Spanish Was Beaten out of Me: White Violence and Mexican Schools in Early-to-Mid-Twentieth Century Kansas

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Introduction: The Public Discourse on Brown v. Board of Education

The struggle to end racial segregation and Jim Crow policies was not isolated to the Southern United States. One iconic site in the battle for desegregation was Topeka, Kansas. In 1954, the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court Case emerged from the capital city of Kansas and ultimately ended the *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) precedent of a "separate but equal" doctrine for public schools. The *Brown* decision is rightfully enshrined as a critical moment in the Civil Rights Movement and important works have been written for both academic and public audiences, especially since the 1990s.[1] Despite the wealth of knowledge produced especially over the last three decades, the history of school segregation in the United States is often conflated in public discourse only to tell of its victorious outcome, and intricacies, such as how other racialized groups were also segregated in schools and the regionality of the case, are not predominately featured. Many scholars, especially Derrick Bell, have written about not just what the *Brown* decision did, but what it failed to do, such as shuttering opportunities for Black teachers and thrusting Black students into racist, white-led classrooms, all while still not improving the material conditions of poor public schools.[2] The local history of *Brown* is also rife with misunderstanding as the Court consolidated several cases from Delaware, Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. under the "et al" designation with *Brown* simply being the first case alphabetically.[3]

0026-3079/2020/5904-023$2.50/0 American Studies, 62.3 (2023)

The complexities of *Brown* highlight how 1) the public school system was entrenched in racism across the country (not just the Jim Crow South) and 2) how often the public discourse of historical moments can slide into a simplified narrative.

School segregation and the system of Jim Crow writ-large were not simply legal mandates that everyday people in the South were obligated to follow. To the contrary, policies of racial exclusion were created and policed, often violently, from the bottom by ordinary white citizens across the United States.[4] White supremacy depends on simplified yet hegemonic historical narratives.[5] Too often, *Brown* is deployed to position segregation as an error in policy and not as indicative of the United States' racist character.[6] Conservative Republican Kansas Attorney General, Derek Schmidt wrote an introductory piece in *Recovering Untold Stories: An Enduring Legacy of the Brown v. Board of Education Decision* on the significance of the Kansas Statehouse's *Brown* mural opening by declaring, "One of the great moments in American legal history arrived in 1954 when the U.S. Supreme Court declared what *obviously* is true: Maintaining separate public education systems for children based on their race is prohibited by the Constitution of the United States of America."[7] Schmidt's utilization of the word "obviously" is key to what I mean by the common-sense nature of "hegemonic historical narratives." Schmidt portrays *Brown* as a forgone conclusion; rather than a deeply contested struggle across the country for school desegregation, as evident in the fact that *Brown* folded five different locations into one case. Using the top-down legal framework (such as Schmidt deploys) to understand *Brown* further likens the Supreme Court decision to a magic wand by which the United States' institutional racism is wiped away with one flick of the wrist. Instead, I argue that we must look at the history of school segregation through the lens of white violence instead of a simplified legal narrative that often fails to consider how school segregation was enforced outside of the bounds of the law, frequently by ordinary white folks.

Going beyond legal discourse allows us to better understand how white supremacy is imposed on the ground level and how everyday people make history for better or worse. Marcus Rediker defines "the phrase 'history from below' [as] a rhetorical assertion of political sympathy but also of how history happens. But, at the same, time that can never be written without history from above. Historians from below study power."[8] Utilizing a "history from below" methodology is not only adopted to relate stories of resistance and triumph from marginalized people, but is also used to share the quotidian violence enacted through the daily life of ordinary white actors. I define "ordinary" as people who were often working class and lacking in political power or influence.[9] If they did wield political power, then it was often at the local level.[10] The often-violent policing of the color line by white people in segregated Kansas provides us with examples of

how white supremacy operates outside the law and how those historical narratives are often swept under the rug. It is hard to learn complexities from history when the popularized history of the United States is simplified for easy consumption.[11] The dominant narrative of school segregation told through the legalized lens of *Brown* does not account for how ordinary white people, often parents, organized to establish and maintain school segregation for not only Black children, but other racialized children as well. Below we will see how Kansas' lack of official state policy on Mexican segregation allowed white people to often act with violent impunity to enforce segregation.

The official written law did not necessarily grant white people the right to terrorize those who dared to cross the color line, but the sociopolitical system of white supremacy depended on such violence.[12] Because laws are useless without enforcement, even when such quotidian policing is outside the bounds of legality, the history of white supremacy is thus the history of everyday white violence, whether state-sanctioned or otherwise. Therefore, to fully understand school segregation in this country, we must step outside of the popularized *Brown* narrative because legal discourse can only tell so much of the story. The narrative of school segregation must then be told "from the bottom." A top-down legal framework obscures the quotidian violence and everyday policing of the color line that empowered ordinary white people to act without fear of government reprisal.

I interrogate a narrative of school segregation in Kansas outside of the typified *Brown* legalistic discourse by utilizing a variety of archival materials, oral histories (both conducted by myself and archived by others), and secondary sources to highlight people regulating, negotiating, and resisting the color line. Early-to-mid-twentieth century Kansas operated under a quasilegal tri-racial segregation system of color *lines* by which white, Black, and Mexican people were defined as three separate races despite the fact Kansas law only decreed legal segregation along the Black/white binary.

In this article, I focus on so-called "Mexican schools" in Kansas and how their history illuminates how categories of race and institutionalized racism are created, maintained, contradicted, and resisted. I build upon a rich tradition of scholarship on Mexican segregation that includes *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation* (1990) by Gilbert G. Gonzalez; *Chicano Students and the Courts: The Mexican American Legal Struggle for Educational Equality* (2008) by Richard R. Valencia; *Strategies of Segregation: Race, Residence, and the Struggle for Educational Equality* (2018) by David G. García; and *Reading, Writing, and Revolution: Escuelitas and the Emergence of a Mexican American Identity in Texas* (2020) by Philis Barragán Goetz. Another foundational study of Mexican school segregation across the United States, including in Kansas, is by education studies scholars Rubén Donato and Jarrod Hanson. They summarize two main

themes emanating from the history of school segregation, "one reflected the desire of Whites to intentionally separate students based on race; and second, given the attention the *Brown* decision and its aftermath received, Americans have come to understand school segregation as a Black-White issue."[13] By following the historical thread of Donato and Hansen's first theme, we can change the public understanding of school segregation away from simplified narratives dependent only on the legal formations of *Brown* to a more nuanced version grounded "from below " that highlights how segregation went beyond a "Black-White issue" and legal framework.

What's the Matter with Kansas?: Critical Regionalism

Race and racism were fixtures in Kansas from its territorial days as white settlers claimed Indigenous land for their own. The land now known as Kansas included land originally colonized by Spain and then controlled by a sovereign Mexico before being forcibly ceded to the United States in the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican American War in 1848, only thirteen years before Kansas gained statehood. Kansas history is, therefore, Mexican history, which is ultimately all an interconnected story of racialized nation-making through colonialism and capitalism. Whereas Kansas often positions itself within a "Free State" mythology fashioned from its touted legacy as the base of John Brown and an abolitionist stronghold during the Civil War, the state never operated under anti-racist or decolonial practices.[14] The push for Kansas to be admitted as a free state comprised a coalition of settlers, most of whom were not staunch abolitionists but rather proponents of so-called "free" labor and favored Kansas to be a state only for whites.[15] White settlers situated "free" in relation to Blackness and slavery which are made to represent freedom's perennial antithesis. So, rather than simply inheriting national racial formations, white settlers in nineteenth-century Kansas were active agents constructing, fortifying, and reforming race in order to control both land and labor to the benefit of white folks. The racialization and oppression of Mexican people in the twentieth century cannot be divorced from these histories of Indigenous dispossession and anti-Black racism because the structures or "racial scripts" used against those racialized populations were often recycled to target Mexican populations.[16] Also, Mexicans did not enter twentieth-century Kansas nor anywhere else in the Midwest unaware of these racial hierarchies that placed Blackness and Indigeneity permanently underneath whiteness.[17] Those that could assimilate to whiteness often did, and those that could not still tried to insert themselves as relationally above these groups or at the very least separate from both Blackness and Indigeneity.[18] Mexico and the rest of Latin American had their own varying racial hierarchies which all still valued whiteness above all else.[19]

The haunting specter of settler colonialism and anti-Indigenous policy is especially important to note. Indigenous people were another racialized group outside of both the Black/white binary and Kansas' tri-racial segregation system as Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their homes and placed into federally-operated boarding schools. According to the U.S. Department of the Interior's 2022 Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative, more than 400 Indian boarding schools existed throughout the United States from 1819 to 1969, with 14 located in Kansas.[20] White violence also governed these institutions with an iron fist as survivors, scholars, and even the federal government have confirmed.[21] Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland (Pueblo of Laguna), in a June 22, 2022, statement to the Committee of Indian Affairs, included this reality by affirming how "Many children who entered the boarding schools were involuntarily removed from their communities and never returned home. This intentional targeting and removal of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children to achieve the goal of forced assimilation of Native people was both traumatic and violent."[22] Whereas there are many connections between American Indian boarding schools and Mexican schools, such as forced assimilation and violence, it is outside the scope of this article because boarding schools were federally regulated and often had children taken hundreds of miles away from their families, sometimes over state borders, so my argument about ordinary white people demanding segregation from their neighbors does not fully account for how American Indian boarding schools were founded and proliferated for 150 years.

Despite the founding and maintaining of American Indian boarding schools being outside the scope of this article, settler colonial ideology and anti-Indigenous sentiments resonate throughout anti-Mexican racism.[23] An unnamed Topeka High School student wrote an article simply titled, "Mexicans," in a 1914 issue of *The High School World*, which ended with a particularly violent, racist quip: "Of course there are some good Mexicans, but they—like the good Indians—have separated their carcasses from their souls."[24] The machinations of ordinary white people to keep public Kansas schools as "white only" helps us understand how whiteness is defined in opposition to Blackness, Indigeneity, and "Mexican-ness" in varied but connected ways.[25]

Segregation presents us with another national script that Kansans performed in tune but not always in the same step with the rest of the country. The progressive side of Kansas and the permeance of the Free State myth kept the state from adopting stringent Jim Crow laws, but the preservation of white supremacy mandated some levels of segregation. For example, the state legislature of 1862 allowed separate schools for "Black or mulatto persons."[26] Kansas law directed the segregation of Black and white students in separate facilities in elementary school but

did not require it, whereas Kansas City, Kansas, was the only city permitted to segregate its high schools.[27] Kansas' legal apparatus was fixed in the Black/white binary and there was thus no statutory segregation of non-Black racialized groups. What is also noteworthy is the fact that racial segregation in schools was so vital to Kansas' white settler government that it enacted this legislation only a year after being admitted to the Union (i.e., as a "free state") and during the onset of the Civil War.

Whereas the statutes referring to and enforcing racialized school segregation in Kansas operated through a Black/white binary, the practice of school segregation in Kansas could not be contained within a simplistic divide between Black and white. The reality of state law was that "unlike Black students, statutes did not mention Mexicans. But as they arrived in schools, White parents began to demand segregation. Their segregation appeared to depend on the power of parents and civic organizations and how school officials were able to manipulate the law."[28] Although school segregation laws did not specifically address Mexican children, white Kansas parents organized under the banner of whiteness through parent-teacher-associations (PTA) groups and neighborhood associations to impose segregation in their local schools despite their legal inability to do so under state law.[29]

The "soft line" segregationist policy by which segregation is enacted outside the bounds of law is connected to the negotiations between the "free state" mythology and whiteness as a broader Midwestern problem where "whites responded with a form of resistance that was unique to the [Midwest] region, rhetorically opposing discrimination while simultaneously clinging to white supremacy."[30] So, whereas "what's the matter with Kansas?" positions the state as being exceptional or at the very least peculiar, in reality, Kansas is only one of many sites in the global battle over white supremacy and empire. In fact, Dean Saranillio reminds us that "the colonial discourse of fifty U.S. states, thus contains one's temporal and spatial imagination of the scale of U.S. empire while also denying the violent imperial histories on the very land beneath our feet."[31] Power exudes through multiple and varied relationships and shifts over time and place.

Hence, our scholarship needs to reflect the diversity and wide-ranging experiences of differentiated life under nation-states and global capitalism. José Limon advocates that we accomplish this through a lens of "critical regionalism," which he considers "a renewal of regionalist thinking, not in any isolated sense, but rather within yet in tension with globalization."[32] As much as Kansas, the Midwest, and the United States as a whole were created and managed through tenets of white supremacy, both people of color and antiracist white folks have resisted racism to create inclusive communities. The idea of a "global Midwest" in both this article and this *AMSJ* special issue as a whole act as a counterpoint to white supremacy. "Global Midwest" invites histories rooted in difference, offering us new ways

of thinking and understanding the world around us. In contrast to simplified histories written under the formations of "White Supremacist Midwest," "global Midwest" accounts for the various ways colonialism and capitalism affect marginalized groups across a space created through Indigenous dispossession and genocide. For people to carve out a non-white space in a place so often violently opposed to their existence is something to celebrate and uplift. The battles waged against the system of segregation as detailed herein account for a self-determination among both Black and Mexican people to exist and prosper outside the constraints and violence of white supremacy.

As a life-long Kansas Chicana, I am a product of both the brutality of the "White Supremacist Midwest" and the perseverance of the "global Midwest." The dichotomy of violence/resistance is also one of loss/retention within my own life as reflected by my grandfather, Seledonio (Sal) Esquibel, who was forced to attend a so-called "Mexican school" in Topeka during the 1930s. Here "Spanish was beaten out of [him]."[33] Sal, who passed away in 2020, was a storyteller. I heard many of the same tales throughout my life, but never a peep about the childhood abuse and segregation he endured until I sat down to do an oral history with him in my first year of graduate school. When I pressed him on some specific aspects of discrimination he experienced, he responded, "Honey, they were prejudice."[34] The use of the term of endearment, "honey," is interesting not only because it represents our relationship, but more than that, it showcases that my grandpa is still trying to protect me from the hardships and discrimination he experienced growing up Mexican in Kansas. It was then that I understood why my grandparents did not teach Spanish to their children and grandchildren. Whereas Americanization won the language battle with my family, it was not through the myths of racial liberalism and assimilation. It won through state-sanctioned violence against children.

The power and significance of "history from below" and oral histories were crystallized for me during the interview with my grandfather.[35] I grew up next door to my grandparents, and I thought I knew everything there was to know about them. But I was so incredibly wrong. Although my grandfather could have kept his past experiences of racist abuse and discrimination from me, that would have been not only a disservice to him and to my family, but it would also continue the public historical amnesia of Mexican schools. Conducting oral histories allows us to be more active agents in curating archives for our communities. The writing of history is dependent on what we know. My grandfather might have wanted to protect me from knowing the full extent of the racist violence he endured, but I believe turning away from the ugly, even hurtful truth does not do any justice to him nor history. His story encapsulates not only the resistance and fortitude he had to survive and thrive in a place that did not want his presence but also the other side of the coin, which is that ordinary white

people, such as his elementary school teachers, are capable of violent racism. In fact, white supremacy depends on everyday people upholding racist hierarchies.

Whereas academic work siuch as Donato and Hansen's 2021 book, *The Other American Dilemma: Schools, Mexicans, and the Nature of Jim Crow, 1912-1953*, and Marisela Martinez-Cola's 2022 work, *The Bricks Before Brown: The Chinese American, Native American, and Mexican Americans' Struggle for Educational Equality*, have recently advanced the conversation regarding Mexican school segregation and the legacy of *Brown*, more historicization and theorization must be done to further illuminate this aspect of U.S. school segregation to outside of only academic circles. This article is written with the hopes that it is consumable to for general public and could be utilized in high school curricula.

Also notably, Donato and Hansen did not cover Topeka in their work whereas Martinez-Cola focuses solely on California. I believe the reason Donato and Hansen do not discuss Topeka is because no parents or community members filed a complaint with the closest Mexican consulate in Kansas City, Missouri, (the primary job of the consulate is to protect Mexican citizens while they are abroad) on the Topeka Mexican School at the Branner Annex.[36] The records from Mexican consulates build the foundation for most of their important archival work but government records cannot tell the whole story. Therefore, the oral history conducted between my grandfather and me as well as other oral histories that I and others have conducted with Topeka Mexican community elders works to fill this longstanding gap in both communal memory and academic discourse on Topeka's history of Mexican school segregation.

The absence of Mexican schools in the popularized narrative of school segregation is also a result of anti-Black racism on the part of Mexicans themselves. White people are not the only ones infatuated with perpetuating white supremacy.[37] Anti-Black racism led to a lack of interracial solidarity between Mexican and Black civil rights groups even as they faced similar battles including school segregation. For example, the title from Brian Behnken's *Fighting Their Own Battles: Mexican Americans, African Americans, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Texas* is derived from a quote from League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) leader, Felix Tijerina, who declared that LULAC would not work with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to prevent bills that would circumvent *Brown* from passing in Texas by asserting, "Let the Negro fight his own battles. His problems are not mine. I don't want to ally with him."[38] The absence of solidarity Tijerina shows here is also a dearth of historical understanding. Mexican segregation was innately tied to Black segregation. Laws and tactics used to subjugate Black people were utilized against Mexicans as well. Highlighting the complexities within

historical narratives such as this can combat such ideas fostered by the likes of Tijerina who would have marginalized people believing that their problems are not innately bound up with other subjugated peoples.

The Racialized Schooling of Mexicans

To fully understand the importance of the quasilegal "tri-racial" school segregation system in Kansas, we must first review the national discourse and memory regarding the racialization of Mexicans. The American Southwest is traditionally the epicenter of Chicanx studies and Mexican American histories, which is understandable given most of the U.S. southwestern territory was appropriated by the United States from Mexico in the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican American War in 1848. The treaty also granted U.S. citizenship to any Mexican national who decided to stay within the newly relinquished region. Automatically, Mexicans were thrust into a racialized form of citizenship that differed from how they were racially identified under the Mexican state and the preceding Spanish colonial administration. According to the U.S. Naturalization Act of 1790, unlike the racial codes of Mexican law, the only people allowed to naturalize as U.S. citizens were "free white" persons.[39] Therefore, all Mexicans were legally classified as white even though socially and culturally they were most often not seen or treated as white people.[40]

Although legally Mexicans were designated as "white," the extralegal and quasilegal white supremacist political and cultural milieu environment of the United States moved quickly to situate them as culturally "off-white." This racial cultural classification then reduced them to second class citizenry.[41] Thus, the racial othering of Mexicans was achieved not through formalized national law *per se*, but through state-sanctioned modes of extralegal violence, including systematic land theft, job discrimination, and, as mentioned above and below, school segregation at the local level.[42]

Over the last two decades, the history of school segregation has been illuminated beyond the Black/white binary by scholars who highlight the 1946 *Mendez v. Westminster* state court case, which declared "Mexican schools" in California unconstitutional, as a precursor to *Brown*.[43] The connections between *Mendez* and *Brown* go beyond them both ruling on school segregation. On behalf the NAACP, Thurgood Marshall penned and filed amicus (friend of the court) briefs for *Mendez* as the case was pending before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. Marshall then used some of the same arguments from *Mendez* to win *Brown*. The Mendez family's attorney, David Marcus, argued, "Segregation resulted in feelings of inferiority among Mexican American children that could undermine their ability to be productive Americans." U.S. District Court Judge Paul J. McCormick agreed with the plaintiffs and ordered that the school districts cease their "discriminatory practices against the pupils of Mexican

descent in the public schools."[44] McCormick's use of "discriminatory practices" instead of racialized segregation is an important point because the justifications for segregating Mexicans in California were made to appear not "race-based" because Mexicans were legally classified as "white."[45]

Because the segregation of Mexican children needed to be coded outside of the legal definitions of race, supposed language barriers and "bad hygiene" were employed as justifications instead.[46] School officials "claimed Mexican-descent children had special language needs that could only be met in segregated classrooms, and that Mexican children fell behind Anglo children because of the migratory agricultural work of their parents. They denied that race played any role in the creation of separate Mexican schools."[47] The linguistic justification for segregation also allowed school officials to side-step the question of citizenship and categorize Mexican Americans and noncitizen Mexican immigrants into one homogeneous group that needed cultural assimilation. In practice, the purpose of Mexican schools was to teach children of Mexican origin (regardless of their citizenship status) the English language and "Americanize" them into society.[48] English proficiency thus became the primary tool of white supremacists to ensure the "legality" of school segregation of Mexican children while simultaneously promoting a campaign of Americanization. However, some children were already fully proficient in English. Americanization in schools was, as such, a process of placing Mexicans outside of American ideas of whiteness. And importantly, regardless of citizenship or English-speaking-ability, Mexicans were seen first as laborers. Mexican children were no exception to this idea of Mexicans as laborers as they were often forced to work in the fields, planting and picking for long hours alongside their parents.[49]

The contradiction between Mexican Americans' legal white citizenship and racialized cultural otherness was employed to topple school segregation throughout the Southwest. In 1930, the nation's first desegregation case involving Mexican-descent children, *Independent School District v. Salvatierra,* challenged the segregation of Mexicans in Texas, where the court ruled that "the arbitrary exclusion of Mexican-American children from 'other whites' constituted unlawful racial discrimination."[50] The Texas Supreme Court's findings firmly define Mexican schools as explicitly race-based and "arbitrary" (meaning the claims of Mexican children needing to learn English in segregated classrooms or other reasons for segregation such as hygiene, were illogical, randomly deployed, and illegal), yet Mexican schools would continue to operate in California and Kansas for another two decades. The following year in California, *Alvarez v. Lemon Grove School District* contested similar racial segregation of Mexican children under the guise of language acquisition and cultural whitewashing, but as mentioned, desegregation was not fully won in California until fifteen years later in 1946 through the *Mendez v. Westminster* decision.[51]

Unlike the Texas and California cases in which language proficiency and the push for Americanization were thin veils covering racist policies, the segregation in Kansas was not based on English-speaking abilities, nor were the reasons based on hygienic matters. Rather, R. M. Cleary's excellent master's thesis on Kansas City, Kansas' segregation reveals, "The issue was race and in most cases in Kansas, Anglo parental pressure played a major role. Racist perception, fear of race mixing, fear of interracial sex, dating, and marriage influenced reactions to Mexicans by Anglos."[52] In the eyes of white Kansans, Mexicans were a threat to preservation of whiteness and the perceived benefits of white supremacy. Racist segregation policies were not simply decreed by those in power in local, state, or federal government. Instead, white parents of school-aged children were the main proprietors in the creation of Mexican schools in Kansas.

White Patrolling of the Color Line(s) in Kansas

Two of the main urban areas of Kansas then and now, Topeka and Kansas City, saw an uptick in Mexican immigration in the 1910s as the Mexican Revolution raged. Railroad companies, such as the Santa Fe and Rock Island, sent recruiters to the border to entice migrants to continue north to the railroad hubs of Topeka and Kansas City.[53] Altough the majority of Mexican immigrants in Kansas settled in urban areas, Mexicans could be found across the state. Thus, Mexican segregation also occurred across Kansas including in smaller rural towns such as Hutchinson and Salina. Hutchinson attempted to create a wholly separate Mexican school but settled on separate "Mexican rooms" instead.[54] Unlike most segregated Mexican schools or "rooms" in Kansas, Topeka's Branner Annex School was not officially or colloquially referred to as the "Mexican school." This was despite the fact that only Mexican children attended it. In the oral history I conducted with my grandfather, he simply refers to it as the Branner Annex and did not directly tell me that it was a segregated school for only Mexican children.[55] It was not until I continued to do interviews with other community elders and then began archival research that I realized the Branner Annex was indeed a so-called Mexican school. In fact, the now long gone makeshift four-room building with two brick outhouses was only blocks away from where I grew up. None of the teachers at the Branner Annex had any special training for teaching English as a second language. They did not even speak Spanish.[56] Instead the violence through physical abuse and forced assimilation practices inflicted on my grandfather and presumably other Mexican children by underqualified, racist teachers in substandard facilities became the primary method for them to learn English and properly "assimilate."

Sixty miles east of Topeka lies Kansas City, Kansas, which sits on the state border directly next to its Missouri counterpart. The two Kansas Cities generate a sprawling metro area which encompassed a few battles

in the fight to end segregation. One such Kansas City, Kansas, subsidiary imbued in tensions surrounding the segregation of Mexicans was the railroad community of Argentine, Kansas. In 1923, the town constructed the segregated Clara Barton School, also commonly referred to as simply the "Mexican school." The Argentine case is significant for several reasons including that Argentine "appears to be the first instance in a major city outside the Southwest where school officials publicly informed residents that it was establishing a separate Mexican school."[57] The Clara Barton School "owed its origin to the efforts of civic and PTA groups in Argentine and Armourdale who favored segregated schools for Mexicans."[58] The ordinary white citizens of local civic associations and PTA groups implemented this extra-legal segregation in collaboration with local governments, particularly and obviously with school boards. These political groups also operated with the sanction of the Mexican consulate. The Mexican consul in Kansas City, Missouri, was primarily concerned with the children of Mexican citizens receiving a "proper" education and not whether the segregation was necessarily legal under Kansas or federal law.[59] The Clara Barton School in Argentine continued to function as a segregated Mexican school until a flood destroyed the building in 1951, almost thirty years after its founding.[60]

Whereas the so-called Mexican school provided the answer to the calls for segregation by white parents and civic organizations at the elementary and middle school levels (with a local newspaper claiming it to have "solved the racial problem"), there was no segregated high school built for Mexican students in Argentine or anywhere else in Kansas.[61] Regardless if the school board was willing to bend the legal code, racial segregation at the high school level was explicitly not allowable by state statute, with one notable exception. The Kansas City school district (where Argentine was located) was, in fact, the only district in Kansas where a segregated high school for only Black students was legally allowed. Black students were bused from across the large Kansas City, Kansas, school district to the only segregated high school in the state, Sumner High School.[62] Therefore, the only high school in the Argentine community was for white students and was the only option for Mexican students to continue their formal education. It is not known whether any Mexican students tried to enroll in Sumner High School, but it seems likely they would have been turned away even if they did.

As stated earlier, Mexican immigrants in early-twentieth century Kansas were navigating a racialized, sociolegal environment in which their racial categorization often differed from when in Mexico. This is to say that race and racism still festered in Mexico and the rest of formerly colonized Latin America. The racial hierarchy across Latin America, inherited from Spanish, French, and Portuguese colonialisms and the transatlantic slave trade, classified Blackness and Indigeneity as inferior to whiteness.[63]

Therefore, Mexicans in Kansas and elsewhere in the United States were experienced with a system of racial hierarchies. Few Mexicans desired to personally identify and/or be identified as Black, given the vulnerabilities and exploitation it augmented in the U.S. socio-legal-racial system, yet nevertheless some Mexican parents tried to enroll their children in Black schools in different parts of the country, such as in Washington D.C. Despite these attempts, however, they were denied by the state.[64] Of course, there were also Black Mexicans who were unable to *choose* whether they identified as Black or not.

An interview in a 1994 Kansas Humanities Council booklet on the history of the local Mexican Catholic Church and School, Our Lady of Guadalupe, with a Topeka community elder, Frank Cervantez, noted that "there were schools for blacks and schools for whites." Cervantez recalls, "My mother trying to enroll us in the black school which was only three blocks away and the school would not let us attend. So we had to attend the white school which was ten blocks away."[65] The interview did not state how old Cervantez was at the time of his elementary schooling but the reason for him not being enrolled in Topeka's segregated Mexican school could be because it was after the school was closed in 1942 due to Mexican parents' organized protest to city officials.[66] The proximity of both the white and Black schools reflects the fact that Topeka was not completely residentially segregated even though racist "red-lining" was deployed in the city.[67]

The combination of integrated neighborhoods with segregated schools proved perplexing to even small children. Lupe Perez, who was born in Topeka in 1934, and attended the Branner Annex during its last two years of operation, stated in a 2014 newspaper article that she "did not know why, when the neighborhood was a mix of white, black and Mexican, we had to go to different schools. I would ask, and my mother would say, 'That's the way it is.'"[68] Although the color line was presented as "natural" in the form of simply, "that's the way it is," both young children and other parents (such as those in Topeka who participated in an organized demand to close the Branner Annex School) questioned the legitimacy of segregated schooling.

As mentioned, Mexican parents in Kansas City's neighborhood of Argentine did not openly resist the segregation of elementary-aged Mexican students at the Clara Barton School, but there was a significant battle waged over the segregation at the high school level. Jesus and Luz Alvarado, Marcos De Leon, and Victorina Perez's enrollment in Argentine High School in the fall of 1925 was initially met with the ordinariness associated with the annual return to school. However, this smooth transition from the Mexican-only Clara Barton School into the white high school was short-lived. A week later, the school board was presented a petition that was "signed by over 200 Anglos from the Argentine district [which] was

produced as evidence that the children were not wanted."[69] The petition was organized by both the high school's PTA and a local civic group ensuring the petition could be signed by white community members with no children in the school. Notably, the petition gave no reason for expelling the four Mexican children except for the "commonsense" reason of their non-white race. It is worth noting that this white supremacist upheaval occurred only two years after the opening of the Clara Barton School, implying that many of the same white folks involved in the campaign for its creation were the same people involved in this racist call for Mexican students to be expelled from the high school. Also, the fact that the four children were entering high school only two years after the establishment of the Clara Barton School insinuates that they were most likely attending school with white children prior.

The local school board refrained from mandating the students' removal from the school and, in response, the white parents threatened violence on not just the students and their families but also targeted the entire Mexican community in Argentine. It is important to remember Argentine as a relatively small, working-class railroad community within the larger Kansas City metro area. Many parents on both sides of the color line worked for the same railroad companies and lived blocks apart from one another. The proximity between the potential white mob and the Mexican community rendered the threats of violence even more distressing. The school board and other facets of the local Kansas City government did not condemn the threats of violence, much less rebuke the calls for segregation. The parents of the four students removed their children from the school for their own protection, but they refused to bow to the petition or the threats and demanded their children be allowed to return safely to school without fear of physical harm.[70]

Although the white parents and white community members who supported segregation had no qualms about defending their racist reasonings and violent threats while demanding Argentine High School remain for whites only, the school board was bound by Kansas law which dictated that children, regardless of race, had a right to attend public schools and that the only segregated high school was one for Black students. The school board's response to the petition and threats of violence was unfortunately not to denounce the aggressive segregationists but instead the school board offered a series of "resolutions" that would both appease the white parents and provide a high school education to the Mexican students. The school board was determined to reach "a compromise based on segregation." First, it offered the parents of the Mexican students a separate room and teacher within the Argentine High School building. Then, officials suggested providing carfare and tuition for the students to cross the state border and attend an integrated high school in Kansas City, Missouri. However, the Mexican parents resoundingly refused both options.[71]

In the face of violent threats directed towards them, their children, and their entire community, the parents of the Mexican students were steadfast in demanding their children's safe return to Argentine High School. The fortitude and persistence of these families to stand up against a racist mob and an at-best indifferent school board is something to uphold within history. Furthermore, the dual legacy of everyday white supremacy and everyday nonwhite resistance embedded in the narrative of Mexican schools in Topeka and Argentine would be impossible to know if one were to only learn about school segregation through a top-down legal framework. Utilizing a "history from below" method reveals as much about everyday white people's ability to be arbiters of violence in defending the color line as it does about ordinary folks also standing up and resisting such racism.

Whereas, today, it is unclear whether the four children were Mexican nationals or U.S. citizens, we do know the parents were Mexican nationals as they were able to petition the Mexican consulate in Kansas City, Missouri, to intervene in the case. After the school board refused anything other than "a compromise based on segregation," the Mexican consul then appealed to the U.S. Attorney General to demand the students be allowed to re-enter school without any threats to them, their families, or the rest of the Mexican community in Argentine. The Mexican consul argued that because the Mexican parents were considered "friendly aliens," the Attorney General of the Federal Government needed to take some action to ensure their and their children's rights.[72] While the legacy of *Brown v. Board* hinges on the "separate but equal" doctrine violating constitutional rights, the resolution to the 1925 Argentine High School case is contingent on perhaps the students themselves and, at the very least, their parents not being U.S. citizens. The "right" to attend school without the threat of extralegal violence was guaranteed through their status as Mexican citizens and the so-called "friendly" relationship between the United States and Mexico during the 1920s. This resolution to the Argentine High School segregation case upsets normalized narratives concerning what it means to be a citizen and an "alien" in the United States, and again, falls out of the typified legal narratives of school segregation.

Today, the term "alien" is often paired with the descriptor, "illegal" instead of "friendly," and is utilized to fan flames of anti-immigrant sentiment and signify that undocumented immigrants are not deserving of the same rights, equity, and access promised to U.S. citizens.[73] But, as we see with the Argentine case, so-called alien status did not always aways equate to being subject without rights. The contradiction between citizenship and the accessibility of rights was so visible to Mexican immigrants in early-to-mid-twentieth century Kansas that "Mexicans who sought citizenship found themselves objects of ridicule and harassment. Mexican consuls, too, attempted to thwart naturalization attempts because they felt continued Mexican citizenship offered better protections to the immigrant than

naturalization."[74] These contradictions undermine the legal narratives of *Brown*, echoed by the likes of current Kansas Attorney General Schmidt, which decree racialized inequality in schools as a past issue since *Brown* allowed the United States to fulfill the so-called "obvious" egalitarian promises based on equal citizenship and constitutional rights.

The history of segregated schooling of Mexicans in Kansas highlights the constructed nature of race outside the bounds of law. The cases in Kansas in particular underline the power of everyday people in enacting and maintaining, as well as resisting, racial hierarchies. Segregated schools, both Black and Mexican, were thus critical in maintaining racial hierarchies in Kansas and the rest of the United States as they indoctrinated children at a young age to accept white supremacist thinking as simply "that's the way it is." History from below showcases that ordinary people shape history and that no power structure, such as a racial hierarchy, exists naturally.

Conclusion: Resisting "That's the way it is" Thinking

Whereas the focus of this article is the segregation of Mexican children in schools, segregation of Mexicans along a tri-racial system did not end at the schoolyard and the non-educational color lines were just as much patrolled by everyday white people who were not concerned with whether a person was a citizen of the United States or not. An archival oral history with Mexican immigrant and Topeka resident, Jesus Padilla underscores the reality of U.S. citizenship providing few rights for racialized subjects in early-to-mid-century Kansas. Padilla was born in Quiroga, Michoacan, Mexico, in 1904 and emigrated to Topeka in 1928 to reunite with his mother, Maria Medina and her new husband, Guadalupe Ponce. One of the first things Padilla remembers seeing upon his arrival to Topeka was a restaurant sign declaring "Mexicans and Colored only served sack lunches."[75] He soon realized, however, that white people's deciphering of which folks were and were not Mexican was completely inconsistent as judgment of "Mexican-ness" was based on skin color and not citizenship. One of his first visits to a movie theater in Topeka proved the faulty nature of defining a strangers' racial identity as he was allowed to enter the theater and his darker skinned friend was denied entry by a white employee. Padilla protested by arguing that even though he was light-skinned, he was Mexican and, meanwhile, his friend was actually an American citizen. His friend's citizenship status had no effect on the employee's decision to bar him from the theater.[76]

The policing of the color lines in recreational venues such as movie theaters, restaurants, and pools varied with Mexicans sometimes gaining access to spaces barred to Black people, whereas other times they were blatantly prohibited. As seen with Mexican schools, the blurred color lines

of Kansas were caused not by state policy but the lack thereof which allowed everyday white people, whether they be parents, restaurant owners, or movie theater employees, to hold power over non-white people and feel as if they were shareholders in upholding the system of white supremacy. The narrators of the oral histories I conducted all commented on their experiences with segregation and racial discrimination in Kansas, but in Thomas Soza's interview he explains the deadly consequences of the city pools' "white only" policy. Multiple members of Soza's extended kin network perished in the Kansas River as they attempted to have a fun escape from the stifling humidity and heat of Kansas summers. Soza mournfully but matter-of-factly stated, "We lost a lot of people in the river because we weren't allowed to go to the swimming pools."[77] Again, recreational and leisure venues were not required by law to operate under Jim Crow policies so white people established and preserved the violent and at times even deadly color line under their own volition. Of course, the desire to racially segregate almost every aspect of life was not a natural inclination for white people but a learned one. The edification of white supremacy that is presented in Padilla's narration of his first day in Topeka was proliferated to all subjects across the color lines. The sheer amount of racial discrimination faced by non-white people would be easy to classify as "that's just the way it is" as Lupe Perez's mother tries to rationalize to her, but racism is anything but natural. There is a lot of work behind upholding white supremacy as seen in how white people continually organized to restrict the movements and opportunities for people of color.

Segregation in the United States was not a Southern problem. It was not simply a Black/white issue that was only regulated by state officials and government policy. The history of segregated all-Mexican schools (and Mexican segregation more broadly) in the United States, and particularly Kansas, offers us another avenue to better understand how race and racism has been defined, deployed, and resisted over time and space by ordinary people across the country. The effects of nation-wide racial segregation across color lines still reverberate into today. Schools are still institutions where children are exposed to the realities and pressures to conform to white supremacy and racial hierarchies. But our current day is also shaped by the active resistance to such racialized power structures. History does not just happen to people. History is never just "that's the way it is."

Notes

1. A sampling of the foundational work on Black school segregation and the legacy of the *Brown* case include: *Removing a Badge of Slavery: The Record of Brown V. Board of Education* (Princeton:ⱡ Markus Wiener Publishers, 1993) edited by Mark Whitman; Paul E. Wilson's *A Time to Lose: Representing Kansas in Brown v. Board of Education* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995); Austin Sarat's

Race, Law, and Culture: Reflections on Brown v. Board of Education (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); James T. Patterson's *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Mary Maruca's *Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site* (Oro Valley: Western National Parks Association, 2003); Peter F. Lau's *From the Grassroots to the Supreme Court: Brown v. Board of Education and American Democracy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Richard Kluger's *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004); Ansley T. Erickson's *Making the Unequal Metropolis: School Desegregation and Its Limits* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); *With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing Brown V. Board of Education* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2008) edited by Charles C. Bolton and Brian J. Daugherity; and Ben Keppel's *Brown v. Board and the Transformation of American Culture: Education and the South in the Age of Desegregation* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2016).

2. Derrick Bell. *Silent Covenants: Brown V. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

3. Cheryl Brown Henderson, Deborah Dandridge, John Edgar Tidwell, Darren Canady, and Vincent Omni. *Recovering Untold Stories: An Enduring Legacy of the Brown v. Board of Education Decision* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Libraries, 2018).

4. The history of lynching is a crucial aspect of extralegal violence in which ordinary white people engaged throughout the United States and especially in the Jim Crow South. For more, see Ida B. Wells' "United States Atrocities: Lynch Law" (London: "Lux" Newspaper and Pub. Co., 1900); Paul Ortiz's *Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Michael Pfeifer's *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society, 1874-1947* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004); and Amy Louise Wood's *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

5. My understanding of hegemony is rooted in Antonio Gramsci's theorization of the term in his *Prison Notebooks, Volumes 1-3* (Columbia University Press, 2011). I found it most hopeful to think of how hegemony creates societal knowledge that is perceived as "common sense."

6. Bell, *Silent Covenants.*

7. Brown Henderson et al. *Recovering Untold Stories*, vii (emphasis added).

8. Carl Grey Martin and Modhumita Roy, "Narrative Resistance: A Conversation with Historian Marcus Rediker," *Workplace: A Journal for Academic Labor* 30, (2018): 58.

9. I use the terms "ordinary" and "everyday" throughout the article to emphasize that racist violence and segregation practices by white people not in political power were the essential cogs in the white supremacist machine and without them racialized hierarchies could not be withheld. This is also not an American phenomenon as white supremacy is a global project. A critical example of positioning "ordinary" people at the crux of racial genocide in Europe is Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

10. See W.E.B. Du Bois' *Black Reconstruction* (New York: Free Press, 1935), Alexander Saxton's *The Indispensable Enemy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), and David Roediger's *Wages of Whiteness* (London: Verso, 1991) for foundational works on how ordinary white people enforced color lines, often violently.

11. One reading that encapsulates the malleability of history is W.E.B. Du Bois' foundational 1935 text, *Black Reconstruction*, an over 700-page indictment of the decades of historians who produced and proliferated racist and blatantly false accounts of Reconstruction. Du Bois defines their purposeful misinterpretation of the postbellum United States and continued indoctrination of white supremacy as the "propaganda of history." Knowledge producers with allegiances to white supremacy can utilize the same archives for their own devices. Du Bois explained that this demonstration of power is as easy as garnering "sufficient general agreement and determination among the dominant classes," so that "the truth of history may be utterly distorted and contradicted and changed to any convenient fairy tale that the masters of men wish," (726). Du Bois ending *Black Reconstruction* with "The Propaganda of History" was not a signaling of defeat or forecasting the futility in producing knowledge that resists. Rather, he was foregrounding how high the stakes are in the production of historical knowledge. The preceding 700 pages of *Black Reconstruction* illustrate how scholars can center voices that have been silenced, forgotten, or distorted and center truths of survival and resistance to events that systems of power dare not name.

12. Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

13. Rubén Donato and Jarrod Hanson, *The Other American Dilemma: Schools, Mexicans, and the Nature of Jim Crow, 1912-1953* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021), 102.

14. Hannah Bailey, "'Colonized by Freedom:' Making the State, Private Property, and Race in Kansas" (PhD dissertation, The University of Kansas, 2021).

15. Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004).

16. Natalia Molina, *How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

17. Gabriella Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Ethnicity and Nation: 1916-*1939 (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

18. María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo's *Indian Given: Racial Geographies Across Mexico and the United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), proves insightful here. Her chapter, "Adjudicating Exception: The Fate of Indio Bárbaro in the U.S. Courts (1869-1954)" is especially informative for how different lawyers tried to "exceptionalize" Mexicans as not white and racially discriminated against and also as distinctly separate from Black and Indigenous people, ignoring the reality that Mexicans can be white, Black, and/or Indigenous.

19. Nicole M. Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence: Remapping U.S. and Mexican National Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011). María Josefina. Saldaña-Portillo, *Indian Given: Racial Geographies Across Mexico and the United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

20. U.S. Department of the Interior's 2022 Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative, "Federal Indian Boarding School Maps."

21. For more on the violence of American Indian Boarding Schools, see David Wallace Adams' *Education for Extinction American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875–1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995); K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa L. McCarty's *"To Remain an Indian": Lessons in Democracy from a Century of Native American Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2006); *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences* (Lincoln, Bison Books: 2006) edited by Clifford E. Trafzer and Jean A. Keller; Kim Warren's *The Quest for Citizenship: African American and Native American Education in Kansas, 1880-1935* (Durham: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010); and John R. Gram's "Acting Out Assimilation: Playing Indian

and Becoming American in the Federal Indian Boarding Schools" (*The American Indian Quarterly* 40, no 3, 2016).

22. Deb Haaland, Boarding School Initiative. Volume 1 of the Department of the Interior's Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report, including S. 2907, Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act, June 22, 2022.

23. Again, María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo's *Indian Given* is an excellent work that showcases the proliferation of anti-Indigeneity on both sides of the border in both connected and varied ways.

24. *The High School World*, "Mexicans," March 27, 1914, (*A T.H.S. Scrapbook, 1871-1971* edited by Danny Callison and Judy Cromwell), 1979.

25. Kim Warren's *The Quest for Citizenship* is especially useful in understanding the Kansas context for Black and Indigenous racialized experience in public schools.

26. Reams, Bernard D. Jr. and Paul E. Wilson, ed., *Segregation and the Fourteenth Amendment in the States: A Survey of State Segregation Laws 1865-1953: Prepared for United States Supreme Court in re: Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka* (Buffalo: William S. Hein, 1975), 186-7.

27. Rubén Donato and Jarrod Hansen, "'In These Towns, Mexicans Are Classified as Negroes': The Politics of Unofficial Segregation in the Kansas Public Schools, 1915–1935," *American Educational Research Journal*, 54, no. 1 (2017): 56.

28. Ibid: 57.

29. R. M. Cleary, "The Education of Mexican-Americans in Kansas City, Kansas, 1916–1951" (MA thesis, University of Missouri, Kansas City, 2002).

30. David J. Peavler, "Creating the Color Line and Confronting Jim Crow: Civil Rights in Middle America: 1850-1900." (PhD dissertation, University of Kansas, 2008), 64.

31. Dean Saranillio, *Unsustainable Empire: Alternative Histories of Hawai'i Statehood* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), xiii.

32. José Limón, "Border Literary Histories, Globalization, and Critical Regionalism." In *American Literary History* (2008), 166-7.

33. Seledonio Esquibel, Personal Interview, February 17, 2018.

34. Ibid.

35. My oral history practice is first and most importantly rooted in my family's tradition of passing family stories down from generation to generation. Academically, I am particularly inspired by Maylei Blackwell's *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011) but the foundational work of Alessandro Portelli's "What Makes Oral History Different" (In *Oral History, Oral Culture, and Italian Americans*, 2009) and Nancy MacKay's *Curating Oral Histories: From Interview to Archive* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2006) are also formative.

36. Donato and Hansen utilize archival records from Mexican consulates across the United States that fielded complaints on school segregation by Mexican citizens. These records are housed at the National Archive in Mexico City. The lack of Mexican consul records on Topeka may be because many of the children there like my grandfather were actually American citizens and therefore unable to call upon the consul for assistance. Donato and Hansen detail this predicament of citizenship also being the case in Colorado.

37. Guidotti-Hernández. *Unspeakable Violence*.

38. Behnken, Brian. *Fighting Their Own Battles: Mexican Americans, African Americans, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Texas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

39. See Nicholas De Genova and Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas's excellent examination of race, nationality, and U.S. citizenship in twentieth century Chicago, *Latino Crossings: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and the Politics of Race and Citizenship* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2006) for a deeper understanding of how these categories of identity are constructed and shift over time and place.

40. Neil Foley, *Mexicans in the Making of America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015). Laura Gómez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York: NYU Press, 2007). Rafael Pérez-Torres, *Mestizaje: Critical Uses of Race in Chicano Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

41. Gómez, *Manifest* Destinies, 2.

42. Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930 (*Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979). Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Los Angeles Barrio, 1850-1890: A Social History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

43. Jennifer McCormick, "Mendez v. Westminster: Domestic and International Forces Underlying the Fight for School Desegregation," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 39, no. 1 (2019): 5-34. Philippa Strum, *Mendez v. Westminster: School Desegregation and Mexican-American Rights* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010). Lisa Y. Ramos, "Dismantling Segregation Together: Interconnections Between the *Méndez v. Westminster* (1946) and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) School Segregation Cases," *Equity & Excellence in Education* 37, no. 3 (2004): 247-54.

44. U.S. Courts. "Background - Mendez v. Westminster Re-Enactment." https://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/educational-activities/background-mendez-v-westminster-re-enactment

45. Philippa Strum, "Mendez v. Westminster."

46. Natalia Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879*-1939 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

47. Foley, *Mexicans in the Making of America*, 153.

48. Robert R. Alvarez, "Jim and José Crow: Conversations on the Black/Brown Dialogue," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 51, no. 3 (2016): 346 –57.

49. Kansas Humanities Council. *Generations United: A History of Our Lady of Guadalupe Community* (1994), 25. Kansas Historical Archives. Hazel and Robert Gomez Collection, Box 3.

50. Foley, *Mexicans in the Making of America*, 154.

51. Strum,. *Mendez v. Westminster*.

52. Cleary, "The Education of Mexican-Americans in Kansas City, Kansas, 1916–1951," 124.

53. Cynthia Mines, *Riding the Rails to Kansas: The Mexican Immigrants* (Washington D.C.: National Endowment for the Humanities, 1980).

54. Donato and Hanson, *The Other American Dilemma*, 63-4.

55. Esquibel, personal interview. An important note on oral history is that, as a methodology, it does not provide a "truer" or "more accurate" narrative. Memory is fickle but that does not make recording memories any less important. What is remembered, forgotten, or even altered by a narrator allows for us to better understand how a person sees themselves within history and as history makers.

56. Kansas Humanities Council, *Generations United*, 26.

57. Donato and Hanson, *The Other American Dilemma*, 58.

58. Judith Laird, "Argentine, Kansas: The Evolution of a Mexican-American Community, 1905-1940" (PhD dissertation, University of Kansas, 1975), 193.

59. Donato and Hansen, "'In These Towns, Mexicans Are Classified as Negroes,'" 59.

60. Kansas Historical Society. "Clara Barton School, Argentine, Kansas." Part of: Photographs of Mexican Americans (Kansas City Kansas Spanish Speaking Office). Call Number: Dart ID: 304205. Unit ID: 447587.

61. Cleary, "The Education of Mexican-Americans in Kansas City, Kansas, 1916–1951," 79.

62. Named for the anti-slavery proponent and radical Republican, Charles Sumner.

63. Guidotti-Hernández's *Unspeakable* Violence. Saldaña-Portillo's *Indian Given*.

64. David G. García, Tara J. Yosso, and Ryan E. Santos, "In Pursuit of 'Equality of Opportunity': Ernesto and Karla Galarza Challenge School Segregation, Washington, DC, 1947." *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 41, no. 3, (2022): 37-64.

65. Kansas Humanities Council, *Generations United*, 26.

66. Celia Llopis-Jepsen, "Historian: Topeka's Hispanic segregation often forgotten" *Topeka Capital Journal*, May 8, 2014.

67. Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al., "Mapping Inequality," American Panorama, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers.

68. Llopis-Jepsen, "Historian."

69. Cleary, "The Education of Mexican-Americans in Kansas City, Kansas, 1916–1951," 83.

70. Ibid, 84.

71. Ibid, 83.

72. Ibid, 140.

73. Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 4.

74. Laird, "Argentine, Kansas: The Evolution of a Mexican-American Community, 1905-1940," 188-9.

75. Alexander Bleiberg, "From Mexico to Topeka on the Rails of the Santa Fe: The Saga of Mexican Labor and the Great Strike of 1922" (1996), 2. Kansas Historical Archives. RR 1381; Box 1381.

76. Ibid, 3.

77. Thomas Soza, personal interview, May 29, 2018.