of many U.S. citizens, Mexico stood for Catholicism and feudalism.

After the Texas government agreed in 1845 to be annexed to the United States, President James Polk sent a small army to the Rio Grande. Under the leadership of General Zachary Taylor, the army was to protect the Texas border. Taylor's presence sparked a military reaction by Mexico that resulted in the U.S. Congress declaring war—on May 13, 1846. Later in the century, former President Ulysses S. Grant wrote about the declaration of war and the subsequent military campaigns as “the most unjust war ever waged by a stronger against a weaker nation . . . an instance of a republic following the bad example of European monarchies.”⁸

The United States did not confine its military actions to Texas. Within one month after the congressional declaration of war, President Polk ordered a war party under the command of Colonel Stephen Kearny to travel from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and occupy the Mexican city of Santa Fe, New Mexico. After entering Mexican territory, Kearny issued a proclamation saying: “The undersigned enters New Mexico with a large military force for the purpose of seeking union with, and ameliorating the condition of the inhabitants.”⁹ Kearny promised, without authorization from President Polk, that all Mexican citizens in New Mexico would be given U.S. citizenship, and he convinced many local officials to take an oath of allegiance to the U.S. government. The Mexican governor fled Santa Fe, and Kearny entered the city on August 17, 1846, without encountering any significant resistance.

One month later, on September 25, 1846, Kearny left Santa Fe for the Mexican province of California. A year before Kearny's departure from Santa Fe, a small military force under the command of Captain John C. Fremont had arrived

at Fort Sutter, California. Aided by the presence of Fremont's force, a group of American settlers declared that California was the Bear Flag Republic. Their action was similar to that in Texas on July 4, 1846. The leaders of the new nation created a flag featuring a single star and a crude grizzly. At the celebration for the new republic, Fremont announced that he planned to conquer all of California. Military historian General John Eisenhower writes regarding Fremont's proclamation: “This pronouncement was remarkable because it was made at a time when Fremont had no knowledge of whether or not Mexico and the United States were at war.”¹⁰ On December 12, 1846, Kearny arrived in San Diego to complete the final conquest of California.

Eventually, the expanding war led to the occupation of Mexico City by U.S. military forces on September 14, 1847. The war ended on May 30, 1848, when the Mexican congress ratified the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ceded to the United States Mexican territory from Texas to California. Besides creating a lasting resentment toward and suspicion of the U.S. government by the Mexican government, the acquisition of Mexican lands presented the problem of what to do with the conquered Mexican citizens. During negotiations regarding the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexican leaders were concerned about the racial attitudes of U.S. leaders and demanded that Mexicans living in ceded territory be given full citizenship rights in the United States. However, when the treaty was discussed in the U.S. Senate, the majority of senators did not believe that Mexicans were ready for “equal union” with other U.S. citizens. Consequently, the final treaty postponed the granting of U.S. citizenship to the conquered Mexican population. Article IX of the treaty stated that Mexicans in the ceded territory “shall be incorporated into the Union of the United States, and be admitted, at the proper time (to be judged by the Congress of the United States), to the enjoyment of all rights of citizens of the United States.”¹¹

Despite the treaty's provisions for citizenship, citizenship rights were abridged throughout the Southwest through limitations placed on voting rights and through segregation in public accommodations and schooling. As with cases involving

Asian Americans, courts wrestled with the issue of racial classification. In 1897, Texas courts ruled that Mexican Americans were not "white." In California, Mexican Americans were classified as Caucasian until 1930 when California's Attorney General Webb categorized them as Indians. He argued, "the greater portion of the population of Mexico are Indians." Therefore, according to the California school code, Mexican Americans were segregated based on the provision that the "governing board of the school district shall have power to establish separate schools for Indian children, excepting children of Indians . . . who are the descendants of the original American Indians of the U.S." Classified as Indians, Mexican Americans were not considered "the original American Indians of the U.S."¹²

The uncertain nature of Mexican American citizenship rights was reflected in the mass repatriation program of the 1930s. As in the case of Japanese Americans placed in concentration camps during the 1940s, the U.S. government and state governments in the 1930s ignored citizenship rights of Mexican Americans and deported about 400,000 of them back to Mexico. Many of those deported were officially native-born citizens. Their parents had immigrated into the United States in the early twentieth century to escape the chaos and economic deprivation of the Mexican Revolution. In *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States*, Manuel Gonzales writes, "During the course of this popular [repatriation program] campaign, civil liberties were violated on a regular basis, as American-born children of immigrants, now U.S. citizens, were often denied the option to stay in the country when their parents were deported. Harassment and discrimination against remaining Mexicans were also common."¹³

ISSUES REGARDING PUERTO RICAN CITIZENSHIP

Puerto Rico became a colony of the United States in 1898 at the conclusion of the Spanish-American War. The war represented the final demise of Spanish empire in the Americas. The events leading up to the Spanish-American War were primarily centered in Cuba where, prior to the outbreak of the war, a liberation army composed of Cuban rebels revolted against Spanish rule and against economic domination by foreign sugar and tobacco industries. The liberation army marched through the countryside torching plantations and plunging Cuba into economic chaos. The Spanish response was brutal: 200,000 Spanish troops were sent to Cuba to stop the liberation army, and the infamous concentration camp order was issued. The concentration camp order moved women, children, and men from villages into garrison towns as a method of cutting off all support to the rebel army. Citizens were executed or their property confiscated if they were found traveling outside garrison towns without a passport.

The U.S. government was interested in the rebellion from several perspectives. First, there was an interest in reducing Spanish influence in the Americas. Within this context, the government was sympathetic to the liberation army's goal of ousting the Spanish. Second, the U.S. government was interested in protecting American-

owned sugar and tobacco plantations. This meant economic stabilization. For that purpose, the U.S. government wanted the establishment of a stable democratic government that would protect the property interests of foreign investors. As a result of this concern, the U.S. government was not interested in the liberating army ruling Cuba at the conclusion of the war. Third, the U.S. government was interested in establishing military bases in the Caribbean. But, because of the politics surrounding the U.S. entry into the war, Puerto Rico became a colony of the United States rather than Cuba. Consequently, for military purposes, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, was retained by the United States and military bases were established in Puerto Rico.

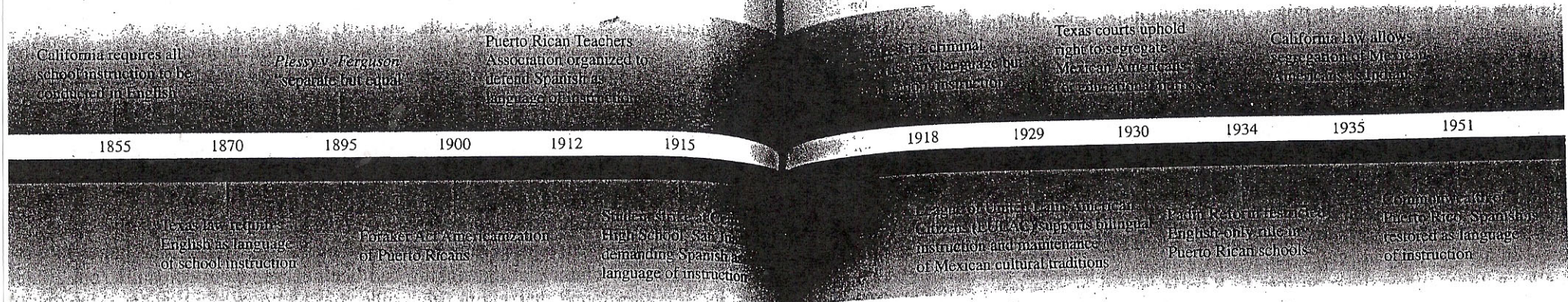
The event that sparked a congressional declaration of war was the sinking of the battleship *Maine* in Havana harbor on February 15, 1898. The immediate reaction was to claim that the sinking had been caused by the Spanish, but a later investigation found that a coal fire on the ship had caused a powder magazine to explode. Even though the Spanish might not have been responsible for the sinking, "Remember the *Maine*" became the rallying call for the war.

As a result of the rebel war and the sinking of the *Maine*, President William McKinley asked Congress for a joint resolution authorizing intervention in Cuba. The resolution passed by Congress called on the Spanish to abandon all claims governing Cuba and to remove all its forces from the island. An important part of the resolution stated that the United States had no intention of exercising sovereignty over Cuba. Spain, of course, considered the resolution a declaration of war. And the war quickly escalated to global proportions. On one side of the world, the U.S. Navy sailed into Manila in the Philippines. On the other side of the world, American troops joined the Cuban liberation army to oust the Spanish from Cuba. On October 18, 1898, U.S. forces, which had invaded Puerto Rico less than three months previously, raised the U.S. flag in San Juan and declared the end of Spanish rule and the beginning of U.S. dominion.

While events in Cuba were the main cause for the United States initiating the conflict, the final treaty focused on other Spanish territorial possessions. The United States Congress had already declared its intention not to rule Cuba; consequently, the United States demanded that Spain cede Puerto Rico, the island of Guam in the Central Pacific, and the Philippines. With the signing of the treaty on December 10, 1898, the U.S. military gained strategic bases in the Caribbean, the Pacific, and the Far East. In 1901, before relinquishing Cuba, the U.S. Congress passed legislation dictating that Cuba sell or lease lands to the United States for naval stations. This paved the way for the United States to establish a naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.¹⁴

As a conquered people, Puerto Rican Americans have been divided over issues of independence and U.S. citizenship. In 1915, a debate over citizenship was sparked by the introduction of legislation into the U.S. Congress to grant citizenship to Puerto Rican Americans. Speaking before the House of Representatives in 1916, Puerto Rican leader Muñoz Rivera requested that Congress let the Puerto Rican people vote as to whether or not they wanted U.S. citizenship. Ignoring the plea, Congress passed the Jones Act, which was signed into law by President Woodrow Wilson in 1917.¹⁵

HISPANIC/LATINO EDUCATION TIME LINE PRIOR TO CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT



The Jones Act obligated Puerto Rican Americans to serve in the U.S. military while denying them the right to vote in national elections. Similar to Native American attitudes in Indian Territory, when they were granted citizenship in 1901 as part of the process of abolishing tribal governments, many Puerto Rican Americans did not welcome this grant of citizenship.

Like African Americans, Mexican Americans and Puerto Rican Americans did not gain full citizenship rights until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and its 1975 amendment which required that electoral ballots and information be multilingual.¹⁶ The 1975 amendment to the Voting Rights Act along with the 1968 Bilingual Education Act opened the door to full citizenship for the Hispanic/Latino community.

MEXICAN AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

The attitude of racial, religious, and cultural superiority—which provided motivation for the United States to take over Mexican land and which fueled hostilities between the two countries throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—was reflected in the treatment both of the Mexicans who remained after the U.S. conquest and of later Mexican immigrants. Segregated schools, housing, and discrimination in employment became the Mexican American heritage. Reflecting the attitude of the Mexican government toward the anti-Mexican feelings in the United States, the president of Mexico, General Porfirio Díaz, was reported to have remarked in the latter part of the nineteenth century: “Poor Mexico! So far from God and so close to the United States.”¹⁷

The evolution of discriminatory attitudes and practices toward Mexican Americans occurred in two stages. The first stage involved the treatment of the Mexicans who remained after conquest. The second stage occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when U.S. farmers encouraged the immigration of farm laborers from Mexico, and political and economic conditions in Mexico caused many Mexicans to seek residence in the United States.

In *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836–1886*, David Montejano argues that a victor has the choice of either eradicating the conquered population or assimilating them into its own culture.¹⁸ David Montejano identifies two patterns in the treatment of the Mexican Americans in Texas in the nineteenth century. The pattern of extermination and ejection occurred in central and southeastern Texas with the uprooting of entire communities. Mexican Americans were physically driven out of Austin in 1853 and 1855 and out of the counties of Matagorda and Colorado in 1856. A large part of the Mexican population of San Antonio was driven out by 1856.¹⁹

The ejection of the Mexican population was justified by racist attitudes. Frederick Law Olmsted recorded many of these attitudes while traveling through Texas in 1855 and 1856 as a reporter for the *New York Times*. Olmsted overheard newly arrived settlers complaining that Mexicans “think themselves as good as white men” and that they were “vermin to be exterminated.”²⁰ He found a general feeling among Anglo settlers that “white folks and Mexicans” were never meant to live together. He quoted a newspaper article published in Matagorda county that began: “The people of Matagorda county have held a meeting and ordered every Mexican to leave the county.”²¹ The article went on to justify the expulsion by calling the Mexicans in the area “lower class” and contending that the Mexicans were likely to take Black women as wives and to steal horses.

One of the important consequences of this negative action against Mexicans was to make it easier for American settlers to gain land in the area. In this case, racism served as a justification for economic exploitation. While the Mexican population declined in these areas after the war, it rose again during the early twentieth century. The same racist arguments were then used to justify paying Mexican farmworkers lower wages and establishing a segregated system of schooling.

In the southern part of Texas, a different pattern developed for the treatment of the conquered Mexican population. Montejano calls this pattern a “peace structure,” with two major components. One component involved bringing the Mexicans under the authority of Anglos in political matters, while the other involved an accommodation between the Mexican and Anglo elites.²² This accommodation

served as a basis for the creation of large cattle ranches. Anglo cattle raisers gained access to large tracts of land either by marrying into elite Mexican families or through direct purchase. In this accommodation, Anglos made a distinction between what they identified as the "Castilian elite," who controlled vast amounts of land, and the average Mexican, who was identified as a "peon." In the minds of Anglos, this division involved a racial distinction. Peons, as compared with the Castilian elite, were considered racially inferior because they were mestizos. The Castilian elite were accepted because of their supposed lack of Indian heritage and their Spanish ancestry. In other words, Anglos held the same racist attitudes toward peons as they did toward Indians.²³

These racist attitudes permeated the life of the cattle ranches established in southern Texas during what is referred to as the "cowboy era" in Texas history. By the 1860s, the railroad was extended to Kansas. This made it possible to raise cattle in Texas, drive them on foot to Kansas, and then ship them east. Between 1866 and 1880, more than four million cattle were marched north out of Texas. The term "cowboy" was coined to describe the workers who took the herds north. The cattle drives would follow either the Chisholm Trail or the Western Trail north from southern Texas through Indian Territory to Kansas.²⁴ The taxes levied on the drives by the Choctaws in Indian Territory helped to support their school system.

On the cattle ranches of the cowboy era, the authority structure created a division between Mexican and Anglo cowboys. The Anglo cowboys, of course, exercised authority over the Mexican ones. In addition, facilities were segregated. Anglo cowboys ate in the ranch dining room and refused to eat with the Mexicans; Mexican cowboys camped with the herds and consumed their rations at their campsites.²⁵ This segregation established a pattern for later forms of segregation.

As with Native Americans, a major concern of the conquered Mexican population was the mandate that English was to be spoken in the schools. In 1856, two years after the Texas legislature established public schools, a law was passed requiring the teaching of English as a subject. In 1870, at the height of the cowboy era, the Texas legislature passed a school law requiring English to be the language of instruction in all public schools.²⁶ The same attempt to eradicate the Spanish language in the United States occurred in the conquered territory of California. The California Bureau of Instruction mandated in 1855 that all school classes be conducted in English. In *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking California 1846-1890*, Leonard Pitt writes about the English-only requirement in public schools: "This linguistic purism went hand in hand with the nativist sentiments expressed in that year's legislature, including the suspension of the publication of state laws in Spanish."²⁷

In general, Mexican Americans in the last half of the nineteenth century tried to escape the anti-Mexican attitudes of public school authorities by attending either Catholic schools or nonsectarian private schools. In California, some members of the Mexican community were interested in providing a bilingual education for their children. They wanted their children to improve their ability to read and write Spanish and become acquainted with the cultural traditions of Mexico and Spain, while at the same time learning to speak English. In some places, such as Santa Barbara, California, local Mexican leaders were able to bypass the state requirement on teaching in English and were able to maintain a bilingual public school. But

in most places, bilingual instruction could be had only through schools operated by the Catholic Church.²⁸

In Texas, a bilingual education could be had in parochial schools and, in south Texas, in private schools established by the Mexican community. These private Mexican schools tried to maintain both the Spanish language and Mexican culture. The three major purposes of these Mexican schools were to impart Mexican ideals, to teach Mexican traditions and history, and to maintain racial pride among the students.²⁹ Because of the language issue, Mexican American students were discouraged by local school authorities from attending the first public school opened in El Paso, in 1883. Consequently, Mexican Americans opened their own Mexican Preparatory School in 1887. As in California, some Texas communities did not enforce the English-only rule. The first public school that opened in Brownsville, Texas, in 1875 was attended primarily by Mexican American children. Since most of these children did not speak or understand English, the English-only rule was not enforced until the fourth grade.³⁰

The patterns of discrimination and segregation established in the nineteenth century were accentuated during the great immigration of Mexicans into the United States in the early twentieth century. Between 1900 and 1909, some 23,991 Mexicans immigrated to the United States. Between 1910 and 1919, this figure increased dramatically—to 173,663; and between 1920 and 1929, the number rose to 487,775.³¹

One of the keys to understanding the continuing patterns of racism and segregation is the fact that the immigration of Mexicans was encouraged by U.S. farmers—because Mexicans were an inexpensive source of labor in the booming agricultural regions of Texas and California. By the 1890s, the era of the cowboy was drawing to a close. Railroads had penetrated Texas, making the cattle drives across Indian Territory unnecessary. In addition, because of a variety of economic changes the cattle industry itself was in decline. Consequently, many Texans turned to farming. As the twentieth century unfolded, the expansion of the railroad made it possible to ship agricultural goods from California to the East. Similar to Texas California farmers needed cheap labor. For some farmers, Mexicans were ideal laborers. As one Texas cotton grower put it: "They are docile and law-biding. They are the sweetest people in this position that I ever saw."³²

Anglo attitudes about the education of the children of immigrant Mexican involved two conflicting positions. On the one hand, farmers did not want Mexican children to go to school—because school attendance meant that they were not available for farm work. On the other hand, many public officials wanted Mexican children in school so that they could be "Americanized." In addition, many Mexican families were reluctant to send their children to school because of the loss of the children's contribution to the family income.

These conflicting positions represent the two methods by which education can be used as a method of social control. One is to deny a population the knowledge necessary to protect its political and economic rights and to economically advance in society. Farmers wanted to keep Mexican laborers ignorant as a means of assuring a continued inexpensive source of labor. As one Texas farmer stated: "Educating the Mexicans is educating them away from the dirt, away from the dirt." Reflecting the values of the farmers in his district, one Texas school superintendent

intendent explained, "You have doubtless heard that ignorance is bliss; it seems that is so when one has to transplant onions. . . . So you see it is up to the white population to keep the Mexican on his knees in an onion patch or in new ground. This does not mix very well with education."³³ A school principal in Colorado stated, "never try to enforce compulsory attendance laws on the Mexicans. . . . The banks and the company will swear that the labor is needed and that the families need the money."³⁴

Therefore, according to Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr. in *"Let All of Them Take Heed": Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981*, one of the most discriminatory acts against the children of Mexicans was the nonenforcement of compulsory school laws.³⁵ A survey of one Texas county in 1921 found only 30.7 percent of Mexican school-age children in school. In another Texas county in the 1920s, school authorities admitted that they enforced school attendance on Anglo children but not on Mexican children. San Miguel, Jr. quotes one school authority from this period: "The whites come all right except one whose parents don't appreciate education. We don't enforce the attendance on the whites because we would have to on the Mexicans."³⁶ One school superintendent explained that he always asked the local school board if they wanted the Mexican children in school. Any enforcement of the compulsory education law against the wishes of the school board, he admitted, would probably cost him his job.³⁷

Those Mexican children who did attend school faced segregation and an education designed, in a manner similar to the programs applied to Indians, to rid them of their native language and customs. School segregation for Mexican children spread rapidly throughout Texas and California. The typical pattern was for a community with a large Mexican school population to erect a separate school for Mexican children. For instance, in 1891 the Corpus Christi, Texas, school board denied admission of Mexican children to their "Anglo schools" and built a separate school.

In *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation*, Gilbert Gonzalez finds that the typical attitude in California schools was reflected in the April 1921 minutes of the Ontario, California, Board of Education: "Mr. Hill made the recommendation that the board select two new school sites; one in the southeastern part of the town for a Mexican school; the other near the Central School."³⁸ Gonzalez reports that a survey conducted in the mid 1930s found that 85 percent of the districts investigated in the Southwest were segregated.³⁹ In *All Deliberate Speed: Segregation and Exclusion in California Schools, 1855-1975*, Charles Wollenberg quotes a California educator writing in 1920: "One of the first demands made from a community in which there is a large Mexican population is for a separate school."⁴⁰ A Los Angeles school official admitted that pressure from white citizens resulted in certain neighborhood schools being built to contain the majority of Mexican students.⁴¹

Besides outright racist attitudes toward Mexican Americans, school segregation was justified by the same argument used to justify isolating southeastern Indians in Indian Territory. Educators argued that the segregation of Mexican children would provide the opportunity to, in Gonzalez's words, "Americanize the child in a controlled linguistic and cultural environment, and . . . to train Mexicans for occupations considered open to, and appropriate for, them."⁴²

Segregation also served the purpose, according to Montejun, of maintaining white supremacy. Anglo and Mexican children both knew that segregation was intended to separate the superior from the inferior. In addition, Mexican schools were in poorer physical condition, the Mexican children used books discarded by Anglo schools, and Mexican teams could not participate in Anglo athletic leagues. The sense of inferiority learned in the segregated educational system was reinforced in adult life by the refusal of Anglo restaurants to serve Mexicans and by segregated housing.⁴³

Those Mexican children attending segregated schools were put through a deculturalization program. Similar to that for the Indians who were isolated in Indian Territory and boarding schools, the deculturalization program was designed to strip away Mexican values and culture and replace the use of Spanish with English. The term most frequently used in the early twentieth century for the process of deculturalization was "Americanization." The Americanization process for Mexicans should not be confused with the Americanization programs encountered in schools by children of European immigrants. As Gilbert Gonzalez argues, the Americanization of Mexicans, as opposed to Europeans, took place in segregated school systems. In addition, the assimilation of Mexicans was made difficult by the nature of the rural economy, which locked Mexicans into segregated farm work. Anglos also showed greater disdain for Mexican culture than they did for European cultures.⁴⁴

An important element in the Americanization of Mexican schoolchildren, as it was for Indians, was eliminating the speaking of their native language. Educators argued that learning English was essential to assimilation and the creation of a unified nation. In addition, language was considered related to values and culture. Changing languages, it was assumed, would cause a cultural revolution among Mexican Americans. Typical of this attitude was a Texas school superintendent, who was quoted by Gonzalez as saying that "a Mexican child 'is foreign in his thinking and attitudes' until he learns to 'think and talk in English.'"⁴⁵

In 1918, Texas passed legislation with stricter requirements for the use of English in public schools. The legislation made it a criminal offense to use any language but English in the schools. In addition, the legislation required that all school personnel, including teachers, principals, custodians, and school board members, use only English when conducting school business.⁴⁶

As they did regarding Indian culture and values, many Anglos believed that Mexican culture and values discouraged the exercise of economic entrepreneurship and cooperation required in an advanced corporate society. As I discussed in the previous section, it was believed by many whites that the communal lifestyle of Indians hindered their advancement in U.S. society. On the other hand, Mexicans were criticized as having a fatalistic acceptance of the human condition, being self-pitying, and being unable to work with others in large organizations. Also many Anglos felt that Mexicans were too attached to their families and to small organizations such as local clubs.⁴⁷

The attempted deculturalization of Mexicans did not always extend to cultural aspects such as food, music, and dance. Those advocating cultural democracy felt that these cultural traditions could be maintained while attempts were made to

socialize Mexican children into an entrepreneurial spirit, or what was called an "achievement concept."⁴⁸

It is again important to stress that most Mexican children did not encounter these deculturalization programs. That they did not was simply because compulsory education laws were not enforced and, besides, the children had to help support their families. In addition, there were reports of Mexican children dropping out of school because of the anti-Mexican bias of the curriculum. This was particularly true in Texas where, in history instruction, stress was placed on the Texas defeat of Mexico.⁴⁹

In addition, many children of migrant farmworkers received little opportunity to attend school. In fact, in some areas of California, state laws on school attendance were routinely violated by local school boards to ensure the availability of children for farm work. In 1928, with support from the state, the Fresno County, California, superintendent of schools opened a special migratory school. Children attended between 7:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. and then joined their parents in the fields. This five-hour school day was in clear violation of state law on the number of hours of attendance, but the California state government never enforced this requirement on the migratory schools, and the five-hour day became typical for schools serving migrant children. In some parts of California, migrant children were completely denied an education. In the 1930s, public schools in Ventura County, California, displayed signs reading "No Migratory Children Wanted Here."⁵⁰

Of course, many in the Mexican American community protested against this denial of education to their children, the existence of school segregation, and the attempts at deculturalization. In 1929, representatives from a variety of Mexican American organizations met in Corpus Christi, Texas, to form the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). This organization was composed primarily of middle-class Mexican Americans, as opposed to Mexican farm laborers and migratory workers. In fact, membership was restricted to U.S. citizens.⁵¹

LULAC adopted a code that reflected the desire of middle-class Mexican Americans to integrate the culture of Mexico with that of the United States. The code attempted to balance a respect for U.S. citizenship with a maintenance of cultural traditions. On the one hand, the code asked members to "Respect your citizenship, converse it; honor your country, maintain its traditions in the minds of your children, incorporate yourself in the culture and civilization." On the other hand, the code told its members to "Love the men of your race, take pride in your origins and keep it immaculate; respect your glorious past and help to vindicate your people."⁵²

Clearly, LULAC was committed to a vision of the United States that was multicultural and multilingual. In contrast to the public schools, which were trying to eradicate Mexican culture and the use of Spanish, LULAC favored bilingualism and instruction in the cultural traditions of both the United States and Mexico. The LULAC code called upon its members to "Study the past of your people, or the country to which you owe your citizenship; learn to handle with purity the two essential languages, English and Spanish."⁵³

As an organization, LULAC was dedicated to fighting discrimination against Mexican Americans, particularly in the form of school segregation. In fact, one of the founders of LULAC, J. Luz Saenz, argued that discrimination and the lack of equal educational opportunities were hindering the integration of Mexicans into U.S. society. In summarizing the position of LULAC, Saenz stated, "As long as they do not educate us with all the guarantees and opportunities for free participation in all . . . activities . . . as long as they wish to raise up on high the standard of supremacy of races on account of color. . . so much will they put off our conversion . . . [to] full citizens."⁵⁴

LULAC's first challenge to school segregation occurred in 1928 with the filing of a complaint against the Charlotte, Texas, Independent School District. In this case, a child of unknown racial background adopted by a Mexican family was refused admission to the local Anglo elementary school and was assigned to the Mexican school. Her father argued that because of her unknown racial background, she should be put into the Anglo school. The state admitted that the local school district did not have the right to segregate Mexican children: On the other hand, local school officials justified the segregation of Mexican children because they required special instruction in English. After determining that the child spoke fluent English, the state school superintendent ordered the local school district to enroll the student in the Anglo school. While this potentially opened the doors of Anglo schools to Mexican children who spoke fluent English, it did little to end segregation.⁵⁵

LULAC's second case involving school segregation occurred in 1930 when the Del Rio, Texas, Independent School District proposed a bond election to construct and improve school buildings. Included in the proposal were improvements for the Mexican school. Mexican American parents in the district complained that the proposal continued the practice of segregating their children from other students. The local superintendent defended segregation as necessary because Mexican students had irregular attendance records and special language problems. The court accepted the arguments of local school authorities that segregation was necessary for educational reasons. On the other hand, the court did state that it was unconstitutional to segregate students on the basis of national origin. This decision presented LULAC with the difficult problem of countering the educational justifications used for segregation. At a special 1931 session, LULAC members called for scientific studies of arguments that segregation is necessary for instruction.⁵⁶

While LULAC focused most of its efforts on school segregation, there was a concern about what was perceived to be the anti-Mexican bias of textbooks. In 1939, the state president of LULAC, Ezequiel Salinas, attacked the racism and distortions of Mexicans in history textbooks. Significant changes in the racial content of textbooks did not, however, occur until the full impact of the civil rights movement hit the publishing industry in the 1960s.⁵⁷

While LULAC was struggling to end segregation in Texas, Mexican American organizations in California were attacking the same problem. By the 1930s, Mexican children were the most segregated group in the state. The California situation was somewhat different from that of Texas, because of a 1935 California state law allowing for the segregation of Chinese, Japanese, "Mongolians," and Indians. While

Indians born in the United States were exempt from this law, the state did allow, as previously discussed, the segregation of Indians who were not "descendants of the original American Indians of the United States." According to Charles Wollenberg, "In this torturous and indirect fashion, the 1935 law seemed to allow for segregation of Mexican 'Indians,' but not of Mexican 'whites.'"58

The struggle to end segregation played a major role in the civil rights movement of the post-World War II period. The efforts of both the NAACP and LULAC finally resulted in the end of legal segregation of African American and Mexican American students. The civil rights movement also opened the door to feelings of racial and cultural pride.

PUERTO RICAN AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

Reflecting the attitudes of U.S. leaders toward La Raza, educational policy in Puerto Rico followed a pattern similar to that for Native Americans and Mexican Americans. The policy was based on a desire to win the loyalty of a conquered people and stabilize control of Puerto Rico as part of a broader strategy for maintaining U.S. influence in the Caribbean and Central America. Puerto Rico, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and the Panama Canal Zone were the linchpins of this strategy.⁵⁹ The use of education as part of the colonization of Puerto Rico was explicitly stated in 1902 in the annual report of the second commissioner of education, Samuel Lindsay: "Colonization carried forward by the armies of war is vastly more costly than that carried forward by the armies of peace, whose outpost and garrisons are the public schools of the advancing nation."⁶⁰

Consequently, U.S. educational policy in Puerto Rico emphasized building loyalty to the U.S. flag and institutions, as well as deculturalization. The patriotic emphasis was similar to the Americanization programs directed at Native Americans. And, just as U.S. and state educational policies attempted to strip Indians of their languages and cultures, U.S. educational policy in Puerto Rico attempted to replace Spanish with English as the majority language and to introduce children to the dominant U.S. culture.

When considering U.S. educational policy in Puerto Rico, it is important to understand that the citizens of Puerto Rico did not ask to become part of the United States. In fact, the goal of the independence movement in Puerto Rico throughout the nineteenth century was independence from Spain, not cession to the United States. Similar to its actions in Cuba, Spain attempted to crush any attempts on the part of Puerto Rico to gain liberation from Spanish rule. Typical of the independence movement was the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Committee, which, in 1863, marched under the banner "Liberty or Death. Long Live Free Puerto Rico."

In addition, in 1897, the year before the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, Spain declared Puerto Rico an autonomous state. The residents of the now former colony of Spain quickly established a constitutional republican form of government; however, Spain still appointed the governor, who had restricted power. The newly independent government assumed power in July 1898, just before the landing of U.S. troops.

Therefore, after a long struggle for an independence that was quickly snatched away by an invading U.S. military, Puerto Rican citizens did not welcome subjugation by the U.S. government. In fact, Puerto Rican resistance to U.S. control, while not so strong as it was in the early twentieth century, continues to this day.

The anger among Puerto Rican Americans was heightened by the fact that the United States immediately placed them under the control of a military government operated by the War Department. Within less than a year, Puerto Rico went from being an autonomous state to being ruled by a military dictatorship.

The strong Puerto Rican independence movement contributed to a wave of resistance to the educational policies designed for Americanization and deculturalization. A list of these policies was compiled by Aida Negron De Montilla in her book *Americanization in Puerto Rico and the Public-School System 1900-1930*. I provide here a summary of the list, followed by an explanation of how these policies evolved.

In examining this list, you should consider the items in the broad context of how a nation can use schools to impose its will on a conquered people. This is a case study in both an attempt to dominate through education and resistance to that domination. Some of the items in the list are presented as "attempts" because of the high level of resistance to these plans by the Puerto Rican people.

Summary List of Americanization Policies in Public Schools in Puerto Rico

1. Required celebration of U.S. patriotic holidays, such as the Fourth of July, which had not been celebrated prior to conquest
2. Patriotic exercises designed to create allegiance to the United States, such as pledging allegiance to the U.S. flag and studying important historical figures of U.S. history
3. Replacing local curricula and textbooks with those reflecting the way of life in the United States
4. Attempts to expel teachers and students who engaged in anti-United States activities
5. Attempts to use teachers from the United States as opposed to local teachers
6. Introduction of organizations, such as the Boy Scouts of America, to promote allegiance to the United States
7. Attempts to replace Spanish with English as the language of instruction⁶¹

The first U.S. commissioner of education in Puerto Rico, Martin Grove Brumbaugh, captured the general thrust of these policies when he wrote in a preface to a history book, "President McKinley declared to the writer that it was his desire 'to put the conscience of the American people in the islands of the sea.'"⁶² Brumbaugh was appointed in 1900, when military rule was replaced with a colonial government established by Congress under the Foraker Act. With the passage of the Foraker Act, which was in effect between 1900 and 1917, the president was given the power to appoint a commissioner of education for Puerto Rico. While the military was in control, the educational system was organized along the lines of a U.S. model. In addition, the War Department created a commission to recommend educational policies for the island. The commission's report became a

guide for Brumbaugh and the next six commissioners of education. The report outlined the basic methods of Americanization. It recommended that Puerto Rico have "the same system of education and the same character of books" as the United States, that teachers be "Americans," and that students be instructed in the English language.⁶³

The commission's attitude about the power of education was similar to the attitude of those who believed that Native Americans could be Americanized in one generation. At times, the language of the report gives the school an almost mystical power. "Put an American schoolhouse in every valley and upon every hilltop in Porto [sic] Rico," the report states, "and in these places . . . American schoolteachers, and the cloud of ignorance, will disappear as the fog flies before the morning sun."⁶⁴

While the report stressed Americanization, it cannot be considered simply a cynical statement by a conquering power. In fact, the commission found that only 10 percent of the population was literate. Both the commission's report and the later actions by the commissioners of education were undertaken in the spirit of trying to help the Puerto Rican people. The problem was the assumption that U.S. institutions, customs, and beliefs were the best in the world and that they should be imposed. The attempt to help was accompanied by an attitude of moral and cultural superiority.

During his short tenure (1900-1901), Brumbaugh began the process of Americanization. In a letter to school supervisors, he stated, "No school has done its duty unless it has impressed devout patriotism upon the hearts and minds of all the children."⁶⁵ He recruited teachers from the United States. Most of these teachers spoke only English, which meant that by default their instruction was not bilingual. Every school on the island was given an American flag, with most of them being donated by the Lafayette Post, Army of the Republic, New York City. The raising of the U.S. flag was used to signal the commencement of classes. Patriotic exercises were organized in the school, with children being taught U.S. national songs such as "America," "Hail, Columbia," and "The Star-Spangled Banner."⁶⁶

Therefore, within only four years of being an autonomous nation, Puerto Rican children were being educated to shift their allegiance from Puerto Rico to another country. The introduction of George Washington's birthday as a school holiday was part of this process. Schools were told to impress on students Washington's "noble traits and broad statesmanship." Exercises were organized which consisted of singing U.S. patriotic songs and reading Washington's speeches. In San Juan, 25,000 students were involved in the celebration. In Brumbaugh's words, "These exercises have done much to Americanize the island, much more than any other single agency."⁶⁷

Letters were sent to teachers instructing them to celebrate, on June 14, 1901, the creation of the U.S. flag. Teachers were instructed to engage students in a celebration of the flag, beginning with a flag salute followed by the singing of the U.S. national anthem. Then teachers were to have students give speeches, recitations, and patriotic readings and to sing patriotic songs and to march to band music.

Learning English was considered an important part of the Americanization process. In any language are embedded the customs and values of a particular cul-

ture. Similar to American Indians, Puerto Rican Americans were taught English to build patriotism. In his annual report, Brumbaugh states, "The first English many of them knew was that of our national songs."⁶⁸ While many teachers from the United States were not capable of conducting bilingual instruction, Brumbaugh believed that Spanish should be taught along with English. But, Brumbaugh believed, teachers from the United States should be placed in kindergarten and elementary schools to begin English instruction as early as possible.

During Brumbaugh's tenure, Puerto Rican resistance to U.S. educational policies began to appear. They did so in the magazine *La Educación Moderna*, in a 1900 article, "English in the Schools." The article attacked "the spirit of . . . supremacy with which the English language is being imposed."⁶⁹

The second commissioner of education, Samuel Lindsay (1902-1904), introduced more policies designed to educate Puerto Rican children into the U.S. way of life. An important part of his program was sending Puerto Rican teachers and students to the United States to learn the English language and U.S. culture. These trips were designed to prepare Puerto Rican teachers to teach about the United States when they returned to the classroom.⁷⁰ Combined with the patriotic celebrations initiated during Brumbaugh's tenure, the program of study abroad was intended to inculcate the values of the dominant society in the United States.

Lindsay also began to tighten policies regarding the teaching of English. First, he included an examination in English as part of the general examination for gaining a teacher's certificate.⁷¹ Consider the impact of this requirement in the context of your own country. Imagine you were a teacher and suddenly, within four years of conquest, you were being examined on your knowledge of the language of the conquering country!

The language issue was taken one step further by Lindsay's successor, Roland Falkner. Falkner's impact on language policies extended far beyond his term, from 1904 to 1907. Falkner ordered that all instruction past the first grade be conducted in English. Of course, the major problem he encountered was that most Puerto Rican teachers did not know enough English to conduct instruction in that language. Consequently, as an incentive to improve their English skills, teachers were to be classified according to their scores on the English examination. In addition, the government provided English instruction for Puerto Rican teachers. Of course, it was impossible to convert an entire school system from one language to another in a short time, and therefore the results of the language policy were very spotty.

The journal *La Educación Moderna* launched an attack on the language policies. One Puerto Rican teacher complained in the journal that the instruction given by American teachers and that given by Puerto Rican teachers in English was having a disastrous effect on the students. The newspaper *La Democracia* editorialized that nothing could be done about the situation until the department of education was controlled by Puerto Rican Americans.⁷²

While the language issue continued as a source of friction between Puerto Rican teachers and U.S. authorities, the next commissioner of education, Edwir Dexter (1907-1912), tried to increase the significance of patriotic celebrations in the schools. Although the Fourth of July was not a date in the school calendar Dexter dressed a group of schoolchildren in red, white, and b. . . and marched their

through the streets of San Juan under a large patriotic banner. Also, Dexter considered the celebration of Washington's and Lincoln's birthdays and Memorial Day to be an important means of teaching English, because all events on those days were conducted in that language. Adding to these activities, Dexter introduced military drill into the schools.⁷³

In 1912, Puerto Rican teachers organized the Teachers Association to resist the policies of the commissioner of education. The teachers' magazine *La Educación Moderna* heralded the event: "Day after day we have worked for the defense of our mother tongue and at last today we see our efforts and publicity crowned with success by the meeting of the Teachers Association."⁷⁴

During the term of Commissioner of Education Edward Bainter (1912–1915), the Teachers Association started to campaign to resume teaching in Spanish. The organization passed a resolution calling for the teaching of arithmetic in Spanish. In 1914, the organization requested that Spanish be used as the language of instruction in the first four years of grammar school with English being taught as a subject.

In 1915, resistance to the imposition of English sparked a student strike at Central High School in San Juan. The strike occurred when a student, Francisco Grovas, was expelled for collecting signatures to support legislation that would require Spanish to be the language of instruction in the Puerto Rican schools. This caused Commissioner of Education Paul Miller (1915–1921) to proclaim that any student participating in a strike would be suspended from school indefinitely.⁷⁵

The strike at Central High School reflected a rising wave of nationalism and calls for independence. Despite the imposition of citizenship, students and other groups continued to campaign for independence. One dramatic outbreak of nationalism occurred in 1921 during graduation exercises at Central High School when a student orator waved a Puerto Rican flag and cheered for independence. Commissioner Miller responded by ordering the removal of "the enemy flag" from the auditorium. Students responded that if the flag were removed, they would leave the ceremonies.⁷⁶

Tensions increased in the 1920s with the appointment of the first Puerto Rican to the post of commissioner of education. As commissioner from 1921 to 1930, Juan B. Huyke imposed Americanization programs with a vengeance. Appointed because he favored assimilation to the United States in contrast to independence, Huyke called the independence movement unfortunate and stated his belief that it would shortly disappear from the minds of Puerto Rican Americans. He considered Puerto Rico to be "as much a part of the United States as is Ohio or Kentucky."⁷⁷ Defining Americanism as patriotism, "He that does not want to be a teacher of Americanism would do well not to follow me in my work."⁷⁸

Committed to Americanization, Huyke resisted attempts to return to Spanish as the language of instruction. Huyke required that all high school seniors pass an oral English examination before they could graduate. School newspapers written in Spanish were banned. English became the required language at teachers' meetings, and teachers were asked to use English in informal discussions with students. School rankings were based on students' performance on English examinations.

Student clubs were established to promote the speaking of English. Teachers who were unable or unwilling to use English in instruction were asked to resign.⁷⁹

Similar to his predecessors, Huyke linked the ability to speak English to the learning of patriotism. This was exemplified by the creation of the School Society for the Promotion and Study of English Language for all eighth, ninth, and tenth graders in Puerto Rico. Supporting patriotism and English, society members were required to wear small American flags in their buttonholes and speak only English. For the celebration of American Education Week in 1921, Huyke recommended as a topic for a speech "American Patriotism—wear the flag in your heart as well as in your buttonhole."⁸⁰ In the monthly publication of the Department of Education of Puerto Rico, *Puerto Rico School Review*, Huyke summarized the attitudes about the role of the school in the colonialization of Puerto Rico: "Our schools are agencies of Americanism. They must implant the spirit of America within the hearts of our children."⁸¹

CONCLUSION: RESISTANCE TO LANGUAGE POLICIES

Deculturalization and Americanization policies have been resisted by subjected populations. Resistance to Huyke's policies came from the Puerto Rican Teachers Association and from students. The Teachers Association protested the lack of material on Puerto Rico in the curriculum and the failure to recognize Puerto Rican holidays and celebrations in the school calendar. They complained about the fact that out of the seventeen high school principals in Puerto Rico, only five were Puerto Rican. And, of course, they protested the English-language policies. Protest marches by university students were branded by Huyke as "aggressively anti-American" and students were expelled. Professors were warned to stop their support of the protests or resign their positions.⁸²

Increasing protests over school policies eventually resulted in the Padin Reform of 1934, which restricted English-language instruction to high school and made content instruction in the upper elementary grades in Spanish. But textbooks remained in English. During the 1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt urged a bilingual policy with a stress on the importance of learning English. In Roosevelt's words, "But bilingualism will be achieved . . . only if the teaching of English . . . is entered into at once with vigor, purposefulness, and devotion, and with the understanding that English is the official language of our country."⁸³

In 1946, the Teachers Association was able to pressure the Puerto Rican legislature into passing a bill requiring that instruction in public schools be given in Spanish. President Harry Truman vetoed the bill. From the perspective of many Puerto Rican Americans, the language issue could be resolved only by giving the island more political autonomy. On October 30, 1950, President Truman signed the Puerto Rican Commonwealth Bill, which provided for a plebiscite to determine whether Puerto Rico should remain a colony or become a commonwealth. In 1951, Puerto Rican Americans voted for commonwealth status despite protests by those urging Puerto Rican independence. Commonwealth status gave Puerto Rican

Americans greater control of their school systems, and consequently Spanish was restored in the schools.⁸⁴

As I suggested at the beginning of the chapter, the language issue would continue to be the common education issue within the Hispanic/Latino community. Should Spanish or English be the language of instruction? Or should instruction be bilingual? Whatever the answer to these questions, the Spanish language will continue to be the source of identity for the Hispanic/Latino community.

NOTES

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