BROWN PAPERS

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MACRI

MEXICAN AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS INSTITUTE

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Current Ideas on Mexican American Civil Rights

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In This Issue:

Founded in San Antonio, Texas in 2019, the Mexican American Civil Rights Institute (MACRI), is the premier national organization dedicated to chronicling and advancing the Mexican American community's civil rights efforts in the U.S. For more information, visit www.somosMACRI.org or contact us at info@somosMACRI.org.

Cover photo: Members of the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) protest on the campus of Our Lady of the Lake University, 1968. Courtesy UTSA Special Collections Library.

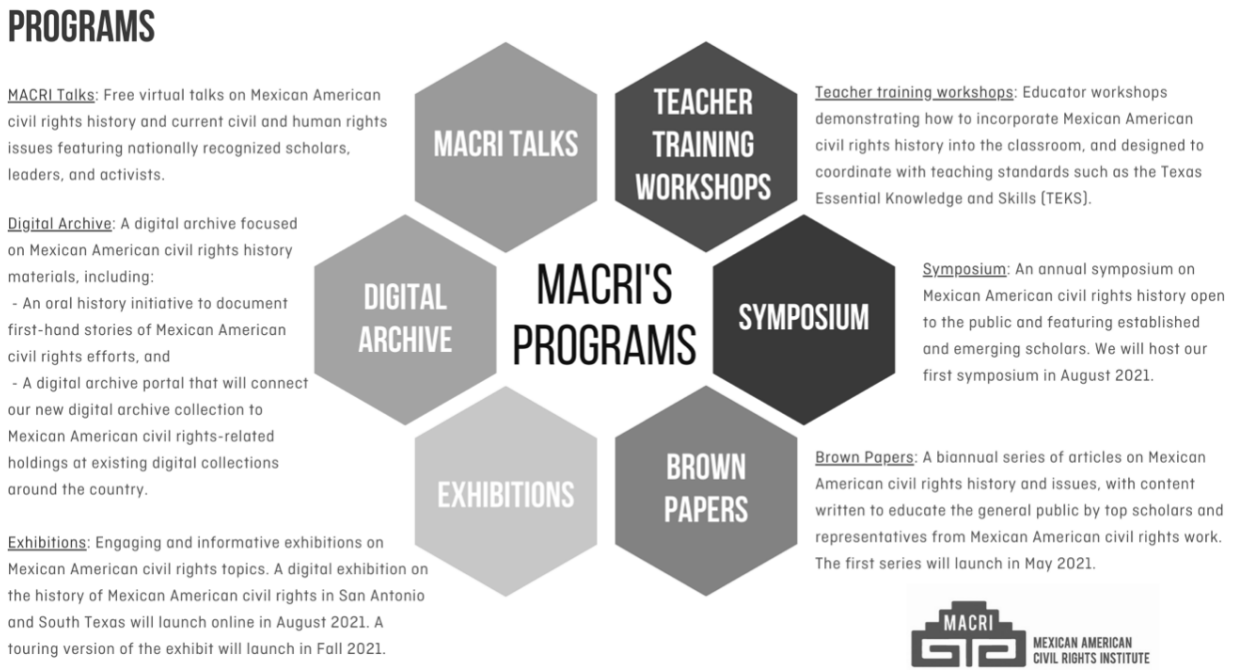
EDITOR'S NOTE

Sarah Zenaida Gould, PhD

A few months after the 2017 presidential inauguration I was riding in a taxi in Mexico City and the driver asked me how I liked my new president. Using my best fifth generation Tejana Spanish, I told him I was worried. Worried for my Mexican American community, worried for all the immigrants living and working in the US, worried for all of us. Well, that's what I meant to say, but I couldn't remember the word for worry so instead I said "tengo miedo" - I'm afraid. And that wasn't entirely wrong, but it also wasn't the full story. I didn't have the language to explain that my family left Mexico more than a century ago during the Revolution to get away from violence, but they entered a land full of its own kind of violence, but still, despite these challenges, my family's history and the histories of so many other Mexican Americans gave me an unwavering confidence in our community's resilience. Sadly, the anti-Mexican rhetoric of the moment was nothing new and we would survive it, just like we survived the gasoline and pesticide baths, the forced repatriations, the poll taxes, the language tests, the redlining, the school segregation, and all the other discriminatory and unethical policies that have been inescapable realities for generations of people living and working in the United States.

Little did I know that the events that would unfold over the next few years would lead me to join a group of people working to create the nation's first public history institute dedicated to Mexican American civil rights history – the Mexican American Civil Rights Institute (MACRI). As a historian and curator committed to increasing access to meaningful history to people of all ages and all walks of life, this endeavor could not feel more timely or more urgent.

Since launching to the public in 2020, MACRI has initiated six program areas, one of which is the biannual publication of *Brown Papers*, a series of articles on Mexican American civil rights history and contemporary issues, with content written by top scholars and representatives from Mexican American civil rights work to engage the general public in thinking more deeply about where we've been and where we're going.



I am excited to share with you our inaugural issue of *Brown Papers*! Each article reflects the views and ideas of its authors. In this issue, we focus on public education and voting. First, noted Chicano Movement leader and scholar José Angel Gutiérrez offers a passionate argument in favor of expanding Mexican American Studies in Texas public schools. Next, we have a transcript of a panel presented as part of MACRI's Virtual Launch in August 2020 – "Mexican American Civil Rights & Public Education"- a conversation moderated by Lilliana Patricia Saldaña featuring three education policy experts, Viridiana Carrizales, Celina Moreno, and Marisa Pérez-Díaz. Finally, demographer Rogelio Sáenz dives into the Texas Latino vote in the 2020 presidential election, searching for answers about that elusive blue wave.

I hope you will find these articles thought provoking and perhaps they will even inspire you to learn more about public education and voting. A new issue of *Brown Papers* will be released later this, year but MACRI's virtual programming will continue to bring you fresh content all year-round. Our program calendar can be found at www.somosMACRI.org.

Finally, I want to thank our funders and supporters, especially the City of San Antonio, Bexar County, Wells Fargo, Patronato members, and all of our individual donors, who have made this possible! ¡Mil gracias!

A LOGOMACHY ON MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDIES FOR TEXAS

José Angel Gutiérrez, *Emeritus*, PhD, JD

#1. Why do we need Mexican American Studies in Texas and what have been the institutional, structural, and epistemological obstructions to creating such?

#2. Why should local school boards create and maintain Mexican American Studies as their major curricular component that meets state mandated regulations for a core curriculum and graduation requirements?

#3. Who will be the future students that need such a curriculum and what role should state associations of school board and elected/appointed officials and ethnic studies faculty organizations play in building and maintaining Mexican American Studies in all 1,247 independent school districts (ISD's) in the state of Texas?[1]

 # 4. What is the plan?

[1] Not to be considered here are charter schools, private schools, religious order schools or ISD's under state supervision who represent interests intending to privatize public education for personal profit.

#1a. Why do we need Mexican American Studies in Texas?

Because since 2010-11, a decade ago, the majority of students in Texas public schools were of Mexican origin. Together with their cultural cousins from other historical Spanish heritage countries, they have constituted 50.3 % of all students. They have become the majority of students.

#1b. Who has been in the way obstructing such a curricular change toward creating the discipline of Mexican American Studies in the state?

The Obstructionists: Anglo-centric Regulators which have been **t**he Texas Education Agency (TEA); the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE); The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, (THECB); and, the various systems of higher education in the state have been the four major state agencies with some stake and political control over local ISD's. Local school boards, however, are autonomous and responsible for all policy, personnel, resource allocation, and taxation related to the political jurisdiction of their ISD. Typically, a local school board will contract for a term of years at varying salary rates and or bonuses with the educational leader, the School Superintendent. The Superintendent in turn will recommend all personnel-- educational, supportive, and maintenance—for hiring by the school board. Either the school Superintendent runs the school board, or the school board runs the Superintendent, usually the former given the professional degrees, experience, and interview skills held by the Superintendent to be and not held by individual school board members. The school board, after this hire, is relegated to voting on policy matters, expenditures, personnel recommendations, and tax rates/values usually prepared by the Superintendent.

The Anglo-centric regulators historically have only seen one purpose for public education in Texas: the making of Anglos out of all students. These entities either need to be reformed if not abolished. TEA is somewhat necessary only to keep data and monitor ISD reporting on attendance, curriculum adherence, solvency, and school finance.

The SBOE is a relic. It is obsolete and totally unnecessary for the statewide public education mission. They are elected from 15 districts statewide, such large geographic areas that they are totally unrepresentative and subject to partisan gerrymandering (compare with only 31 state senators, for example). There is nothing they do that cannot be done by TEA or ISD's themselves. The SBOE, not teachers or experts in the fields, choose textbooks; they invest teacher retirement funds; and approve the testing instruments to measure educational accomplishment by grade levels. Each of these is a boondoggle and windfall for the elected officials and those they chose to help them with these three tasks. There is no reason a teacher or an ISD staff person cannot decide where to place their retirement funds either a private investment firm or even Social Security System. SBOE should be abolished by the Legislature or by constitutional amendment from the voters.

THECB is the oversight body over 38 universities incorporated into 6 statewide systems whose leadership, regents, are political appointees of the governor. Regents in turn choose the president or chancellor (interchangeable terms) of each system and each university. THECB is not needed, another relic and a very partisan political one. many cases. Political appointees should not be the leadership of public universities.

Every faculty senate at every institution is perfectly capable and qualified to choose its own campus educational leader for a non-renewable term, say 10 years. Every division, college, unit within each university, say Science or Social Science, has faculty who can and should elect their own Dean to run its division, college, or unit, for a non-renewable term of say 7 years. The same applies to departments. Faculty should choose their leadership from among their ranks.

There are 61 community college districts in Texas, each governed by an elected body of Trustees, also very partisanly gerrymandered. These Trustees choose the president or chancellor (interchangeable terms) to administer the educational program and staff. The faculty should be doing this just like the recommendation for the university systems. The only unique feature about community colleges is a tax base and open admissions policy.

Anyone can enroll. The majority of "Hispanic" students and other minorities enroll in community colleges and that is the extent of their higher education.

In Texas, 42 of these community colleges qualify and are listed as part of the network of Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI's). More on this program later.

The community colleges and ISD's should be collapsed into 254 units, just like the number of counties in the state with jurisdiction inside those county lines. That should be the jurisdiction and tax base for all public education pre-K to community college. The immediate benefit is financially enormous, no 1,247 school superintendents needed, only 254. The tax base can be finally equalized and made fair across the board. No more rich or poor school districts or community college, all share the statewide tax base on a per capita basis.[2]

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[2]Education in the US is NOT a Fundamental Right; It is a State Matter. Demetrio Rodriguez, San Antonio, wanted is daughter to attend another school district and not Edgewood ISD, the segregated Mexican one on the west side of the city. He sued and lost kin state courts. He sued again in federal court and lost again. SCOTUS ruled that education was not a fundamental right in the US Constitution therefore it was a state matter. His case was sent back to Texas. At that time, the Chicano Civil Rights Movement was in full swing under the leadership of the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO). Beginning in 1967 and into the 1970s we organized school boycotts to shut down school districts which were not educating us, Chicanos, progeny of Mexican origin people in the US. Sad to say, there is no data base of all these walkouts.[2] In 1973 to protest the Rodriguez case outcome, MAYO led a huge demonstration down Congress Avenue toward the state capitol and took possession of the entire building. There were 3 major pushbacks to this protest. First, the US flagpole was removed from the front of the building and place on top of the Capitol so no one, like MAYO, could ever pull down the US flag. Second, the legislature made it a felony to promote, organize, lead, sponsor, join, etc. a school boycott in Texas. Regardless, this era is the beginning of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement across the nation. Third, the Texas Legislature has failed to develop an equitable school finance system for all ISD's since then, half a century and going without a solution. Poor districts remain poor, rich districts remain rich. Mexican origin kids, and others born in such ISD cannot divorce their parents and move to rich districts, anymore they can change their skin color, physical appearance, family income, or teachers. The solution is a statewide system of land appraisals and market values based on counties, statewide collection, and disbursement to each ISD based on per capita enrollment. Another solution is to eliminate the religious tax exemption for all churches, private religious schools, and property holdings. Religion, organized ones, are a business and should be taxed as any other business property.

Compare and Contrast States on Public Education: Where is a Better Chance for Success?

To continue systemic unequal education opportunity based on disparate funding formulas to ISD's should be made a criminal offense and with personal civil liability for each legislator and governor who continues the practice. Compare an index, A Chance for Success, in which various indicators, including school finance, measure and predict the chance for success for each student in that survey. Money wins especially in the states of the Northwest and the losers are states in the south, including Texas.[2]

The Leaky Pipeline

#2. Why should local school boards create and maintain Mexican American Studies as their major curricular component that meets state mandated regulations for a core curriculum and graduation requirements?

Because Hispanic students in Texas ISD's, mostly of Mexican origin, are now the majority. Majority rule is a foundational tenet of American democracy and in every state. In 2017-18, Hispanic students were 52.4% of all public-school students. Why then do the state obstructionists continue to require the teaching and education of only a minority of white students who in this same academic year were not the majority? And they will never be into the future. Black, Asian, and Native American students are also a small percentage of students.

It is past due time to end Anglo-centric education in Texas.

Our Local School Board Members in Texas should take the lead in this educational and transformational reform. The National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO) publishes an annual directory of such officials by federal, state, and local office held. In 2019, there were 6,832 "Education School Board" members in the nation, with no further

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If a Mexican origin student is able to graduate from high school, the obstacles to continued academic success begin to mount. According to Jorge Chapa and Belinda de la Rosa in "The Problematic Pipeline: Demographic Trends and Latino Participation in Graduate Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Programs," in 2000 Latinos of college age population were 17.5% nationwide, but only 10.8% graduated from high school. From community colleges, the overwhelming choice for Latinos in higher education, only 9.9% of those who enrolled graduated and only 6.6% went on to obtain a bachelor's degree. Only 3.8%of all doctoral degree candidates were Latinos.[2] Incredibly, at UT-Austin, one of two Tier 1 research universities in the state, the 2019 website deliberately hides that few if any of the PhD graduate students were Latino stressing instead the high number of Asian and foreign students enrolled. I assume nothing statistically has changed over the last 20 years at UT-Austin STEM graduate programs. Our tax dollars are going to educate the foreign students from Asia and other countries but not our own.

Comparison with Black Experience

Regardless of viewpoint on historic segregation and resource-poor opportunities, black higher education did create a black professional class because they could credential one another, they could certify and degree their students. And did so for many centuries. We do not have a comparable experience. In fact, not until 1992 that the Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI program began did some of this change, but not much. The HSI program is more Hispanic Using than Hispanic Serving. The main advocacy organization, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) is based in San Antonio, Texas. During the Obama two-term presidency, HSI programming was run by a black male. Occasionally, a Latino or Latina heads the program. In 2016, the majority of such government funded institutions were in Puerto Rico.

description other than Latino, and gender There were 1422 females in such positions and 1,113 males. In Texas during 2019, there were 1,076 "Education School Board" members of which 698 were females and 398 were males. It appears that service on a school board is a female endeavor. On the other hand, or I should say at the other end of the board meeting table is usually a white, male, superintendent in charge of a Mexican origin majority student body. Few "Latina" school superintendents exist, according to Pauline M. Simpson and Marie Davenport's research. In 2009, they found very few Latina school superintendents in Texas and when present on the job, it was at a small rural ISD of up to 1,499 students. The Latina Superintendent was between 51-60 years old, prior experience as teacher, married, with grown children.[3]

What does this say about Mexican origin school superintendents in Texas, male or female? Why are there few to non-Mexican origin school superintendents? Are there no qualified applicants interested in the job at this or that ISD? Can only white males lead Mexican origin majority school districts as school superintendents. How does a Latina school trustee begin to challenge or question a white male superintendent on policy, budget allocations, personnel choices, strategic plans, community services, drop-out prevention, and the like? Or a male trustee for that matter.

The biggest and most effective ally in this needed transformational reform is MASBA: The Mexican American School Board Association in Texas.
In the late 1960s as part of a Chicano faculty response to the demands being made by protesting Chicano students boycotting classes, Dr. Simon Gonzalez at UCLA's College of Education wrote a grant to establish the Educational Task Force de la Raza. Once funded, he set about hiring a local representative to help these protesting students and those who succeeded in getting the first cohort group of school board trustees elected. In Texas he chose José Angel Cardenas, one of five Chicano school superintendents in the state, to be the Task Force's lead man in 1968. Dr. Cardenas became the 5th superintendent of Mexican

[3] "Current Women Superintendents in Texas: Still a Minority," *Journal for Women in Executive leadership*, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, July 2010.

origin as a result of a walkout demand by Chicano Students at Edgewood ISD. When Dr. Cardenas convened an organizing meeting there were two small groups in one room of the Tropicana Hotel in San Antonio, each in a corner. One group was comprised of a handful of Chicano college and university faculty and another were the handful of Chicano school board trustees.

I was torn between the two groups because I was among the first Chicano Trustees of the Crystal City ISD and I also wanted to be part of a Chicano faculty association. I was about to obtain my PhD in Government and Chicano Studies from the University of Texas at Austin. I opted for the latter, forming the Texas Association of Chicanos In Higher Education, (TACHE). The other corner formed MASBA.[4]

#3. Who is the future of the US and why do we need Mexican American Studies now?
Because we are the future of the US. The two letters, US in USA is and will be those of us of Mexican origin together with our Hispanic cousins going into the future. The projection of population for 2050 is that Hispanics will be one in three persons in the US. Therefore, over the next 30 years the Hispanic population in this Occupied Mexico in the US numbering in 2019 about 59 million plus another 5-11 million of undocumented Mexicans also residing in the US will become the critical mass of all peoples in the US. This role of critical mass or one of every three persons is new. We are the future. In the other traditional Mexico, there are another 137.2 million in 2015. Together, this One Mexico is comprised of no less than 207 million people, divided into two parts for now.

#4. What is the plan?
First, let us all understand that an ISD is usually the largest employer, largest business, largest consumer, and largest brain trust in any given city or area. Each of these components needs to be developed into an economic engine for the area of the ISD and when possible in collaboration or joint partnership with an adjacent(s) ISD. As brain trust

[4] My wife and I wrote the biography of the organization, *The Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education*, (Mt. Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Press, 2103).

they have the fiduciary duty to make ready our children for any college and professional degree.

All vested groups, primarily ISD's and MAS programs at college and university level must pledge to end the "leaky pipeline" with annual reduction in compensation for the top executives in administration of no less than 5% of total package not returnable until an improvement of no less than 3% is had at associate and bachelor degree attainment and 2% at PhD and or professional degrees.[5]

An ISD, preferably in McAllen, Edinburg, Mission or Hidalgo should vote to adopt a PreK-12 B3, MAS curriculum. The local Education Region Service Center should sign an MOU as well as UTRGV, the university, to develop, implement and train ISD faculty on the pedagogy of this new discipline. Let those who oppose seek to intervene in the courts while the MAS program, gets started and data collection to show how better off students are under this discipline than the Anglo-centric one of centuries past.

The ISD's with jurisdiction within a 100-mile band of US-Mexico border have a special obligation and duty in Texas and the nation including all of Alaska and Hawaii. The adults and children without lawful status for US authorities living in these areas are hostages. They cannot go back where they came from given all they risked to get here and they cannot go further without risking death due to the new inland Border Patrol checkpoints.[6]

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[5] If a Mexican origin student is able to graduate from high school, the obstacles to continued academic success begin to mount. According to Jorge Chapa and Belinda de la Rosa in "The Problematic Pipeline: Demographic Trends and Latino Participation in Graduate Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Programs," in 2000 Latinos of college age population were 17.5% nationwide, but only 10.8% graduated from high school. From community colleges, the overwhelming choice for Latinos in higher education, only 9.9% of those who enrolled graduated and only 6.6% went on to obtain a bachelor's degree. Only 3.8%of all doctoral degree candidates were Latinos.[5] Incredibly, at UT-Austin, one of two Tier 1 research universities in the state, the 2019 website deliberately hides that few if any of the PhD graduate students were Latino stressing instead the high number of Asian and foreign students enrolled. I assume nothing statistically has changed over the last 20 years at UT-Austin STEM graduate programs. Our tax dollars are going to educate the foreign students from Asia and other countries but not our own.

[6] See Todd Miller, *Border Patrol Nation: Dispatches from the Front Line of Homeland Security*, (San Francisco: City Lights Bookstore, 2014). On page opposite page of chapter one (p11) is the 100-mile zone map. As of 2008, 52 percent of all US Border Patrol agents were of various Hispanic origins, primarily Mexican. The new border police are our own relatives. Our Hispanic agents hunt other unlawful Mexicans and immigrants. See

According to V. Terriquez, head of Chicano Studies at UC-Santa Cruz, 1 in 4 children in these zones are foreign born also. Together, this population and all other Hispanic cultural cousins wherever they live were not born here, raised here, schooled here. They are and have been since the mid-1980s when this type of immigration increased many times over, strangers to the lived experience of Mexican origin people. Yet they live among us and are ISD students. MAS needs to provide them with the pedagogy and discipline to know what the rest of us have lived and learned as the largest minority in the US and that they too share a Spanish history before dismemberment by the English throne and colonizers of the mid-1650s.

Each ISD should have a credit union for all its employees and all should be encouraged to join.

Each ISD should have an array of Farm to Market cooperative ventures to provide food, jobs, training, and charitable donations for those in need. The major ones should be a chicken raising operation, a pig farm, a fish farm, and a vegetable growing set of green houses.[7]

Each ISD should have its own mechanic shop to maintain and repair vehicles and provide the energy to run the automotive fleet such as buses, cars, trucks, heavy equipment. The ISD should contract with a major refinery for gasoline, diesel, lubricants, propane. butane, natural gas, and any other energy to make available, based on membership in the credit union and as employee of the ISD any such energy at a highly discounted rate.

James Pinkerton, "Hispanic Agents Hold 52% of Border Patrol Jobs," *Houston Chronicle*, December 29, 2008, at https://chron.com/news/article/Hispanic-Border-Patrol-52-percent-of-Border-Patrol-jobs/1528577.php/

[7] I have done this three times before, latest in 2016-19. For example, a sow can have 3 litters per year, each comprised of anywhere from 12-18 piglets. This is a lot of pigs and food source. Same with chickens and breeding which will produce hundreds of dozens of eggs, chicks, roosters, and eventually older hens. A green house will produce tons of any vegetable all year round that can be harvested, cleaned, chopped, packaged and made available to students as salads which they will not eat unless it has an array of dressings such as Ranch, the current favorite. IN this packaged form with Ranch, students will eat kale, spinach, cabbage, carrots, etc.

Each ISD should form a buying club for its employees and in collaboration with adjacent ISDs to purchase paper, inkjets, toner, zip drives, computers, laptops, tablets, and the like consumables needed always.

Each ISD should create its own shop to build computers--desktop, laptops, and tablets—to learn to repair and make them. This same shop should be the center for teaching AI
At the next MASBA annual convention in San Antonio, February 2021, the organization should pass a Resolution demanding Mexican American Studies be made the principal and core curriculum in all Texas ISD's. Related legislative initiatives passed by MASBA should be to abolish the TBOE and THECB, and reform TEA.

MASBA should seek legislative reform to collapse existing ISD's into only 254, one ISD per county and make uniform a statewide appraisal of property market values with a tax rate for the various categories of land uses. All religious tax exemptions should be ended in the state, organized religion is a business.

The 20 Regional Education Service Centers should be mandated to prepare within twelve months a discipline with core curriculum in STEM, Humanities, Arts, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Economic Development, and Kinesiology (including organized sports) based on the Mexican origin heritage and lived experience with supplements for other Hispanic groups, whites, blacks, Asians, and Native Americans.

The STEM curriculum should begin being imparted at the 4th-5th grade through 12, no exceptions. All students must take and pass Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, Calculus, Biology, Geology, and Astronomy.

The AI curriculum should begin being imparted at the 4th -5th grade through 12, no exceptions. All students must take coding, data analysis, metadata collection and analysis, robotics, and block chain technology.

The Humanities, Arts, Economic Development and Kinesiology curriculum should be based on Mexican origin foundations and secondarily on other interests manifested in other parts of the country such as rowing, swimming, ice hockey, golf, tennis, bowling, gymnastics, wrestling, boxing, and the like. An alternative would be to develop student exchange programs within families, a semester each, for students to travel and attend school for these purposes in other parts of the country.

All ISD's and their credit unions should make possible money for travelships, not just academic scholarships, so students can travel abroad or intranational for specific program opportunities.

All ISD's should adopt a B3 curriculum as a strategic plan for all students.[8]

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[8] Spanish Language is Rich in Heritage and Linguistic History. The overall goal, regarding language, for Texas public school students is to become fully a B3 person, bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate. Most of our public-school children will speak English, learn to write, and read it. Few if any are fully B3 in Spanish and English. Only one Texas-based university, the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV), has committed as part of its strategic plan to ensure all future graduates are fully B3. Texas has been cruelling in denying persons of Mexican origin their civil rights, especially language rights. They used race and language as divide and conquer devices. When convenient we were considered White, when not, just Mexican. Being Mexican was justifiable homicide and murder by any white person, certainly law enforcement the infamous Texas Rangers. One court case in particular should be taught beginning in the middle grades. This case is not even taught in the law schools in the state or nation. *Hernandez v Texas* is the case, a 1953 case in which Pedro Hernandez shot and killed another Mexican in a bar confrontation. He was tried and found guilty by a jury of 12 white men. On appeals that this jury was not one of his peers as constitutionally mandated he lost until his case was moved over to the federal courts. In one of the trials, the Mexican lawyers had to take a break for bodily needs and looked for a bathroom. Heading toward the one they thought was available they were stopped, escorted downstairs to another bathroom with a sign that read, "Colored Men y Hombres Aqui." A segregated bathroom sign became evidence that being classified or labeled white did not mean you were treated as white. Supreme Court Justice Earl Warren, who earlier had heard about the Mendez v. Westminster case when he was governor of California understood the treatment meted to people of Mexican origin and ruled that from then on, 1954, Mexicans, while they may be white are not treated as whites and deserve to be a Class Apart and protected under the US Constitution. That is when Mexican origin people and by extension, all other cultural cousins, got civil rights coverage and protections in the US.[8]

Regardless of the Hernandez case, speaking of Spanish in the public schools was prohibited and physically punished. Not until bilingual education was allowed in 1968 did some practice of learning and teaching of Spanish began to take place. The language demand was always part and parcel of the protest demands during school boycotts and walkouts of the late 1960s.

<u>Learning Spanish is Liberation</u>

In the year 711 the African-based Islamic forces successfully invaded what is now Spain. They remained in power and possession until 1491. During those 800 years or so many language borrowings between Arabic and Spanish took place. Approximately, 23 percent of alleged "Castilian Spanish" is actually an Arabic-based borrowing. Such words as *alfombra, algodon, alhuamda, alambre,* even *Adios* for example are from Arabic.

Finally, a research project should be created now by the Mexican American Civil Rights Institute (MACRI) to do two major tasks: 1. Update Rodolfo F. Acuña's *The Making of Chicana/o Studies: In the Trenches of Academe* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011). Every program listed in that work should be re-contacted with an updated survey questionnaire to be returned and used as a current data base of existing programs related to our Texas Mexican American Studies discipline. 2. Draft a proposal for submission to major funding sources to create a new Mexican American School Superintendent preparation program. Let us train our own school superintendents once again.[9]

All HSI grant funds directed at colleges and universities should move away from adding more support programs and increasing non-teaching faculty and staff salaries. The focus should be on graduation and retention from Associate Degrees at community colleges to

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Typically, all words in Spanish that begin with "al" are Arabic in origin. *A Dios* or to God was a compromise to avoid violence. A person just said "To God" without naming Mohammad or Jesus as a prophet. Another good example is the used to this day of *O'jala* or Allah willing. Does anyone know what they are saying and why when these words are used? Can you imagine the impact on a young child to reach back to 711 and trace his language history to that era and its current use?

Hernan Cortes and the thousands of Spaniards and some Africans that crossed the Atlantic beginning in 1492 to conquer the "Indies" (Americas) met up with a dominant empire, that of the *Meshicas* or *Aztecas* who spoke *Nahuatl*. As in the case of Arabic, the "Castilian Spanish" contains another 20-25% of words that are Nahuatl-based. Examples are *chocolate, tomate, aguacate, zinzontle, mesquite*, for example. All words that end in "te" previously "tle" in actual Nahuatl were too difficult ot pronounce by the Spanish speakers, so they just dropped the "tle" for "te."

Spanish also has allowed borrowings going into English such as *patio, rodeo, lariat, mesa, canyon, corral, calaboose, vigilante*, for example.

Just imagine teaching a class in Spanish and pointing out these borrowings that make current students no less than pentilingual speakers; Spanish, Nahuatl, Arabic, English and their own *pocho* Chicano such as *orale, chale, simon, canton, ranfla, ruca, refin, tacos, burritos, chalupas, chuco*, for example.

[9] In 1973, I wrote a proposal to the Carnegie Corporation for several million dollars to train Chicano superintendents in Texas. Dr. Jose Angel Cardenas was my collaborator and he built IDRA on the issue of school finance from the same funding source and was my top academic resource for that training. A second collaborator was Dr. Tomas Arciniega, then with San Diego State University. The program was continued when I became the County Judge for Zavala County, Texas. All total after 5 years, there were 50 new, fully certified, Chicano/a school superintendents in Texas. Additionally, all entities listed here, but MASBA in particular, should demand all national foundations prepare an audit that shows their history of philanthropy toward the Mexican origin people in the US and other Hispanics. These foundations enjoy a tax exemption yet do not fund, nor have they in the past, this ethnic community. In 2020, the bulk of funding leaves the US and in 2020 more foundations than ever before are led by African Americans and not Hispanics who are the largest and most needy group compared to all others.

bachelor's degrees at colleges and universities. It is well established now that the focus on educational opportunity is myopic. The focus now should be on educational outcome… Graduation with degrees, professional and advanced. Draft Memorandums of Understanding, MOU's, between ISD's and the nearest HSI college or university to focus on outcomes that ensure graduation. Why did some of us succeed in PhD and obtaining professional degrees? Why do others not? Is this to remain a mystery without explanation and remedy for more decades into 2050?

MACRI, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), and MASBA should begin a fundraising drive to create endowed chairs on MAS in Texas and at other colleges and universities. These funds should be made available under an MOU to HSI institutions and HACU to match and create such endowed chairs. Guidelines for such a use of HSI grant monies permit this allocation given matching yet no program that I know of ever has.

MEXICAN AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS & PUBLIC EDUCATION[1]

Viridiana Carrizales, Celina Moreno, Marisa Pérez-Díaz, and Lilliana Patricia Saldaña, PhD

Lilliana Patricia Saldaña, PhD: Good morning. My name is Lilliana Patricia Saldaña and I'm an associate professor in Mexican American Studies and I'm a proud board member of the newly inaugurated Mexican American Civil Rights Institute. On behalf of the Institute, I want to welcome you, and I want to welcome our esteemed guests here today who will speak about Mexican American civil rights and public education.

Our three guests today are Celina Moreno, Viridiana Carrizales, and Marisa Pérez-Díaz. I want to introduce our esteemed guests.

Celina Morena is the President and CEO of the Intercultural Development Research Association, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to the equity and excellence in education. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by providing dynamic training, useful research, evaluation, and frameworks for action, timely policy analyses, and innovative materials and student parent leadership programs. Ms. Moreno is an invited

[1] This is a transcript of a presentation at MACRI's Virtual Launch on August 14, 2020. The video can be found on MACRI's Facebook and YouTube pages.

member of the Texas 2036 Advisory Committee on Maximizing Education Resources for Texas 2036's Education Resource Project. She previously served as the interim Southwest Regional Council for MALDEF, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, the nation's leading Latino legal civil rights organization. At MALDEF, she successfully represented dreamers to defend DACA and against a separate lawsuit that would have invalidated the Texas DREAM Act. Ms. Moreno also served as trial and appellate co-counsel in the challenge against the inequity and inadequacy of the Texas school finance system. She represented Bexar County and the cities of San Antonio, El Paso and others against Texas' anti-immigrant Senate Bill 4. She served as co-counsel in the Texas redistricting case seeking to protect the rights of Latino voters, in a case challenging the conditions and the detention of an asylum-seeking woman at the Hutto Residential Center, and in a case representing the American GI Forum to reverse a "Whites-only" cemetery policy. She received a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Texas at Austin, a master's degree in public policy from the Harvard Kennedy School focusing on education, and a law degree from the University of Houston. In her hometown of San Antonio, she was appointed to the Mayor's Commission on the Status of Women and the board of the Martinez Street Women's Center, a nonprofit seeking to empower women and girls. She currently serves on the advisory council of Hispanic Scholarship Fund. Thank you, Celina Moreno for joining us today. It is a great honor to have you here.

Our next guest is Viridiana Carrizales. Viridiana is, co-founder, chief executive officer, and board president of ImmSchools, an immigrant led nonprofit organization that partners with K through 12 schools and educators to support undocumented students and families by leading professional development, immigrant centered workshops, and organizing for immigrant family policies. Viridiana was born in Michoacán, Mexico and immigrated with her family to the United States when she was 11 years old. She began her journey as an immigrant activist in 2004 by c- founding a grassroots organization dedicated to organizing and informing undocumented students of their rights and access to higher education. Viridiana holds bachelor's degrees in Spanish literature and communications from the University of Texas at Austin. For five years, she led Teach for America's efforts to recruit and place teachers with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, DACA, in classrooms

throughout the country. Through her leadership, the program recruited over 240 DACAmented educators for teaching in 22 cities across 11 states. Viridiana has been recognized by the League of United American citizens and the Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce for her leadership and dedication to the immigration community. After 14 years, she became a US citizen in 2016 and currently resides in San Antonio, Texas. Thank you, Viridiana for joining us today.

And our next guest is Marisa B. Pérez-Díaz. She is the District 3 [Texas] State Board of Education member. She is the youngest Latina nationally to have ever been elected to serve on the State Board of Education and is now serving her third term on the Board, having been reelected in 2014 and 2018. Pérez-Díaz served on the Committee on Instruction from January 2013 to December 2016. Since January 2017, she has served as the Vice Chair of the Committee on School Initiatives. During her time on the Board, Pérez-Díaz has been instrumental in the redevelopment of high school graduation requirements, the update and approval of the long-range plan for Texas public education, and the rebranding of the permanent school fund. Additionally, she has been a leading voice in the fight to approve and implement Mexican American Studies and African American Studies courses for a high school credit in Texas. Pérez-Díaz holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology with a minor in psychology from the University of Texas at Austin and a master's degree in educational leadership and policy studies from the University of Texas at San Antonio. Pérez-Díaz's cohort research on the impact of a social justice oriented principal training program called the Urban School Leaders Collaborative on the transformation of prospective K-12 administrators was presented at the University Council for Educational Administrators' 2016 convention in Detroit, Michigan, and the American Educational Research Association's 2017 annual meeting. Thank you once again for being with us here this this morning.

I wanted to just preface our conversation by talking about Mexican American schools have often been sites of cultural, linguistic, and racial violence and exclusion. Some of the key struggles that Mexican Americans have fought against include segregated schools, linguistic violence, and English only policies, Eurocentric and white supremacist curricula, and

exclusion of Mexican American history and culture from textbooks, and inequitable school funding policies, as well as systemic inequities that hinder the pathways to higher education for Mexican Americans. All of which have impacted our economic and political power in this country. And despite the obstacles that we have faced as a people, parents and teachers and community members have mobilized at the grassroots level to gain access to public education, as well as to transform these schools for future generations. So, I wanted to begin with one question. The first question is, in what ways is public education a civil right for Mexican Americans?

Celina Moreno: I think education has long been a civil right and critical to fully accessing other types of fundamental rights like voting, for example. It's something that's fundamental as part of our democratic society. And that's why so many of us fight against attempts to undermine it as a common good. In Texas right now, and this has been something that's a trend, we're seeing what we call a Texas three step, right? Where there's, there are attempts to deprive schools of public funds, then demonize public schools, and then privatize them. And so that's something that we have to constantly fight back against. But I think education for Mexican Americans isn't just a civil right. It's more than that. As a community, it's always been a central vision for our families. So, you heard from your parents and grandparents, they tell us "*educate para nosotras*," get an education so you don't suffer what I what I went through. And so, I think it's even more than that. But just from a legal perspective, there's so many Supreme Court cases, even though the US Supreme Court has not recognized it as a fundamental right nationally, there's so many cases that they have come down with, from **Plyler v. Doe**
[1982] to board of education that that really spells out how important of a right it is and it's something that so many generations of our families have fought for.

Marisa B. Pérez-Díaz: I don't mind following that up. I'm glad Celina took the legal perspective. In terms of what it means for Mexican American families, I completely agree with everything that Celina mentioned. In addition to the fact that our families have fought for a very long time, being here for a very, very long time, there are generations and generations of families that have seen a lot of transition throughout this nation's history.

And for us to be a part of that, not just to be looked over, but to be enmeshed and to be included and involved it is really powerful. Here in San Antonio alone we have Edgewood ISD, which was prolific in passing some federal legislation in terms of school funding, and so we have power in people, power in voice and I think that what tends to happen a lot of the times for our Mexican American families and our Latinx families in general is that we're so culturally wired to be a communal type of people, that it makes sense for us to push for rights together. But I also think that there's been so much trust placed in the public education system that has for a very long time retraumatized our families over and over again. And so, I think that it's important for us to be involved in education, but to also push back, where our families have in the past really just trusted in the system and put a lot of faith in the fact that our people that are overseeing policy and education are really taking the best interest of those of all of us into account when we're making decisions, and recognizing that that's not the case, it's not always been the case, and that we have strengthened our voices and that we do have a place. This is a civil rights matter. And because we have rights, we have the right to speak up and speak against things that we see in the system that aren't working for us.

Viridiana Carrizales: Yes, yes to all of that. And thank you so much, Dr. Saldaña, for inviting me. And it's really an honor to share this virtual space along with two powerful *mujeres* that I'm constantly learning from. So, I think from my perspective, coming to this country when I was 11 years old, the reason why my parents came to the US was in pursuit of this, like, better education [they] didn't have access to this in Mexico. I remember coming into school and realizing that this best education that my parents had in mind was contradicting or, in a way, I was experiencing through teachers who were forcing me to forget my Spanish. Teachers who were forcing me to leave who I was, my identity, my culture, outside the door that did not belong here. So, I remember those few years, how much I hated going to school, because I felt like it wasn't a place where I belonged. And [I] quickly learned that this, you know, to excel and to be successful, I had to blend in. I had to assimilate. I had to just rip [away] everything that was me and my former education in Mexico to be able to find a place here. And I felt that that was the greatest injustice. And now as an adult, I'm able to reflect back on that right, of my parents, how my parents didn't

question that. How my parents didn't know about the history of so many people [who] have fought for us to even have the right. I came here when I was an undocumented student. The fact that I even had the opportunity to go to school, I didn't know about the Lopez family who was, you know, the family behind the case of **Plyler v. Doe** that allowed undocumented students to be in our schools, I didn't know about them. I didn't know about many of the Mexican Americans that have fought and have really been at the forefront of many of these civil rights cases, that have given me the opportunity for me to be in school, for me to have graduated, and now to learn my history. So, I, you know, all of the things that I have been able to access, I know that has come because of the fight, the ongoing fight of many Mexican Americans, that until this day, continue to make sure that we have access to that best education that all of our parents want for us.

Lilliana Patricia Saldaña, PhD: Thank you. Thank you so much, Viridiana. So, each of you has a dynamic and stellar record for improving the quality of education for ethnic Mexicans in Texas. Can you talk about some of the work that you're doing to create educational access, equity, and justice for communities in San Antonio and beyond?

Viridiana Carrizales: I don't mind starting. You know, one of the reasons why I co-founded ImmSchools was because navigating K-12, as an undocumented student, I experienced directly the injustices that exist in our K-12 system. I went to school, graduated high school many years ago. And until this date, you have many of our undocumented students who are navigating school, and who are learning or being told that they don't belong. That they will never be able to achieve anything. That school is not for them. That college, you know, it's not something that they can attain. So, I've continued to witness injustices that are happening in our K-12 system, which is why, I co-founded this organization to make sure that we're changing the pathways, that we're changing how we're treating our students, especially those who are undocumented in this country. For my family now, my family was actually never able to come into my school, to advocate to be part of any school conference because I remember my elementary and middle school, when I came here, how the front office will automatically ask anyone who came into the school for a driver's license. And I remember overhearing this whenever as a middle school

student and [I] told my parents not to come to my school at all because I was so afraid that my school was going to be asking for an ID that they did not have. So, for me, most of my K-12, I remember a feeling of being at a place of fear, a place where, again, I didn't belong. And that is why I'm doing the work that I'm doing right now with ImmSchools. To change this for our students, to make sure that none of our students feel like their immigration status is what defines her potential or what can define what they're able to do.

Marisa B. Pérez-Díaz: You know, serving on the State Board of Education is sort of an interesting place to be. I'm one of 15 members on the board, representing different geographic areas of Tejas, but of the 15 members on the board there are only three Latino people, right, three Latinx people, and we all represent the border. Like we represent the entire borderland of Texas. And so, we recognize that some of the challenges that our communities that we represent face, are very different from the challenges across the state. And in recognizing this, from the very beginning of my tenure, I was working with one of my colleagues to ensure that we saw inclusivity first and foremost in the curriculum. And so, the most obvious of what's been happening with the State Board is the work that we're doing in ethnic studies courses. I'm so proud to have been a part of the Mexican American Studies course that passed. But that was work that was carried on from our predecessors, right, Mary Helen Berlonga, from the Valley, you know, Joe Bernal, from San Antonio. These individuals were fighting at a time where it was even more polarizing to talk about who we are in our identities. And because of the work that they, the foundation, the groundwork they laid, my colleague, Ruben Cortez and I were able to work together to help lay a foundation for Mexican American Studies, which eventually was passed. [It] took us almost five and a half, six years to do, and that was ridiculous. But that just goes to show you a lot of the just, the divisive nature of even talking about identity is heartbreaking that for so many of our youth who don't have maybe the language to articulate what that feels like, right, Viri was just talking about her experiences, even though she was feeling all of that emotion as a youth, I'm sure it was hard to express that, to, first of all, to know who to express it to in terms of your own peers, but I mean, even less with adults. And so, providing a space, a safe space for our youth to recognize that their identity is important, and that people who look like them have contributed in really powerful and meaningful

ways to this country, and that they've been here for hundreds and hundreds of years before the founding of this country is important. But when you don't see themselves reflected, they can detach that much more easily from their education. So that's first and foremost. That was the driving factor and the driving force behind why the inclusivity of identity studies, ethnic studies, courses are so important. But on top of that we were working on Mexican American Studies in the same year that we were also working on our long-range plan for public education. Typically, that plan is something that the State Board of Education reviews every 10 to 12 years, and it, we complete it and it goes up on a shelf and nobody ever opens it up again. But the idea behind the amount of work that we put in this time around was because we wanted to make sure that our all of our families had access. When we're talking about the families that are in K-12 education in Texas, we're talking about 54% of our youth population in the schools. And so, we have so many Latinx families that are represented in our communities it's important to have them engaged in meaningful ways, as well in what the development of education looks like. And so, one of the priorities that we wanted to make sure was very explicitly identified in our long-range plan for public education was family engagement and empowerment and ensuring that families were part of the conversation when it came to creating public education policy. And there have been subsequent laws that have helped to support that work. And we hope that moving into the next legislative session, we continue to support laws and see laws that that push family engagement because the majority of, again, the majority of families that are experiencing public education here in Texas, are Latinx families. And the majority of those Latinx families identify as Mexican American or as Mexican, right. And so, it's so important to see that, to see that happen because, again, we have power in our voice and we just need to know, they just need to know they have space.

Celina Moreno: Thank you, Marisa. One The reasons why I'm so excited about the work that you Dr. Saldaña and the MACRI team are doing is because you're really honoring San Antonio as a place where so many national civil rights organizations that fight for Mexican Americans and the Latinx community were founded. I've been very privileged to work for two of those such national organizations, both IDRA, and before that MALDEF. And some of those organizations have a long history of working together actually as both attorneys and

litigators and policy advocates, with the star witnesses and researchers at IDRA, starting from the Plyler v. Doe case and US v Texas [2016] that led to the first bilingual education law in Texas. Both organizations were critical in that, as well as all of the many school funding cases in Texas. And so, I wanted to just honor the work that the organizations, it's not just work I've done but, I'm proud to be part of a legacy of these two organizations. To answer your question, specifically, in terms of what I've been involved with, I've been lucky to fight alongside Marisa to push the State Board of Education to reject a racist textbook on Mexican American Studies, as well as push for ethnic studies courses and a more culturally sustaining core curriculum generally. So not just as an elective class, but something that all students learn, so that we're not so that the by exclusion, we are not reinforcing institutional racism and teaching kids racism by excluding important histories. I've also been very fortunate to work alongside the Dreamer community and Viri has been critical in that along with many of our allies, in coalition to fight every, almost every legislative session against attempts to repeal the Texas DREAM Act. So, I've been privileged to fight that both in the Texas Legislature, but also against an anti-immigrant group who sued to end the Texas DREAM Act in court. We were able to in that case successfully, and then most recently being part of the school funding cases as well as the case to defend DACA. This is a case that is actually after the recent Supreme Court decision, extremely important. And my *colegas* at MALDEF are fighting against that right now. In the case that I was recently involved with, representing 22 brave Dreamers who decided that they were going to rain on the Trump administration's party with the State of Texas - you know, they were sweetheart adversaries on the same side, both trying to end DACA - and these Dreamers intervened to be defendants and defend DACA against those entities. And so that's something else that we're watching closely and that I was lucky to be a part of.

Lilliana Patricia Saldaña, PhD: Thank you, Celina. Know the work that each and every one of you is doing is just absolutely incredible. And it speaks to the legacy that we continue to work to keep in our communities. But I wanted to know a little bit more about what you think that we as a community can do to transform public education for present and future generations. I mean, we know that we have this rich history, right, of people powered movements. And it's been through community that we've been able to create change, right,

through coalition building, through at the grassroots level in our own communities, building our movements at the statewide level and then at the national level. So, what can we as a community do right now to transform public education for our present and future generations?

Celina Moreno: I think Marisa said it and so did Viri. I think it's so important to build coalitions. IDRA founded and co-administered along with MALDEF, a race equity coalition focused on education, called TLEEC. It's an organization that incorporates, and I think we have to, the way we work we have to include the business community, and the grassroots community, and the grass-tops community, and the educators, and all of us work together to fight very powerful interests into undermine public education. That's common good. And so, I think building coalitions is one way, but also improving the diversity in who's actually advocating. So many times, my colleagues and I will be the only black person or Latina in a room of policy advocates, in a state where three of every four students is a student of color. And that is 100% inappropriate. You know, it should not be that mostly white men, frankly, are making decisions for a majority student of color student body. And so, I think that that's another thing. And then making sure that people who are most directly impacted are not just at the table, but really centered in these conversations. And so, I know that's something that we work very hard on in our current work at IDRA is to build parent leadership and student leadership, and connect these networks of parents that are not just, they don't just care about their education, their child's education, but they want to be leaders, right? So not just inviting them to a PTA meeting, or offering a GED or ESL class, but actually inviting in parents and students as leaders in their own education or in their children's on education.

Lilliana Patricia Saldaña, PhD: Thank you so much. I have one more question. What might an organization like MACRI do to educate the larger community about our civil rights, movements and education?

Marisa B. Pérez-Díaz: IDRA is doing an amazing job, Celina, under your leadership to really build out networks that are committed to race equity, to social justice, and so

ensuring that, that's key, right, building out those relationships. But I think also encouraging our youth, I think there's a lot of power in youth that really gets overlooked. We've seen amazing examples of it recently, with a lot of different issues that have popped up as COVID hit. here in San Antonio, you had youth standing up against school boards telling them what they need out of their own education and school boards are listening. There's power in that. And so, I think that an organization like MACRI can provide the foundation, provide the context for our youth to build off of because they've got power, they've got energy that I think some of us don't have to be out there. But we're also I think, in doing that, also building up future members of the Mexican American Civil Rights Institute, right? Future leaders of IDRA, future State Board of Education members, future founders of nonprofit organizations that are doing the work. So, everything that Celina said on top of just really uplifting our youth. There's a lot of power and I believe strongly in youth voice.

Viridiana Carrizales: Yes, I completely agree. And I would just add, looking into the own strength and the power of our community, right, you create a space for us to have a *plática* and we're all going to show up, and we're going to share our own stories, and I think that the beautiful things that already are part of our culture that we can uplift we can look into, we can to create spaces where those things can be celebrated. I know especially right now with COVID-19, I think it's hard to feel hopeful. A lot of our students are not hearing, like, all these positive things. They are not hearing or seeing the moments in which they continue to be resilient. And I think that places like MACRI can create those spaces. Where we uplift each other. Experiences where we show the power that our students have through those examples that Marisa shared. So, I'm very, very excited. And I hope that you continue to tap into organizations that are here in San Antonio to make sure that all of us in coalition, building together, we can hopefully, get more of our students to learn their story, their history, and act on it, because we need more fighters, right? We've done a lot. We've won a lot of victories, but it's not enough. We have to completely dismantle our education system to be created by and for people. And this is a good way to start that.

Marisa B. Pérez-Díaz: If I can just add really quick, I think that you really just said something that triggered me. COVID and has brought on a lot of really difficult challenges and everybody's been shaken in a different way, but I also I'm an optimist. One of the silver linings I feel, and this is because the system is vulnerable, this is the optimal time to infiltrate and shake this system even more and tell, like, direct what we want to see out of public education because we're now having to reinvent and reimagine what it looks like, because of the situation we're currently in. So, this is a great time to do that.

Lilliana Patricia Saldaña, PhD: Gracias, Marisa. Celina.

Celina Moreno: I think adding to that is also just working alongside, and especially building up the momentum and honoring the work of all of the leaders of the Black Lives Matter movement, and ensuring that we see ourselves as part of a bigger picture. So, honoring our own legacies, and our own histories, but seeing the connection between our history and our legacy and that of other people, particularly the Black community. And I think, Marisa was saying, giving the example of youth voice, and I think in the recent fight for African American Studies at the State Board of Education you saw students do that. You saw MAS students come together with students pushing for African American Studies, and recognizing, and not seeing the barriers that other generations have seen, but really working together to make change. And I think that's really important. Seeing the students not only as having voice to share their perspective, but being the problem solvers and providing the solutions, being the researchers. We have an exciting new student participatory action research [program], where the students themselves are the ones doing the research, going and talking to other students and their peers and their teachers and their parents about what the needs are in the time of this pandemic. And so, it's seeing students as leaders and lifting them up and supporting them.

Lilliana Patricia Saldaña, PhD: Gracias. We're all so excited about working and continuing to work with members in our community with ImmSchools, with IDRA, with MALDEF, with our educators. And you're absolutely right, there is a tremendous need to educate our students, right, our school aged children and youth who, even though we have, I believe, 17

teachers in San Antonio teaching Mexican American Studies, you know, it would be wonderful to have Mexican American Studies in all our schools across all grade levels and program models. So, we will, we vow to continue to build on the legacies of past generations and to educate our communities about the rich legacy of Mexican American civil rights, particularly in education and through education programming. We're incredibly excited. Thank you once again, for being a part of this conversation. And we look forward to working with you and to seeing you once we get over this hump of COVID-19. Thank you so much for your incredible insight, your knowledge, your activism, and your *corazón*, and all the work that you do. Gracias!

A REFLECTION ON THE LATINO VOTE IN TEXAS[1]

Rogelio Sáenz, PhD

The 2018 midterm election sounded creaking noises in Texas suggesting that the long-anticipated demographic wave would turn the state blue. It did not happen in 2018, but surely 2020 would be the year. To add to the intrigue, Latinos accounted for three of every five new Texans eligible to vote and grassroot organizations were making great headway in registering Latino voters.[2]

Early in the night as polls closed throughout Texas, it became clear that we took some steps back in turning Texas blue. The sounds of the political momentum shift was much more audible in 2018 when Beto O'Rourke nearly beat Ted Cruz and Democrats flipped two U.S.

[1] This essay is a follow up to the virtual MACRI Talk "Mexican American Civic Engagement & the 2020 Election," held on October 20, 2020. The talk can be found on MACRI's Facebook and YouTube pages.
[2] Rogelio Sáenz and Sharon Navarro, "Dems Must Listen to Latinos to Connect with Them," *San Antonio Express-News*, November 7, 2020, https://www.expressnews.com/opinion/commentary/article/Commentary-Listen-to-Latino-voters-to-connect-15707983.php.

House seats, two Texas senate seats, and seven Texas House seats.[3] Two years later, nothing to write home about: Democrats took away a Texas Senate seat and a Texas House seat and ceded a U.S. House seat and a Texas House seat to Republicans.[4] Furthermore, Trump soundly beat Biden by nearly 6 percentage points and John Cornyn kept his U.S. senate seat blowing past M.J. Hegar by close to 10 percentage points. Furthermore, despite his bashing of Latinos and erecting a border wall along the Texas-Mexico border, Latinos increasingly voted for Trump more so than they did four years earlier.

Political pundits have tried to make sense of the disappointing outcome in Texas for those of us who have wanted to see the state turn blue. In this essay, I provide my analysis of what happened, the challenges that we face, and the opportunities that we have in turning Texas blue.

Lessons learned from the 2020 election

Post-election analyses draw out the political complexities that are part of the Latino political landscape in Texas. One analysis of 28,000 precincts across more than 20 large cities in the country indicate that while Biden won in these sites, the percentage increase of votes between 2016 and 2020 was much greater for Trump compared to Biden (relative to Hillary Clinton votes in 2016).[5] For example, although Biden beat Trump by 50 percentage points in Cook County, home to Chicago, in Gage Park, Humboldt Park, Little Village, and Pilsen, neighborhoods where Latinos make up more than half of the population, Trump received 45 percent more votes in 2020 than four years earlier while there was no change in the Democratic vote. Similar trends occurred in Orlando, Philadelphia, New York City, Phoenix, and Los Angeles. In Texas, too, this trend persisted with precincts shifting

[3] The Texas Tribune, "See the Results of the Texas 2018 Midterm Election Here," *The Texas Tribune*, November 6, 2018, https://apps.texastribune.org/elections/2018/texas-midterm-election-results/.
[4] Carla Astudillo, "Here Are the Texas 2020 Election Results," *The Texas Tribune*, November 3, 2020 (updated December 1, 2020), https://apps.texastribune.org/features/2020/general-election-results/.
[5] Weiyi Cai and Ford Fessenden, "Immigrant Neighborhoods Shifted Red as the Country Chose Blue," *New York Times*, December 20, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/12/20/us/politics/election-hispanics-asians-voting.html?smid=fb-share&fbclid=IwAR08AlrCqZz_PCFCb_SQ1edtHzroQVWrjuGEmh1nAqb0iLgeFgykePSBcNs.

politically rightward being those with relatively larger Latino populations. Cai and Fessenden note that in Texas the "Democratic margin in 80 percent Latino precincts dropped an average of 17 percentage points." In McAllen, the number of votes cast for Trump rose 93 percent between 2016 and 2020 while the Democratic vote rose by 7 percent. Other research examining a different set of areas (Phoenix, Milwaukee, Las Vegas, Miami, Paterson, New Jersey, and the Rio Grande Valley) has also shown this trend associated with a large percentage gain in votes for Trump compared to a flat line or declining votes for Biden.[6]

This political shift occurred particularly in the Texas border region. In the 14 border counties that Biden won, Trump gained a considerable portion of the vote ranging from nearly one-third in El Paso County to close to half in Culberson and Starr County.[7] Trump won six border counties, most prominently Zapata County where he beat Biden by 5 percentage points and where four years earlier Hillary Clinton beat him by 30 points.

Four important lessons emerge from the outcome of the November 2020 election. These illustrate the significant challenges that we face within the Latino community and within the Democrat Party.

First, the 2020 election reminded us that Latinos are a diverse population in many ways but particularly in their politics. For long, we have realized that there is a sizeable portion of the Latino population that is politically conservative and who regularly provide support for Republicans. I think that the Latino left, myself included, has been to a certain degree in denial of this fact, perhaps suggesting that this segment is smaller than it actually is and

[6] Equis Labs, "2020 Post-Mortem: Part One: Portrait of a Persuadable Latino," April 1, 2021, https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/20537484-equis_post-mortem_part_one__public_deck .

[7] Julio Ricardo Varela, "A 63-Page Detailed Analysis of 2020 Latino Voters Is Exactly What Everyone Needs to Read Right Now," *Latino Rebels*, April 2, 2021, https://www.latinorebels.com/2021/04/02/a63pagedetailedanalysisof2020latinovoters/?fbclid=IwAR1NvrZsFSs0BpGZA5MhjATGPqYZp9taVe1Vd0prq7KiSVeip-9GQWNo2FY.

that eventually these misguided brethren will have an epiphany—the *aha* moment when they realize that Republicans do not have their interests in mind.

Second, political observers have indicated that Latinos along the border may also be voting for their own particular economic interests. Along the border, law enforcement, border patrol, and Homeland Security jobs are plentiful and provide stable income along with benefits not found in many jobs located in the region with the energy sector being another industry associated with job growth and tied to Republican political interests. I put together data from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates for the 2015-2019 period to identify occupations, industries, and college majors where Latinos 18 and older who are U.S. citizens along the border are disproportionately clustered relative to their counterparts in the interior of the state. The border region includes Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) that are located approximately 100 miles from the Texas-Mexico border and interior regions are all other PUMAs.

There are eight occupations with at least 1,000 Latino workers in the border in which border Latinos are at least 1.75 times more likely to be employed in compared to their counterparts living in the interior (Table 1). These include the following occupations: detectives and criminal investigators (3.10 border Latinos per 1 interior Latino); other extraction workers (2.67); police officers (2.53); underground mining machine operators (2.23); correctional officers and jailers (1.97); probation officers and correctional treatment specialists (1.85); security guards and gaming surveillance officers (1.75); and derrick, rotary drill, and service unit operators, and roustabouts, oil, gas, and mining (1.75). Yet, overall, Latinos on the border who hold law-enforcement, security, and energy jobs represent a small share (3.8%) of the entire Latino workforce in the border region.

Table 1. Eight Selected Occupations Where Border Latinos are Disproportionately Working Compared to Latinos in Interior, 2015-2019

	Border Region		Interior Region		Ratio of Border
	Number	Pct. of all	Number	Pct. of all	percent to
Selected occupations	workers	border workers	workers	interior workers	Interior percent
Detectives and criminal investigators	2,560	0.253	2,584	0.082	3.102
Other extraction workers	4,697	0.465	5,500	0.174	2.674
Police officers	11,660	1.154	14,429	0.456	2.530
Underground mining machine operators	1,294	0.128	1,821	0.058	2.225
Correctional officers and jailers	5,487	0.543	8,717	0.276	1.971
Probation officers and correctional treatment specialists	1,227	0.121	2,079	0.066	1.848
Security guards and surveillance officers	9,569	0.947	17,102	0.541	1.752
Derrick, rotary drill, and service unit operators, and roustabouts, oil, gas, and mining	1,705	0.169	3,050	0.096	1.750
Total U.S. Citizen Latino Workers	1,010,202		3,163,237		

Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

In addition, there are three industries in which border Latinos are more than 1.75 times as likely to work in compared to Latinos in the rest of the state: justice, public order, and safety activities, (1.85); national security and international affairs (1.84), and support activities for mining (1.77). Again, however, Latinos working in these three industries make up a small (6.5%) portion of all Latino workers in the border area.

Table 2. Three Selected Industries Where Border Latinos are Disproportionately Working Compared to Latinos in Interior, 2015-2019

	Border Region		Interior Region		Ratio of Border
	Number	Pct. of all	Number	Pct. of all	percent to
Selected industries	workers	border workers	workers	interior workers	Interior percent
Justice, public order, and safety	29,356	2.915	49,671	1.574	1.852
National security and international affairs	10,006	0.994	17,067	0.541	1.839
Support activities for mining	25,835	2.565	45,749	1.450	1.769
Total U.S. Citizen Latino Workers	1,007,231		3,156,106		

Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Moreover, Latinos who are U.S. citizens and who have at least a bachelor's degree living on the border are much more likely to have majored in criminal justice and fire protection than Latinos living in the interior of the state. Criminal justice and fire protection is the third most common major for border Latinos while it ranks eighth among Latinos in the rest of the state. Border Latinos with a bachelor's degree are approximately 1.75 more likely to have majored in criminal justice and fire protection compared to those in the interior of the state. Once again, however, the share of criminal justice majors among all the majors of Latino college graduates in the border region is small (6.5%).

Table 3. Top Ten Majors of Latinos with a Bachelor's Degrees or Higher by Geographic Location, 2015-2019

	Border Region		Interior Region	
Rank	Major	Number majors	Major	Number majors
1	General education	22,838	Business management and administration	47,566
2	Business management and administration	19,066	General education	35,328
3	Criminal justice and fire protection	12,850	Psychology	31,570
4	Nursing	10,915	General business	30,755
5	Elemenary education	10,500	Accounting	26,791
6	Accouting	9,766	Nursing	26,050
7	Psychology	9,217	Biology	21,919
8	General business	8,585	Criminal justice and fire protection	20,751
9	Biology	7,655	Elemenary education	17,306
10	English language and literature	4,821	Marketing and marketing research	16,124

Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

Thus, these data show a greater prevalence of employment in law enforcement and criminal justice and to a certain degree in the energy sector among Latinos living on the border compared to those living in other parts of the state. Yet, persons working in these occupations and industries or who have majored in criminal justice represent a small share of the overall workforce or majors of college graduates in the border region. Still, there are likely to be spillover effects of influence, as family and friends associated with these jobs and diploma holders recognize their economic interests.

Third, the state and national Democratic leadership needs to stop taking Texas Latino voters for granted. It understandable that with limited resources, the Democratic Party targets particular races that are competitive to maximize their political gains across the state. Yet, in the process, the party stands to face an erosion of Latino support. The national Democratic Party additionally has regularly viewed Texas as a Republican stronghold and has not invested much in cultivating the Latino vote. Only toward the close of the presidential race did the national Democratic Party pay any attention to Texas, sending

Kamala Harris at the eleventh-and-a-half hour to the Valley, which proved to be too little, too late.

One of the key takeaways from the results of a large national Equis Lab survey of Latinos, which includes respondents from the Rio Grande Valley, is that "This is a story of turnout **and** persuasion. Some analysis makes the mistake of treating the Latino electorate as static from election to election, when in fact it is incredibly dynamic and fast-changing."[6] The message is clear: the Democratic Party needs to consistently engage and pursue the Latino vote. It would be wise for the Texas and national Democratic leadership to court Texas Latinos as they woo white suburban voters. Without such a change, Democrats will continue to see Republicans extend their political dominance. As Cristina Tzintzún Ramirez, executive director of NextGen America, asserts "Invest in Latinos everywhere….Spend money on Latinos. Speak to them early and make sure you understand the regional and cultural differences."[8] I add that the Texas Democratic Party needs to field more Latino candidates for office throughout the state.

Fourth, summarizing the above three lessons, the Democratic Party needs to recognize the reality of the Latino vote in Texas. A major research project funded by Texas Organizing Project led by Cecilia Ballí aptly paints the diverse portrait of the Latino political landscape in our state. Ballí and her colleagues conducted in-depth interviews with more than 100 Latinos who are eligible to vote in Houston, San Antonio, Dallas, El Paso, and the Rio Grande Valley. In contrast to the cursory survey queries that provide surface information, these are deep conversations tapping at the roots of why Latinos vote, do not vote, and their identification with particular political parties. Their findings clearly reveal the complexity of the Latino voters and potential voters.

[8] Arelis R. Hernández and Brittney Martin, "Why Texas's Overwhelming Latino Rio Grande Valley Turned Toward Trump," *The Washington Post*, November 9, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/texas-latino-republicans/2020/11/09/17a15422-1f92-11eb-ba21-f2f001f0554b_story.html.

From this study, Cecilia Ballí wrote a very important article outlining their findings.[9] This article will be the playbook for how we go forward. What emerges from these deep conversations does not jive with what we on the left typically project on our Latino community. To a certain extent there are Latino voters who are deeply politically conscious and understand the structural racist and discriminatory aspects of Texas politics. However, there are telling additional findings. First, many Latinos continue to be on the political sidelines. Generations of their family members have never or rarely voted and politics is not discussed much. These individuals are largely concerned with making ends meet, they view people in power as not caring about the interests of common people, and they cannot make a link between governmental policy and their lives. Second, many Latino voters consider themselves as independent, even when they vote consistently for one party. Why? Because they do not see either party engaging them, they do not come from families who have voted or voted consistently for a particular party, and many hold ideologically mixed views on political issues—such as abortion, gun rights, and immigration—that cut across political parties. Even more educated Latino voters report that they feel that both parties do not represent their interests. Furthermore, Latino Trump supporters, who Ballí concedes are the most difficult to understand, have specific commonalities: they are conservatives who see that the middle class is being forced to provide for the less well-to-do, people game the system that hurts their own interests, and they compete directly in the job market with immigrants who work for lower wages.

The major takeaways are that Latinos are not an easy political group to profile and demography is not destiny. We see growing numbers of Latinos in the state, but it will not automatically turn to political strength given the internal political diversity among Latinos and a Democratic Party that has taken the Latino vote largely for granted and not taken the time to know them.

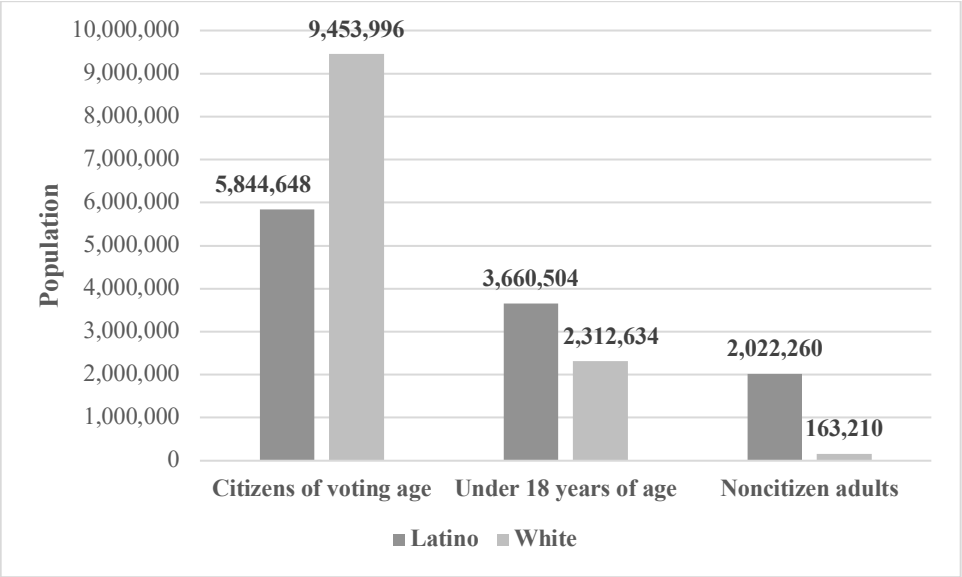
[9] Cecilia Ballí, "Don't Call Texas's Latino Voters the 'Sleeping Giant,'" *Texas Monthly*, November 2020, https://www.texasmonthly.com/news-politics/dont-call-texas-latino-voters-sleeping-giant/.

The political reality of Latinos as the new numerical majority

Over the last several decades, demographers have been demonstrating that eventually Latinos will replace whites as the state's largest racial or ethnic group. This reality is projected to take place next year. In many ways, Latino political leaders have been savoring this moment. Yet, lesson learned from the previous section: numbers do not translate directly to political strength.

The latest estimates for 2019 show 11.5 million Latinos compared to 11.9 million whites. Whites have an overall population advantage of 402,000 over Latinos, but the reality in the ballot box is that the white advantage is much larger due to half of Latinos being ineligible to vote because they are either less than 18 years of age or are not U.S. citizens. When it comes to citizens of voting age, there are 3.6 million more white than Latino eligible voters (Figure 1). It is difficult to erode that disadvantage in the short run. Yet, political coalitions could help the cause given that there are approximately the same number of eligible voters who are Latino or other persons of color as there are white eligible voters.

Figure 1. Texas Latino and White Population by Voter Eligibility Classification, 2019



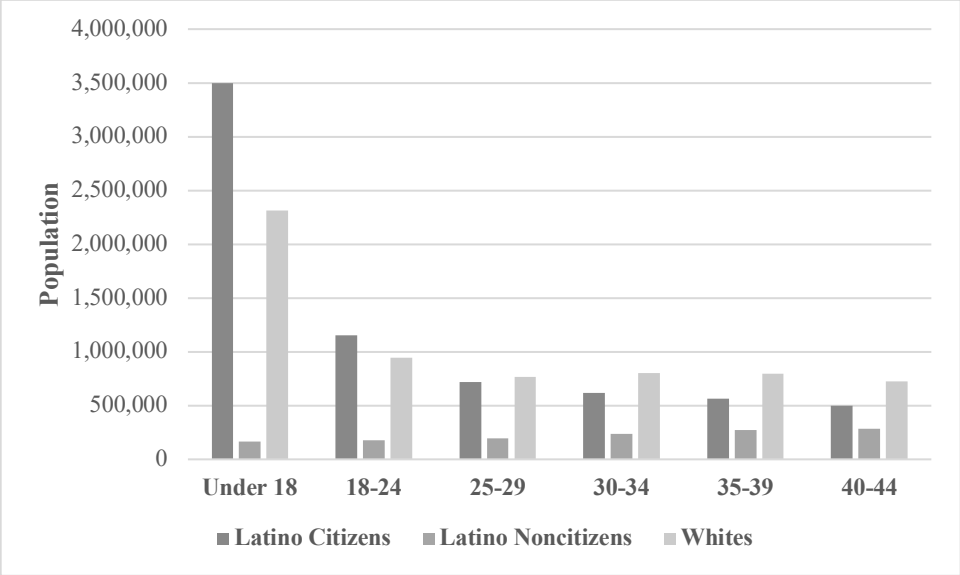
Source: 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

The Latino-white age divide and the future of Texas politics

The age divide between Latinos and whites will be important over the long run. Currently, whites are the numerical majority in age groups at 45 and older with Latinos outnumbering whites in ages younger than 45. Nonetheless, a certain portion of Latinos between the ages of 25 and 44 are not U.S. citizens with whites maintaining an advantage at these ages when we focus exclusively on citizens of voting age.

However, Latino citizens outnumber whites at all ages under 25. This is the sweet spot in the Latino demography. Among citizens who are 20 to 24 years of age, Latinos hold an advantage of 106,000 over whites. Latinos have a much greater numerical advantage over whites among persons who are today less than 18 years of age. There are nearly 1.2 million more Latinos than whites who are less than 18 years of age today and who are U.S. citizens. Add the 165,000 Latino children who currently are not U.S. citizens and provide them a path to citizenship and the Latino advantage becomes even greater. Right now, more than 203,000 Latinos turn age 18 every year and the vast majority—96 percent—are U.S. citizens.

Figure 2. Texas Latino Population by Citizenship Status and Whites in Selected Age Categories, 2019



Source: 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

Again, however, we need to realize that despite these watershed numbers, this still represents potential political power. We need to ensure that today's Latino youth are politically engaged and with a constant message from family, educators, community leaders, and nonprofit organizations about the importance for them being civically active in their communities. We also need to press high schools to ensure that students who turn age 18 have the opportunity to register to vote. There is so much potential here and from where we will draw our future political leaders.

Results of 2020 Census and Latino role in Texas growth

The U.S. Census Bureau just released the national and state tallies of the population counted in the 2020 census. The state totals were used to allocate the 435 congressional seats. Seven states, including California, lost one congressional seat, while six states added one congressional seat with Texas being the big winner gaining two seats. Actually, Texas was projected to gain three congressional seats, but this did not materialize. My colleague

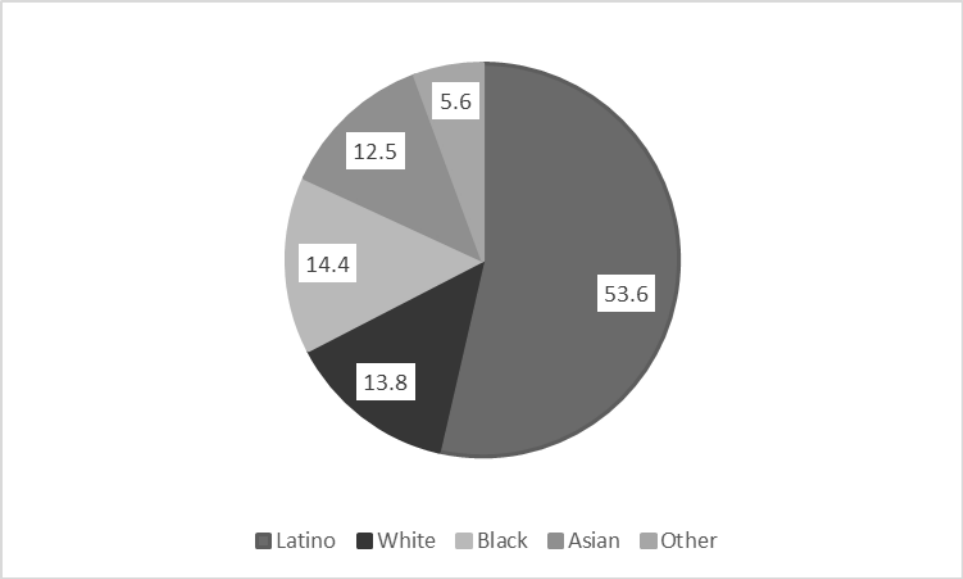
Dudley Poston and I recently argue that Texas surrendered the third seat due to Governor Abbott's failure to invest funds and actively urge Texans to be counted in the census.[10] It is very likely that Latinos, in particular, were undercounted in the census. Trump tried unsuccessfully to insert a citizenship question in the census and sought to omit unauthorized immigrants from the population counts, efforts to discourage Latinos and undocumented immigrants from participating in the census due to fear and uncertainty.

The growth in the state's population during the decade has been due primarily to growth in the Latino population and other groups of color. The latest population estimates broken down by race and ethnicity are for 2019. Between 2010 and 2019, the Texas population rose by 15.3 percent. The Latino population grew by 21.8 percent, slightly faster than the Black population (19.3%), while the Asian population increased the most rapidly at 50.8 percent. The white population increased the slowest at 4.7 percent over the decade.

Texas added approximately 3.9 million persons to its population between 2010 and 2019. Latinos accounted for 54 percent of the overall state growth with the other groups of color contributing nearly 33 percent (Figure 3). Overall, of every seven persons added to the Texas population between 2010 and 2019, approximately four were Latino, two other persons of color, and only one was white. Thus, Latinos and, more broadly, all persons of color were largely responsible for the two congressional seats that Texas received. It is anticipated that Republicans will use gerrymandering and related political ploys to dilute the Latino and Black vote this fall when political redistricting begins.

[10] Dudley L. Poston, Jr. and Rogelio Sáenz, "How Abbott Cost Texas a House Seat," *San Antonio Express-News*, May 7, 2021, https://www.expressnews.com/opinion/commentary/article/Commentary-How-Abbott-cost-Texas-a-House-seat-16159960.php.

Figure 3. Percentage Distribution of the Texas Population Growth, 2010 to 2019



Sources: 2010 Decennial Census and 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

The Republican pushback

It is this demographic strength of Latinos that Republicans have tried to quash over the last three decades with the passage of laws to make it more difficult to vote and to suppress the Latino vote. The current Texas legislative session has clearly shown the strategy that Republicans will take to keep Latinos from translating their growing numbers into political power. In the political sphere, Republicans have enacted voter suppression laws that serve to intimidate voters, encourage vigilante observers at the ballot box, and criminalize the process of voting—all efforts to quell the state's demographic shift through voter suppression.[11] In the educational sphere, Republicans have established policies that bar the teaching of critical race theory in public schools with the intent of doing away with

[11] Al Kauffman, "New Dangers in Texas Voting Bills," *San Antonio Express-News*, May 12, 2021, https://www.expressnews.com/opinion/commentary/article/Commentary-Texas-voting-bills-are-more-dangerous-16172122.php.

instruction of the role of racism in the continual subjugation of people of color.[12] These two pieces of legislation are intended to support the status quo and the Republican political dominance. Come fall, as noted earlier, we will also see the gerrymandering and political ploys that Republicans will use in the drawing of congressional districts to enhance their political power. Never mind that the two new congressional seats that Texas received were due to the disproportionate growth of Latinos alongside African Americans and Asians.

Conclusion

I have provided an overview of where we, as Latinos, stand today several months after the 2020 presidential election that held much possibility after inroads that Democrats made in the 2018 midterm election. The anticipation of turning Texas blue simply did not materialize. We learned important lessons from the November 2020 election with the major realization that our struggle to gain political power will be difficult. Our growing numbers will not simply turn into political power. The current Texas legislative session has resulted in Republican legislative weapons—voter suppression laws and the barring of the teaching of critical race theory in public schools—that are intended to ensure that Latinos do not translate their growing numbers into political power that would erode Republican political dominance in the state.

Republicans have additionally developed policies that hurt people of color and the poor including the opposition to the expansion of Medicaid and improvement of the conditions of workers. The Republican leadership has particularly shown their lack of concern for Latinos, Blacks, and the poor during the pandemic. Throughout the COVID-19 era, Latinos, in particular, have accounted for the greatest numbers of persons statewide who have lost their lives to COVID-19.[13] I estimated that at the close of 2020 Latinos who had died from

[12] Patrick Svitek, "Texas Public Schools Couldn't Require Critical Race Theory Lessons Under Bill Given House Approval," *The Texas Tribune*, May 11, 2021, https://www.texastribune.org/2021/05/11/critical-race-theory-texas-schools-legislature/.
[13] Rogelio Sáenz, "For Latinos, the COVID-19 Trends Are Getting Worse—and the Worst May Be Yet to Come," *Poynter*, October 30, 2020, https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2020/for-latinos-the-covid-19-trends-are-getting-worse-and-the-worst-may-be-yet-to-come/.

this disease had, on average, another 20 years of potential life left were it not for COVID-19.[14] We desperately need to elect political leaders who are going to invest in our future and who will keep us safe during a pandemic or a severe winter storm like the recent one that immobilized the state and killed more than 100 Texans.[15]

We will all need to up our political game in order to turn the corner on this disastrous political course. The future of our families and our children is at stake.

[14] Anna Kuchment, Holly K. Hacker, and Dianne Solis, "COVID'S Untold Story: Texas Blacks and Latinos Are Dying at the Prime of Their Lives," December 19, 2020, https://www.dallasnews.com/news/2020/12/19/covids-untold-story-texas-blacks-and-latinos-are-dying-in-the-prime-of-their-lives/.

[15] Shawn Mulcahy, "At Least 111 People Died in Texas During Winter Storm, Most from Hypothermia," *The Texas Tribune*, March 25, 2021, https://www.texastribune.org/2021/03/25/texas-deaths-winter-storm/.

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