



## Plessy to Brown: Education of Mexican Americans in Arizona public schools during the era of segregation

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PLESSY TO BROWN: EDUCATION OF MEXICAN AMERICANS IN ARIZONA  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS DURING THE ERA OF SEGREGATION

By

Herman Robert Lucero

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Herman L. Luzzo

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my wife, Consuelo Macedonia Gauna Lucero, who has unselfishly supported me throughout the years in all of my endeavors. She has always been the source of love, inspiration and strength for our family and for me. This work would not have been possible without her support and understanding.

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This is also dedicated to all the former students who attended Williams Elementary School and South Beaver School in the years 1930s through the 1950s, and who persevered and succeeded in spite of the many obstacles and hardships they faced during that era.

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## ABSTRACT

This study provides an analysis of the historical events that shaped the public school education of Mexican American children in Arizona in the first half of the twentieth century. This study also examines how segregation was established in two cities in northern Arizona and how schooling affected the feelings and emotions of former students. From about 1900 to 1950 Mexican American children were required to attend segregated schools or were segregated in different classrooms even though there were no laws that mandated segregation. Segregation was established under the guise of providing special accommodations for Spanish-speakers.

However, it was clear that the education policies of Arizona in the 1930s and 1940s were to prepare Mexican children for “Mexican” occupations. These educational programs had their roots in Americanization policies implemented earlier in the twentieth century. At the root of the Americanization policies in the Southwest was the notion that the Mexican immigrant was culturally inferior and could not be assimilated into the American mainstream until the Mexican culture and language were eradicated. Included in these policies were Mexican Americans, although they were United States citizens.

Mexican children in school were publicly humiliated, physically and verbally abused for speaking Spanish on school grounds. The high school dropout rates for Mexican Americans in those years were very high. Mexican students were not encouraged to go to college by educators because they felt that the students did not have the mental skills to achieve academic success and because they did not need a higher education for the “Mexican” jobs they would be working.

Most people are unaware of the extent of public school segregation of Mexican Americans in the state of Arizona. The public is generally aware of the segregation of African Americans in public schools and to some degree of the segregation of Native Americans in boarding schools. Segregation of Mexican Americans in the public schools is an important chapter in Arizona history that must be told to illustrate the struggle in the daily lives of past generations of Mexican Americans to overcome the numerous racial and discriminatory practices they experienced.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to provide a historical account of the public school segregation of Mexican American in Arizona in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and to place these events in the broader context of school segregation in the United States. The public is generally aware of the segregation of African Americans in public schools and, to some degree, the segregation of Native Americans in boarding schools in the 1800s and the first half of the 1900s. However, the era of school segregation of Mexican Americans in Arizona is largely unknown and unwritten. Even well-known author, Gilbert González (1999), who wrote extensively on school segregation of the Mexican American, only touched on segregation in Arizona, limiting his analysis to the Phoenix area.

The “separate-but-equal” doctrine born in 1896 as a result of a Supreme Court ruling in the case *Plessy v. Ferguson* was the legal basis for racial discrimination and segregation of African Americans. This ruling not only allowed states to pass legislation mandating separate schools for African Americans, but also was the basis for segregation of African Americans in public accommodations and the passage of “Jim Crow” laws that affected every fiber of their daily lives. Later in the 1800s as thousands of Mexican immigrants came north to the United States, these same “Jim Crow” laws were also used to discriminate against the Mexican people because of their dark skin and their *mestizo* Spanish-Indian heritage.

Although state laws did not mandate segregation of Mexican children in public schools, Mexican children were forced to attend segregated schools throughout the Southwest and California. State and local officials segregated Mexican children on the premise of accommodating the "special language" needs of Spanish-speaking students. Public pressure also forced school officials to segregate Mexican children based on the concern of Anglo parents that the progress of their children would be impeded if they attended the same classes as Mexican children. In other cases, Anglo parents just did not want their children in the same schools as Mexican children. These actions were fed by negative stereotypes of the Mexican people and the prevailing ideology of Anglo superiority.

Segregation of Mexican Americans in the public schools is an important chapter in Arizona history that must be told to illustrate the struggle in the daily lives of past generations to overcome the numerous racial and discriminatory practices they experienced. Thomas Sheridan (1986), in a major historical account of Mexican Americans in the Tucson area, noted that Arizona continues to be overlooked by writers of Mexican American history. He further wrote, in his analysis of discrimination and subordination faced by Mexican Americans in the 1930s, that "No institution revealed the complexity of this subordination better than the public school system." (Sheridan, 1986, p. 217). It is also important to provide a historical background to the current studies on the academic achievement of Mexican Americans and to measure how far we have come, or how far we yet to go, to provide equal educational opportunities for Mexican American children.

The year 2004 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. This historic legislation mandated the end of legal public school segregation for all students in America. No doubt there will be many celebrations (and perhaps some private condemnations) and commemorations around this historic event. Most media events and discussions will probably focus on past *de jure* segregation as a black and white issue. However, few people, except those who lived the experience, will recall the segregation of Mexican students in California and all southwestern states, including Arizona. Even fewer Americans will know that lawsuits brought forth by Mexican parents prior to 1954 provided the foundation for the lawsuit initiated by the NAACP that resulted in the *Brown* case.

Noted educational historian Rubén Donato (1997), in his analysis of school segregation, writes that during the civil rights era of the 1960s, when scholars were publishing numerous articles on the failure of public schools to educate minority children, their articles tended to focus primarily on the African American experience. The issue of segregation of Mexican Americans tended to remain in the background. Donato further describes this oversight, “The plight of the African American has received so much attention since the civil rights era that it dominates historical memory and often serves as a frame of reference for current discussion on educational issues” (Donato, 1997, p.1). This statement serves to illustrate the fact that the educational concerns of the Mexican American have always remained in the background and given comparatively



little attention. Carter and Segura (1979), for example, concluded that the education of Mexican Americans has been one of designed neglect and ingrained institutional racism.

### Statement of the Problem

Mexican American students in the twenty-first century continue to do poorly in public schools throughout the Southwest. Through the years, research studies have advanced a myriad of reasons for the low academic performance of Mexican American children, the alarming high dropout rates from high school, and the failure of many Mexican Americans to graduate from a university. However, few studies have given any attention to the past decades of public school segregation of Mexican Americans and the long-term effects of such segregation and institutional racism on school achievement. Many educators and others have long acknowledged that public school segregation is one of the major deterrents to academic achievement of minority students (Valencia, 2002). During the era of segregation in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Mexican American parents were concerned about the effects of school segregation and filed many legal challenges around the country. Very little has been written about the ideologies and pedagogical reasons given for public school segregation of Mexican Americans in the state of Arizona or, much more important, its consequences. Understanding the past is critical in helping to shape the future education of Mexican American children and to analyze the current state of education.

This study will, therefore, analyze the purpose and outcomes of public school segregation of Mexican Americans in Arizona public schools during the years 1900-1950. In some cities in Arizona there were separate public schools for “Mexicans” and in

others Mexican American children were placed in separate classrooms, in an integrated school. The study will include a detailed analysis of the schools in Flagstaff and Williams because they represent both types of segregation for Mexican Americans. In Flagstaff, South Beaver Elementary School was a designated school for Mexican Americans. In Williams Elementary School, students were placed in separate classrooms (within an integrated school) from first through the eighth grade. Even the playground was segregated in the Williams school. Anglo children and Mexican children were unaware that the other attended the same school. I attended both of these schools in the 1940s and I am familiar with both situations. I know many of the former students and this social network facilitated interviewing them for their recollections and reflections about their schooling experience. During the era of segregation, various pedagogical reasons were given by school administrators for the separation of Mexican Americans. Most common were those citing differences in language and culture. The rationale was that the Mexican American children needed special instruction in learning English and assimilating into American culture. However, there were other reasons that were not so pedagogical in nature. The issue was simply that Anglo parents did not want their children to attend classes with "Mexicans." In Tucson in 1932, sixty students were transferred from Menlo Park school to Davis. Plaintiffs later described this action in 1974, in a desegregation lawsuit, as an effort by Superintendent Rose to maintain Menlo Park as a predominantly Anglo school (Sheridan, 1986, p 221)

Segregation of Mexican American children in Arizona public schools was part of a scene being duplicated in many cities of the Southwest and California. During the early

part of the twentieth century, concerns were raised for the first time about the education of Mexican American children. Annie Reynolds (1933), a researcher for the United States Office of Education, first raised the alarm of thousands of Mexican children being segregated in public schools. For the first time, the public school education of these children became a major issue in the United States.

This study will also examine some of the historical factors that set the stage for public segregation of Mexican Americans and how these factors manifested themselves in Arizona. An important factor was the nature and pattern of the Mexican migration to the United States after the Mexican War of 1846 and their subsequent reception in the United States. This phase was marked by employment of Mexican immigrants in low-paying jobs that impacted all phases of their daily lives and was marked by institutional racism and discrimination. In most cases, Mexican immigrants stayed within an area roughly 100 miles from the Mexican border all the way from California to Texas. Mexican immigrants tended to settle in enclaves (*barrios*) for reasons of low economic status, discrimination in housing, security, language and culture. The large influx of Mexican immigrants after the Mexican Revolution of 1910 alarmed many mainstream Americans and resulted in the implementation of Americanization policies, directed by the U.S. government. Caught in this vicious dilemma were U.S.-born Mexican Americans whose history is inextricably linked to Mexican immigration.

Americanization programs, coupled with school segregation, greatly impacted the education of Mexican Americans. The intent of these programs was to eradicate all things Mexican from the Mexican American child. The reasoning behind this action was the

belief that once this eradication was accomplished, the Mexican child would then easily assimilate into the American mainstream and become a “real” but subordinated, American. Americanization practices implied that there was no inherent value in anything Mexican, including language, religion, dress, family traditions and customs or family life style (González, 1990). With this intent, Mexican American children were educated in segregated classrooms or schools and were indoctrinated with the belief that they were mentally inferior to Anglo students.

### Significance of the Study

The history of education for Mexican children in the first half of the twentieth century is a story marked by racial discrimination, school segregation and little regard for their language and culture. Rodolfo Acuña, Chicano historian, graphically described the situation when he wrote “The Chicano community fought segregation, inferior schools and education, the discrimination of I.Q. exams, poor teaching, the lack of Mexican Teachers, and the socialization process that condemned them to failure and then conditioned them to accept it.” (Acuña, 2000, p. 171) The Chicano movement in the 1960s, as part of civil rights efforts of African Americans, helped to illuminate many of the issues surrounding institutional racism in the schools and resulted in renewed awareness of the problems that had plagued public school education for the Mexican Americans. However, many of the same problems persist in the twenty-first century.

Vestiges of segregation and Americanization policies continue to be reflected in the schools of today. For example, Proposition 227, passed by voters in California in 1998, and Proposition 203, passed in Arizona in 2000, severely restricted bilingual

education and mandated that English Language Learners (ELLs) be placed in classrooms designed as Sheltered English Instruction (SEI). ELLs must continue to be placed in SEI classrooms until they have acquired a good working knowledge and are able to perform regular schoolwork in English (A.R.S. 15-751). The placement of students in SEI classrooms is reminiscent of the days when Mexican children were segregated for “pedagogical reasons.” Bilingual education, even with its many restrictions, is still an option for some students but is hampered by the requirement of the law that all standardized testing be done in English. Teachers are under continuous pressure to improve test scores at all costs. Thus, bilingual teachers are forced to abandon biliteracy in English and Spanish and concentrate on “teaching to the test” in English. A fairly new tactic that further reduces bilingual education, in designated bilingual classrooms in some schools, is the introduction by administrators of reading adoptions with English-only components. These adoptions are driven by “Arizona Learns” which implements President Bush’s recent initiative entitled “No Child Left Behind.” This textbook adoption process dictates literacy in English only and severely impacts the learning of students whose first language is other than English.

Another major component in the education Mexican American children has been the continuing detrimental misuse of English as Second Language (ESL) instruction for minority students. Angela Valenzuela (1999), in her research in a Texas high school with a virtually all Latino population, found the students were grouped in the ESL track and the non-ESL track. She documented how this division was producing students with poor academic records, who were not equipped to function in Spanish or English. In similar

research, Laurie Olsen (1997), in a California high school with a large number of Latino students, describes conditions similar to those Valenzuela found. She found that students in ESL tracks were largely excluded from access to the curriculum that native English speakers received and thus received a substandard education. In writing about past segregation, González (1990) commented, “Americanization merged smoothly with the general educational methodology developed to solve the Mexican education problem, as it went hand in hand with testing, tracking, and the emphasis upon vocational education” (p. 30).

In spite of some successes, Mexican American students continue to struggle in Arizona public schools and are still dropping out of high school at alarming rates. Recent standardized scores for Stanford 9 and Arizona’s Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) testing released by the State of Arizona Department of Education for the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD) indicate that Mexican American students lag significantly behind their Anglo counterparts. Table 1 data reflect AIMS test results for school year 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 and were taken from the TUSD Web Site, <http://tusdstats.tusd.k12.az.us>, on the date, 10-28-2004:

Table 1                      Combined AIMS results for all high schools in TUSD

	<u>White/Anglo</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>	<u>Difference</u>
<u>Reading</u>	<u>% met standard</u>		
2002-2003	65.2	36.8	-28.4
2003-2004	65.3	36.2	-29.1
<u>Writing</u>	<u>% met standard</u>		
2002-2003	77.0	53.1	-23.9
2003-2004	66.8	50.3	-16.5
<u>Math</u>	<u>% met standard</u>		
2002-2003	41.0	18.5	-22.5
2003-2004	48.8	18.5	-30.3

Many schools are still highly segregated in Tucson for various reasons. Richard Valencia (2002), in his in-depth study of the continuous school failure of Mexican Americans in the 1990s, states that Chicano students represent the most highly segregated group. Valencia further notes that as schools become more segregated, academic achievement also decreases. He concluded that segregation is extremely harmful to Chicano students and writes, "It is clear that segregation has and continues to be a major institutional process in denying equal educational opportunities for Chicano students and thus has helped shape their school failure" (Valencia 2002, p. 7)

A constant recurring theme in the education of Mexican American children is the total disregard for their language and culture in schools. Bilingual education served to fill this void to some degree through use of Spanish as a language of instruction. However, only about one third of Hispanic children participated in bilingual education classes. This situation is aggravated by the lack of Mexican American teachers in schools. Both Acuña (2000) and Valencia (2002) cite the absence of Mexican American teachers as one of the major determinants of low academic achievement for Mexican American students.

In formulating my research questions, I thought about the reasons that this subject has always interested me so passionately. First I have learned from many years of intensive research that very little has been written about the Mexican settlers in northern Arizona and in particular about past segregation of Mexican children in the same cities. There is a need to tell the story of the contributions made by the Mexican people in helping to build the cities, the mines, and railroads of this state. However, I knew I could not encompass everything in my research and that I had to narrow my focus. I chose to

concentrate on the school segregation of Mexican Americans because it is an important part of history that should be recorded along with that of African Americans and Native Americans and to fill a small part of the missing written history that exists in our story.

Second, I felt strongly about the negative impressions I had carried within me about growing up in Williams and Flagstaff, Arizona. In the 1940s and 1950s, we experienced considerable racial discrimination and prejudice in our daily lives outside of school. However, what I remember most about those years is the time I spent in school. I remember attending segregated classes and continually being admonished and physically punished for speaking Spanish in school. Those experiences left me with deep feelings of inferiority about my first language and culture. In my study I wanted to examine the past reasons for such treatment by teachers and also to determine if other former students shared my feelings.

### Research Questions

With those objectives in mind, I formulated the following research questions to guide the study:

1. What was the nature and extent of public school segregation of Mexican American children in Arizona?
2. What were the perceptions and attitudes of administrators and teachers in segregated schools toward their Mexican American students?
3. What were the consequences of public school segregation of Mexican American children in Arizona?



### Format of the Study:

Chapter 1 contains the introduction and the rationale for conducting the study. Chapter 2 is a review of literature which provides background information on Mexican immigration. It also includes an analysis of literature that reflects how negative stereotypes of Mexican immigrants were created by social scientists of that era. Also included in chapter 2 is a review of Americanization policies that were designed to force assimilation of Mexican immigrants. Chapter 3 contains the research methods, research procedures, and a description of the collection of primary source data for two schools in Northern Arizona. Chapter 4 contains a review of how Americanization policies were implemented in Arizona and also provides background information on “Mexican schools” throughout the state. In chapter 5, the focus is narrowed to two schools in Northern Arizona which had segregated classes for Mexican Americans. In one case, a separate school was built specifically to segregate Mexican children and in the other case, Mexican children were placed in separate classroom from Anglos through the eighth grade. Chapter 6 contains recollections of former students of based on interviews and also contains an analysis of teacher perceptions of their Mexican students. Chapter 7 contains the summary and conclusions. It also contains recommendations for improvement of teaching strategies for Mexican children and also contains recommendations for areas of future study. An epilogue is included at the end which contains my personal experiences and reflections.

Definition of terms:

In Northern Arizona, in the 1930s through the 1950s, Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants were treated as one group by educators and school administrators. They made no distinction between U.S. born Mexican Americans or Mexican immigrants who were not yet citizens. Because of this general usage in that era and for simplicity, I use the term Mexican to include both U. S. born and immigrants. I use term “Anglo” to refer to Euro-Americans because it also commonly used.

Use of Names: I used the actual names of the schools because this is a historical account of actual events that happened over sixty years ago. I do not use the actual names of the people I interviewed to protect their anonymity as required by the Human Subjects Consent Forms.

Interviews: Interviews with former students are included in Appendix B.

School Board Minutes: Extracts of pertinent Flagstaff School board minutes reflecting some of the history of South Beaver School are included in Appendix C.

## CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Mexican Immigration

The events of the 1900s are rooted deeply in the early sixteenth century when the Spanish conquistadors explored the Americas. Their exploits are well-chronicled in numerous history books and other historical accounts. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Spain initially explored and claimed vast regions of land in North America, from Florida to California and into the regions of Mexico, Central America and parts of South America. Texas was ignored by the Spaniards until the seventeenth century and New Mexico was not settled until 1598 when Juan de Oñate traveled directly north from Zacatecas, Mexico, to colonize New Mexico. In southern Arizona, along the routes where Fray Marco and Coronado had traveled in 1540, there was no further Spanish exploration until 1687 when a Jesuit priest, Father Eusebio Francisco Kino, founded the mission San Xavier del Bac in Tucson, Arizona (McWilliams, 1948).

The Spanish ruled the Southwestern parts of the United States from 1540 until 1821 when Mexico gained her independence from Spain. Mexican rule lasted a very brief period, from 1821 until the Mexican American War of 1846. A decade prior to the Mexican-American War, Texas became the first Mexican territory to be lost due to the Anglo-led revolt against Mexico in 1836. The early Texas settlers came from Missouri, a slave state, and brought their slaves with them (Samora, 1977). During this time, the Mexican government became alarmed at the large numbers of Anglo settlers who had invaded Mexican territory and tried to stop further settlements. This Mexican action

resulted in a revolt by Anglo settlers. The Battle of the Alamo that preceded Texas independence is well known by most Americans. However, not much emphasis is placed in our history books that Mexico was protecting its territory from Anglo invaders in this historic battle (Romero, 2002). Texas became a state in 1848 and later part of the Confederate South that practiced slavery. To the Anglo, who had based slavery on black skin, the dark skin of the Mexican was a sign of inferiority (Carlson & Calhoun, 1972). The ideology of Anglo superiority and racial inferiority of the Mexican was to spread throughout the West and Southwest.

After Texas was lost, the rest of the West and Southwest was loosely governed by Mexico until the Mexican and American War in 1846 that ended with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. The land in the United States controlled by Mexico was far-flung and not well protected. Thus it was relatively easy for the superior American forces to overwhelm the few Mexican troops protecting the Mexican territory. At the time of the Mexican-American War, the Spanish settlements that became part of Mexico in 1821 consisted of a large colony in New Mexico, a chain of missions in California and a number of poorly-equipped and badly-protected settlements in Texas and Arizona (McWilliams, 1990).

Mexico lost what are now the border states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, plus Nevada, Utah, parts of Colorado, and small sections of Oklahoma, Kansas and Wyoming (Menchaca, 2001). Later, southern Arizona, below the Gila River, also became part of the United States with the Gadsden Purchase of 1854. The treaty marked the end of Mexican rule in the West and Southwest. At the time of the signing of the treaty there

were approximately 75,000 Mexicans in the lands acquired by the Americans. There were about 60,000 in New Mexico, 7,500 in California, 5,000 in Texas, and 1,000 in Arizona. The vast majority was of Spanish-Indian heritage (McWilliams, 1990).

The defeat of the Mexicans coupled with the U. S. governmental policy of “manifest destiny” set the stage in the Anglo mind for the notion of White supremacy and the appropriation of Mexican labor in the conquered lands (Garcilazo, 1975). The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo provided for individual and political rights, but provisions were not made to safeguard these rights. The treaty further stipulated that Mexicans who lived within the newly annexed territory would be incorporated into the United States with the enjoyment of all of the rights as citizens (Menchaca, 2001). As history would show, this provision of the treaty would be broken many times over.

George I. Sánchez, a respected and well known author of the early educational problems of Mexican Americans, wrote that in New Mexico, the Spanish-speaking people were ill-equipped to withstand the influx of Anglo merchants, cattle barons, land grabbers and other outsiders who invaded this territory after the treaty. Sánchez further states that the people of New Mexico knew very little of the business ways of the newcomers such as issue of competition, economy, taxation, and of education. The people of New Mexico knew only the system of agriculture, and other forms of land use and management that came from Spain (Sánchez, 1940).

After the Mexican American war, more Mexican immigrants started to come to the United States in large numbers during the late 1800s and early 1900s. One of the reasons for the large immigration was the rural modernization policy of Porfirio Diaz,

President of Mexico from 1876-1911, that dislocated many poor people from their holdings and gave their land to the rich (García, 1991). His policies eventually led to the Mexican revolution of 1910 that further caused many Mexicans to flee to the North. Over one million Mexicans, about one tenth of the Mexican population, migrated north between 1910 and 1930 (Ruiz, 2001). The immigrants were poor and largely uneducated.

The rapid growth of the United States propelled by the building of the railroads and the recruitment of cheap Mexican labor was another important reason why Mexicans came north. Mexican workers were needed in Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado to work in the copper mines. In California, agricultural workers were needed in great numbers and Mexican workers filled that need and became the preferred source of labor (Levinson & Ember, 1997). Many Mexican workers and their families were recruited for the harvest of sugar beets in Nebraska and Colorado (Donato, 2003, Gonzales 1999). Also in 1880 and later, many thousands of Mexicans were recruited through El Paso, Texas, to work on the railroads. Eventually two thirds of the railroad workers of that era were Mexicans, who eventually displaced the Chinese and European immigrants (Garcilazo, 1975).

Upon their arrival in the United States, Mexican immigrants tended to move into *barrios* or *colonias* already established with large numbers of prior Mexican immigrants and U.S.-born Mexican Americans (Ruiz, 2001). Where these residential areas were located was often dictated by the mining, agricultural, railroad companies or other businesses that had recruited the immigrants (McWilliams, 1990). This pattern of movement is important to note because in the eyes of mainstream American, the *barrio*

residents would blend into a single group called “Mexicans.” This movement into the *barrios* for both Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans continued into the 1940s (Gonzales, 1999). Discrimination continued to be rampant for both Mexican and Mexican Americans with limited economic opportunities, deficient housing and segregated schools.

#### Factors that shaped mainstream pedagogical ideologies

Racism was pervasive toward the Mexican population in the early 1900s and manifested itself in stereotypes. Many of the stereotypes were generated by classic racist theories that put forth the argument that non-White groups were characterized by biological differences, such as inferior intelligence (Barrera, 1979). Gunnar Myrdal, writing in *An American Dilemma* about bias theory, stated that he felt prejudice produced discrimination, that discrimination kept minorities subordinate, and that a vicious cycle was set up when the perception of subordination by subsequent generations reinforced the stereotype of minority unworthiness that had created the situation in the first place (Barrera, 1979). This observation very much characterizes what happened to the Mexican people.

Paredes (2000) describes another aspect of the racialist theory as the doctrine of miscegenation, which held that the progeny of racially different parents inherited the worst qualities of each and concluded that this theory had the greatest impact on American views of Mexicans. Paredes (2000) further stated that racialists regarded mixed-breeds as impulsive, unstable and prone to insanity. The Anglo distaste for “half-breeds” would be documented many times over.

Historical analyses by historians, educators and other scholars are replete with examples of negative stereotypes of the Mexican people. Albert Camarillo (1984), a historian, wrote that in the late 1800s, Anglos in California characterized local Chicanos as idle, indolent, sleepy set, illiterate and a wasteful people. Other early Anglo settlers in the southwest described the Mexicans as lazy, passive, without ambition and “half breeds” that were satisfied with their lot in life (Levinson & Ember, 1997). Mexicans working in the sugar beet field of Nebraska in the early 1900s were not encouraged to settle in Nebraska after the sugar beet season because Anglo farmers felt the Mexicans were held back by the “mañana” attitude, lack of ambition and lived one day at a time and did not plan for the future (Valdés, 2000).

In the early 1940s the Sleepy Lagoon Case in Los Angeles, California, provided the basis for an often-cited stereotype of the Mexican male (Gonzales, 1999). In this case a Mexican American youth was accused of killing another Mexican American gang member. A police lieutenant testified that Mexican youth were criminally inclined for genetic reasons. The lieutenant further stated the Mexicans were descended from the bloodthirsty Aztecs and therefore had an utter disregard for the value of life and an inherited disposition towards violence. This case received wide publicity and spread the myth of the deranged Mexican.

Contributing to the negative stereotypes of the era were articles published in the 1920s and 1930s from the scientific community stressing the inferiority and low intelligence of Mexican children. Many social scientists equated the mixed heritage of the



Mexican with inferiority and low intelligence. Much of the propaganda emanated from eugenicists and biologists (Carlson & Calhoun, 1972)

The following summaries illustrate different aspects of racist theory and are taken from Carlson & Calhoun (1972, pp 149-155): Dr. C.M. Goethe, a leading scholar on eugenics, wrote in 1929 that the Mexican was of inferior bloodlines of Amerind (American-Indian) blood. Professor of biology S.J. Holmes of the University of California wrote that the Mexican immigrants consisted of peon laborers mostly of Indian blood who did not contribute much to the cultural life of the communities where they lived and were largely criminals. He further wrote that studies made on the intelligence of Mexican children indicated they had below average intelligence. L.L. Burlingame, a biologist from Stanford University, repeated the same theme in 1940 when he wrote that the Mexicans were of Amerind bloodlines, were of low intelligence, and were not a desirable group to become Americans.

Also during much of the early part of the twentieth century, educators and psychologists were involved in administering I.Q tests to large numbers of Mexican and Mexican American children. There were many inherent problems dealing with administering these tests and analyzing the result. The most serious and obvious problem was that the tests were all in English and were given to Spanish-speaking children with various levels of proficiency in the English language. Samora (1977) noted in his research of Mexican American history that intelligence tests were given in English that had been normed by middle class white Americans and that when the Spanish-speaking children scored low, they were considered retarded. William H. Shelton, a psychologist,

writing of the intelligence of the Mexican child in 1924, stated that the Binet intelligence tests he administered rated the intelligence of the Mexican American at about 85 percent of a normal group of White children (Sheldon, 1924).

Intertwined with negative stereotyping was the process of “racialization” that further categorized most Mexicans as inferior in all domains of life. Menchaca (2001) defines the process of racialization as the use of the legal system to confer privilege upon Whites and to discriminate against people of color. According to Menchaca (2001), shortly after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the United States Government began the process of racializing the Mexican people and denying them different rights on the basis of race. Mexicans who were White were accorded full legal rights and *mestizos* (Spanish-Indian), Native Americans, and *Afromestizos* received fewer rights. This turns out to be a critical point because most Mexican immigrants were *mestizos* with dark skin and would subsequently be classified as non-White in a variety of circumstances.

In 1883 and 1896, there were two very important United States Supreme Court rulings that had a devastating effect on Mexican Americans for many years to come, because the court ruled that non-Whites could be segregated. The Court in 1883, in *Robinson and Wife v. Memphis and Charleston Railroad Company*, allowed exclusion of racial minorities from hotels, restaurants, parks, public conveyances, and public amusement parks (Menchaca, 2001). The *Robinson* case overturned the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which had prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, religion, and national origin. Menchaca (2001), Camarillo (1984), and González (1990) all describe examples

of racial discrimination where Mexicans were legally excluded from public facilities reserved for Whites.

### Plessy v. Ferguson

In 1896, in the case of Plessy v. Ferguson, the Supreme Court legalized all forms of social and school segregation. In Louisiana, a man named Homer Adolph Plessy, who was seven-eighths Caucasian, took a seat in a railway car reserved for Whites. He refused to move to the car reserved for Blacks and was subsequently arrested. The court upheld the state-imposed racial segregation. The justices based their decision on the separate-but-equal doctrine, and ruled that separate facilities for Blacks and Whites satisfied the Fourteenth Amendment so long as the facilities were equal. According to Menchaca (2001), the court ruling, in effect, stated that for segregation, each state had the right to determine who was white and who was non-white. The Plessy decision served to reinforce the inferior political status of the Mexican in later years. During the era of *de jure* segregation, the indigenous heritage of people of Mexican-origin linked them to people of color and dark-skinned Mexicans were also segregated (Menchaca 2001)

### Americanization Policies

Another important historical event that had a major impact in shaping the Mexican educational experience was the Americanization policies of the 1900s. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, millions of new immigrants to America were described in terms of “waves of people” coming to the United States (Pedraza & Rumbaut, 1996). The first wave was from 1820-1880 and was predominantly from the European northwestern nations, England, Scotland, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and Ireland. The second wave

was from 1831-1930 and was described as coming primarily from southern and Eastern Europe, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Poland, and Russia. The third wave occurred after 1924 when immigration was virtually closed to Europeans. This third wave included the migration of African Americans to the northern part of the United States, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans. The closure of immigration to Europeans in 1924 gave impetus to the massive immigration of Mexicans to the United States.

After World War I, Americans became concerned about the large numbers of foreigners in the United States. People became especially concerned that immigrants were not learning the English language and would not necessarily be patriotic and loyal to the United States. In 1918, the United States government set up an Americanization division as part of the Bureau of Education, under the department of the Interior (White 1971).

The Americanization policies for the Mexicans would very much parallel that of the Native Americans in the 1800s. The Native Americans were taken from their homes and forced to live in boarding schools in an effort to acculturate them to “American” ways. As expressed more than one hundred years ago by the General Secretary of the Methodist Church of Canada, removal of children from the influence of their home (for at least 5 years) was a necessary condition for both their “salvation” and “civilization” (Cummings 1989). A Bureau of Indian Affairs report, dated 1905, stated that the government “...wish to see children of Indian descent educated in the industrial arts and trained to habits of personal cleanliness, social purity, and industrious family life”...we feel that the hope of our American system lies in the public school and such educational

institutions as shall maintain standards of public living...bring the children into the great body of English-speaking, home-loving, industrious, and pure-minded Americans” (Carlson & Calhoun, 1972, p.12-13).

The purposes of Americanization policies in the 1900s were to instill American values in the new immigrant such as: love of family, the right work ethic, patriotism, citizenship, allegiance to country, moral qualities to include duty, obedience, proper dress, service, honor, truth and uprightness (González 1990, White 1971).

Americanization was defined as follows: “Americanization is the process of unifying both native and foreign born in perfect support of the principles for which America stands, namely liberty, union, democracy, and brotherhood.” (White, 1971, p. 3)

In the Southwest, Americanization policies in the 1920s were aimed primarily at the Mexican immigrant. However, it is important to note that U.S.-born Mexican Americans were also swept up in the process of Americanization. The federal government and state governments made no distinction between Mexican and Mexican Americans. They viewed all *barrio* residents as a monolithic group of unassimilated immigrants (Ruiz, 2001).

Gilbert González, in a major review of the school segregation period during 1900-1950, concluded that Americanization (not academics) was the primary goal for the education of Mexican children. School administrators reorganized schools and practices whenever the Mexican population rose to significant numbers in a community and whenever Mexican children became visible on school rolls (González 1990).

“This reorganization established special programs, including Americanization schools and communities. The desired effect was the political socialization and acculturation of the Mexican community, as well as, ironically, the maintenance of those social and economic relations existing between Anglos and Mexicans. Indeed, more than anything else, Americanization tended to preserve the political and economic subordination of the Mexican Community.” (González 1990, p. 30)

Instead of educating the Mexican child in academic subjects, the public schools developed a system of Americanization that neglected the needs of many children and focused on teaching American middle-class values and mores (Samora, 1977). American Indians as well as Spanish-speaking children were stripped by the school system of their language, their culture, their traditions, and customs (Samora, 1977).

White (1971), in his discourse on Americanization of the Mexican, preached the value of community centers for bringing the Mexican people together to teach them thrift, cleanliness, English and citizenship. He further commented about the Mexican people, “They should be brought together, not scattered throughout the community where they cannot be reached, but this does not mean that they be allowed to live like animals” (White, 1971, p. 54).

Special programs were included in the Americanization curriculum such as homemaking classes and other classes to teach skills that would prepare the Mexican for low skilled jobs they would be mentally capable of performing. Since it was believed that Mexican girls possessed a talent for sewing, their ability as seamstresses would be developed in the elementary school (Pozzette, 1991). Ruiz (2001) also notes that the

curriculum in “Mexican” schools was vocational and that many teachers and school administrators had very low expectations for their students. They believed that the students had few aspirations and fewer abilities beyond farm and domestic work.

There were other goals of the Americanization policies. A repeated theme in Americanization literature was raising the standards of living and moral standards of the Mexican immigrant (García, 1991). In New Mexico, Gonzales-Berry (2000) wrote that the official discourse of Americanization was to exclude languages other than English from the educational arena of the Mexican Americans. These policies were meant to strip the Mexicans immigrants of their language, culture and other lifestyles and make them “Americans.”

#### Public School Segregation in the Southwest and California

In 1933, Annie Reynolds, a researcher for the United States Office of Education, published a historic study on the education of Spanish-Speaking children of the southwest. In the letter of transmittal for the study to the Department of Interior, Commissioner John Cooper, she wrote, “There have been many Spanish-speaking foreigners largely from Mexico in the United States in recent years. They are sufficiently numerous, however, in our five Southwestern states to constitute a rather serious school problem” (Reynolds, 1933, p. v).

This report by Reynolds was one of the first acknowledgements by the government that there were thousands of Spanish-speaking children languishing in segregated public schools. Reynolds recounts how different communities coped with the “Mexican problem.” She comments that since it is against the law to segregate Mexican

pupils on the grounds of race and nationality, the segregation is achieved on the premise of providing for the special educational needs of the Mexican children (Reynolds, 1933). Another method used for achieving segregation according to Reynolds was to build a neighborhood school in the “Mexican quarter.” Reynolds also writes ...”this solves the vexed problem of segregation without arousing antagonism and the school becomes a 100 percent Mexican school” (Reynolds, 1933, p. 10).

### California

There were “Mexican” schools throughout the Southwest and California. Mexican parents did not stand passively by and fought segregation through the courts in several states. There were two important law suits filed that eventually resulted in the desegregation of schools for Mexican Americans. The first occurred in San Diego, California in 1930 when Roberto Alvarez filed a lawsuit against the Lemon Grove School District. The School District wanted to prevent Mexican American students from attending Anglo schools by building a separate school. The court ruled in favor of the parents and is of historical significance because it was the first successful school desegregation case in the United States.

The other court case that received worldwide publicity because of its historic implications was: *Mendez v. Westminster* (1947). In Westminster Orange County, California, Gonzalo Mendez and other Mexican American parents filed a lawsuit aimed in ending school segregation. They argued that school segregation based on race or nationality violated the Fourteenth Amendment. Judge McCormick ruled in favor of Mendez and the other plaintiffs and stated that since California law did not allow for



separate Mexican Schools, the requirement to attend such schools could be considered arbitrary action taken without due process of law (González, 1990 & Ruiz, 2001). The Court of Appeals refused to challenge the decision established in *Plessy v. Ferguson* of “separate-but-equal,” but did uphold Judge McCormick’s decision that segregation of Mexican and Mexican American children violated the Fourteenth Amendment. This landmark decision effectively ended school segregation in California and laid the framework for the *Brown* decision.

### Colorado

Donato (1997) writes of similar instances of school segregation in Colorado where White parents did not want to their children to attend the same schools as Mexican children. Donato further writes that the educators used the term “maladjustment” of to justify segregation of Mexican children. Like Reynolds (1933), Donato notes that a school district in Colorado established a Mexican school near its “Spanish colony” and that in the Lamar School District, they built a “Mexican” school.

### Texas

There was widespread segregation of Mexican American children in Texas public schools in 1900-1950. Segregation of Mexican children originated at the turn of the century but expanded during the period from 1920 to 1942 as a result of large-scale immigration from Mexico and increasing antipathy from school officials (San Miguel, 1987). Segregation of Mexican children was not mandated by state law but was based on local school board decisions. The school board was reflecting the specific desires of white parents who did not want Mexican students to attend school with their children

(San Miguel, 1987). There were numerous lawsuits filed by Mexican American parents in Texas in attempts to end schools segregation. However, most were unsuccessful until 1948. Following the groundwork laid by the Mendez case in California, parents filed a lawsuit against school authorities in Bastrop County. In *Delgado v. Bastrop Independent School District*, the court decided in favor of the parents and ruled that segregation of students of Mexican ancestry was arbitrary, discriminatory, and illegal (San Miguel, 1987).

### New Mexico

In New Mexico the education of Spanish-speaking children took many different paths that included limited segregation, bilingual education, and English immersion. Getz (1997) concluded that the education process in New Mexico for Hispanics was so different in the first half of the 1900s that few historians included it in their work. New Mexico was also different in that most New Mexicans did not refer to themselves as Mexican or Mexican Americans. They preferred to be called *Hispanos* or *Spanish Americans*. The reasons for these distinctions are outside the scope of this work. However, it should be noted that New Mexico did not experience the large-scale Mexican Immigration as other states. Although the education of Spanish-speaking children in New Mexico was more progressive, the results were just as ineffective as in the other Southwestern states. Sánchez (1940) wrote that in 1938, although Spanish-speaking students made up one-half of public school enrollment, they made up less than one-fifth of the enrollment in the twelfth grade. Sánchez further stated that of almost sixty

thousand Spanish-speaking children enrolled in public school, more than half were in the first three grades.

### Summary

There were several factors that would eventually shape the education of Mexican children in the southwestern part of the United States. First was the nature and pattern of Mexican immigration to the United States in the late 1800s and the early 1900s. Second were the negative stereotypes of Mexicans that were being created by the scientific community of that era. Third were the Americanization policies implemented after World War I, designed to force the assimilation of Mexican Immigrants.

Mexican immigrants started to come north in large numbers in the late 1800s and early 1900s to work primarily for the railroad, in agricultural, harvesting crops, and for the mining industry. These large organizations dictated where Mexicans worked and to a large degree where they lived. The residential patterns resulted in the establishment of "Mexican schools" in the *barrios* and led to public school segregation of Mexican children.

While Mexican immigration was occurring, many negative stereotypes were being created of the Mexican people. Biologists wrote that Mexican people had inferior bloodlines and had low intelligence because they were *mestizos* of mixed Spanish-Indian heritage. Others wrote that because Mexicans descendents of racially mixed parents, they inherited the worst qualities of both. At the same time, psychologists were administering intelligence tests in English to Spanish-speaking children and declaring them to be mentally inferior to white children.

Americanization policies also greatly impacted the education of Mexican children. These policies were directed at both Mexican adults and Mexican school children. The objective of Americanization was to strip Mexicans of their language and culture and make them “real Americans.” These policies were not designed to provide an academic education to Mexican children. Similarly Mexican parents were subjected to Americanization classes in which the primary purpose was to prepare them for semi-skilled and low-skilled jobs. The purpose of Americanization for Mexican immigrants was to prepare a subordinate work force. The government and the schools made no distinction between U.S.-born Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants.

## CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

### Research Questions

These research questions guided my work

1. What was the nature and extent of public school segregation of Mexican American children in Arizona?
2. What were the perceptions and attitudes of administrators and teachers in segregated schools toward their Mexican American students?
3. What were the consequences of public school segregation of Mexican American children in Arizona?

### Research Procedures and Analysis

Since my work is a historical analysis of events that happened in the first half of the twentieth century, I had to rely on historical manuscripts and other accounts of the events of those years for background information. In particular the historical reasons for Mexican immigration to the United States are important because how and when immigration occurred dictated how the education of Mexican children in the United States would evolve. I researched many historical works that dealt with Mexican immigration and found the majority had the similar chronology of events. I included those which I thought were the most representative and comprehensive. The work of McWilliams (1990) was particularly useful and by many accounts sets the standard for correctly depicting events of Mexican immigration in the first half of the twentieth century.

However, I also realized that the validity of historical writing is often judged by the primary sources used to tell the narrative. In this regard I sought primary sources related to education of Mexican children in Arizona so that I could make my own evaluation and interpretation of the events. Since my main focus was going to be the schools in Williams and Flagstaff, Arizona, I felt that the review of actual school records, local school board minutes and interviews with former students would provide me with the most reliable information. To get this information, I would have to make several trips to those cities and convince school officials to grant me access to school records.

One of the purposes of this study was to analyze not only the extent of public school segregation of Mexican Americans in the state of Arizona, but also the historical events that facilitated segregation. I felt an analysis of historical events was important because neither state nor federal laws mandated segregation of Mexican students, as they had for African Americans in many parts of the United States. The questions then became, how did segregation of Mexican children become so widespread in the Southwest and California and what were the factors that seemingly permitted segregation to gain wide acceptance by mainstream Americans and Mexican parents? I felt that the answer must lie in the development of a national ideology that viewed segregation of Mexican children as normal. I surmised that to gain some insight of how this ideology might have developed, I would have to first have to understand how the relationship between white Americans and Mexican immigrants developed over time.

With this framework in mind, I divided my research into four major areas. In the first phase of this study I reviewed the literature on the historical nature and patterns of Mexican immigration. I also analyzed the images and perceptions that were being formed by mainstream Americans of the Mexican people as contact between the groups grew. I reviewed the works of historians, psychologists, biologists, and other writers of the early twentieth century that fed these perceptions. I specifically chose works of the early nineteenth century because I was interested in how the ideology of Mexican inferiority and Anglo superiority was being developed. I knew that I could have used such work as that of Stephen Jay Gould (1981), who wrote, *The Mismeasure of Men*, in which he debunks intelligence testing. But I didn't want to use contemporary ideas to analyze historical realities.

In the second phase, I reviewed literature for historical information that dealt with public school segregation of Mexican and Mexican Americans in the Southwest and California. In this phase, it was not easy to find comprehensive works that were specifically about segregation of Mexican children. As noted earlier, there is still not much written specifically about segregated schools for Mexican Americans. Here, I included the works of Donato (1990), San Miguel (1987) and González (1990), three of the most respected and well-known authors in this area. I analyzed their writing looking for common events that reflect reasons for segregation of Mexican American children in public schools in those states. My intent was to determine if the same events duplicated themselves in Arizona.

In the third phase I reviewed historical information that reflected public school segregation of Mexican American children in Arizona schools. I searched for directives published by the state on Americanization efforts in Arizona and also on segregation of Mexican children in the public schools. I found relatively few. It was also difficult to find manuscripts that detailed historical information on school segregation for Arizona cities. In this regard, I made two trips to review documents in the Chicano Research Collection in the Hayden Library at Arizona State University. The library had several autobiographies written by Mexican Americans who had attended segregated schools in Arizona. These autobiographies confirmed what I had found in the work of Bradford Luckingham (1989) about the Phoenix area and what Mary Melcher (1999) had written about school segregation in southern Arizona. These two scholars offer the most comprehensive accounts of school segregation for Mexican children in Arizona. At the Hayden Library, I also found a very useful summary by Pérez (1986) of litigation concerning school segregation of Mexican Americans prior to 1954. However none of these accounts at the Hayden Library is inclusive of the entire state.

For Tucson, Arizona, I found the School Superintendent Reports of the 1920s to contain considerable information. I also relied on the work of Thomas Sheridan (1986), noted historian for this area. Through my travels in the state for the past few years, I talked to many different people that attended school in the 1930s to 1950s, about their education in their respective Arizona towns. These conversations gave me a sense of what had happened throughout the state and confirmed that we indeed had shared common schooling experiences.



In the last phase of my work, I performed an in-depth study of the history of two schools in northern Arizona that had practiced public school segregation of Mexican children in the first half of the twentieth century. My intent was to analyze how the national events and events in other parts of the state, impacted Mexican children in an actual school. I selected Williams Elementary School in Williams, Arizona, and South Beaver School in Flagstaff, Arizona because I had attended both of these schools as a youngster in the 1940s. Mexican children attended segregated classes at Williams Elementary in the same school with Anglo children. Only Mexican children (and later some Native Americans) attended South Beaver School. It was a school that had been built specifically to segregate Mexican children.

My research about these two cities and the schools covered many areas. I remembered some of the history of Williams through my own experiences in the early 1940s, so I first wanted to determine if my memories were accurate or had been clouded by time. In July 2000, I went to the local cemetery to find the grave of my grandmother who had been buried in Williams in 1942. I remember having been told that in the 1940s the cemetery was segregated. While there I met a native of Williams who was maintaining several graves and we talked about the segregated burial areas. He was familiar with the history and directed me to a couple of sources that could verify the information. Unfortunately, I was unable to do so because the old funeral home was closed and the other source was not available. I include this episode because I wanted to verify that racial segregation in Williams extended even to the dead. I know that it existed in the Catholic Church because in my childhood days, we were required to sit on one side

of the church and the Anglos sat on the other side. In my research, I found similar instances in the Phoenix area where the Catholic Church practiced racial discrimination. I mention these instances because they were part of the social atmosphere of the 1930s to the 1950s that made school segregation seem almost normal.

I thought that it would be difficult to gain permission to view school records of those earlier years and I also wondered if they were even available. The availability concerned me more because without these records, my research would be incomplete. Fortunately, in Williams, the School Superintendent and her staff were extremely helpful in assisting me to view the records at Williams Elementary School. However, only those from 1930 to 1942 were still available. In Flagstaff, the South Beaver School Principal was also very helpful in giving me access to school records from the years 1920s through the 1950s. His father had attended South Beaver School so he was very interested in my research.

I made eight trips over a period of several months to Williams and Flagstaff to review the school records. I knew that former students of Williams Elementary referred to the class assignments as the “American” and “Mexican” classes, but I didn’t expect to find school records with these designations. There was also a class entitled “The Americanization Room” or 1C as commonly referred to other parts of the state. Imagine my surprise when I found my name in the Americanization Room of 1940. I never knew why I was twelve years old in the sixth grade when I should have been eleven. I thought I had entered first grade at age six. What I hadn’t known was that my first class was the Americanization Room or 1C and that I had then progressed to 1M (first grade “Mexican”).

I reviewed class lists at the Williams school looking for the pattern of class assignments. In the majority of the cases, all Spanish-surnamed students were assigned first to the Americanization Room and then to the “Mexican” classes. There were a handful of exceptions where a few Spanish-surnamed were in the “American” classes. I was told by former students that one Mexican family had told school officials that they were French, so their children were placed in the “American” classes. The only pertinent information on the class lists was the names of the students and their class assignments and I made copies of these lists for future analysis.

At South Beaver School, I also reviewed class lists for class assignments and progression of students. Although not labeled as an “Americanization Room,” South Beaver also had the first entry class of 1C. The class lists at South Beaver contained considerably more information than the class lists in Williams. These lists had the age of the student, home address, and work place of the parents. Here, again with the permission of the school, I make copies of lists from the 1930 through the 1940s for further analysis.

While in Williams, I made trips to the local library to search for information on the town. There was little specific information that pertained to the public school for the period in which I was interested. I did find high school graduation lists which I used later in my analysis of Mexican high school graduates. However, at the library I did find a copy of a Master’s thesis written by Jim Fuchs (1953), a former student at the University of Arizona, which contained a comprehensive history of Williams prior to 1950. However, there was no mention of the segregated classes in the elementary school.

Both in Williams and Flagstaff, I also reviewed School Board Minutes for the past fifty years to historically develop the chronology of how segregation was accomplished at both schools. Neither sets of minutes provided reasons for the segregation of Mexican children in the elementary schools.

Since the school records at South Beaver provided more detailed information about the students, I looked for patterns of over-age children in the different classes. I was also interested in information on residential patterns of the students and for places of employment of the father. I wanted the information on employment to determine what types of jobs Mexican men were performing. For both Williams Elementary and South Beaver, I counted the number of Mexican students in the sixth grade for several years and I compared these numbers to the numbers of Mexican high school graduates for their respective graduating classes. I wanted to determine the dropout rates between sixth and twelfth grades.

I found some very valuable historical information in the archives of the Northern Division of the Arizona Historical Society. The Society had commissioned a commercial firm to perform a survey of historical building in 1993 of Flagstaff and the firm had included some important findings on residential and employment patterns in the 1920s and 1930s. I compared these findings to my analysis of employment patterns of parents I found in the South Beaver School records. The Society also provided me with some other important historical information about South Beaver School such as newspaper clippings and research articles.

I also interviewed six former students of both schools to get their recollections about their school days and to triangulate some of the written history of these schools. I am including copies of these interviews to give the reader a sense of how they felt. I was particularly interested in their feelings and emotions of those days. I tried to capture these feelings as we talked and as we shared memories. This aspect was the most interesting, but also the most difficult. I did not realize how time consuming and difficult it would be to transcribe tapes of the interviews correctly. I had planned to interview each person three to four times, however that proved to be unnecessary. I had intended to use the three-interview process suggested by Seidman (1998). He recommended that the first interview be focused on the interviewee's life history, the second on the details of the experience, and the third, a reflection of the meaning. I found that I only needed to do the initial interview, transcribe the interview, and make a second visit to discuss corrections and additions. The interviewees felt strongly about their schooling and had reflected on it throughout their lives and they were prepared to combine all three parts in one sitting. On the second interview, they did make some changes after they read the transcript. Two added reflections of their lives after they graduated from high school.

I also wanted to get some idea about how the former teachers in Williams and Flagstaff might have thought about their former Mexican students. I could not locate any former teachers who were still living. However, I did locate at Northern Arizona University some of the Master's theses they had written while teachers at Williams Elementary and South Beaver School. What they wrote in some cases revealed their perceptions of their Mexican students, but without discussing their writing with them, my

findings are one-sided. However, their theses do provide some clues as to how they might have viewed their students.

As a side note, to show the extent you might have to go to get an interview, I am including one of my experiences. One of the persons I interviewed lived in the mountains about thirty miles from Williams. To get there, I had to drive the last fifteen miles on unpaved roads. In one of the trips I had to drive these roads while it was snowing very hard and the wind was blowing the snow all over the road. I had only tire tracks to guide me in some places. It was a memorable interview.

#### Summary of Research Procedures

- Step 1 Literature review of Mexican immigration patterns.
- Step 2 Literature review dealing with stereotypes and pedagogical implications for Mexican children.
- Step 3 Literature review of public schools segregation in the Southwest.
- Step 4 Literature review of public school segregation in Arizona.
- Step 5 Review of school records and school board minutes in Williams and Flagstaff, Arizona.
- Step 6 Conduct interviews with former students.
- Step 7 Literature review of writing by former teachers in Williams and Flagstaff, Arizona

## CHAPTER 4 PUBLIC SCHOOL SEGREGATION IN ARIZONA

“Arizona’s Mexican American population had carried the burden of undeserved poverty since early territorial days. Because of ignorance on their part and the lack of leadership material to guide them in [a] united effort, they had been the object of ruthless exploitation by the big mining and agricultural industrialist by the big mining and agricultural industrialists. They had tasted the bitterness of low wages, poor housing, inadequate schools, job discrimination and public scorn for years. They were stereotyped as lazy, slow, and improvident by their Anglo-American neighbors.”

Raymond Johnson Flores (1950, p. 9)

Acuña (2000), Donato (1999), and San Miguel (1987) wrote similar accounts of Mexican American struggles in other parts of the Southwest. This analysis by Flores captures the reality of the lives of Mexican Americans in Arizona in the 1930s through the 1950s. In all of these accounts, the same factors of discrimination in housing and discrimination in employment had virtually assured segregated schooling for Mexican children. In Arizona, as elsewhere, Americanization programs contributed to the prevailing ideology that Mexican children did not require a highly academic formal education but should be prepared for unskilled and semi-skilled jobs.

There were two major events that impacted the education of Mexican children in Arizona. First were the Americanization programs that were part of a national program directed at all immigrants. Second was the direction given by the state on how Mexican children should be taught in Arizona public schools.

### Americanization Policies

As in other parts of the Southwest in the early 1900s, Americanization policies in Arizona affected the daily lives of Mexican people. Americanization educational programs of the era were conducted at two levels; one was aimed at adults through evening classes or by visits to the home and the other was directed at Mexican children in the classroom. González (1990) and Samora (1977), in describing these programs, commented that Americanization, not academic achievement, was the educational goal of public schools for Mexican children. Similarly, Melcher (1999), in a study of school segregation in Arizona, noted that those setting educational policy in Arizona from 1920-1940 focused only on the assimilation of Mexican children and the teaching of English.

In Arizona there were extensive Americanization efforts in the early 1900s. On the surface these efforts might seem to be highly commendable. No doubt, programs were very much needed to teach immigrants the English language and to prepare them to take citizenship tests. However a close look at the vocational training provided as part of the Americanization classes indicated that the training was intended to prepare Mexican immigrants for low paying laborer jobs. This is the same pattern duplicated in other parts of the Southwest and California (González, 1990)

A bulletin published in Arizona by the "Committee on Americanization Work" entitled "Americanization in Arizona (1920)" summarizes much of the work performed with adults in the state. The work in Arizona was headed by the "State Committee on Americanization Work in Arizona" and was founded under the direction of the U.S. Bureau of Education. The overarching committee was very well-organized and had



representation from many prominent organizations in the state, such as the State Federation of Women's Clubs, State Association of Trained Nurses, Red Cross, Y.M.C.A., Chamber of Commerce, and the American Legion, the Rotary Club, State Board of Education and many other organizations with state-wide affiliations. The racial groups represented in the committee were "Latin-Americans", Italian, Greek, Slavic, Chinese, and Japanese. Various churches and fraternal groups were also represented on these committees (Americanization in Arizona, 1920).

Throughout the state, from 1918 to 1920, there were 41 Americanization centers formally established. Every major city or town in Arizona had an Americanization program. These programs were generally headed by a local "Community Committee on Americanization" that worked with the city local chapters of the state organization such as local women's clubs associated with the State Federation of Women's Clubs. The local schools were much involved in Americanization efforts, both in the classrooms and in conducting evening classes for parents. Local churches (particular the Catholic Church and the Mormon Church) were in the forefront of Americanization work. Other organizations involved at the local level were the Y.M.C.A., the Red Cross, public health offices of the county, County Home Demonstration Agents, the Tempe Normal School (later Arizona State University) and the University of Arizona. There were also benevolent societies involved including a Mexican American organization, the *Alianza Hispano Americana* (Americanization in Arizona, 1920).

The adult curriculum of the Americanization classes included the following: the teaching of English, civic lessons in citizenship classes, vocational training classes that included sewing classes for Mexican girls, remodeling of garments, nursing, home economics, and proper care of babies, nutrition, health, etiquette, and “methods of living.” In Jerome, Arizona, there was a special course for Mexican girls to teach them the vocabulary of housekeeping so that they could work in homes. In Peoria there was an evening class in cooking for Mexican girls. In Sonora, Arizona, where the population was almost entirely Mexican, there were classes in “Domestic Science and Manual Training.” The classes were largely conducted in local community centers, public schools, vocational schools, the YMCA, and churches. In addition, there were also extensive outreach programs that included visits to homes of the Mexican immigrants by county workers who specialized in public health, nursing, and County Home Demonstration Agents who gave instruction in “Domestic Economy.” Public school teachers also made home visits to help educate the immigrants (Americanization in Arizona, 1920).

Although Americanization classes were intended for all immigrants, in Arizona the majority of the “students” were of Mexican heritage. For example in Jerome about two-thirds of the students were Mexican and one-third of mixed nationality, primarily of Slavic origin. In Winslow, most of the home visits by public health workers were to Mexican homes, as was the case throughout the state.

### Education Policies

Prior to Americanization programs, the local schools were already using English as the only language of instruction as mandated by state law. In 1899 the Arizona

territorial legislature had passed Title XIX, a bill mandating English as the language of instruction in public schools. Title XIX would later be used as the legislation foundation for some schools to segregate Spanish-speaking children. In the early 1900s, Mexican children had constituted over fifty percent of school age children in Arizona (Ruiz 2001). In spite of these numbers and the overwhelming need, there would be no school instruction in Spanish and later there would be public school segregation of Mexican Americans in Flagstaff, Williams, Winslow, St Johns, Glendale, Tolleson, Gilbert, Safford, Duncan, Clifton, Miami, Douglas, Ajo, and Tucson. In most of these cities, Mexican American children would attend segregated “Mexican Schools.” In cities like Williams and Tucson, they were placed in segregated classrooms. See Figure 1 for a map of Arizona.

There was no early mandate from the state in the 1900s to segregate Mexican children. However, a bulletin published by the State Department of Education in 1939, provided the authority and direction for placement of Mexican children in separate classes. In the forward to the bulletin, the State Superintendent stated that the state of Arizona did not subscribe to segregation of bilingual groups, however in many communities where there were young children of foreign parentage, and these children could be grouped in receiving rooms and in primary rooms so that early instruction could be adapted to their special needs. However there were no criteria specified by the state bulletin on the definition or determination of “special needs.” There were no tests prescribed to determine English or Spanish proficiency (State Department of Education, Bulletin 13, 1939).

The bulletin also dictated to teachers and administrators what should be taught to Mexican children and how it should be taught. The prescribed curriculum made it clear that the main goal of education for Mexican children was not academic achievement but assimilation and acculturation into the “American” culture. The emphasis in Arizona school was to be the teaching of the “American” way of life and of “American” values.

Vera A. Chase, the author of Bulletin 13, directed that bilingual children be given training that had some practical value. In the bulletin, she asked a rhetorical question: “What are the young men and women of immigrant parentage who have graduated from the schools of Arizona during the past decade doing for a living?” Chase answered the question by indicating that only a small number of bilingual children finish college and go on to professional careers, but that the majority become semi-skilled workers such as day laborers, landscape workers, truck drivers, laundry workers, janitors, grocery clerks, gardeners, butchers, housemaids, miners, and restaurant workers (State Department of Education, Bulletin 13, 1939, p24).

Chase writes, “It is not easy to determine what training is most likely to function in the life of a foreign laborer, but the following attainments would seem desirable:

1. Ability to converse in English.
2. Interest in books, newspapers, and magazines.
3. Ability to apply fundamentals of arithmetic.
4. Music appreciation, use of musical instrument, singing.
5. Artistic ability and appreciation of the beauties in his environment--  
mountains, sunsets, native plants.

6. Knowledge of simple duties as maid, gardener, etc.
7. Ability to write a letter.
8. Understanding of home economics: Marketing, cooking, and serving a meal; sewing, home decorations, care of children.
9. Knowledge of manners and customs: How to behave courteously in situations to be met in the community.
10. Cultivation of qualities which help him make a place for himself in the community; willingness to work, desire to give adequate service for pay, dependability, courtesy, cleanliness, personal pride—care of person and of home.” (State Department of Education, Bulletin 13, 1939, p25)

There were no recommendations in the curriculum for inclusion of chemistry, physics, algebra or other higher-level mathematics that would prepare students for professional careers. The intent in these instructions is clear—that Mexican children should be prepared for "Mexican" jobs. The other implications in the instructions are that Mexican people are uncivilized, lazy, and dirty in their daily habits and in keeping their homes clean.

#### History of School Segregation in Arizona

Part of the extent of segregation for Spanish-speaking students was captured in a report entitled “Study of School Segregation” published by the Arizona Council for Civic Unity in 1949. Although not all-inclusive, the report provides an excellent historical reference for school segregation of Mexican Americans. This report indicated that Mexican children as well as African Americans and in some case Native Americans were

taught in segregated schools in various parts of the state. The report also noted that Arizona was the only Western state (and the only state outside of the South) that had laws requiring segregation of African American children in the elementary schools and in some cases high schools.

The Arizona school segregation laws, as cited in the Council's report, read as follow:

Section 54-416 "The Board of Trustees...shall segregate pupils of the African race from pupils of the Caucasian race in all schools other than high schools and provide all accommodations made necessary by such segregation."

Section 54-430 enlarged the Board of Trustee's power of segregation in the following language "...they may segregate groups of pupils and may maintain special schools during vacation as necessary for pupils of the district."

"Arizona courts held that this section delegated broad general power to trustees to classify and segregate pupils for any reason at any time."

The Council confirmed segregation of Spanish-speakers in the study by stating that Spanish-speaking students were placed in segregated schools in Flagstaff, Ajo, Douglas, St Johns, Safford and Duncan, Arizona. According to the Council report, the Board of Trustees rationalized their decision to segregate Spanish-speaking students by citing language difficulties.

The trustees contended that instruction of Spanish-speakers would be improved by placing them with others of the same home environment. The trustees also advanced the reasoning that mixing students from English-speaking homes and Spanish-speaking

homes would impede the education of the English-speaking students. The report indicated that the disadvantage of such a system was very well stated by a principal of a segregated school who was quoted in the report as saying:

“We have two separate school districts for grammar schools in our town. Originally the intention was to separate the Mexican children from the White children. As we operate now there are no Whites attending the Mexican school although we have 25-30 Mexicans attending our school here, which was for Whites originally. There is no distinction drawn where we have both in attendance.

I do not feel, however, that there is a definitely a problem here. Graduates from the Spanish school speak English very little, which is reflected in their performance in high school. An average of about fifteen or twenty Mexican students enter high school each year and there hasn't been a Mexican graduated from high school in the last three years.”

The principal quoted seems to be almost proud of the fact that no Mexican students had graduated from his high school in the last three years and doesn't acknowledge that the dismal graduation rate of Mexican students is a serious problem. The report from the Council also contains a reference to another often-cited reason for segregation of Mexican children: "that it would impede the education of English-speaking students."

There were other schools not included in the report that were also segregated. Luckingham (1994), in his book on minorities in Phoenix from 1860-1992, describes

segregation of Spanish-speaking children in Tolleson, Glendale, South Phoenix and other valley farm communities. Pérez (1986) indicated that Winslow, Clifton, and Miami were also segregating Mexican American students as late as 1949.

According to Luckingham, segregated schooling for Spanish-speaking children in the Phoenix area persisted after World War II largely because of residential factors. However, in the rural communities of the valley where Mexican American and Anglos students would have been more likely to share the school available, “language deficiencies” often provided a reason for segregation (Luckingham, 1994).

#### Tolleson

Court action by Mexican parents led to the successful desegregation of the Tolleson School, in the court case of *Gonzales v. Sheeley*. In this 1950 lawsuit, lawyers for Mexican Americans argued in federal court that placing Mexican American children in a separate school denied them their constitutional rights under the Fourteenth Amendment. The lawyers also cited the outcome of the court action in California of *Mendez v. Westminster* that used the same argument to overturn segregation in the California case (Luckingham, 1994)

#### Tempe

Laura Muñoz (2001) describes an early attempt by Mexican parents to desegregate a school in Tempe, Arizona, in 1925 when Adolfo Romo filed a lawsuit against the Tempe Elementary School District because they refused to admit his children to the new Tenth Street School. Romo contended that the Eighth Street School, where his children attended school, had only student teachers from the nearby normal school (now



ASU) and therefore his children were not receiving an equal opportunity for a good education. The Board of Trustees had previously designated the new Tenth Street School for “children of the White race” and the Eighth Street School for “Mexican Americans” or “Spanish American” children. The lawyers for Romo argued in court that Mexican Americans were considered White by the state for census purposes and consequently should be admitted to the Tenth Street School. The court denied their admittance, citing the Plessy v. Ferguson “separate but equal” doctrine, and ruled that schools could segregate Mexican students for pedagogical reasons as long as the educational opportunities were equal. However, the court did rule to enforce a 1913 Arizona Civil Code that required school districts to provide all school children with the equal educational opportunities, including equally qualified teachers. The Eighth Street School continued to be segregated until 1950.

### Tucson

In Tucson in 1918, Mexican American children, along with Native Americans, were segregated in “beginning English classes” in a program that was known as 1C (Sheridan, 1986). Since there was only one grade level, students of all ages were placed in the same classroom. State law mandated that districts with large numbers of non-English-speaking students provide special programs of bilingual instruction. However, these special programs, which lasted until 1965, meant little more than English vocabulary lessons. The 1C program failed to achieve its goal and Mexican children progressed slowly, the majority eventually dropping out of school (Sheridan, 1986).

C. E. Rose, Tucson School District I Superintendent in 1923, echoed prevailing American mainstream racist ideology when he characterized Mexican American and Native American children at Ochoa School and Drachman as “foreign born” (Report of the Superintendent 1920-1921, p. 43). According to Sheridan (1986), many of the Mexican children and nearly all of the Papago children mentioned in that report came from family lines which had established themselves in Southern Arizona long before the Gadsden Purchase.

#### Winslow and St Johns

Mexican children attended segregated schools in several cities in Arizona. Rudy, a former student, remembers attending a segregated school in Winslow, Arizona, named Roosevelt. He also recounts that there was a great deal of discrimination in employment (Interview with Rudy, August 14, 2004). Socorro recalls attending a segregated school at St Johns, Arizona. She said the Mexican children went to the Mexican school named Coronado and the Anglo children attended a Mormon school (Interview with Socorro, August 14, 2004)

#### Mining Towns

Flores (1951) documented the existence of segregated schools for Mexican children in the mining towns of Superior, Clifton, and Miami, Arizona. Flores conducted extensive surveys throughout the state attempting to determine the reasons for segregation. He found that the main reasons cited for segregation were English

deficiencies of Mexican children and the fear of Anglo parents that integrated classrooms would impede the learning of their children. However a different opinion was given in an interview by a former student. The student stated, "...many of the early administrators were of Texas sympathy or origin, thus they discriminated against the Mexican on the general basis that Mexicans were just Mexicans." (Flores, 1951, p42)

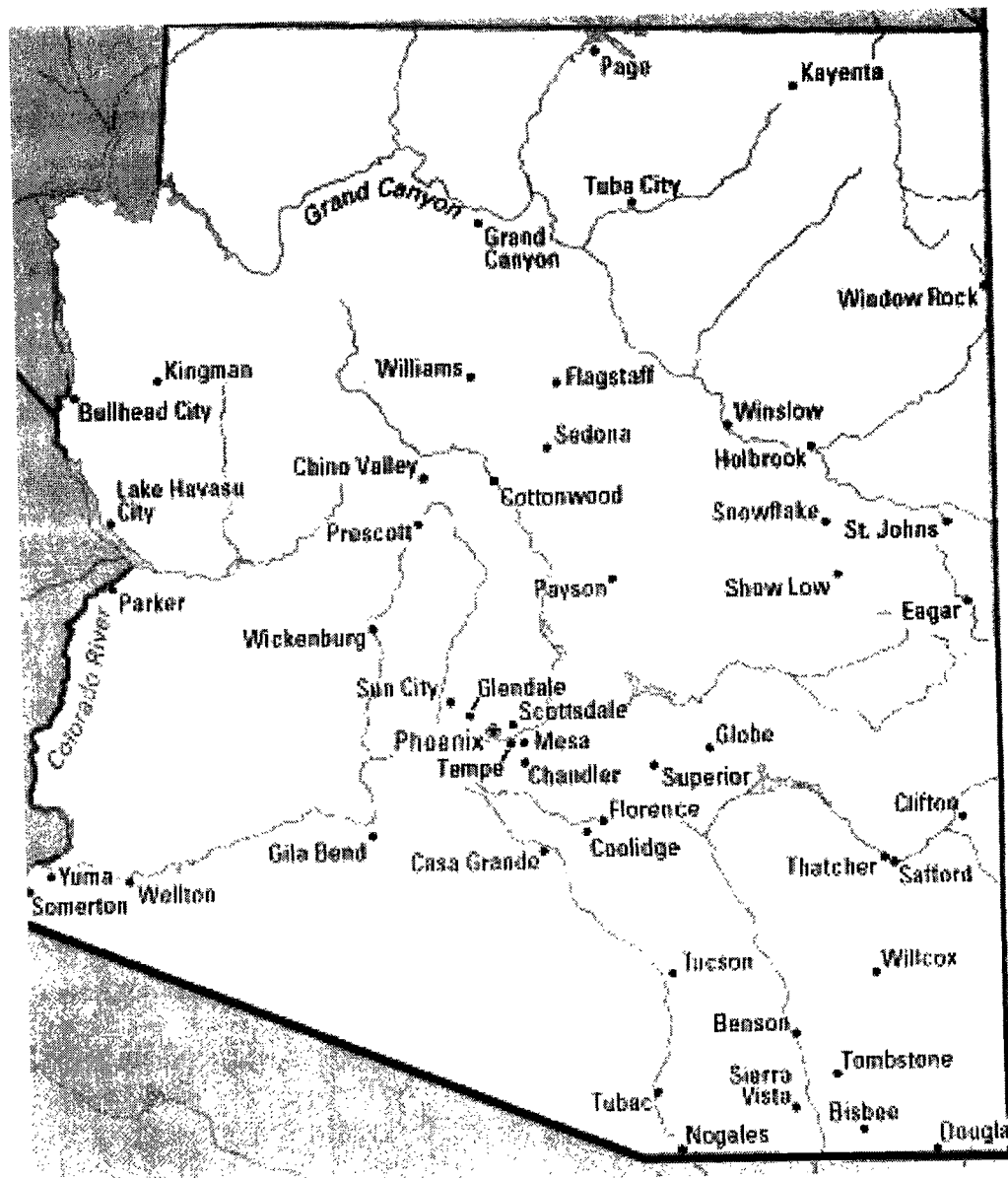
Ajo and Duncan, also mining towns close the U.S. Mexico border, had a history of segregated classes. According to Baird (1953), prior to 1953, the practice in the Ajo schools was to segregate Mexican children in an Americanization room upon entering school and to keep them segregated through the elementary grades. "Under this plan many Mexican children were retained in the lower elementary grades until they were overage and oversized in the group. Many ill effects were felt under this plan." (Baird, 1953, p4). Olas Arnold Lunt (1942), in a Master's thesis, indicated that there were segregated schools in Duncan. In his thesis, Lunt made a study to determine the reasons for the high number of withdrawal of Mexican students in the 1930s and in his analysis noted that there were very high numbers of Mexican children in the elementary grades, but that few graduated from high school.

### Summary

Americanization in the state played a major part in setting the tone for educating Mexican children. The purpose of Americanization was to prepare the Mexican people for largely semi-skilled and unskilled jobs and to maintain the subordinate status of the Mexican people. The public schools reinforced these practices in the schools. Segregation of

Mexican children was systematic and prevalent throughout the state. Although the state did not mandate segregation of Mexican children, the State School Board of Trustees allowed Mexican children to be placed in separate classes for “language deficiencies.” The State Department of Education used the same rationale to permit placing of Mexican children in separate classes. During the same era in Arizona, Native American children were sent to boarding schools or placed in segregated classes with Mexican children. While the state “permitted” Mexican children to be separated, state laws mandated that African Americans be relegated to their own segregated schools. This resulted in a tripartite school system in many cities in Arizona. There would be separate schools for Anglo, Mexican, and African American children for most of the first half of the twentieth century.

Figure 1. Map of Arizona



## CHAPTER 5 PUBLIC SCHOOL SEGREGATION IN NORTHERN ARIZONA

It is important to note that the early settlement of Northern Arizona by Anglos and Mexicans occurred differently than in the southern part of the state on the US-Mexico border. In the southern part of the state Mexicans in the 1800s had lived there for many years before Anglos settled in the area. For example, in Tucson, the Mexicans had built many business establishments and owned much of the land prior to the arrival of the Anglos. However, as noted by Sheridan (1986), the Anglos eventually established dominance in all areas of commerce, politics and land ownership. In Northern Arizona, Anglos came first, slightly ahead of the Mexican population and established political and economic dominance from the very beginning. The Anglos came as homesteaders and entrepreneurs and the Mexican people came primarily as laborers.

The pattern of segregated employment, segregated housing, and segregated schools would be established in Northern Arizona as it had in other parts of Arizona and the Southwest. Mexican workers would be largely confined to unskilled jobs such as laborers in railroad work gangs, shepherders, or lumber mill employees. As Mexicans continued to arrive in Flagstaff in the early 1880s, segregated housing soon developed, with Anglos residing to the north of the railroad tracks and Mexicans to the south. A segregated school for Mexicans would eventually be built on the Flagstaff Southside. In Williams, the main employers would be the lumber mill and the railroad.

Prior to the Spanish explorations in 1540 by Francisco Vasquez de Coronado, Northern Arizona was home to the Anasazi Indians and later to the Hopi Indians and the

Navajo (Comeaux, 1981). After Coronado, there were a few other incursions into Northern Arizona. In 1580, a Mexican merchant named Antonio de Espejo had ventured into Northern Arizona looking for silver (Cline, 1976, Dorish 1966). Later in 1598, Capitan Farfán, an emissary of Juan de Oñate, the Spanish governor of New Mexico, led an expedition into Northern Arizona in search of gold and silver (Dorish, 1966). However, there were no Spanish settlements left behind.

It was almost three hundred years later, around 1840, that white trappers and other white men ventured into the Williams and Flagstaff area (Cline, 1976, Fuchs, 1953). After the completion of the railroad in 1882, many more White settlers came to Flagstaff from New England, the mid-West, the South and other parts of the United States. They immediately homesteaded the land and set up commercial enterprises with the help of mid-West bankers brought in to finance the railroad boom (Cline, 1976). Many fraternal organizations, for Anglos only, were established at this time such as the Grand Old Army of the Republic (veterans of the civil war), the Knights of Pythias, the Masons, the Elks and other organizations (Cline, 1976, Fuch, 1953). Since many of the members of these fraternal organizations were also the businessmen and landowners, this set up interlocking organizations that allowed Anglos to control the towns financially, politically, and socially to the exclusion of others. Cline (1976) writes that in the decades following the Civil War fraternal lodges became a very important part of life in the United States and nearly every Protestant male adult was affiliated with one or more lodges. The influx of Anglo financial capital and the establishment of all Anglo fraternal

organization was a pattern that was prevalent throughout the early settlement of cities and towns in Arizona.

There is little written of the early arrival of Mexicans and Mexican Americans settlers into Northern Arizona. However in 1993, the Northern Division of the Arizona Historical Society, located in Flagstaff, commissioned a private architectural firm to make a survey of the historic buildings and homes in the Southside and Old Town. The report captures some of the history of the migration of Mexicans and Mexican American families into the Flagstaff area (City of Flagstaff, Southside/Old Town Historical Building Survey, 1993). One of the purposes of the report was to write the history of old buildings. However the investigators also revealed valuable historical information on the residential patterns and places of employment of the inhabitants of Flagstaff by analyzing census data from 1920 and 1930.

The report indicates that by the end of World War I, distinct housing patterns had emerged in the town areas and neighborhoods of Flagstaff. Upper and middle-class Anglos had built their homes on the north side of the railroad tracks. Working class Anglo families also resided on the north side of the railroad tracks but were located further to the west side of the city. In 1920, with only two exceptions, all of the Mexican and Mexican American families resided in Old Town (also south of the railroad tracks) and areas in the Southside. Thus early in the 1900s, Flagstaff was already a very segregated city. Anglos lived on the north side and Mexican and Mexican Americans on the south side of the railroad tracks.



In 1920, Mexicans and Mexican Americans constituted approximately one third of the population in Flagstaff. Those that had come from New Mexico were largely working as shepherders and some were working in the lumber mills. A few were employed as common laborers, worked for the railroad, or were store clerks and small shop owners. In contrast, most Mexicans from Mexico were employed in the lumber mill and constituted the majority of the work force (City of Flagstaff, Southside/Old Town Historical Building Survey, 1993).

In my analysis of school records for South Beaver School in Flagstaff, I found that in the 1940s many people still worked in the lumber mills and for the railroad, but by now large numbers were working at the Navajo Ordinance Depot, located twelve miles from Flagstaff. This was an Army depot used for storage of munitions and bombs and was very active through the Korean War of 1950-1953. The school records indicated that Mexican men were still employed in a large variety of semi-skilled and unskilled laborer jobs. There were no entries in the school records indicating that fathers were also doctors, lawyers, or had other professional careers.

Flagstaff became the Coconino county seat in 1891 and was later incorporated as a city in 1894. Lists of county, city officials, judges and members of the School Board of Trustees for the Flagstaff area for the years 1900-1954 do not contain a single Spanish surname (Cline, 1976). The lack of Spanish surnames vividly demonstrates the total Anglo dominance in Flagstaff during that era.

My grandfather migrated to Williams, Arizona, from Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 1909 to work as a shepherd. Many of the families in Williams in the early 1920s had come from Mexico when the men were contracted to work on the railroad tracks. In 1944, I moved to Flagstaff and learned that many of the families of my school friends had come from New Mexico in the 1920s and 1930s. In many cases we were third and fourth generation Americans whose ancestors had been in New Mexico when it was still part of Mexico. I also knew several families that had come to Williams and Flagstaff from Mexico during the Mexican revolution. Most of the fathers of my friends worked in the lumber mills or for the railroad. My father worked in the lumber mill in Flagstaff in the 1940s and early 1950s. I worked for a brief period at the Navajo Ordinance Depot in 1951.

#### History of South Beaver School

In the early 1900s both Mexican and Anglo children attended the same schools. At that time there were two elementary schools in Flagstaff. Emerson School, which had been built in 1895, was located in the Northside (north of the railroad tracks) and had all grades through the eighth grade. All children attended Emerson in the intermediate grades. Brennan School was located in the Southside (south of the railroad tracks) and had classes only through the second grade. Mexican children were segregated at Brennan in classes with special emphasis on English (Cline, 1976).

Brennan had previously been the site of the first Catholic Church in Flagstaff and was located in an area know as the Brennan Addition which was originally planned for well-to-do Anglo families. But the families soon relocated to the Northside (City of

Flagstaff, Southside/Old Town Historical Building Survey, 1993). The School Board minutes for 1916 confirm that Mexican children were segregated at Brennan by recording the hiring of a teacher for the Mexican first grade (Flagstaff School Board minutes, 8/1/1916).

In 1918, the School Board first discussed the building of a school on the south side of the railroad tracks on block 177. There was no mention in the minutes that the proposed school would be to house Mexican children. However, based on the residential patterns around the proposed school site, it was evident that the future pupils would be Mexican children. The Board decided that due to World War I, and the present condition of the bond market, this would not be a logical time to present a bond issue to the public. The board voted to hold the issue in abeyance (Flagstaff School Board minutes, 2/12/1918). The discussion for a new school would be revived again in 1929 and now it was clearly stated that the intent of the new school would be for Mexican children. A decision on building the new school was once again postponed for future discussion (Flagstaff School Board minutes 1/11/1929).

In 1925, African Americans started to move to the Southside in identifiable numbers to work in the lumber mills. African American children attended Brennan and Emerson schools until 1926 when a separate school named Dunbar was built to segregate African American children as mandated by state law (Cline, 1976). Most African Americans settled in the Brennan Addition, nick-named Cadytown, after the lumber company that had brought them to Flagstaff (City of Flagstaff, Southside/Old Town Historical Building Survey, 1993).

In December 1933, the School Board records indicated that the board was concerned with overcrowding at Emerson School and building a school in the Southside was again discussed. The Board appointed a citizen committee to look further into the matter (Flagstaff School Board minutes, 12/7/1933). The Citizens Committee made its report to the School Board in a letter dated January 10, 1934. The letter signed by the committee chairman, Dr. M. G. Fronke, stated, "At the request of the members of your Board, Mrs. T.T. Pollock, Br. Harold S. Colton and myself made a canvass of the situation in regards to the erection of a school building for the segregation of the Spanish speaking pupils." The letter further indicated that building of the new school was necessary due to the unsanitary condition of the Brannen School and to the over-crowded condition of the same school and the resulting over-flow of Spanish speaking pupils at Emerson School. Dr. Fronke met with the school board on January 11, 1934 and reiterated the need for a new school building and stated, "...that the erection of a new school building for the Mexican children would relieve the situation at the Emerson School and at the same time provide an opportunity to give the type of instruction to Mexican children that would suit their needs." The Board authorized Superintendent Thomas to proceed with plans for the new school (School Board minutes 1/11/1934).

There had been no prior indication in the School Board minutes that Mexican children were already in separate classrooms from Anglo children at both Emerson and Brennan school. However in 1935, the Superintendent of Schools submitted a report to the school in the first month of the school year 1935-1936 that indicated the extent of the segregated classes. Mexican children were segregated in Emerson school from first

through eighth grade and in Brannen School from first grade through fourth grade (Flagstaff School Board minutes 10/10/1935). In my review of school registers, I found listings of segregated classes from the early 1920s through 1935 prior to the move of Mexican children to the new school.

#### South Beaver School from 1935 to 1955

The new school, later named South Beaver, was completed in 1935 and the Mexican children were moved from their segregated classes at Brannen and Emerson School. Cline (1976) wrote of that event, “The youngsters trooped into the new building on Monday, Dec 2, 1935, with Thomas R. Weitzel as both principal and 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher.” The new school had been built at a cost of \$60,000 and opened with ten classrooms, a domestic science room with a sewing room, kitchen, and library. The first teachers, along with Weitzel, were Betty Irish, Gertrude Schnebley, Helmi Nylund, Ellen Harrigan, Robert Robles, Elta Skidmore, and Hill Redmond (Southside School, 1935).

Thus in 1935, there were now for the first time three separate schools; Emerson for Anglo children, Dunbar for African Americans, and South Beaver for Mexican children. This would be the norm until the 1950s.

In February 1939, the School Board discussed a letter from H. E. Hendrix, Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction, on the question of segregation of non-English speaking pupils. The Board recommended that Superintendent Thomas reply to the letter stating the method and plan used in the Flagstaff schools (School Board minutes 2/9/1939). Neither a copy of the letter from Superintendent of Public Instruction or of the

reply from Superintendent Thomas was available in the school board minutes for those years.

In 1951, the School Board discussed what they termed as the “negro problem” and its effect on the community of Flagstaff. Due to overcrowding at Dunbar, a number of kindergarteners were to be moved to South Beaver School. The Board indicated that this move was in accordance with the board policy requiring children to attend the schools nearest their residence and instructed the Superintendent to disregard race in making this move (Flagstaff School Board minutes, 9/6/1951). The Board apparently instructed the Superintendent to disregard race because state laws at this time still mandated that African Americans attend segregated schools and moving the students to South Beaver could be viewed as integrating them.

The planned move of African American kindergarteners from Dunbar School alarmed the parents of Mexican children in South Beaver School because the move represented, in their opinion, further segregation by combining Mexican and African American children. A delegation of parents met with the School Board and expressed their fear that Negro children were to be placed in South Beaver School and that Negro children would not be given the opportunity of attending white schools. The parents were concerned that now both Mexican children and African American children would be segregated in the same school (Flagstaff School Board minutes 10/8/1951).

The Board answered the parent’s concerns by stating that it was board policy that children attend the school nearest their home and that if necessary the Board would eventually district the community for school purposes (Flagstaff School Board minutes,

10/8/1951). By districting the city for school purposes, the Board could dictate where children would attend school based on school district without regard to the nearest school. Since African American children lived south of the railroad tracks, they lived closer to South Beaver than to Emerson School on the Northside. However it may not have been possible for African American to attend Emerson if they had chosen to do so. Two former students of South Beaver, who lived closer to Emerson than to South Beaver told me that they had tried to enroll at Emerson and were told to go to South Beaver.

In a historic meeting of the School Board in March of 1954, board member T. M. Knoles, Jr, made a motion to establish an open school district for Flagstaff. The motion was seconded by Dr. Tollefson and was carried unanimously (Flagstaff School Board minutes, 3/15/1954). Dunbar School was closed prior to the Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board* outlawing school segregating throughout the country. The closing of Dunbar again caused the issue of moving African American children to South Beaver to resurface. The *Club Triangulo Mexicano*, acting in behalf of Mexican parents, wrote to the school board expressing their concern of a developing problem at South Beaver School. As in 1951, the parents were concerned again that African American children would be segregated with Mexican children in the south side of Flagstaff. The Club wrote, "Integration is a nice sounding word, more so than segregation but integration must be properly balanced or it will do more harm than good. In our case in South Beaver School we have three segregated groups, namely Spanish speaking, Indian and colored. This condition tends to retard the progress of the children. Friction between the different

racess of children has developed to such an extent that eventually we are going to have more problems” (*Club Triangulo Mexicano* letter dated 11/17/1954)

Bianca (personal interview September 18, 2004), who was a student in South Beaver at the time, recalls some incidents that happened when Dunbar was closed:

H- Do you remember when they closed Dunbar and they moved some black kids to South Beaver?

B- Right. I remember that. I remember that they were out of place too. They would come in bullying people to make a place for themselves at the school.

The letter from the *Club Triangulo Mexicano* further stated, “We parents thoroughly understand that is impossible for the teacher to mould character into the child. We know that character and good citizenship is our job. How can we mould character and instill good citizenship into the minds and hearts of our children when to begin with they have two strikes against them. When they ask us this question. Why don’t we have Anglo-American schoolmates in our school? We cannot evade the question. We have to answer it. We have to tell them that even though since our great state as well as our wonderful nation has abolished segregation, we are still a segregated group.”

The Lumber & Sawmill Workers Union, Local 605, comprised largely of Mexican Americans had been furnished a copy of the letter of the *Club Triangulo Mexicano* to the board and wrote to the School Superintendent. The Union letter requested corrective action and indicated that they were a committee appointed by the Union and wanted to meet with the Superintendent to discuss the situation (Lumber & Sawmill Workers Union, Local 605 letter, undated).



The School Superintendent presented both letters to the School Board, both of which alleged segregation at the South Beaver School. The board discussed the matter and decided that no further action was necessary in light of policy of open schools established in March of 1954. Parents were free to enroll their children in any Flagstaff school. The School Superintendent stated to the Board that he had called the agent of the Lumber and Sawmill Workers Union and advised the agent that he was willing to meet with the Union committee at their convenience. The reference to the prior establishment of an open school policy effectively ended the discussion (School Board minutes 1/15/1955).

#### Analysis of South Beaver School Records

My analysis of South Beaver school records indicated that in the early 1940s there were also classrooms designated as 1C, even though the class lists were not annotated as "Americanization" classes. 1C had been the designation for such classes in other parts of the state. However, it was recognized by the Flagstaff School Board that Americanization classes were conducted at South Beaver. The Flagstaff School Board minutes indicate that Eunice Veazey was hired to teach the Americanization class at South Beaver (School Board minutes 5/19/1939).

In 1985, on the fiftieth year anniversary of the building of South Beaver, the principal, Paul Hubbard, commented on the Americanization classes and said, "In those days there was no kindergarten at the school, but there was a pre-first grade designed to teach Mexican children use of English and indeed to discourage their ever using Spanish

again. It was an insidious seemingly benevolent method of cultural assimilation common throughout the Southwest” (Sweitzer, 1985).

The students were promoted from 1C to 1A or 1B and then to 2A or 2B, and so on. In examining the class lists, I also found a consistent pattern that children were overage for their grade level. In a sample of 6th grade classes from 1940 through 1947, the ages of the children ranged generally from eleven to fifteen years old. In a few cases, the range was from twelve to sixteen years old. Francis McRae Findlay, former teacher at South Beaver School in the 1950, made a study of fourth grade South Beaver students using data from the 1951-52 school years and found that many children at South Beaver spent two years in each grade and that some graduated from sixth grade at the age of 16 or 17. Findlay also indicates that in the class designations of "A" and "B", the "B" was the "retarded" group (Findlay, 1955, p. 2).

I analyzed the numbers of sixth grade students in South Beaver for the years 1940 to 1947. I compared the number of sixth grade students to the number of Mexican students in their graduating classes and found few Mexican students graduated in proportion to their numbers in sixth grade. The data reflected in Table 2 indicates there was a very high dropout rate.

As depicted by the figures in Table 3, the graduation rate in the 1940s for Mexican students was very low although they constituted about 35 percent of the total school enrollment.

Table 2Proportion of South Beaver 6th graders in relation to their graduating class.

<u>Year</u>	<u>6th graders</u>	<u>Class of</u>	<u>Nbr Mex Grad</u>	<u>% Graduated</u>	<u>% Dropout</u>
1940-41	47	1947	7	14	86
1941-42	45	1948	19	42	58
1942-43	51	1949	20	39	61
1944-45	50	1951	30	60	40
1945-46	48	1952	16	33	67
1947-48	48	1953	18	42	58

Table 3Flagstaff High School Graduates for years 1940-1954

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total graduates</u>	<u>Spanish-surnamed*</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1940	57	5	9
1941	44	8	9
1942	53	3	6
1943	54	5	9
1944	53	7	13
1945	60	6	10
1946	46	6	13
1947	61	4	7
1948	80	15	19
1949	86	24	28
1950	72	20	29
1951	93	28	30
1952	83	15	18
1953	106	17	16
1954	100	18	18

\*Data were not available by ethnicity. Spanish-surnamed in year books

### Williams Elementary School

In 1938, Williams had a population of 2,427 people with approximately half of that population being of Mexican descent (Armack, 1938). Armack indicated that almost half of the population was dependent on the lumber industry and that a portion also worked for the railroad. Edna Craig, a former teacher in Williams, indicated that in 1940 the population was still roughly the same size as in 1938 and also confirms that the main industries are the lumber mill and the railroad. Craig also states that about 50 percent of the school children in 1940 were of Mexican descent (Crag, 1940).

Unlike Flagstaff, there has been only one elementary school in Williams at the turn of the twentieth century. Both Anglos and Mexican children attended Williams Elementary School. Mexican children had been segregated in separate classrooms from Anglos since the early 1920s until 1945. There is no written explanation for the segregation of Mexican children in the School Board minutes for those years. The minutes do indicate the hiring of teachers for “Mexican” classrooms in various years, but do not detail the extent of segregation nor the reasons for the segregated classes (Williams School Board minutes, 7/8/1926).

Apparently there had been an interest in segregating Mexican children in the early 1900s as evidenced by a letter sent in 1915 to the Arizona Attorney General asking for clarification on the issue of segregation. There is no mention of this incident in the Williams School Board minutes. However, the Attorney General Biennial Report of 1915-1916 contains the following copy of a letter from a Mrs. Luther Stover of Williams. Mrs. Stover had written the Arizona Attorney General George W. Harbin, asking if

Mexican children could legally be segregated from white children in the public schools.

The Attorney General response reads as follows:

“In reply thereto will say that Subdivision 2 of Paragraph 2733, Revised Statutes of Arizona, 1913, in prescribing the powers and duties of the Board of Trustees of School Districts, provides:

“...They shall segregate pupils of the African race from pupils of the white race, and to that end are empowered to provide all accommodations made necessary by such segregation.”

“You will therefore see that our law empowers the trustees to segregate children of the African race, but does not empower them to segregate children of the Mexican race unless, of course, children of the Mexican race might also be of African descent, by being intermingled with African blood through birth.

I am therefore of the opinion that we have no law empowering trustees to segregate Mexican children from white children in our public schools” (Attorney General Biennial Report of 1915-1916, p1)

There was a discussion amongst the citizens of Williams in 1936 about constructing a separate school for children of Mexican descent and remodeling the old school for the “American” children. However the chief argument against building a new school was that the lumber mill was expected to close within ten to twelve years and the Mexican population would leave town (Fuchs, 1953). In my review of school records at the Williams Elementary School, I found that, although a new school was not built,

Mexican children were segregated in separate classrooms in the Williams school from first grade through the eighth grade from the early 1920s until 1945.

The only school records available prior to 1950 at the Williams school were for the years 1930 to 1942. In my analysis of these school records, I found that that Spanish-surnamed students entering school for the first time were placed in classrooms designated "1C" with the title of the "Americanization Room." Anglo children entering school were started in "1A." The "A" designated the "American" classes. After one year in 1C, the Mexican children were then placed in "1M." The "M" designated the "Mexican" classes. These names were the actual ones used on the class rosters for those years and marked "1<sup>st</sup> grade Mexican" and "1<sup>st</sup> grade American" and so on. I also found that my own school records at Williams reflected my progression from 1C to 1M and so on to 4M when I transferred to Flagstaff. Not only were the classes segregated, but other areas of the school were also segregated. Anglo and Mexican children were not allowed to play in the same playground or eat in the cafeteria at the same time until the classes were integrated in 1945.

Maria (personal interview September 6, 2004) recalls her experience and the separate playgrounds:

H- So What did you think about being segregated like that for 5 years?

M- I didn't know any better. I didn't know we were being segregated. I didn't know because we played on this side of the school. I didn't know that that there were other kids playing on the other side of the building.

H- You didn't even play on the same side of the school?

M- No! No! And Joan, my very, very good friend, she is "*Americana*" and she said, "Maria, I am kind of like you are. I never knew there were Mexican kids on the other side."

M- Remember the Catholic Church was right there on the corner and about that's where we would play, up in the in front of the school in back of the Catholic Church.

Through 1939, the classes were segregated only through the seventh grade. That year, the School Board voted to divide the 8<sup>th</sup> grade for the coming year, making an 8<sup>th</sup> grade "Mexican" and an 8<sup>th</sup> grade "American" class. Again there is no discussion noted in the minutes giving the rationale for this decision (Williams School Board minutes, 7/8/1939). Williams Elementary School remained segregated through the 8<sup>th</sup> grade until the fall of 1945. The School Board minutes of September 12<sup>th</sup>, 1945, records this historical event as follows: "Mr. Bowie [Superintendent] reported that he had joined the Mexican and American rooms, dividing the grade equally thus putting Mexicans and American children in every room."

Maria (personal interview September 6, 2004) was in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade at the time recalls the event and how her teacher had separated the students:

M- Anyway this particular day she said, "I'm going to read some names and when I read your name, take only what's yours and leave the books and everything else

here and line up in the back of the classroom.” I thought, oh my gosh! What’s the meaning here!

Well pretty soon they started calling girls that I played with and they were lined up over there and I am still sitting over here. I’m thinking, well I don’t know if I should be over there or over here, you know. A lot of emotion going through all of us!

H- You didn’t know why you were being called out?

M- They didn’t tell us! So now she called what ever she had on her list and she told the rest of us to be quiet because she was going to leave the classroom and she would be back, for us not to make any noise. So we all sat there like dummies, you know, working on whatever we were working on. She left with my friend and pretty soon she came back. She had all these *gringos* with her- blonde hair blue eyes. Where did they come from? Well that’s when they did it.

Joyce was one of them and Rosemary. I don’t know who the others were. But anyway here they came and I thought, gee, this is going to be different. And so we started. I finished the fifth grade with Anglo kids and we were mixed from then on until I finished high school.

Miles Cureton, who had been principal of Williams Elementary School in 1945, when the classes were desegregated, was interviewed in 1974 upon his retirement and was quoted as saying, “When I first started teaching, the school separated Mexican and Anglo students. Enrollment was about 60 percent Mexican. When I became principal, I



discounted segregation” (Pearson, 1974). I am not quite sure what he meant by “discounted”. He may have meant, “discontinued” or he may have meant to say the segregation was not important (thus discounted).

Many of the Mexican children who attended Williams Elementary School did not graduate from high school. The data are difficult to evaluate after 1942, because the lumber mill, one of the main employer for Mexican men, closed down and many families moved away. My own family moved to Flagstaff, but I returned after a few months to live with my grandfather. My review of school record from 1931 through 1942 indicated there were large numbers of Mexican children in the early elementary grades, but the numbers started to thin out by the 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

The school records indicated that there were large numbers of Mexican children in the early grades, but that few graduated from high school. I compared the number of Mexican children in the sixth grade to their graduating class and found there was a high dropout rate. See table 4.

From 1939 to 1954, there were few Mexican graduates although the Mexican children constituted about fifty percent of the elementary school population. The graduation data was taken from high school graduation lists available in the Williams Public Library and is depicted in table 5.

Table 4

Proportion of Williams Mexican 6th graders in relation to their graduating class.

<u>Year</u>	<u>6th graders</u>	<u>Class of</u>	<u>Nbr Mex Grad</u>	<u>% Graduated</u>	<u>% Dropout</u>
1932-33	23	1939	4	17	83
1933-34	22	1940	5	23	77
1934-35	29	1941	5	17	83
1935-36	24	1942	8	33	67
1936-37	29	1943	10	34	66
1937-38	27	1944	3	11	89
1938-39	41	1945	8	20	80
1939-40	36	1946	6	17	83
1940-41	40	1947	10	25	75

Table 5

Williams High School Graduates for the years 1939-1954

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Graduated</u>	<u>Spanish-surnamed*</u>	<u>% of total</u>
1939	17	4	24
1940	24	5	21
1941	24	5	21
1942	26	8	31
1943	28	10	36
1944	18	3	17
1945	20	8	40
1946	30	6	20
1947	28	10	36
1948	24	2	8
1949	17	3	18
1950	20	7	35
1951	30	10	33
1952	27	11	41
1953	32	11	34
1954	28	8	33

Charles Armack, a teacher in the Williams Elementary School in the 1930s also noted the low number of high school graduates and published the following data in a master's thesis that he wrote while a student Arizona Teachers College (later Northern Arizona University) (Armack, 1938). The data collected by Armack indicate that there were large numbers of Mexican students in the first grade, fewer by the eighth grade, and considerable fewer in the twelfth grade (See Table 6). The titles "American" and "Mexican" in the table are those that Armack used.

Table 6

Relationship Grade 1, Grade 8, Grade 9, and Grade 12 enrollment

	<u>American</u> <u>Students</u>	<u>Percent of</u> <u>Enrollment</u>	<u>Mexican</u> <u>Students</u>	<u>Percent of</u> <u>Enrollment</u>
1933-34				
Grade 1	50	40.6	73	59.3
Grade 2	38	67.8	18	34.1
1934-35				
Grade 1	33	33.7	65	66.3
Grade 8	17	53.1	15	46.8
Grade 9	29	58.0	21	42.0
Grade 12	12	70.5	5	29.4
1935-36				
Grade 1	30	38.9	47	61.0
Grade 8	30	52.6	27	47.3
Grade 9	37	54.0	17	45.9
Grade 12	14	73.6	5	26.3
1936-37				
Grade 1	57	64.0	32	35.9
Grade 8	32	69.5	14	30.4
Grade 9	36	65.4	19	34.5
Grade 12	15	83.3	3	16.6

### Summary

The settlement of northern Arizona had occurred in different fashion than in areas close to the U.S.-Mexican border. Here the Anglos settled first and with the completion of the railroad in 1882, hundreds of new Anglo settlers came from all parts of the United States. They quickly established economic and political control of both Flagstaff and Williams. Mexican American first came to northern Arizona as shepherders from New Mexico in the late 1800s. Later Mexican immigrants would come in the late 1800s and early 1900s to work for the railroad and the lumber mills.

Mexican children were segregated in Flagstaff as early as 1913 at the Brennan School in classes with special emphasis on English. Later Mexican children would be segregated in different classrooms in both Brennan and Emerson School. In 1935, Mexican children were moved to South Beaver School, a new school built in Southside Flagstaff to segregate Mexican children. Earlier in 1926, Dunbar School had been built to segregate African American children as mandated by state law. Thus in 1935, there were separate schools for Anglos, African Americans, and for Mexican children.

In Williams, Mexican children had been segregated in separate classrooms within an integrated school since the 1920s. The Williams School Board minutes for the 1920s to the 1940s do not contain any information explaining why Mexican children were segregated. Mexican children were placed in classrooms designated as the "Mexican classes" and Anglo children were placed in the "American classes." There were separate classes from the 1st grade through the 8<sup>th</sup> grade until 1945 when the classes were joined.

Both in Williams Elementary School and South Beaver School, Mexican children were placed grade 1C upon entering school. These 1C classrooms were known as “Americanization classrooms.” In South Beaver, the students were promoted from 1C to 1A or 1B based on their grades. In Williams, Mexican children attended 1C, then 1M (M for Mexican) until 8M. Anglos children attended 1A (A for American) through 8A. In both cities, the high schools were always integrated.

It was evident from the data I collected and the figures published by Armack (1938), that there were large numbers of Mexican children in the primary graders, fewer by ninth grade and even less by twelfth grade. One of the contributing factors for the large number of high school dropouts may have been the age of the students. In South Beaver School, the ages ranged from 11 to 16 in the sixth grade. By the time some of these children reached ninth grade many would be 17 and 18 years old.

Every two years, for several years, former students of the Williams school have had a reunion to renew old friendships and to reminisce about growing up in Williams. Inevitably the discussion turns to recounting school memories. Most of the participants in these reunions attended school in the 1930s and 1940s so most are in their sixties and seventies. I attended the reunion in 2000 and 2004 and shared in their conversation. Some of their memories may be a little hazy but the one thing they all remember is the “Mexican” and “American” classes. Perhaps their feelings are best summarized in the minutes of their newsletter of their reunion of 1998, when the author wrote, “...the days in the Williams school were remembered, particularly, the “Mexican” and the “American” classes ... the group declared, “The abuse and mistreatment of Mexican

descent children by teachers shall not happen again” (Newsletter, Old Timer’s Reunion, 1998).

## CHAPTER 6 STUDENTS RECOLLECTIONS AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

“Oh. Like I never graduated or anything like that. It made me feel like I didn’t accomplish anything in my life from the beginning of my school years up to high school. I wish there would have been another way around. We were all cheated equally.” (Jennie, personal interview September 21, 2004)

In these poignant words, Jennie, a former student of South Beaver School, summarizes the feelings of many her peers. It is important to note how former students of South Beaver School and Williams Elementary School remember their school experience because it necessary to validate their experiences and to hear voices about a little known history of those times. It is also important to compare the perceptions of their former teachers about their students. Although, it is not possible to determine what prompted their actions, their writing may gave us a glimpse of their thoughts.

Armack (1938), a teacher in Williams, had examined the reasons why Mexican children were being held back in the same grade in large numbers and why Mexican students dropped out of high school in such large numbers. Armack noted that Mexican children on the average had lower scores on intelligence tests than did Anglo children of the same age. He speculated that the lower scores could be due to home and cultural background, language difficulties, lack of interest, or bad treatment in general. Armack concluded his thesis by stating that reasons for withdrawal from school were more basic than intelligence and language difficulties. It is difficult to interpret what Armack meant by that statement since he did not elaborate.

### Student Recollections

Based on my research, I agree with what Armack termed, "bad treatment" may have been one of the major reasons why Mexican students dropped out of school. Several former students of both Flagstaff and Williams's schools spoke of being physically punished and verbally abused for speaking Spanish at school.

Maria (personal interview September 6, 2004) remembers being slapped many times in first grade:

M- All I know is they stuck me in the first grade and there I was with Mary Beltram. Bless her heart. Good God! It was a miserable two years for me because I didn't know how to speak English.

H- So what did she do?

M- Well you know what? After I got slapped so many times...

H- She slapped you?

M- Oh Yeah.

H- Why?

M- I couldn't talk to her for one thing. But yet in Spanish, I knew my alphabet. I knew my colors, which I thought that was such an accomplishment. But it was all in Spanish and you know our parents tried to teach us to be well mannered and not to be disrespectful to our elders. My mom and dad couldn't help me. I didn't know how to write my name or anything. So here I am, cold turkey, in the first grade. I had no clue what I was doing. And the only reason I knew where to go sit



after I got out of class was because my mom had told me to sit right there until the bus comes.

Well you know what? After I got slapped around, she would slap me (made slapping sounds) or rattle that ruler sometimes like the little *monjitas*.

Jane (personal interview June 6, 2004), also a former student in Williams Elementary also recalls being punished for speaking Spanish when they went out to the playground:

J- Every time we went out to recess she said, “No speaking Spanish and remember no speaking Spanish.”

So we all go out and play and of course you’re just learning English so you start speaking Spanish and we get back to class and she lined us up all against the wall and she’d start asking each child, “Did you speak Spanish?”

And some girls and boys that could answer very clearly said, “No Mam.” And “No Mam.”

It was always, “No Mam.” And sometimes there was a “Yes Mam.”

And she wouldn’t punish those “Yes Mams.”

She’d punish the ones that lied and I lied.

I told her “No Mam.”, but I didn’t say “No Mam! I said “No Mam” (softly) and I’d go like that with my face down.

She said, “Oh, I think that you spoke Spanish. Let me see your tongue.”

For the life of me, I had no idea what she wanted to see my tongue for, so I'd stick my tongue out.

"Aha, you spoke Spanish," and she'd grab my tongue and with the ruler, the end of the ruler, she'd pow!

She'd hit you on your tongue and believe me you didn't speak Spanish again out in recess. You wouldn't even talk!

Maria (personal interview September 6, 2004) said that she hated reading until she was an adult. She recalls being slapped for mispronouncing the word "knot":

M- Then when I did start to learn, there was this stupid story about some darn bird and it built a nest.

I don't remember the story but the word 'knot' was in it, K-n-o-t. I would take my little book home. Why would I take my little book cause my parents couldn't help me, but I would show it to my brother anyway. I didn't know what the word was and I didn't know what the word was. I showed it to my dad and he said, "*Ay mija, no se, knút, knút, no se.*"

Well the next day when she called on me. I know that it's my turn

I put my little book there you know how you use to read. You pointed at every word.

I knew the word was coming. I said, "Knút." (Maria makes a slapping sound

H- Why would she do that?

M- I have no idea, but I got slapped for 'knot'. And I had learned the word 'something' and I didn't even know what it meant!

Jane (personal interview June 7, 2004) remembers very bitterly being paddled every day for being late for school because she and her sister couldn't go to school until they had cleaned the kitchen:

J- I think that I was traumatized from being spanked **every** day of the week.

I mean **every** day of the week!

We had to be in our seats by the time the second bell rang.

I was never at my seat because the lady that took care of us wouldn't allow us to go to school until the dishes were cleaned and the kitchen was clean.

So by then by the time we'd hear the bell ring we'd tell her, "We got to go! We got to go!"

And then we'd run down. I was late! I was late!

And she would just get so tired sometimes from spanking me she would call Mr. Armack to come and spank me.

And when she spanked me, she bent me over the chair, my back facing the students.

And she'd whip me with a paddle and the paddle would get stuck to the dress.

And every time she spanked me and panties would show-not my panties- my bloomers.

The lady that used to take care of us made us these bloomers that we would have down to our knees to cover our stockings, from flour sacks.

What was it, The Star?

You washed the gunnysacks or those flour sacks anyway, but you could never be able to get the star out of there.

It was very embarrassing for me to say the least that the kids were laughing at me and I think that hurt more than anything else.

And some times when she didn't want to spank me anymore; she'd put me in the locker they called it the cloakroom.

H- The closet?

J- Where we hung up our coats.

Sometimes when I'd go in there, Henry was there for some reason or other and he was always hiding behind the coats. He would get underneath the coats and he would come at me like that. I was scared to death

H- How long did she use to keep this Henry in there?

J- I have no idea. I don't remember how long she kept me in there

Pete (personal interview June 4, 2004) also remembers how he was treated in school:

H- How were you treated by the teachers for speaking Spanish in school? Or did you speak Spanish?

P- Yes. That's all we knew. Just amongst us kids. They would jump on us that we had to talk English. We started to learn it. We had to. It was more like a punishment.

H- How were you made to feel about your language and culture?

P- They put you down. At the time we didn't know anything. We were as green as grass.

H- Did you think of yourself as an American when you were in school?

P- After we grew up?

H- No. When you were in school.

P- No. I just thought I was a Mexican. That's all that was in my little brain. That's about all. We didn't know any different.

There were similar instances of "bad treatment" by teachers at South Beaver. Jennie (personal interview September 21, 2004) remembers her school years in the 1940s:

H- Do you remember your days at South Beaver School?

J- Yes.

H- What do you remember about those times?

J- I remember it was a nightmare.

H- Why?

J- I wasn't very happy. We were mistreated, like being slapped around and pulling our hair.

H- Why did they do that?

J- Well, because-ah, for no reason at all some times- but mainly because we weren't speaking English.

H-So they told you not to speak Spanish in school?

J- Yes

H- Then if you spoke Spanish, you got slapped?

J- We got slapped, kicked, had our hair pulled. We had this teacher. She was so mean. She use to force us to get on the swings and she would push us so hard, hard that it was scary. She was a very strong person. She acted more like a man than a woman. She, like, she overpowered us. That's how I felt. We were afraid of her.

H- Why do you think she put you on the swings so high?

J- Maybe to scare us. She was never a very nice person.

H- What else do you remember about school?

J- I remember they had a nurse. They called her Mrs. Bones. She would come to up to the classroom and line us up and take us down to the nurse's office. Then she had two sticks similar to toothpicks and she would go through our hair and put this powder stuff on our hair and cover it with some kind of cloth and then sent us back to the room.

H- Why did she do that?

J- Because she said we all had lice and scabies.

Bianca (personal interview September 18, 2004), another former student of South Beaver recalls similar incidents:

H- Did you speak both English and Spanish when you went to school?

B- When I started school, I spoke Spanish only.

H- Do you remember any kind of experiences because of that?

B- Yes.

H-Can you tell me about that.

B. We would get into trouble because we spoke Spanish, but that's what you spoke when you left home. What could we do, but use the language that we learned at home. And then we would go to the school the teachers would punish us for speaking our language. I was hit with a ruler many a time for that. If they caught us, even out in the playground, they would punish us-put us against the wall. Many years later I ran into one of our old teachers, a couple of years ago, and I asked her why they did that. She said it came down from the higher ups-the administrators. It wasn't them. It was the administrators that had them punish us. They were supposed to turn their back on us when we spoke it in the playground, but they didn't.

H- So even if you spoke it in the playground, they would punish you.

B- Yes.

Bianca (personal interview September 18, 2004) also remembers how the students were checked for lice by the school nurse:

H- Do you remember the nurse checking the kids for lice?

B. All of the time. They [the school nurse] cut their hair short.

H- Did they do that while you were there?

B- Yes. They cut their hair very short and they would tell the parents, you can't send the kids back to school until you completely clean the whole house-until you clean their heads. I remember my mother putting kerosene on my hair before she sent me back to school. They could have burnt our scalps!

Lucio (personal interview September 21, 2004), also a former student at South Beaver School, couldn't understand why they weren't allowed to speak Spanish in school:

H- Did you ever get paddled for speaking Spanish in school?

L- Oh yeah, they use to paddle you all of the time. They grabbed you by your ears. They hit you with a paddle on your hands.

H- For speaking Spanish in the classroom or outside?

L- Even outside during recess. You couldn't even speak Spanish there. In the classroom-no way!

H- Did they ever tell you why they were doing this?

L- You had to speak English. "You're an American." We never could figure if we were Americans. We were all Mexicans there.

H- How did that make you feel?

L- I couldn't figure it out. Everybody was Mexican, everybody was speaking Spanish. I couldn't figure that out why we couldn't speak Spanish and we were all Mexicans.



H- When you started school, did you speak English?

L- Yes because of my older brothers. I didn't speak it very well. I spoke it with an accent.

Many former students I spoke to throughout my travels in Northern Arizona expressed the same feelings as those I chose for the interviews. The memories of punishments for speaking Spanish remained very strong amongst everyone. But interestingly, everyone I talked to from that era still speaks Spanish.

#### Teacher Perceptions

As part of my research I found several Master's theses at Northern Arizona University written by former teachers about their Mexican students in Flagstaff and Williams during the 1930s and 1940s. I analyzed what they wrote to try to determine their views of their Mexican students in terms of race and nationality. I was interested in finding out if they thought of their students as Americans. These theses were all submitted to Arizona State Teachers College (NAU) and concern studies the authors had made trying to measure the intelligence of Mexican children and to evaluate their academic performance.

I found that their descriptions of their students often revealed how the teachers saw their students and how these views might have affected their teaching. The U.S. Census Bureau in 1930 had used the term "Mexican" to identify Spanish-speaking U.S. born citizens of Mexican ancestry. However, in 1940, the Census Bureau used the term "White" and included both Anglos and U.S. born Mexican children under this category.

Armack (1938, Oswald (1940), and Craig (1940), all former teachers in Williams Elementary School in the 1930s and 1940s, categorized their students as “Mexicans” and “Americans.” As mentioned before, students at this school were assigned to “Mexican classes” and “American classes.” Craig (1938), in particular, did not appear to consider her Mexican students as Americans, although most would be U.S. born at that time. Craig must have concluded that her Mexican students were slow-witted, thieves, and abused children when she wrote the following in her thesis,

“...even though these children show that they are assimilating the customs and manners of their adopted land, they still retain their characteristic slow development in thought and action.”(Craig, 1940, p14)

“In presenting this course it cannot be stressed too strongly that the Mexican child can not cover as much ground as the American. He comes from a land of *mañana* and he thinks in a land of *mañana*. He has the same desires and urges as children of other nationalities, but he wishes to take more time to express them. To hurry him too fast is cruel.” (Craig, 1938, p12)

“As most Mexican families are large, the child soon learns to defend himself and his few possessions. When he first enters school he is apt to show this characteristic by grabbing everything in sight and fighting for it if necessary. As he has had very little, he is apt to put small objects in his pocket to have for his very own. This problem for the desire of goods must be coped with at the very beginning of the schools year. It must be dealt with firmly, for the type of child quickly takes advantage of any seeming weakness,

but kindly for he has not been trained to recognize the rights of others.” (Craig, 1940, p. 14)

“...The strangeness of the school overpowers him and he is fearful of what might happen. As home he has been cuffed a great deal and is always on guard. This characteristic he carries into the schoolroom. It is quite easy to tell the homes that rule by force in the way the children dodge when a hand is raised even though there is no intention of striking.” (Craig, 1938, p5)

Another teacher from Williams in the 1930s, Charles Armack, prefaced his master’s thesis with the following statement

“Many times teachers and people on the streets speak of the intelligence of the Mexican children and adults in the most uncomplimentary way. According to popular belief, the Mexican children do not get along as well in school as the English-speaking children because they are lower in intelligence.” (Armack, 1938, p. 1)

Armack did not repudiate this statement in the body or findings in his thesis. However, he did mention that standardized test results of Mexican children should be viewed with caution because of language difficulties and cultural bias that is inherent in standardized tests.

Analysis of the theses of former teachers in South Beaver School indicates the use of a variety of terms to identify Mexican and Anglo children, Castro (1954) described the two groups as “Mexican” and English-speaking pupils of Caucasian stock.” Findlay (1955) used the terms “Mexican” and “Anglo.” Weitzel (1941), former teacher and principal, referred to the two groups as ‘Spanish-speaking’ and ‘English-speaking’ thus

avoiding mixing descriptions of race and nationality. Fleming (1955) used the terms “Spanish-American” and “Anglo-American.”

None of teachers of Williams School or South Beaver School referred to Mexican children as “Americans” first, in term of nationality. In Flagstaff, in the 1940s and 1950s, we were already referring to ourselves as Chicanos. However the Anglo did not refer to us as Chicanos. To them we were not Chicanos or Mexican Americans; we were just “Mexicans.” Chicano was a term that would be popularized amongst many Mexican Americans in the Chicano Movement of the 1960s.

Flora Baird, a teacher in Ajo, Arizona, in the 1950s, made a study concerning reading readiness of Mexican children in first grade. Baird did not consider that the language the children spoke was Spanish when she made the following comment, "No attempt was made to evaluate the relative amount of knowledge these children had when the reading readiness tests in this study were given in **Mexican**" (bold mine) (Baird, 1953, p2).

Maria (personal interview September 6, 2004), a former student of Williams Elementary School who graduated from Williams High School in 1952, recounted the following story about a former high school teacher who had a very low opinion of his former students:

M- He was a football coach, and he was single and taught there in Williams, I don't know for how many years.

M- Do you remember Curtis and Kay?

M- They had the little photo shop there in town. So when people were going through they checked with Curtis because they knew about the students, their whereabouts and everything. And you know it was a good thing that they were there, because somebody like me, I don't even know where half of my classmates are or anything. But they would know because they kept track of all of these people.

M- So he happened to come through one time and he said to Curtis, "So did any of the kids I had, ever amount to anything?" Curtis said, "I can't believe you're asking me that. What kind of a teacher were you? Didn't you teach them anything?" Cause he taught history as well.

And he said, "I just never thought that anyone from here would amount to anything." And Curtis said, "Maria, it was a joy for me to start rattling off, Mexicans, as well as Anglos, how well they were doing, Air Force or whatever. And he was really surprised the kids from Williams made it as well as they did.

Lucio (personal interview September 21, 2004) remembers that when he and other South Beaver former students went to Jr. Hi School in the early 1950s, the teachers didn't think they could read seventh grade material:

H- What was it like when you went to Jr. High school? How did the teachers treat you?

L- They put all of the Mexican kids in one room for special English. They gave me a book that I read in 4<sup>th</sup> grade- 4<sup>th</sup> grade English.

I told the teacher, "Hey I read this in 4<sup>th</sup> grade."

The teacher said, "I didn't want to put you in with the others because you might fall behind."

So we complained to the principal, me and the other guys. The rest of them didn't care. The rest could care less.

H- They put all of the Mexicans in one room.

L- Yeah in one room. I still remember the teacher, Mrs. Walkup. So we went to complain to the principal, me and these 4 other guys. They gave us a chance. We got in the other class. We were the only 4 Mexicans with the other group. The others guys didn't pass the test they gave us.

H- How did you do?

L- I passed it. I use to read a lot when I was a kid.

H- They gave you a reading test?

L- Yeah, a readings test.

H- The other kids, they were in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade and they couldn't read?

L- Some of the guys couldn't read. They just wanted to get to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

H- Why?

L- They didn't think they were going to do anything, anyway.

A former student of Flagstaff High School in the early 1950s remembers that Mexican girls were placed in sewing classes. Bianca (personal interview September 18,

2004) had spoken earlier of being punished for speaking Spanish in her sewing class, so I inquired more about her sewing class and this was her response:

H- That sewing class you were in-was that mostly for Mejicanas or was it for everybody?

B- You know when I was going to school you got this plan with the counselor. One was a professional plan. The other one was given to the Mexicans. There was a professional plan and I don't know what they called the other plan. They put the Indians, the Mejicanos, and the blacks on that plan. We got the sewing classes, a few classes in cooking. They gave the white kids typing classes, bookkeeping and shorthand.

H- What about college prep classes?

B. No. College classes were for the elite, the white people that were in the school. We were learning how to make aprons and how to cook so we could feed those white people and take care of them.

### Summary

It's difficult to determine in most cases what the former teachers thought about their students from their writing. The teachers were also victims of the school system and must have been influenced by the same forces that resulted in segregation of Mexican children. However, it seems that they did not think of their students as Americans, but rather as "Mexicans." The former students certainly remember the low expectations that teachers had for them. These low expectations must have also contributed to the high dropout rates of Mexican students from high school.

There were large numbers of Mexican students who dropped out of school during the years of segregated schooling. Former students remember being physically punished for speaking Spanish in school and being humiliated and embarrassed in school because of their Mexican language and culture. In the high schools, Mexican students were not encouraged to take college preparatory classes because the school counselors did not think the Mexican students would succeed in college.



## CHAPTER 7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The public school segregation of Mexican children in the first half of the twentieth was inevitable. From the early days of the United States, it was clear that race would become a critical social issue in later years for minorities. This was evidenced by the callous disregard for Native American rights by early Anglo settlers and subsequent efforts to “Americanize” Native Americans by forcing the children to attend boarding schools far from home and for many years. The slavery of African Americans is also a well-known low point in American history. African Americans were not considered human beings, but were treated as property by their white owners. The ideology of Anglo supremacy was, therefore, already pervasive when the Mexican people first encountered Anglo squatters in Mexican territory in Texas in the early half of the nineteenth century.

History has shown that from the first encounters with Texans, the Texan Anglos had a deep hatred for the brown and dark-skinned Mexicans and considered them inferior. The quick defeat of the Mexican Army by United States forces in the Mexican American War of 1848 further reinforced the belief of Anglo superiority. This ideology and the evolving concept of manifest destiny would soon result in the subordination of the Mexican people, both immigrants and U.S. born citizens.

The large majority of Mexicans who immigrated to the north in the late 1800s and early 1900s were poor and uneducated. They were recruited in large numbers in the Southwest to feed the burgeoning labor demand of agricultural and mining interests that were part of the rapid industrialization of the United States. Their employers manipulated

where and how they lived in the United States and how their children were educated. In the early 1900s, The U.S. government became concerned about the large numbers of foreigners who did not speak English and were not assimilated into the “American” way of life.

To deal with this problem, the Southwestern states, under the direction of the federal government, established extensive Americanization efforts to force assimilation of the large number of Mexican immigrants. However, Americanization efforts took place under the umbrella of segregated housing, segregated employment and segregated schooling. The main purpose of Americanization in the Southwest at that time was to strip the Mexican immigrant of all things Mexican, language, culture, clothing, even food and produce a subordinated labor force to support mainstream American interests. Caught in the unstoppable force of Americanization were U.S.-born Mexican children who were first, second, third, and even fourth generation Americans. Federal and state government officials made no distinction between Mexican immigrants and Mexican American citizens. They were both part of the “Mexican problem.”

The governmental framework for dealing with the “Mexican problem” was influenced during the early 1900s by negative stereotypes of Mexican people that were evident in all aspects of American life. Psychologists gave I. Q. tests in English to Mexican children with limited English speaking skills, and pronounced them as mentally inferior to monolingual English speaking children. Biologists declared that Mexicans were inferior because they were of mixed heritage and as a result were of low intelligence and were not fit to become American citizens.

In the 1930s, the U.S. government became aware that there were thousands of Mexican children floundering in segregated schools but the government did little to improve their lot. By this time the state of Arizona had already relegated its Mexican children to segregated classrooms or segregated schools. Also by then, in most Arizona cities, African Americans were forced by state law to attend segregated schools. Native Americans were either sent to boarding schools or segregated in schools with Mexican Americans.

The condition of the Mexican people was affected a great deal by their low economic status. The economic conquest by Anglos had been relatively quick and unchallenged in the state of Arizona during the late 1800s and early 1900s. When the railroad was completed in Arizona in the 1880s, Anglo entrepreneurs poured into the Arizona territory. By then Native Americans had been exiled to reservations and African Americans were trying to recover from centuries of slavery. Many Mexicans that immigrated to the state in the late 1800s and 1900s had been recruited for specific industries such as mining and agriculture. The city fathers and the mining company or large farm owners generally dictated where Mexican men lived and worked. In Northern Arizona, the railroad companies and the lumber mills were the major employers and influenced where Mexican families resided and worked. All of these historical events fostered a mainstream ideology that Mexican children were inferior and shaped the education of Mexican children.

In interviews of former students, I found that most felt segregation was considered normal. Mexican children had been conditioned to accept their subordinate

status, as noted by historian Rodolfo Acuña (2000). Some of the former students even said they were happier being only with people of their own race. The Mexican parents must have also felt that segregation was normal as there were no public outcries until the 1950s. In Arizona, public school segregation of Mexican children was pervasive and widespread. There were segregated “Mexican” schools or segregated classes in virtually every part of the state.

In Northern Arizona, the School Board records of the early 1900s indicate that segregation of Mexican children was openly discussed and the records reflect to some degree how it was progressively implemented. But these records do not tell the story of why it was necessary to segregate Mexican children. Noted historian of Northern Arizona, Platt Cline (1976) wrote that Mexican children were placed in special classes with emphasis in English in Flagstaff as early as 1912. In his historical analysis of the education of Mexican children, Cline skips the period from 1912 to 1935, when South Beaver School was built for complete segregation of Mexican children. In my research I found class lists that indicated that Mexican children had been in segregated classes in integrated schools during the intervening years in the 1920s and early 1930s, prior to the transfer to the all-Mexican school in Southside Flagstaff.

In Williams, segregated classes for Mexican children were reflected in the School Board minutes starting in the 1920s. Mexican children were placed in segregated classes from first grade through the eighth grade until 1945. Mexican children were assigned to the “Mexican” classes based on their Spanish-surname. There were no tests given to determine English fluency. The progression of the Mexican children Williams’s school

was from the “Americanization” class 1C to first grade “Mexican” until they reached eighth grade “Mexican.” The Anglo children were placed in first grade “American” and progressed to eighth grade “American.” At the high school, they all attended the same classes. If the true goal of the “Mexican” classes had been to teach the children English, school officials would have tested Mexican children for English fluency prior to placing them in segregated classes. The school would have also provided for integrated classes at all grade levels to include Mexican children as they obtained English proficiency.

The school records for South Beaver School indicated that it was normal for students to be two to three years older than the age for their grade level. Since Mexican children both in Flagstaff and Williams attended first grade for two years (1C to 1M in Williams, and 1C to 1A or 1B in Flagstaff), they would have been eleven or twelve years old in sixth grade. In my analysis of school records, I found that the ages of students in the sixth grade at South Beaver Schools ranged from eleven to fifteen years of age. In some cases there were students who were sixteen years old. This phenomenon could help explain why Mexican students dropped out of school in such large numbers. A former student of the Williams school, who later became a school principal, told me that he felt that participation in athletics helped keep many Mexican children in high school. However, by the time they reached the eleventh and twelfth grades, many Mexican boys were too old to play sports and they dropped out of school.

Another factor that may have resulted in the high dropout rates from high school may have been the attitude by the teachers that Mexican students would not go on to college. Interviews with former students of Flagstaff and Williams’s high schools

indicated the counselors did not encourage Mexican students to stay in school and that Mexican girls were channeled into cooking and sewing classes. One former student also said that his four sisters dropped out of school because it was expected that they would stay home and help the mother. There did not appear to be incentives for Mexican girls to stay in high school.

A teacher, who had taught in Williams many years in the 1930s and 1940s, had been concerned about the high drop out rates and suggested that perhaps “bad treatment” caused many Mexican students to drop out of school before they reached the twelfth grade. Several former students told stories of being physically and verbally abused in school for speaking Spanish. One student remembers being paddled and humiliated every single day for being late to school. All of the former students I interviewed felt degraded in school.

Another aspect that could have influenced the school failure of many Mexican children was the lack of acknowledgement by teachers and school administrators, that their Spanish-speaking students were for the most part American citizens. In my analysis of several masters’ thesis written by former teachers of Mexican children in the 1930s and 1940s, I found that the teachers consistently referred to their students as “Mexican” or used the non-racial term of “Spanish-speaking.” They wrote in terms of “Mexican” and “American.” The class lists at Williams Elementary School were categorized as the “Americanization Classes,” the “Mexican Classes” and the “American Classes.” The teachers used these same terms in their writing to differentiate between students.

### Implications

In Arizona in the year 2004, schools are still faced with the same urgency to teach English to hundreds of newly arrived Mexican immigrants. However, bilingual education classes, which were once commonly available in Arizona schools to help Mexican immigrants in their transition, are becoming virtually extinct. State laws passed in the year 2000 as a result of Proposition 203 severely restrict the use of Spanish in the classrooms. An added factor that constraints the use of Spanish by teachers are federal and state laws requiring that standardized testing used to measure academic achievement be administered in English only. Schools are publicly judged by the results of standardized test scores and labeled as “Failing” to “Excelling.” There is constant surveillance of schools by both the state and the federal government. Since these tests must be administered in English only, teachers are forced to concentrate on teaching English skills. The unrelenting scrutiny and continuous pressure on school districts to achieve high-test scores has virtually eliminated opportunities for biliteracy education in the state.

Mexican children are once again being given the impression that their first language is not important and that English must be learned at all costs. Corporal punishment has vanished from the schools; however the verbal messages from state officials, administrator and teachers remain the same as during the era of school segregation-“Speak English, You’re an American.” In spite of what we have learned from history, the measure of a real “American” continues to be the ability to dominate the English language. Obviously it is very necessary and important to be fluent and literate in

English. No one disputes that issue. However, teachers should not have to subtract the ability to speak Spanish from Mexican children in order for them to master English. With the diminishing opportunities for a bilingual education, there are few alternatives in schools to produce biliterate children. In some isolated cases there are some dual language programs that are seeking to educate children in both English and Spanish. Two examples of dual language programs are located at Davis Bilingual Magnet School in the Tucson Unified School District and Los Amigos Elementary in the Sunnyside School District, also in Tucson, Arizona. More programs like these are needed throughout the state.

In Williams and Flagstaff, the segregated classes and segregated schools are a thing of the past. However in some cities, like Tucson, Arizona, schools are more segregated than ever. Much of the present day segregation appears to be as a result of residential patterns, as in past years. Again in this realm, there appears to be no quick solution. Several solutions have been tried, such as magnet school programs to attract white students to schools with large minority population and also limited busing to other schools for desegregation purposes. Both of these efforts are currently under juridical review to determine their effectiveness.

#### Recommendations for teaching Mexican Children

The teachers in Williams and Flagstaff, Arizona over sixty years ago recognized that Mexican children were falling two to three years behind their Anglo peers and were seeking answers on how to best teach Mexican children. The teaching of English reading skills was the main stumbling block. Many current ideas and methods for teaching second language students were not known at that time. But even today, teachers have not



found effective ways to teach second language learners. The state of Arizona has dictated that English language learners be taught using Sheltered English methodology. However based on my own experience as a teacher and discussions with other teachers, this methodology is still being developed for today's students. New strategies must be developed that prepare teachers to teach students whose primary language is other than English. Many of the strategies for teaching a second language are designed to teach English in isolation of teaching content material at the same time. The new strategies must incorporate techniques similar to bilingual education that allows children to master academic material while developing proficiency in English simultaneously.

Another type of training that would benefit future teachers is learning more about the total environment of their potential students by making home visits part of the curriculum while at the University. Home visits could be incorporated as part of their block training while they are at a school doing observations and mini-lessons. It is critical that teachers have an understanding and appreciation for the language and culture of the student. In studies by Gordon (2002), featuring home visit by student teachers, the student teachers reported gaining valuable insights to help future students do better in school. From my own teaching experience, I know that home visits help the teacher learn much more of the home life and of the communities of the students than by relying only on classroom experiences. Home visits also help in forming a bond with the extended family of the child that has immeasurable valuable in relating to the student.

### Recommendations for future studies

The history of the Mexican people in the state of Arizona is still not yet fully developed. Sheridan (1986) and Officer (1987) have written extensively about the southern part of the state. Patricia Preciado Martin (2004) has lent her own unique voice to this history. However in the northern part of the state, from Kingman to Holbrook and the intervening cities and towns, there is little written that captures the culture and voice of early Mexican settlers and pioneers. For a variety of reasons, the Mexican people tended to live and work in the same areas. This closeness fostered a distinct new culture to be developed of mixed Mexican and American traditions and customs. Mexican people held on to their old traditions, but also adopted Americans ones or blended the two. David Port (1999) captures of some of vibrancy of this scene when he described life on San Francisco Street in Southside, Flagstaff during the 1940s and 1950s. He wrote about where people lived, the small businesses they owned, the theater where we saw Mexican movies and many other aspects of a lively Southside. These images described by Port must be given life in all aspects of the daily lives of Mexican Americans of those days to preserve an important historical period of Arizona history.

Mexican music was also a large part of the daily lives of the Mexican people in Flagstaff and Williams in the first half of the twentieth century. There were numerous small Mexican bands that traveled to towns such as Williams, Ashfork, Winslow, Holbrook and other places to create an atmosphere that was not completely Mexican, but yet, not American either. My father had such a band and music was very much a part of

my youth. In any account of the lives of the Mexican people in Northern Arizona, the role Mexican music played should not be overlooked.

The important role of the Catholic Church in the daily lives of the Mexican people in the early part of the 1900s needs to be more fully explored. In Flagstaff, in the 1940s, Our Lady of Guadalupe church was the center of all social events for its Mexican congregation. From the *Gran Jamica* or fiesta to the baptism of new Catholics, to church wedding, to renting the church hall for dances, the church was very important. In Flagstaff, Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church sponsored a Boy Scout troop and other youth activities such as basketball teams. The role of the church was important because it served as a refuge and source of strength for Mexican people in time of considerable racial discrimination.

Finally, the history of Mexican people, Native Americans, and African Americans in Arizona should be written as a single story. All three groups suffered similar examples of Anglo racial discrimination in the same areas; employment, schools, housing, and public accommodations. All three groups were considered inferior by Anglos and were educated for several years in segregated schools. The consequences of such treatment have not yet been fully realized.

#### Concluding Statement

I trust that my study adds to the works of Gilbert González, Rubén Donato, and Guadalupe San Miguel in the areas of Americanization and public school segregation of Mexican children. My main purpose was to provide an in-depth look at two schools in Northern Arizona in an effort to document how school segregation was established in

specific settings. I also wanted to give voice to the former students of these schools and to honor their struggles during an era of racial discrimination when Mexican children were told that their language and culture had no value. In my travels around Arizona, I have listened to and shared similar stories of other places. There is much yet to be done to capture the full story of public school segregation in Arizona. I hope to add to that story in the future.

## Epilogue

I have often thought about my early school days and I have always wanted to write about those days. I was curious whether those events I had relived in my mind over and over again had actually happened. I found in my research that things had been pretty much as I remembered them, with few exceptions. I was born in 1934 in Williams, Arizona, which is close to the Grand Canyon and lived there until I was nine years old. My family roots, both on my mother and father's side are from New Mexico. Like most Chicanos from New Mexico, we have many bloods running through our veins, Mexican, Spanish, and Native American. I have traced my heritage on my father's side back five generations to New Mexico.

My ancestors had been born in New Mexico when it was still part of Spain and later Mexico. I was the second oldest of a twelve children family, but I was the oldest son which is very important in the Mexican tradition. When I was six years old my parents, brothers and sisters moved to Flagstaff when the lumber mill closed down in 1942. I stayed in Williams with my grandfather. My grandmother had died that same year so it was just my grandfather and me. He was a ranch hand and a sheepherder and he took me all over the mountains around Williams. I remember being in the forests and camping out with my grandfather while we tended sheep. He was a big influence in my life and taught me many things I still remember today.

My first language was Spanish but I don't remember how I learned to read or write in English. I do remember having religious education classes when I was about 6 years old and they must have been in English because I didn't learn my prayers in

Spanish until much later in my life. I can only assume that we spoke English to the Catholic sisters. I also remember that my grandfather use to buy me small hardback books about the U. S. Presidents in English and I use to read those books. I don't know how old I was, but it had to be before I was 9 years old.

When I first went to school in 1940, Williams was a mixture of Anglo settlers, railroad workers from Mexico, shepherders from Basque, Spain, and Mexican people from New Mexico like my family. In Williams, there were no segregated schools. It was much worse in my opinion. We were put into segregated classrooms in the same school as Anglo children. We were always being punished for speaking Spanish. I have talked to numerous Mexican people in Williams who went to school there in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s and their experiences are very much the same of humiliation and racial discrimination for speaking Spanish. Even the cemetery was segregated in those days. There was a Mexican section and a section for Anglos.

In Flagstaff I went to a segregated elementary school for Mexican children. The Blacks and Anglos also went to their own separate schools. We would be punished for speaking Spanish in school and then your friends would beat you up outside of school for being too *agringado* (too white) if you spoke too much English. You couldn't win either way. The teachers in school made me feel as if our language and culture had no value. I learned English and I learned it well, but I still harbor bitter memories from those years.

Flagstaff was very much racially segregated in the 1940s and 1950s and there was considerable racial discrimination. The housing patterns in the central part of the Flagstaff are still pretty much the same today; Anglos north of the railroad tracks and all

others south of the tracks. Of course now there are suburbs that are pretty integrated more by socioeconomic status than along racial lines. We didn't mix with Anglos outside of school so we spoke only Spanish amongst ourselves. There weren't too many times we spoke English outside of school.

In my neighborhood, *La Plaza Vieja*, everyone spoke Spanish. We had no television or telephone so we spent a lot of time visiting with each other. In the 1940s and 1950s, on South San Francisco Street in Flagstaff, there were many Mexican-owned businesses including a small movie theater. We went there to see Mexican movies and to see live performances of Mexican artists. Of course there was a pool hall where our oral literacy continued to develop, particularly the learning of pachuco slang (*calo*). There were also several bars along this street where you could listen to Mexican music and learn the lyrics.

My dad was a musician so there were always different groups practicing at my house. There were also many opportunities to listen to and dance to Mexican music in the public dance halls. I remember going to Nogales, Sonora, with my dad looking for those prized *cancioneros*-little books of Mexican music and guitar chords to some of the songs. There were no Spanish language radio stations in Northern Arizona at that time and there still aren't. Once a week we would listen to Mexican music and other news in Spanish on a local radio station for an hour or so. Those hours were very much cherished and the local radio announcer was a celebrity amongst the Mexican people. But my favorite thing was listening to the radio late at night because we could pick up stations from far away

that broadcasted in Spanish such as the 50,000-watt stations from Del Rio and El Paso, Texas. My favorite music was and still is *boleros* (Mexican love ballads).

In my Junior High years in school I did very well academically and I even received certificates for perfect attendance for two years. In Junior High, the schools were racially integrated and for many of it was our first real experience in mixing with Anglo students. We had lived side-by-side with African Americans, so we were comfortable with each other. Getting along with Anglo students was a different story. We had many fights with Anglo kids, particularly those that had come from Oklahoma during the years of the dust bowl. Of course we had many fight amongst ourselves. It was almost like an expected thing.

I was an avid reader in English during my Junior High and high school years and I spent many hours at the local library. My favorite books were biographies and autobiographies. I read about many famous people but not one Hispanic. There were no books about Hispanics in the library. There was some historical information in the library such as books on explorers and exploration of the Southwest. The textbooks in school, however, gave only passing notice to the exploration of the Southwest and Mexico.

It was in my freshman year in high school that I started to think about what we were learning in school. There was little in the textbooks that I could identify with. I still did well academically but my attitude about school was changing quickly. Of course we had taken the token Spanish class taught by the only Mexican American teacher in the school and I took that for two years. In the tenth grade I really started to evaluate what I was learning. I had no interest in the landing of the Pilgrims on Plymouth Rock in 1620. I



wanted to learn about the history of my people. In school, I learned nothing about the Spanish exploration of the Southwest and subsequent Mexican settlements. I was still making the honor roll but I was rapidly becoming disillusioned about school because it had no relevance for me.

I completed the tenth grade, but I didn't go back for the eleventh grade. Not a single person from school ever inquired why I didn't return although I would see some of my former teachers, coaches, and the principal in town now and then. My parents didn't encourage me to return to school. I think that they were probably glad I went to work so that I could contribute to the family income.

When I was fifteen years old I lied about my age and joined the Arizona National Guard and trained with the older men in Flagstaff for two summers in Fort Huachuca. I learned to fire the M1 rifle and the Browning automatic rifle. Again I lied about my age when I was sixteen and went to work at the Navajo Ordnance Depot outside of Flagstaff loading bombs and ammunition. It was an Army depot and you had to be eighteen years old to work there. This was at the time of the Korean War and the depot was a very busy place. After a year, several of my friends and I joined the service. None of us had graduated from high school. That was January of 1952. I was seventeen years old.

During my first year in the Air Force, I received my high school G.E.D. In different periods of my Air Force career I took various college courses here and there. My first college classes were at the University of Hawaii in the early 1960s. I started taking classes because I wanted to be an Air Force officer and you needed to be a college graduate to qualify. But in 1963, I got an opportunity to go Southeast Asia to set up

inventory accounting systems at various locations in South Vietnam and Thailand, so I went. From there I started a career in the computer field that took me all over the world in later years. I had an opportunity to experience many cultures and languages during my travels. I went back to South Vietnam in 1970 during the Vietnam War and spent a year working as a computer analyst. I spent 22 years in the Air Force. It took the first few years in the Air Force for me to realize that most people were the same regardless of skin color-some good and some bad.

After I retired from the Air Force, I worked for several years for the federal government, primarily in the computer field and in management positions. I also obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from the University of Arizona in 1980, with a major in management information systems. It had taken me a long time to graduate from college, but I finally had done it. In the early 1990s, I became dissatisfied with my job and wanted to pursue something different. In 1991, I got a job with Carrillo Elementary School as a computer lab technician. After a few months at Carrillo, I knew that I had found my next career. I wanted to become a teacher. I enjoyed working with children and it brought back memories of my early schooling. I wanted to make things different for school children, especially Mexican kids. So I went back to school to get my teacher certification and started teaching in 1994. I returned to school and received a master degree in Special Education in 1998 and an Educational Specialist degree in 2001 from the University of Arizona.

On July 10, 2001, my mother was in intensive care in the Flagstaff Medical Center. Much of the extended family was there and all of my brothers and sisters. My

mother had been in intensive care for a few days already and my brothers and sisters and I had many opportunities to talk and reminisce about growing up in Flagstaff. We talked a lot of our school days and about our parents and how much they had sacrificed for us. My father always had two jobs and my mother did also. When we were children, she had worked in different places such as being a dishwasher in restaurants and cleaning rooms in motels. Our father had passed away twenty-seven years earlier and she was the one who always made sure we kept in touch with each other. She drew us together for special occasions and always reminded us that the family is very important.

I had taken the book, *Con Respeto* by Guadalupe Valdés to read while my mother was in the hospital. I read it as I sat in the ICU waiting room late at night. The book was about ten Mexican families and how they had coped with life and about the aspirations that the parents had for their children. The story brought tears to my eyes as I read it. It made me think about the days when we were young and what our parents had wanted for us. It was never to be rich and famous, but to grow up to be hard working, educated, and respectful, and respected individuals. They wanted us to be *bien educados* in the Mexican sense of the word. My mother died two days later as we gathered around her bedside. I know she was proud of how we had turned out.

There are no significant risks, however, the interview may bring back unhappy memories from my childhood.

### **BENEFITS**

No direct benefit can be guaranteed. However, I will be provided with a summary of the study results, which will provide me with information of past school segregation in Arizona and academic achievement of Mexican American children. This information may facilitate my participation in the discussion of the current education of Mexican American children.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All information I provide for this study will be kept anonymous and treated with the highest degree of confidentiality. Only the following people will have access to the information I provide: Audiotapes will be made available only to the researcher, Herman R. Lucero, Ph.D. Candidate. Information on all transcripts and field notes will be identified only by an initial pseudonym of my choosing. Full transcripts of interviews will be made available only to the researcher, Herman R. Lucero and to me, the research participant. The final product of this study will be a scholarly paper written in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. In the event that transcript excerpts are used in the final report, my name will not be used, and additional information such as a demographic data will also be disguised to further conceal my identity.

### **PARTICIPATION COSTS AND SUBJECT COMPENSATION**

There are no monetary costs to me to participate in this study. The only costs to me are my time. It is anticipated that the interviews will range from 60-90 minutes each, and that I will be asked to participate in 3 to 4 interviews, for a total of 3-6 hours. I will not be compensated for my participation in this project.

### **CONTACTS**

I can obtain further information from the principal investigator **Herman R. Lucero, Ph.D. Candidate**, at (520) 748-2271. If I have questions concerning my rights as a research subject, I may call the University of Arizona Human Subjects Committee office at (520) 626-6721.

### **AUTHORIZATION**

BEFORE GIVING MY CONSENT BY SIGNING THIS FORM, THE METHODS, INCONVENIENCES, RISKS, AND BENEFITS HAVE BEEN EXPLAINED TO ME AND MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. I MAY ASK QUESTIONS AT ANY TIME AND I AM FREE TO WITHDRAW FROM THE PROJECT AT ANY TIME WITHOUT CAUSING BAD FEELINGS. MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS PROJECT MAY BE ENDED BY THE INVESTIGATOR FOR REASONS THAT WOULD BE EXPLAINED. NEW INFORMATION DEVELOPED DURING THE COURSE OF THIS STUDY, WHICH MAY AFFECT MY WILLINGNESS TO CONTINUE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT, WILL BE GIVEN TO ME AS IT

BECOMES AVAILABLE. THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE FILED IN AN AREA DESIGNATED BY THE HUMAN SUBJECT COMMITTEE WITH ACCESS RESTRICTED TO THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR, **HERMAN R. LUCERO**. I DO NOT GIVE UP ANY OF MY LEGAL RIGHTS BY SIGNING THIS FORM. A COPY OF THIS SIGNED CONSENT FORM WILL BE GIVEN TO ME.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**INVESTIGATOR'S AFFIDAVIT**

I have carefully explained to the subject the nature of the above project. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the person who is signing this consent form understands clearly the nature, demands, benefits, and risks involved in his/her participation and his/her signature is legally valid. A medical problem or language or educational barrier has not precluded this understanding.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

BECOMES AVAILABLE. THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE FILED IN AN AREA DESIGNATED BY THE HUMAN SUBJECT COMMITTEE WITH ACCESS RESTRICTED TO THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR, **HERMAN R. LUCERO**. I DO NOT GIVE UP ANY OF MY LEGAL RIGHTS BY SIGNING THIS FORM. A COPY OF THIS SIGNED CONSENT FORM WILL BE GIVEN TO ME.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**INVESTIGATOR'S AFFIDAVIT**

I have carefully explained to the subject the nature of the above project. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the person who is signing this consent form understands clearly the nature, demands, benefits, and risks involved in his/her participation and his/her signature is legally valid. A medical problem or language or educational barrier has not precluded this understanding.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **SUBJECT=S DISCLAIMER FORM**

**Title of Project: Segregation of Mexican American Children in Arizona Public Schools 1900-1950**

You are being invited to voluntarily participate in the above-titled research study. The purpose of the study is to document the past segregation of Mexican American children in Arizona public schools. The project will also provide a record of the feeling, perceptions, and thoughts of Mexican Americans who attended segregated classes. This study will also provide a historical record of segregated schools in Arizona.

You are eligible to participate because you attended a segregated schooling or have knowledge of segregated schooling for Mexican American children in Arizona in the years 1930-1950.

If you agree to participate, your participation will involve interviews about your experiences in a segregated school. The interview will take place in a location convenient for you and will last approximately 5-10 minutes. You may choose not to answer some or all of the questions. During the interview, written notes will be made in order to help the investigator review what is said. Your name will not appear on these notes.

Any questions you have will be answered and you may withdraw from the study at any time. There are no known risks from your participation and no direct benefit from your participation is expected. There is no cost to you except for your time and you will not be compensated for your participation.

Only the principal investigator Herman R. Lucero will have access to your name and the information that you provide. In order to maintain your confidentiality, your name will not be revealed in any reports that result from this project. Interview information will be locked in a cabinet in a secure place.

You can obtain further information from the principal investigator Herman R. Lucero, Ph.D. candidate, Department of Language, Reading, and Culture, College of Education, University of Arizona, at (520) 748-2271. If you have questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may call the University of Arizona Human Subjects Protection Program office at (520) 626-6721.

By participating in the interview, you are giving permission for the investigator to use your information for research purposes.

Thank you.

Herman R. Lucero

Principal Investigator

## APPENDIX B

## INTERVIEWS OF FORMER STUDENTS

**Interview with Maria in her home in Williams, Arizona, September 6, 2004.**

M- He was a football coach, and he was single and taught there in Williams, I don't know for how many years.

M- Do you remember Curtis Whitaker and Kay Whitaker?

M- Do you remember Mr. Theroux? They use to have a photo shop here in Williams and they sold it to Curtis & Kay. So they had the little photo shop there in town. So when people were going through they checked with Curtis because they knew about the students, their whereabouts and everything. And you know it was a good thing that they were there, because somebody like me, I don't even know where half of my classmates are or anything. But they would know because they kept track of all of these people.

M- So he happened to come through one time and he said to Curtis, "So did any of the kids I had ever amounted to anything?" Curtis said, "I can't believe you're asking me that. What kind of a teacher were you? Didn't you teach them anything?" Cause he taught history as well.

And he said, "I just never thought that anyone from here would amount to anything." And Curtis said, "Maria, it was a joy for me to start rattling off, Mexicans, as well as Anglos, how well they were doing, Air Force or whatever. And he was really surprised the kids from Williams made it as well as they did.

H- I read something about Billie Duran and her family that she had 10 children and they all went to college. Have you heard that?

M- Billie and Panfilo? Oh, yeah I heard that. He is a graduate of Arizona. He was an engineer. He went to California. That's where he raised his kids. That's what I understood that they were all college graduates. Same thing with Lauro's kids.

H- He was a teacher, tambien, Lauro? Was he older than you?

M- He was older

M- You know I never felt that I was deprived of anything. Just like my friend Joanne. She said, "Mary we never knew we were poor." Everybody was poor. We didn't know we didn't have those things.

H- I felt it in my teenage years.

M- I have another friend and she said, "You know Maria, the only difference between you and me was that you probably had beans and tortillas and I had beans and cornbread."

M- Well that's a good way of looking at it.



H- Well that's a good diet, beans and tortillas.

H- You said you never felt deprived of anything. Tell me about your education. Tell me about your first memories of going to school.

M- Other than first grade?

H- Did they have kindergarten?

M- I don't know if there was a kindergarten or not. Do you?

H- No.

M- All I know is they stuck me in the first grade and there I was with Mary Beltram. Bless her heart. Good God! It was a miserable two years for me because I didn't know how to speak English.

H- So what did she do?

M- Well you know what? After I got slapped so many times...

H- She slapped you?

M- On Yeah.

H- Why?

M- I couldn't talk to her for one thing. But yet in Spanish, I knew my alphabet. I knew my colors, which I thought was such an accomplishment. But it was all in Spanish and you know our parents tried to teach us to be well mannered and not to be disrespectful to our elders. My mom and dad couldn't help me. I didn't know how to write my name or anything. So here I am, cold turkey, in the first grade. I had no clue what I was doing. And the only reason I knew where to go sit after I got out of class was because my mom had told me to sit right there until the bus comes. Well you know what? After I got slapped around, she would slap me (made slapping sounds) or rattle that ruler sometimes like the little *monjitas*. Did you have catechism?

H- Yeah

M- Well, you went that route too.

M- She would slam that thing and she'd scare the wits out of me.

H- I remember her hitting me on my hand.

M- She would just hit really close to my hands and she would scare me to no ends. Well anyway, finally one day, God gave me the wisdom and I was crying of course. And in Spanish I said to her, "I don't know why it is I get slapped everyday. I don't know how to do anything because nobody can help me. I wouldn't slap you if you couldn't speak Spanish and I said and my mom and dad can't help me because they don't know any English." I knew that much-that I had to know English. I told her that all in Spanish. I just went back to my seat. Well, it was then that she started inquiring about me. She just thought I was being stubborn and I didn't want to learn. So she inquired about me and found out that I was telling the truth, that my folks lived out in McClelland, that I rode in the bus.

So here comes the surprise.

I don't know how days it took. I don't recall that part, but she talked to me in Spanish and it just made me so mad. Then I wanted to kick her because I thought this woman knows how to speak Spanish!

H- I was going to ask because I had heard, *que hablaba Espanol*.

M- She spoke to me in Spanish and she said, "From now on when school is out, I don't want you to leave" And I said, oh my God! I 'm going to miss my bus. She said, "I want you to stay right here."

I said, "No, I can't. My mother told me that when school is out I have sit out there and wait for the bus." She said, "No." I think that we were dismissed at 2 at that time, 2 or 2:30 and the bus wouldn't come until 4:00. So for two hours I would sit out there. Can you imagine?

She said, "Between the time the class is out and the time for the bus, I am going to teach you how to speak in English."

And that's when I started learning. But it was after many...

H- The second year you spent with her or the second year?

M- The first year. But it was kind of late in the first year.

M- So then I said, "But what happens if I miss my bus?"

She said, "I will take you home"

Oh, my God! Well then if that wasn't bad enough, my mom and dad gave her permission to take not only me but *las hijas del mayordomo*, they were *Americanas*.

Tony, my brother, always rode to the bus stop with me and my dad and he always held my little lunch pail. He'd give me a hug and I would give him a hug. If I learned anything I would tell my brother. My brother and I were close ever since we were little kids. So one day he forgot, I don't know what happened, he forgot to give me my lunch. It wasn't until I was on the way to school. My lunch! What am I going to do without my lunch? So I got to school and I was crying and she said to me, "What's wrong?"

Can you imagine my mom, that poor lady, when my brother shows up at home with my lunch! My mom cried all day long. She couldn't drive, she couldn't speak English and here we were, 7 miles apart. Oh the agony!

She said “You don’t need to worry about that. I will take you home and give you lunch.”

“Oh no, I can’t go with you. I’m not supposed to leave the school grounds.”

She said, “No. It will be all right.”

She took me home and she lived at the apartments which were that two story building on the road that goes up to the dam. Remember? Right on the corner of what and what, I can’t remember the streets. Well that’s where she lived and she took me there.

I think what she fed me was a little hamburger paddy because it was a little round thing like this. There was lettuce, sliced tomato and a black olive (makes a face) and I don’t like black olives. Oh God! I can’t eat it but if I don’t eat she’ll probably hit me. So I would take little tiny bites. Yep, she fed me. It was nice of her to do that.

But that’s when I started learning English. I learned my alphabet, my numbers, and my colors.

I remember going home one day I was so excited!

I said, “Tony. You aren’t going believe what I learned today. I learned the biggest word there is- ‘something’. Cause it was so long to me.

Tony said, “Something? What does it mean?”

I don’t know. Just “something.”

H- She was nice to you later. Why was she so bad with you in the first place?

M- Because I am assuming she thought I was being stubborn.

H- But it wasn’t just you. She did it to a lot kids.

M- I don’t know about that part. Maybe she took a dislike to me. I don’t know.

H- I can’t imagine slapping a first grader in the face.

M- Then when I did start to learn, there was this stupid story about some darn bird and it built a nest.

I don’t remember the story but the word ‘knot’ was in it, K-n-o-t. I would take my little book home. Why would I take my little book because my parents couldn’t help me, but I would show it to my brother anyway. I didn’t know what the word was and I didn’t know what the word was. I showed it to my dad and he said, “*Ay mija, no se, knút, knút, no se.*”

Well the next day when she called on me. I know that it’s my turn

I put my little book there you know how you used to read. You pointed at every word.

I knew the word was coming. I said, “Knút.” (Mary makes a slapping sound)

H- Why would she do that?

M- I have no idea, but I got slapped for ‘knot’. And I learned the word ‘something’ and I didn’t even know what it meant!

M- Isn't that a nightmare?

H- Tell me about the Mexican classes. Was it just in the first grade where they segregated you?

M- First through fifth.

H- First through fifth? You know. I don't know why but I thought it was just in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade. First through fifth?

M- When we started the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. It had to be, ah school started in September back then, right after Labor Day I guess. So it had to be September of 1944, when I started the 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

Our teacher, Ms. Perkins, we were her first class. She had just gotten out of college and we were her first class. She was so good.

And that's when they...did I tell you they called the names and they took t...did I tell you this story all ready?

H- No.

M- Well I've told this story so many times.

H- Well, can you tell it one more time?

M- We were in class.

H- Fifth grade?

M- Fifth grade and I don't know how far into the school year we were. That part I don't remember but if Mr. Cureton said he did it when he got the principal's job, it had to be pretty early on between September and December. I don't know.

Anyway this particular day she said, "I'm going to read some names and when I read your name, take only what's yours and leave the books and everything else here and line up in the back of the classroom."

I thought, oh my gosh! What's the meaning here!

Well pretty soon they started calling girls that I played with and they were lined up over there and I am still sitting over here. I'm thinking, well I don't know if I should be over there or over here, you know. A lot of emotion going through all of us!

H- You didn't know why you were being called out.

M- They didn't tell us! So now she called what ever she had on her list and she told the rest of us to be quiet because she was going to leave the classroom and she would be

back, for us not to make any noise. So we all sat there like dummies, you know, working on whatever we were working on. She left with my friend and pretty soon she came back. She had all these gringos with her- blonde hair blue eyes. Where did they come from? Well that's when they did it.

Joyce was one of them and Rosemary. I don't know who the others were. But anyway here they came and I thought, gee, this is going to be different. And so we started. I finished the fifth grade with Anglo kids and we were mixed from then on until I finished high school.

H- The one they called out, they mixed them in another room?

M- Well they left part of the Anglos in that room and then they brought in the Mexicans. They probably wondered, what are the Mexicans doing here?

H- So What did you think about being segregated like that for 5 years?

M- I didn't know any better. I didn't know we were being segregated. I didn't know because we played on this side of the school. I didn't know that that there were other kids playing on the other side of the building.

H- You didn't even play on the same side of the school?

M- No! No! And Joan Gossard, my very, very good friend, she is "*Americana*" and she said, "Maria, I am kind of like you are. I never knew there were Mexican kids on the other side."

M- Remember the Catholic Church was right there on the corner and about that's where we would play, up in the in front of the school in back of the Catholic Church.

H- What did you think later on in life about being segregated? You were just as segregated as black kids in segregated schools.

M- I don't know, gee.

M- Well like I said we had Alfred Brinas in our class and he was kind of blondish and we had one black kid.

### **Interview with Jane in her home in Williams, Arizona, June 9, 2004**

H- Would you tell me of some of your memories of your school experiences?

J- Well my first experience, I guess, was with Ms. Beltram. That's the first one I remember.

J- Nowadays in school you are only supposed to have, what, 32 children? At that time the rooms were just packed with kids.

J- Every time we went out to recess she said, "No speaking Spanish and remember no speaking Spanish."

So we all go out and play and of course you're just learning English so you start speaking Spanish and we get back to class and she lined us up all against the wall and she'd start asking each child, "Did you speak Spanish?"

And some girls and boys that could answer very clearly said, "No Mam." And "No Mam."

It was always, "No Mam." And sometimes there was a "Yes Mam."

And she wouldn't punish those "Yes Mams."

She'd punish the ones that lied and I lied.

I told her "No Mam.", but I didn't say "No Mam! I said "No Mam" (softly) and I'd go like that with my face down.

She said, "Oh, I think that you spoke Spanish. Let me see your tongue."

For the life of me, I had no idea what she wanted to see my tongue for, so I'd stick my tongue out.

"Aha, you spoke Spanish," and she'd grab my tongue and with the ruler, the end of the ruler, she'd pow!

She'd hit you on your tongue and believe me you didn't speak Spanish again out in recess. You wouldn't even talk!

So that was my first experience with her and I think when they moved us, they separated us because the class was so large.

My second experience, I remember I was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade with Ms. Mishke. I wasn't very good in spelling and the boys, I remember Candelario and I want to say, Richard Gonzalez and few of the guys, they use to copy.

They use to write the words on the chair.

He told me, he showed me how to do it, write it on a chair.

And he said, "Write them in order", because she is going to give them to you in order."

So I wrote it on a chair like this and I guess she saw me copying and she called me to the front of the class and she went and.. I don't know if she made the cap right then and there or she had it already but She sat me on the stool and she put a big dunce cap on me and she wrote on an extra piece of paper and she put it on my back.

I had my back, my back, to the class so that she could put this note on back of me that said, "Jesusita is a Copy Catter", in big words.

And she said, "Do you know what we are going to do?"

"We are going to open the door so that everybody that goes by there will see that Jesusita is a Copy Catter."

And I tell you that was degrading. You cannot imagine.

H- Yeah.

J- I was too young to really realize how much it was.

J- That was my only experience there and then on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade I stayed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade two years (with Ms. Kirk).

I think that I was traumatized from being spanked **every** day of the week.

I mean **every** day of the week!

We had to be in our seats by the time the second bell rang.

I was never at my seat because the lady that took care of us wouldn't allow us to go to school until the dishes were cleaned and the kitchen was clean.

So by then by the time we'd hear the bell ring we'd tell her, "We got to go! We got to go! And then we'd run down. I was late! I was late!

And she would just get so tired sometimes from spanking me she would call Mr. Armack to come and spank me.

And when she spanked me, she bent me over the chair, my back facing the students.

And she'd whip me with a paddle and the paddle would get stuck to the dress.

And every time she spanked me and panties would show-not my panties- my bloomers.

The lady that use to take care of us to make us these bloomers that we would have down to our knees to cover our stockings, from flour sacks.

What was it, The Star?

You washed the gunnysacks or those flour sacks anyway, but you could never be able to get the star out of there.

It was very embarrassing for me to say the least that the kids were laughing at me and I think that hurt more than anything else.

And some times when she didn't want to spank me anymore; she'd put me in the locker. They called it the cloakroom.

H- The closet?

J- Where we hung up our coats.

Sometimes when I'd go in there, Henry was there for some reason or other and He was always hiding behind the coats. He would get underneath the coats and he would come at me like that.

I was scared to death

H- How long did she use to keep this Henry in there?

J- I have no idea.

I don't remember how long she kept me in there

But she used to take us to her house to teach us the timetables.

I couldn't learn the timetables.

There is just no way I could learn the timetables.  
 And I feel I was traumatized from all those spankings she gave me.  
 And then she told me, "You're going to learn the timetables if I have to keep you in another year!"  
 Well she kept me another year and ah what was another incident with her?  
 Oh. We were having spelling. We had spelling every day. I think it was every other day.  
 So the one word she gave us was "enough"  
 She gave us "enough" for the **whole** week and we had to write "enough  
 And I... She gave us the paper back and I missed it all the time.  
 Why? I am spelling it right? "Enough, E-n-o-f"  
 The next day I spelled "enuf".  
 Maybe I am not using a capital letter? So I put capital Enuf or capital Enof.  
 I spelled it everyway but "e-n-o-u-g-h."  
 So she got tired at the end of the day, at the end of the week.  
 She said, "You're going to stay after school and write "enough" 500 times until you learn it!  
 Well I was kept after school and she got the dictionary and she went and threw it on my desk!  
 She just slammed it on my desk! "Now look it up until you learn how to spell it!  
 How could I find it, if I didn't know how to spell it, you know?  
 My eyes were jus full of tears that I couldn't see.  
 So she grabbed the book from me and she went and she wrote the word "enough" in **big** letters across the board over there.  
 "Get up there and write it 500 times!"  
 I didn't know how late it was when my dad came after me.  
 I didn't know how late it was.  
 But I...my hand, I was holding it up because I couldn't write anymore.  
 Writing "e-n-o-u-g-h" I don't know how many times I wrote "enough"  
 My dad came in and I wanted to run.  
 I was crying when I saw him coming.  
 I was just crying and I wanted to run to him but I didn't dare because I knew that maybe she would spank me and I never told my dad she was spanking me.  
 I **never** told him and I think when we were kids this lady that took care of us use to spank us all of the time and would say go tell your dad, "*Andale. Vaya y digale a su papa. Vaya,. Digale. Andale! Andale!*"  
 And so that was threatening to us and when she (Ms. Kirk) spanked me I just felt threatened too.  
 So this is why I never told my dad,  
 So those experiences when I was up to the third grade.  
 After that all I remember is that if we found ourselves playing on the north side of the school we were sent to the south side.  
  
 H- So in school the Mexican kids played on one side of the school and the gringos played on the other side?



J- The gringos played on the northside and we played on the southside.

H- Did you mix like in the cafeteria?

H- Did you have a cafeteria?

J- Yes there was a cafeteria but I never went to the cafeteria.

J- I really don't know who ate in the cafeteria or who didn't. But I remember I use to go down to the bathroom or something and I would see the plates all set up and wonder how come I don't get to eat over there?

H -You never ate in the cafeteria?

J- No I never did.

(Jane returns to talk again about her spankings from Ms. Kirk)

J- A lot of the times when she started to spank me, Richard Gonzalez would always say, "Why do you have to spank her every day?"

And then, she'd say, "You're next.

Many times Richard would have her going around the class running after him.

In the wintertime he would dive right out the window into the snow.

We were up high in the third grade. Up you know in the higher level, second or third floor what ever it was. I think there were three floors. *Que no?*

H- I don't remember.

J- And he would dive right out into the snow.

Of course he didn't show up for school for two or three days and by that time she'd forgotten.

H- Laughs.

J- You're so young, you get traumatized.

And so I think that's what kept me from learning the timetables and my spelling.

H- How did you'd then? Say later in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and 7<sup>th</sup> grade?

J- I was always a good speller. A very good speller and I knew my timetables left to right

H- Laughs.

J- And I feel that like, with all those bad experiences I had in life, in my life, I am afraid of being threatened.

In my life I was threatened one time...in the ... (inaudible)

H- That's ok.

J- *Pero*, I ended up all right.

Stories, stories, things that happen in your life, you put them back on the back burner. That's the past. Forget it! Move on!

H- Right.

J- That's what I did. I moved on.

H- Did you consider yourself an American when you went to school?

J- Oh I never thought about it.

H- You never thought about it.

J- I never thought about it.

H- Did anyone ever tell you that you were not an American, that you were Mexican?

J- No you know at the time they were calling us dirty greasers. *Verdad?* When we were growing up.

H- Humm.

J- Ah, I want to say that I did share that at one point. *Pero*, you don't know what it means. I had no idea.

There was a little girl that use to tease me every time I'd go by her house, about my clothes that I was wearing

H-Anglo girl?

J- Yes.

J- He lived across the street and she'd climb the fence and she'd yell at me.

Finally my dad said, "*Mi 'jita*, why don't you go, just walk across over to 2<sup>nd</sup> street, one more block on 2<sup>nd</sup> street and then you won't have her yelling and calling you names" and stuff like that.

So I did and it wasn't bad. It's just over there.

My dad never, never told us about segregation or not wanting this person or that person, so I never heard it at home.

H- The feeling that I grew up with and a lot of people that went to school with me was that the school made you feel like you were inferior and that your language or culture had no value. Did you ever feel that in school? Even in high school?

J- I never thought about it.

H- You never thought about it?

J- I never thought about it.

*Como te digo.* I think that I was very naïve when I was a girl, very shy, very naïve because of what I had experienced I just was leery about the teachers you know.

Mr. King, you know in high school, he was very strong with you if you didn't get a right answer or something he would say, "Didn't you study last night?"

And da, da, da, and he would just yell at you.

So consequently you kind of hold back.

I think that I must have held back a lot.

H- What about in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade with Hayden? Do you remember him?

J- Mr. Hayden? Yes. He was kind of very strong willed.

And I remember him yelling a lot at Candelario.

He always sat in the back of the classroom with me.

So he was always saying something to him.

He could care less. He'd laugh. He didn't know what the guy was telling him, what the teacher was saying.

Of all the teachers I think I felt that he was the most prejudiced.

Sometimes I felt like he hated to have to teach in the 7<sup>th</sup> Mexican grade.

H- What made you feel that way?

J- I don't know. Just his attitude I guess.

And yet, *como te digo.* I wasn't conscious of why the gringos were over there and we are in another room. It never entered my mind.

Maybe they were separated because they were brighter than we were.

H- You never wondered why you were separated. I mean you wondered, but you didn't question it?

J- No I never did. We never questioned it. No. No.

At one point maybe I would think maybe because they're smarter.

I had no idea because we had some very bright kids in our class

H- Yes.

J- They were very bright kids you know. Yet we were segregated.  
*Pero, como te digo*, I had never heard the word segregation and racism and all of that  
 It wasn't in my vocabulary. It just wasn't in my vocabulary.  
 And even in high school when I realized here we were all in one class.  
*Y luego*, the *gringos* maybe one or two were the only ones that answered Mrs Klass'  
 questions.  
 I hated...English. I hated the stories.  
 And she was always asking the questions.  
 But she never looked at you and asked you.  
 She asked and Carolyn was the only one that answered her questions.

H- The *Mejicanos* didn't answer?

J- No. I don't think so. I don't remember. Because all I remember that Carolyn was the  
 only one that answered.

H- So when your first went to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade you had been separated from the *gringos* all  
 of this time and now in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade you're together, so what did you think about that?

J- Well I was wondering ah, I guess I probably wondered what it was going to be like.  
 Were they going to be smarter than I am or was I going be able to raise my hand and ask  
 questions.  
 But I never did. (softly)

H- You never did?

H- Did you ever have Anglo friends, close friends?

J- During high school?

H-yes

J- No. No way. They didn't talk to us.  
 They wouldn't talk to me. I don't know about the rest of them.

H- Did you socialize?

J- No. No. No. I was in the drum & bugle corps, *pero*, there were other Mexicans in the  
 drum and bugle corps.

H- Humm

J- *Pero que nos pusieron* in a little group and talk.

J- I want to go back a little bit.

H- Go ahead.

J- In grade school, at the end of the year there was always a picnic and they took us up into the woods, you know, with a lunch.

H- Yeah.

J- The *Mejicanos*-most of us had burritos. We would eat burritos.

H- Humm

J- The *gringos* had their baloney sandwiches and they were always looking over to see what we were eating.

“What are you eating” You know, stuff like that.

The only one they talked to, really, actually, was Dick Gonzalez.

H- Why him?

J- Well he was very outspoken and they had a dairy.

H- He had money?

J- He had money, yes.

J- That’s what I remember at the picnic.

They had their little bunch and the Mexicans had their little bunch.

And we were all *comiendo los burritos que no nos vieran*.

And they were eating their sandwiches.

H- Did you eat in the cafeteria in high school?

J- We didn’t have a cafeteria.

H- You didn’t have a cafeteria? So where did you eat lunch?

J- From the grade school we lived a block up the hill, so we’d run home.

My brother started being excused from school at 11:00 A.M. to go home and fix lunch for me and our sister. Then he returned to school in the afternoon. He did this for two years.

Then when he entered high school, my sister Helen did the same thing, but she never returned to school in the afternoon.

So, we had more than beans and coffee.

H- Did your sister graduate from high school?

J- No. No.

H- And your brother, did he graduate?

J- Yes. He started engineering school with Florencio and John, but he had his career. He was very young, when he was 8 years old that my mother died, he use to go help my dad when my dad was working with the lumber.

My dad, *le enseñó* all about lumber.

So he became a lumber inspector and there were only two lumber inspectors in all of Arizona, northern Arizona and he was one of them and the other guy was from Flagstaff. And that's what he retired from- as a lumber inspector.

H- I'll be darn!

J- So like I said. In high school we didn't speak to the *gringos*.

They never did say hi or good morning to you, or nothing. They never talked to you. So I would go to school walking and you would meet them and nothing was said.

H- Like you weren't there.

J- Yes.

H- Did you teach your children to speak Spanish?

J- Well, that's another story.

When I got married I married John and he doesn't speak Spanish, so I started teaching my kids Spanish and he didn't want me to.

"You're going to get them all confused."

"**Don't** speak to them in Spanish!"

"You're going to get them all confused."

J- I wanted them to learn Spanish.

So when he wasn't around, I'd sing to them "*Alla en el Rancho Grande*". That's all I knew.

H- Laughs.

J- So even when we went to Hawaii, I would sing those songs to them. They could sing the songs even to you now. But no...

H- But they don't speak Spanish?

J- No. A word *aqui*. *Otra* word *alla*.

I wished I had spoken Spanish to them more often.

Later I met families that, *que venian de Mejico*

The kids were not allowed to speak English at home-only Spanish because the parents didn't know how to speak English so they spoke Spanish at home and in school English and so they speak Spanish perfectly.

H- Do you know anything how the schools are right now for *Mejicanos* in Williams? Do you have an idea whether they are good or bad?

J- I have no idea but you see in the paper and the games and what ever there are, maybe there is a Mexican name here and a Mexican name there.

Jane added the following when I visited her to review the transcript:

When I was 4 years old my mother died, and left 4 of us children the oldest being 8. My dad raised us. I graduated in 1945 I went to work for an oral surgeon in San Jose. I did so for 5 years. We moved further close to the beach and I started working at a drug store where many doctors and businessmen heard me speaking Spanish. They approached me and asked for Spanish lessons. So I worked at the drug store during the day and in the evenings I taught Spanish to several doctors. I had never used medical terms in Spanish, but they were happy to learn with me. I son had a couple of students that I tutored and some restaurants owners and the President of the water works and his wife. We moved to Hawaii where my husband was teaching and I was asked to substitute for a teacher who was on sabbatical. That went on for a year. We returned to the mainland where I registered at several schools, but the wait was too long. I started working for an engineering firm. While at this job I started teaching English at the local Catholic Church and along came the Amnesty Program, sponsored by Loyola Marymount and grants to Marymount which in turn passed them on to catholic charities, and I got in at the beginning of the Amnesty Program being that I had being teaching at St Margaret's Church. I retired from Catholic Charities at the same time I retired from my engineering job. I also sold burritos for 23 years while I was at the engineering firm, which monies I saved and was able to rebuild my 1902 home my dad left us. I am now back home, retired and enjoying it tremendously.

Interview with Lucio on 9/22/04 at his home

H- Where you born?

L- Flagstaff, Arizona

H- Where were your parents born?

L- Guadalajara and Zacatecas, Mexico

H- Did they ever become citizens?

L- Years ago they didn't need to be. They had to have been because they were both collecting social security.

H- What did your father do for a living?

L- He was a carpenter. He worked at the sawmill and the dairy. He had two jobs. He did carpentry on the weekends.

H- Did your mother work?

L- No she was a housewife-not with 10 kids.

H- Did you graduate from high school?

L- I went to the 11<sup>th</sup> grade.

H- Why did you drop out?

L- I got married.

H- You said there were 10 brothers and sisters. How many of them graduated?

L- My two older brothers and my two younger sisters.

H- So 4 out 6 graduated. Why didn't the other 6 graduate?

L- The women once they got to the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade they were supposed to stay at home and help with the housework.

H- Did your parent think of themselves as Americans or Mejicanos?



L- They probably felt more like Mexicans than Americans. They weren't treated as Americans.

H- What do you mean they weren't treated as Americans?

L- They didn't get the same opportunities as Americans who were white. When they went to get jobs, they got the menial jobs-the sawmills and all that.

H- Do you recall your days at South Beaver School?

J- Oh yeah.

H- What do you remember about those days?

J- You never really paid attention. We were segregated but we didn't really know much difference. The first thing you noticed was that there were no other kids-black or white in our school. We were all Mexicans.

H- What are some of your memories of your classes?

L- I don't think we had the best teachers. We really didn't. Of the 6 years I went there, I had only two good teachers.

H- Who were they?

L- In the fourth grade, Ms. Evans. She was strict, but she tried to teach you. The other ones didn't care if you studied.

H- Who was the other teacher?

L- Mr. Womack. He was my fifth grade teacher. He cared about you. I remember this kid had long hair and needed a haircut and he didn't have the money to get one. Mr. Womack paid for the haircut.

H- Did you ever get paddled for speaking Spanish in school?

L- Oh yeah, they use to paddle you all of the time. They grabbed you by your ears. They hit you with a paddle on your hands.

H- For speaking Spanish in the classroom or outside?

L- Even outside during recess. You couldn't even speak Spanish there. In the classroom-no way!

H- Did they ever tell you why they were doing this?

L- You had to speak English. "You're an American." We never could figure if we were Americans. We were all Mexicans there.

H- How did that make you feel?

L- I couldn't figure it out. Everybody was Mexican, everybody was speaking Spanish. I couldn't figure that out why we couldn't speak Spanish and we were all Mexicans.

H- When you started school, did you speak English?

L- Yes because of my older brothers. I didn't speak it very well. I spoke it with an accent.

H- The fact that you were punished for speaking Spanish in school, how did that make you feel? I mean later in years when you thought about it?

L- Degraded.

H- What was it like when you went to Jr. High school? How did the teachers treat you?

L- They put all of the Mexican kids in one room for special English. They gave me a book that I read in 4<sup>th</sup> grade- 4<sup>th</sup> grade English.

I told the teacher, "Hey I read this in 4<sup>th</sup> grade."

The teacher said, "I didn't want to put you in with the others because you might fall behind."

So we complained to the principal, me and other guys. The rest of them didn't care. The rest could care less.

H- They put all of the Mexicans in one room.

L- Yeah in one room. I still remember the teacher, Mrs. Walkup. So we went to complain to the principal, me and these 4 other guys They gave us a chance. We got in the other class. We were the only 4 Mexicans with the other group. The others guys didn't pass the test they gave us.

H- How did you do?

L- I passed it. I use to read a lot when I was a kid.

H- They gave you a reading test?

L- Yeah, a readings test.

H- The other kids, they were in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade and they couldn't read?

L- Some of the guys couldn't read. They just wanted to get to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

H- Why?

L- They didn't think they were going to do anything, anyway.

L- That's the first time you ever mixed with other races. I still remember when I first went to Jr. Hi, there use to be fights all of the time. The Mexicans couldn't get along with the whites or the blacks couldn't get along with the whites. The blacks and the whites, they were always fighting.

H- Why?

L- The whites though they were superior. They would kick out the Mexicans for fighting in school, but they never kicked out the white guys.

H- What about sports.

L- Oh, that's another one. I remember me and this guy went to try-out at football practice. The coach said, "What are you doing here?"  
We said, "We came for the tryouts."  
He said, "You're too small and too short. Get out of here!"

L- They didn't give us a chance. You know, que no tenian Mejicanos.

H- What about basketball?

L- There was only one Mexican that was a basketball player. His father had a store. He was one of the big shots.

H- So you think that because they had a little money he got to play?

L- Yeah. They wouldn't give you tryouts.

H- What about baseball?

L- Same thing.

L- We didn't even have a little league field. They built little league fields on the eastside and the northside. None of the Mexican kids played there. The first year they built a little league field near our house, they won the state championship, all Mexicans. It was around 1958.

H- Did you think of yourself as an American or a Mexican when you were in school? Or did you think about that at all?

J- Like a Mexican.

H- Why?

L- That's all we were. You don't know any different. They wouldn't let you go any other place. They discriminated against Mexicans, even in the stores.

H- What do you mean you couldn't go to different places?

L- Some of the restaurants wouldn't let you in.

H- They wouldn't let you in porque eras Mejjicano?

L- They wouldn't even let you use the bathroom. I still remember trying to use the bathroom on the way to school. That guy hated Mexicans.

H- What was the name of the place?

L- It was a Shell station near highway 66. He used to yell, "You dirty Mexicans." I remember one time I wanted to use the bathroom and he chased me out of there.

H- You said that you couldn't go to different places in town. What about the movies?

L- You could go to the movies. We weren't discriminated there.

H- You couldn't go to certain restaurants?

L- Some restaurants, they wouldn't let you in.

H- When you were a teenager in Flagstaff, what kind of job opportunities were there for Mexican kids?

L- Not much, the lowest paying jobs. They wouldn't hire you in some places if you were a Mexican.

H- They wouldn't hire you for office jobs?

L- No way! If you worked, you worked in restaurants. If you wanted to work, you worked in the kitchen. You couldn't even be a bus boy. The bus boys, eran los que hacian mas dinero. We were back there getting \$.75 an hour. That was what I was getting. Eran gabachos todos los bus boys.

H- What about waitresses and waiters?

L- Same way, unless it was a Mexican restaurant. Many of the after- school jobs se las daban a los gabachos, like the department stores, all of them. You couldn't go and apply like at Babitt's and get a job as a salesman. None of them eran Mejicamos- not even the car salesmen.

H- After you got out high school what did you do.

L- Got married, Went to work-menial jobs. What ever I could get. Years ago a high school diploma meant something. Now they don't.

H- Did you ever take a G.E.D. test.?

L- No I never did.

H- What was your life's work? What did you do?

L- Everything construction, dishwasher, restaurant work.

H- What are you doing now?

L- Barbering. I decided to go to Barber School. I've been barbering for 40 years.

H- So that became your life's work.

H- Looking back now 50 years ago, what impressions do you have of the way Mexican kids were treated in school?

L- They just put them back. They didn't encourage them to study or learn anything. They didn't teach them anything. A lot of the guys could have gone to college. I know I could have.

H- Did most of your friends from elementary school grade?

L- Probably about 10 percent. Just the ones that tried to make something of themselves.

H- Some of the people I have talked to feel that because of the way they were treated in school, they were made to feel inferior.

L- Oh yeah. They did. They made you feel like you were second-class citizens.

H- How about now in the present times, do you think there is still a lot of racism in the schools?

L- I still think there is. I don't think that they have the best schools. Look at the schools in the southside compared to the eastside and the northside. Look at the schools. It is the same thing now. I don't think they get the best teachers.

H- What about when you went to Jr. Hi? Did they paddle you for speaking Spanish there?

L- No. I don't think so.

H- Is there anything else you would like to add about your schooling experience?

L- We didn't have a cafeteria, no buses. We had to walk to school.

H- Where did you eat lunch?

L- We had to take our own lunch. Everybody took their own lunch.

H- What about when you went to Jr. Hi.?

L- I never ate in the cafeteria. We walked home to lunch. It was 2 or 3 miles.

H- So South Beaver didn't have a cafeteria?

L- South Beaver didn't have a cafeteria. Neither did Dunbar. Emerson had one.

H- Did you ever think about going to college?

L- Oh yeah. My brother went. I thought about it. They didn't prepare you for college. They discouraged you from taking college prep courses. They discouraged the Mexicans from taking them.

H- Why do you think they did that?

L- They didn't think you were going to pass and you weren't going to college, why waste their time. They probably figured these kids didn't know anything anyway.

H- You said they discourage you from taking college prep classes.

L- Oh yeah. They said why waste your time, why waste our time, you aren't going to college anyway. That was their attitude. I use to read more at home than they taught me in school.

**Interview with Jennie, September 22, 2004 at her house.**

H- Where were you born?

J- In Flagstaff.

H- Where were your parents born?

J- In Ashfork and Flagstaff.

H- Where were your grandparents born.

J- In New Mexico.

H- What did your father do for a living?

J- He worked for the city and the railroad.

H- Did you graduate from high school?

J- No.

H- Why not?

J- Well I had a bad experience in grade school so I figured if I go to high school it didn't really interest me.

H- Did you brothers and sisters graduate?

J- No.

H- How many brother and sisters did you have?

J- Altogether I had three brothers and two sisters.

H- Why didn't any of them graduate from high school?

J- I guess because there weren't interested in graduating.

H- At what grades did they drop out?

J- Mainly at the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

H- Do you remember your days at South Beaver School?

J- Yes.

H- What do you remember about those times?

J- I remember it was a nightmare.

H- Why?

J- I wasn't very happy. We were mistreated, like being slapped around and pulling our hair.

H- Why did they do that?

J- Well, because-ah, for no reason at all some times- but mainly because we weren't speaking English.

H- So they told you not to speak Spanish in school?

J- Yes

H- Then if you spoke Spanish, you got slapped?

J- We got slapped, kicked, had our hair pulled. We had this teacher, Mrs. Evans. She was so mean. She used to force us to get on the swings and she would push us so hard, hard that it was scary. She was a very strong person. She acted more like a man than a woman. She, like, she'd overpowered us. That's how I felt. We were afraid of her.

H- Why do you think she put you on the swings so high?

J- Maybe to scare us. She was never a very nice person.

H- What else do you remember about school?

J- I remember they had a nurse. They called her Mrs. Bones. She would come to up to the classroom and line us up and take us down to the nurse's office. Then she had two sticks similar to toothpicks and she would go through our hair and put this powder stuff on our hair and cover it with some kind of cloth and then sent us back to the room.

H- Why did she do that?

J- Because she said we all had lice and scabies.

H- Did she do that to all the kids?



J- Not everybody, but there a lot of Mexican that went through there.

H- Did anyone ever get their hair cut or their head shaved?

J- No. I never saw that.

H- What else do you remember?

J- I know they kept me back two years. I think it was the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

H- Why?

J- I don't have the slightest idea. We all did the same work and everything and I was kept two years in one grade. Then I remember thee was a teacher there. He use to turn us over on his lap and hit us with a paddle and he would put us in the closet. He would lock us up in the closet. We were hit hard.

H-Why did he hit you?

J- I guess we didn't speak English and we weren't doing our homework.

H-Did you ever tell your parents that you were being paddled in school?

J- Yes.

H- And?

J- Nothing was ever done in those days. I believe that the teachers could get away with what ever they felt like doing to the kids.

H- What did the school make you feel like-you know-after thinking back?

J- Oh. Like I never graduated or anything like that. It made me feel like I didn't accomplish anything in my life from the beginning of my school years up to high school. I wish there would have been another way around. We were all cheated equally.

H- Do you think that the treatment in elementary school made you not want to continue in high school?

J- Yes, I did. Like we felt left out. Like for instance going to the cafeteria at lunch time. They would load us on the bus and take us to a white school cafeteria to eat. You could see the other kids there-non-Mexicans- sitting on a nicer place then we did.

H- What was the name of the school?

J- Emerson.

H- What do you mean they were sitting in a nicer place than you?

J- The use to have better quality things than we did, I remember. It seems like the food also never looked the same as the other people were eating.

H- Did you sit at the same tables?

J- No. There were two tables for South Beaver.

H- So they would bus you down there at lunch time and bring you back.

J- Yes.

H- When you were growing up as a teenager did you ever mix socially with Anglo kids?

J- No.

H- Why? You didn't have any Anglo friends at all?

J- No. Not that I can recall; mostly Mexican American friends and Indians.

H- Because of where you lived?

J- No. It was just that was the way we were brought up in that grade school. That you didn't have nothing to do with the white people. They didn't like us.

H- What made you think they didn't like you?

J- Maybe they thought we were brought up differently. We just thought that was the way life was supposed to be. You stick around with your own nationality.

H- Did you feel there was a lot of discrimination in Flagstaff when you were growing up?

J- Yes, I did.

H- Can you give me some examples?

J- no response

H- Could you go any place you wanted to in Flagstaff? Did you feel comfortable about going any place in Flagstaff?

J- No. You couldn't go and sit anywhere you wanted to. They sat you themselves in different of the business where ever you went.

H- Like in a restaurant?

J- Yes, like in a restaurant.

H- Did you ever see a lot of Mexican people working in professional jobs in Flagstaff?

J- Not in my time, I didn't-mostly dishwashers. A lot of Mexicans worked in the laundry, like me.

H- The girls?

J- Yes.

H- Weren't there any other kinds of jobs available to you?

J- Everybody worked at the laundry.

H- Did you ever try to get jobs someplace else beside the laundry?

J- No. Actually I started working when I was about 15 and a half. I got my first job as a waitress.

H- Did the school experience make you feel like you were inferior?

J- Yes, it did.

H- Why?

J- I feel like they didn't really want to teach us Mexican people the way like other races would have been taught.

H- What made you feel that way? What makes you feel that way now?

J- Looking back it's like I never accomplished anything with my life until years later-after being married, going to beauty school and getting my G.E.D. I said to myself things can happen if you didn't get taught when you were young later on in life it's harder. It's very hard to get a G.E.D. and be whatever you want to be.

H- Did your parents refer to themselves as Americans?

J- No.

H- They didn't refer to themselves as Mejicanos. Do you remember?

J- I remember thinking of ourselves as Mexicans.

H- Do you speak Spanish now?

J- laughs- yes.

H- Did you teach your children to speak Spanish?

J- Actually my mother-in-law did when they were small and we lived in Flagstaff.

H- But you didn't teach them. The reason I ask you is because people have told me they didn't teach their children to speak Spanish because they were punished themselves for speaking Spanish and they didn't want their kids to have the same problems in school.

J- Well, that why we speak mostly English now. It's like we were brain-washed. And my kids since they were small I spoke to them in English-mostly in English. And I think that stayed in my mind. Your being brought up like that. "Speak English! Speak English! Speak English! My son didn't learn to speak Spanish until he was 37 years old. He had to learn it for his business.

H- Did you ever wonder why you were in a separate school from black and Anglos?

J- I never wondered because I thought that that was the way it should have been. I didn't know any better.

H- Did you think that your education, the way you were taught-that it made you feel inferior?

J- Yes. I do.

H- Do you think about that now?

J- Yes. I talk about it every once in awhile to other people because it's something that you will never forget.

H- Do you remember some other incident of racism that you recall?

J- There is one instance that I remember. We had gone to Emerson School for lunch and coming back we were all running to play in the gym and I was pushed from behind and I hit my head on some wrought iron. I got a big gash on my head. I don't then I was just bleeding and they took me to the doctor. The doctor he just put these clamps on my head with no pain reliever, no nothing and they sent me back to school and said it was all right. I still remember the blood coming down on my head.

H- Was it an Anglo doctor?

J- Yes.

H- Do you think that he treated that way because you were Mexican?

J- Yes. I do.

H- Do you recall anything else like that?

J- It reminded me of when my own brother went to a dentist for a toothache. I remember my brother screaming! He was having his tooth pulled out. It was an Anglo dentist that did it. My brother was screaming in crying in pain! Then the dentist asked him, "Does that hurt?" My brother said, "Yes." The dentist said. "Too bad." My brother still remembers up to this day and every once in awhile he reminds me of the pain he had that day. There was a lot of stuff going on.

H- I can tell that these memories-that you still have strong feeling about things that happened- just from your voice.

J- Yes I know. I hate those-----because I know it's true and you never forget.

H- It was over 50 years ago.

J- Yeah, over 55 years ago, well...

**Interview with Pete, September 7, 2004, Williams, Arizona, Restaurant**

H- Pete, what was your first memory of schooling?

P- When I went to the first grade. It was hard because I had never been out of the house and I didn't know a word of English and it was very difficult for the first few days.

H- Didn't you tell me that you ran away from school?

P- My mother said that I ran away the first day because I was like not civilized and because I didn't know what they were talking about. They came and got me and took me back to school.

H- How old were you? Can you remember who else went to school with you?

P- At that time?

H- Yes at that time.

P- There was Stella Lopez, Mary Navarro and Tony Munoz. Some of these guys didn't start school until later because they lived out in the section houses. One I can remember was Ollie Duran. There were quite a few.

H- What language did you speak at home?

P- Spanish. That's all we knew.

H- You were born in Williams, right?

P- Yes I was born in Williams in 1934.

H- Where were your parent born?

P- My father and mother came from Durango, Mexico.

H- Did your parents graduate from high school?

P- No. Not whatsoever. My father only went to the second grade.

H- Why did your parents come to Williams?

P- My father came here because my grandfather was working at the Saginaw-Manistee sawmill. My father came in like in 1922 to work in the sawmill. Shortly after that he sent for his girlfriend, who later became my mother.

H- So your grandfather came first?

P-First.

H- And your grandmother?

P- My grandmother didn't come until I was already in the second grade. When she came here for the first time she was here illegally so she didn't stay here too long. She wasn't here too long before the immigration picked her up.

H- The immigration came and deported her?

P- Yes. They came and got her and put her in a little truck with a cage like a dog catcher.

H- What about your grandfather?

P- My grandfather got killed in a train accident going back. After my father was here, he decided to go back. I was 13 months and my grandfather decided to hitch a ride on a freight train and he fell off the train in Gallup, New Mexico and got killed.

H- Did your grandfather ever become a citizen?

P- Nope.

H- Did your father and mother become citizens?

P- No. They had the green cards that they used every January. They just had to report. I don't know how that worked.

H. Did they stay here?

P- They stayed here. They never became citizens as far as I know. They had those little green cards. I still have the cards. At that time you could record it every 1<sup>st</sup> of the year.

H- And they never became citizens?

P- Yep. As far as I know.

H- How were you treated by the teachers for speaking Spanish in school? Or did you speak Spanish?

P- Yes. That's all we knew. Just amongst us kids. They would jump on us that we had to talk English. We started to learn it. We had to. It was more like a punishment.

H- How were you made to feel about your language and culture?

P- They put you down. At the time we didn't know anything. We were as green as grass.

H- Did you think of yourself as an American when you were in school?

P- After we grew up?

H- No. When you were in school.

P- No. I just thought I was a Mexican. That's all that was in my little brain. That's about all. We didn't know any different.

H- And that's how the teachers treated you? You had the Mexican classes and the American classes?

P- Yes.

H- Did the teachers ever tell you that you had to act a certain way to be considered an American?

P- No. Just expected us to speak English and that's about it. They really pushed it on us.

H- Did you ever wonder why you were in separate class rooms from the Anglo kids?

P- Yeah. I figured that we didn't speak English that good and they wanted to separate us.

H- But what about...that went through the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. Didn't you know English by then?

P- Yes. By that time I did.

H- Then why were you still separated?

P- I guess they had their by-laws or they had their own little path to go by. I never gave it a thought until you got to the eighth grade you started realizing it. It was not good.

H- Did you remember if you were discriminated in school for some reason.

P- Yes. A few times. They would tell you, "You have to speak English" and this and that. Which we did. Sometimes they made fun of you because you couldn't pronounce the words right. You have to give them credit for trying to correct you but they corrected you in a different way. They discriminated bigger.



H- Did you graduate from high school?

P- Yes in 1953.

H- Did you attend college?

P- No.

H- Do you speak Spanish now?

P- Yes I do.

H- Did you teach your children to speak Spanish?

P- Yes I did. English and Spanish, but after they got away from the house, they probably speak more English now.

H- One of the themes that has emerged in the work is that the teachers made Mexican children feel inferior. Did you ever feel like that?

P- Yes, I did.

H- What made you feel that way?

P- Actually, the way they looked at you, like you were dumb. They looked at you like you couldn't do anything and the more you tried and you tried to keep up with the English. Sometime you had to talk in front of the class and you felt like you didn't have the knowledge and you gave it a whirl. I did anyway. They'd try to correct you. "That's not the way you do it! That's not the way you say it!" In a bad manner instead of trying to help you- to teach you.

H- Another theme is coming out is that the Mexican American children were not treated as real Americans. What are your thoughts on that?

P- That's the truth. They looked down at you. They should have given us credit for trying to learn English which we did in the long run.

H- Since we were born here, we were Americans. Right?

P- We weren't treated as Americans.

H- Like Mexicans.

P- Just like you're a Mexican. You're a Mexican and you're going to be a Mexican. An American is an American. I was born here. That's an American.

H- Do you think there is still a lot of racism in the present school systems towards Mexican Americans.

P- I think there still is. Even in the jobs you can see...

H- What changes do you think are needed in the schools to improve academic achievement of Mexican Americans?

P- It's so long that I haven't been around the schools and our kids are out of school. I don't know.

H- How did your experience in a segregated school affect your life? Or did it? Do you ever think about it?

P- Yes, you would think about it in your mind and remember it. You would think it was going to be like that all of your life. You go with the flow and get involved. You don't have to be a politician or anything like that but you have to get out of your shell. I went into business for my self. I started dealing with the public. You get away from all of that. I didn't go to college like I said. After high school, you got a job or you served your country and that was it. You meet all kinds of people. You go out and better yourself.

**Interview with Bianca on 9/18/04 at her daughter's home in Phoenix**

H- Did you graduate from high school?

B- I went to Flag High and I left when I was in the 10th grade.

H- Why did you leave high school?

B- My dad was real sick and my mother needed help raising the rest of the kids.

H- How many brothers and sisters did you have?

B- There were a total of eight-including me.

H- How many of them graduated from high school?

B- Four.

H- Four out of eight graduated from high school? Why didn't the other four graduate?

B- I quit school to help my mother. One of my brothers did the same. My oldest brother graduated. One of my brothers went into the service and got his GED. Two of my sisters and another brother graduated.

H- Where were your parents born? Where did they come from?

B- My mom came from El Cabezón, New Mexico and my dad from Belén, New Mexico. My mother's ancestors came from Spain and my dad's from the Pueblo Indians in New Mexico.

H- You attended South Beaver School?

B- Yes I did, from kindergarten to 6th grade.

H- When was that?

B- I don't remember. [It was in the late 1940s and early 1950s]

H- Did you speak both English and Spanish when you went to school?

B- When I started school, I spoke Spanish only.

H- Do you remember any kind of experiences because of that?

B- Yes.

H-Can you tell me about that.

B. We would get into trouble because we spoke Spanish, but that's what you spoke when you left home. What could we do, but use the language that we learned at home. And then we would go to the school the teachers would punish us for speaking our language. I was hit with a ruler many a time for that. If they caught us, even out in the playground, they would punish us-put us against the wall. Many years later I ran into one of our old teachers, a couple of years ago, and I asked her why they did that. She said it came down from the higher ups-the administrators. It wasn't them. It was the administrators that had them punish us. They were supposed to turn their back on us when we spoke it in the playground, but they didn't.

H- So even if you spoke it in the playground, they would punish you.

B- Yes.

H- Did they paddle you or how did they punish you?

B- With rulers on your hand. They would make you stretch your hands out and they would hit you with the side of the ruler on your hands.

H- How did that make you feel?

B- Belittled. We didn't get spanked like that at home. I figured, why are doing that to us in school?

H- Did you ever feel that your language and culture had no value from those experiences?

B- Right. They made us feel like we were nothing because we did speak another language and we were from the south side of town. They had us in our own little neighborhoods over there; we weren't rich enough or white enough to go to school on the north side of the tracks.

H- Did you ever realize you were in a segregated school?

B- I didn't realize that until I got, maybe, in the 4th or 5th grade. At that time I noticed they had the blacks in one school. They had the Mexicans in another.

H- So what did you think about that?

B- One part was good that we were all alike. We didn't have to compete with the whites. That was one good point. Another point was that we didn't have the advantages that the white kids had.

H- Do you remember when they closed Dunbar and they moved some black kids to South Beaver?

B- Right. I remember that. I remember that they were out of place too. They would come in bullying people to make a place for themselves at the school.

H- Did all of the Dunbar kids go to South Beaver or did they go some place else?

B- I don't know where the rest went. I know the majority of them went to South Beaver.

H- Do you remember some of your teachers when you were in elementary school?

B- In elementary, I remember Mrs. Allen, Mr. Castro and Mrs. Evans.

H- Who was the teacher that use to hit you on your hands for speaking Spanish?

B- Mrs. Evans.

H- Did Mr. Castro ever punish you for speaking Spanish?

B- No.

H- Did he speak Spanish to you?

B. He spoke Spanish to us in the classroom.

H- So you had positive memories of him-not negative?

B- Well, positive as far as the language is concerned, but he was not the type of teacher that I would like for my children nowadays.

H- Do you remember the nurse checking the kids for lice?

B. All of the time. They cut their hair short.

H- Did they do that while you were there?

B- Yes. They cut their hair very short.

H- They would cut their hair right there in school?

B- And they would tell the parents, you can't send the kids back to school until you completely clean the whole house-until you clean their heads. I remember my mother putting kerosene on my hair before she sent me back to school. They could have burnt our scalps!

H- Do you remember feelings of discrimination when you were growing up?

B- Yes, quite often.

H- Give me an example.

B- When I was a teenager when we were growing up, there was a soda shop downtown and it was a hangout for all the kids. The white girls and the white boys got priority of where to sit. If there were a few tables left, they wouldn't let us sit there unless we were with one of the white girls. I can't remember the name of it. It was by Babbitt's. Oh, yes Pine Top.

H- What about high school?

B- In high school too. I was in sewing class with one of my friends and we were sitting next to each other on the sewing machine. We were making aprons and she said something to me in Spanish about what did I do to this part of the apron and the teacher overheard us and came to us and gave us an "F" for the day. Her name was Mrs. Dunbar.

B- Even in high school you got in trouble if you spoke Spanish.

H- That sewing class you were in-was that mostly for Mejicanas or was it for everybody?

B- You know when I was going to school you got this plan with the counselor. One was a professional plan. The other one was given to the Mexicans. There was a professional plan and I don't know what they called the other plan. They put the Indians, the Mejicanos, and the blacks on that plan. We got the sewing classes, a few classes in cooking. They gave the white kids typing classes, booking and shorthand.

H- What about college prep classes?

B. No. College classes were for the elite, the white people that were in the school. We were learning how to make aprons and how to cook so we could feed those white people and take care of them.

H- The reason I ask you that is because they wrote a long time ago that the schools prepared the Mejicanos for those kinds of jobs and the women for sewing.

B- That's what they taught us-how to sew and how to cook and how to clean and how to baby-sit. The other ones, the whites, got to go to the college classes. They got to go to typing, booking and shorthand.

H- Did you teach your children to speak Spanish?

B- I tried to teach them. It was easier to speak to them in English?

H- Why?

B- Because that's all we spoke at home at the time.

H- Some people have said they didn't teach their children Spanish because of the way they were punished and they didn't want their children to be treated the same way.

B. I think that because of the punishment that we had, that I didn't pursue the Spanish. It was easier to speak to them in English, but it was because of the punishment. They later learned to speak Spanish. In fact both of my daughters married Spanish-speaking men from Mexico.

H- Did you think of yourself as an American when you were in school- as a Mejjicana? Did you think about it at all?

B- I never thought about it.

H- Did your parents refer to themselves as Americans?

B- We never talked about it.

H- Did you parents ever use the words "Los Americanos" when referring to Anglos?

B- Los gringos.

H- They use more los gringos then Americanos?

B- The words they used were los gringos of the north side of town.

H- One of the themes that has emerged in the research I have done is that a lot of Mexican kids were made to feel like they were inferior. Was that the case with you?

B- Do you mean in school?

H- Yes in school.

B- Oh, yeah. When I was in high school my brother was a teacher, doing his student teaching there. I don't know if it because I was his sister that he felt he had to- he put me in my place in front of administrators for his own sake to make himself look good or just something the Mejjicanos that advance do. The older the brother or sister, the more respect you have for them. And that's how he treated us, like we were lower level peons next to him.

H- Do you think there is a lot of racism in the present school towards Mexican Americans?

B- Nowadays?

H- Yes.

B- Not a lot. It's still there. It's changing a little, but you still find it.

H- After school, where did you work?

B- I was a waitress for many years. Later I was able to go to work at a store. They put me straightening out counters and so forth. One of the girls from the Stationary Department was going to leave and they were training me to take over the job. Then this young, little white girl came in and they gave her the job instead of me. I asked the boss, "Why did you do that? I was trained for it." He wanted me to train the girl to do the job they had trained me for. I said no. I won't do it because the job was supposed to be for me. I said why didn't you give it to me You gave it to her. "You're not qualified," he told me. I wasn't qualified but he wanted me to train this girl.

H- Even though he wanted you to train this girl

B- He wanted me to train this girl but I wasn't qualified to do the job. So they put me back in house wares, which I hated. But I would rather let her struggle through it. I didn't care. Let him struggle thought it. Then about a month later, he come to me and says I want to know if you want to take over the Stationary Department. I can't remember the girl's name. She quit. So I said, "Am I qualified to do it now or just because you need somebody up there?" He didn't say anything but I know that's the reason because she was white and she was young and she was pretty. I feel that was discrimination there too.



H- Did you have any other experiences like that?

B- I had trouble years before when I tried to get credit to buy a car by myself and I was divorced. I couldn't get the credit because I was female and Mexican.

H- You think that that kept you from getting credit?

B- Yes- being a Mejicana and a women. My ex-husband could file bankruptcy, the whole thing and he was able to get credit but I couldn't. Yet I had a steady job and I was the one that was working.

H- What is it that you do now?

B- I work in a school where we are incorporating the language and culture and bringing it back so that the kids don't forget where they came from.

H- What languages?

B- Spanish & Navajo.

H- How is the program accepted in Flagstaff?

B- We have a lot of battles with the community. They didn't want it, especially with the passage of Proposition 203. We have to make sure that parents sign a waiver stating that they want their children in the program. They have to be taught in English for 30 days only. That's what we are doing now. Their 30 days are up the 30th of September.

H- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your elementary school education?

B- Yes. I remember when we growing up and they started bringing the blacks into our school. The dentists and doctors would go into our school. Instead of sending the kids to the doctor they would bring the doctors to the school. I remember one day going by the nurse's office and they had this little black kid sitting in there and they were pulling his tonsils out. It was sad. The kid was so scared and crying but instead of sending him to the doctor at the hospital they were pulling his tonsils out right there in the school. And I remember that. It's something that sticks in my mind and in my thoughts I'm sure they wouldn't do that at the other schools in town.

## APPENDIX C

## FLAGSTAFF SCHOOL BOARD MINUTES

**Extract from Flagstaff School Board minutes dated January 11, 1929**

The matter of a new building for the south side, i.e., for the Mexican children was considered at great length, but no definite action was taken at this time--the matter being held over for future consideration.

**Extract from Flagstaff School Board minutes dated December 7, 1933**

Mr. Theodore S. Spencer, Clerk of the Board of Trustees, reported that he had a discussion with Dr. Raymond in regard to a new school building for the Mexican school children on the south side. It was thought it might be possible to obtain funds under the N.R.A. Relief Plan for this purpose. After considerable discussion, the Board felt rather reluctant in taking the initiative in the matter, so they appointed a Citizens' Committee, consisting of Dr. M. G. Fronske, Mrs. Mary M. Pollock and Dr. Harold S. Colton to investigate the situation and report their findings to the Board. It was suggested that Mr. Thomas contact the members of this Committee and to request them to make a report to the Board not later than December.

**From Flagstaff School Board minutes dated January 11, 1934**

**M. G. Fronske. M. D.  
Flagstaff, Arizona**

January 10, 1934

At the request of the members of your Board, Mrs. T.E. Pollock, Br. Harold S. Colton and myself made a canvass of the situation in regard to the erection of a school building for the segregation of the Spanish speaking pupils.

It has been privilege of Mrs. Pollock and myself to serve on the local school board for a number of years, and during those times the need for such a school building has always been present, according to our knowledge of the situation during those years.

Owing to the unsanitary condition of the Brannen School and to the over-crowded condition of the same school, and the resulting over-flow of Spanish speaking pupils at the Emerson School, this committee, after

discussing matters very seriously, wishes to urge on the present Board of Trustees the advisability of having plans drawn and proper application made for funds to further this project.

We felt that a new building will serve not only the children who are to attend it, but also by relieving the congestion at the Emerson School, serve their benefit.

It is our opinion that such a project is going to be inevitable in the next few years. We feel that the present time would be the proper time to go ahead with the project, because of the extreme need, because of the unemployment situation and because of the advantages of the loan from the Public Works Administration.

We are urging you to take active steps towards the materialization of this school building, and we are willing to aid the Board in every way in concluding the work.

Very truly yours

M. G. Fronske, Chairman  
Citizen Committee

#### **Extract Flagstaff School Board minutes January 11, 1934**

Dr. M. G. Fronske, a member of the Citizens' Committee, which was appointed in December to investigate the conditions at Brannen School met with the Board of Trustees and made the following report: First, that the committee was unanimous in their opinion that there was an absolute needs of a new building to take the place of Brannen School. Second, that the present Brannen School was very unsatisfactory as a school building. In addition to being unsanitary, it was not suited for school room work. Third, that the erection of a new school building for the Mexican children would relieve the situation at the Emerson School and at the same time provide an opportunity to give the type of instruction to Mexican children that would suit their needs. The committee also stated that they would be willing to assist the Board of Trustees in any way possible in furthering their plans for the construction of a new building.

In view of the recommendation of the committee, the Board of Trustees authorized Mr. Thomas, Superintendent of School, to secure the service of V. O. Wallingford, Architect, for a preliminary survey of our needs with the view of making an application to the Public Works Administration for purpose of securing a loan for the construction of said building. Mr. Wallingford in his correspondence with the Board of Trustees signified his willingness to come to Flagstaff to make a preliminary survey, so that proper data may be gathered for the application, which is to be submitted to the Public Works Administration

for assistance in financing the project. Mr. Wallingford suggested that his firm is in position to give expert advice in collecting data and in getting applications made out in proper form.

**Extract from Flagstaff School Board minutes dated September 6, 1951**

Mr. Cromer discussed the negro problems as it affects the community of Flagstaff and informed the Board that there are 109 children in the Dunbar School in grades one through six. In addition, there are sixteen Kindergarten children, and due to the limit of the school plant it is physically impossible to provide housing for the kindergarten youngsters at Dunbar.

The Superintendent was instructed by the Board to move the kindergarten Youngsters from Dunbar to South Beaver School, since Mrs. Veazey, the Kindergarten teacher to South Beaver, had only enough children for a half days work.

The Board established the policy of having all children attend the school that is nearest their residence , and the Superintendent was instructed to disregard race in the matter, and to use his best judgment in setting up the program for the ensuing school term

**Extract from Flagstaff School Board minutes dated October 8, 1951**

A delegation of parents from the South Beaver School waited on the Board to discuss the matter of the negro children attending the South Beaver school. They expressed the feeling that since there were no negro children attending the other public schools, that the Board should continue the policy of past years in segregating all youngsters in sixth grade and below. Specifically, they objected to the twelve or fifteen negro youngsters that were attending the South Beaver kindergarten as a class in the afternoon.

On request by the Board Mr. Cromer explained that the negro children were not being placed in all the grades but simply since there was no room at the Dunbar School for a kindergarten, since the physical plant was used to capacity at the present time, and since Mrs. Veazey did not have enough South Beaver youngsters to make two sections, that these youngsters from Dunbar were moved there in a group, and Mrs. Veazey taught them in her room.

The group of parents from South Beaver expressed their fear that the Board was intending to eventually make South Beaver a school for the negro children and they objected to negro children attending school with the Mexican

children, unless the negro children were also allowed in the other schools.

Dr. Sechrist, President of the Board, explained that as soon as new buildings were available, and present plans call for new elementary schools in the immediate future to house the constantly increasing enrollment, that the Board had already set up a policy which states that all children irrespective of race, color, or creed will attend the school nearest their home. He further explained that if conditions warranted such, that the Board would probably eventually district the community for school purposes.

The following is a partial list of those present:

Mr. and Mrs. Tom Vega  
 Mr. and Mrs. Max Castillo  
 Mrs. John Valdivia

**Extract from Flagstaff School Board minutes dated March 15, 1954**

“It was moved by Mr. Knoles that the policy of an open school district be placed in effect, that any child can attend any school in the system and that no transportation will be provided expect for those pupils that reside outside the city limits, with the exception of Branner Homes and Pine Knolls. Further, no child may change schools after once being registered in a school without permission of Principal involved, change of residence excepted. All transported pupils will be placed in those schools wherever necessary to balance class size.”

**Extract form Flagstaff School Board minutes dated January 25<sup>th</sup>, 1955**

Mr. Cromer presented letters from the Club *Triangulo Mexicano* and the Lumber and Sawmill Workers Union, both of which concern alleged segregation at the South Beaver School.

The matter was thoroughly discussed, and no change in the policies (which were adopted at the meeting of the Board on March 15, 1954) concerning the schools to which youngsters may attend was made at this time.

Mr. Cromer reported that he had called Mr. Ralph Juarez, Agent for the local Lumber and Sawmill Workers Union, and told him that is answer to his recent communication, that he would be glad to meet with their committee at any time at their convenience. Letters are herewith attached.”

Letters presented to the School Board by Mr. Cromer.

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LUMBER AND SAWMILL  
WORKERS UNION  
LOCAL 605

Sturgeon Cromer, Superintendent  
Flagstaff City Schools  
Flagstaff, Arizona

Dear Mr. Cromer:

Copy of letter to Doctor Sechrist, chairman of the Flagstaff School Board, has been referred to us.

Our Local Union has discussed the matter and I have been instructed to write or call on you for the purpose of attempting to bring about corrective measures. If same can be done with local understanding.

I have been advised that you are familiar with the situation that now prevails in the South Beaver School and a committee has been selected to meet with you at your convince to chat over the situation and see what can be done to bring about a fair settlement.

Assuring you of our interest on the matter and may we hear from you in the near future.

Respectfully yours,

Ralph Juarez, Agent

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CLUB TRIANGULO MEXICANO  
Flagstaff, Arizona  
November 17, 1954

Since School Started in September and with the closing of Dunbar School, we have been viewing the grave concern the situation which has developed in South Beaver School.

Integration is a nice sounding word, more so then segregation but integration must be properly balanced or it will do more harm than good. In our case in South Beaver School we have three segregated groups, namely Spanish speaking, Indian and colored. This condition tends to retard the progress of the children. Friction between the different races of children has developed to such an extent that eventually we are going to have a more problems.

We parents thoroughly understand that it is impossible for the teacher to mould character into the child. We know that character and good citizenship is our job. How can we mould character and instill good citizenship into the minds and hearts of our children when to begin with they have two strikes against them? When they ask us this question. Why don't we have Anglo-American school mates in our school? We can not evade the question. We have to answer it. We have to tell them that even though since our great state as well as our wonderful nation has abolished segregation, we are still a segregated group.

You Dr. Sechrist, Mr. Knowles and Dr. Tollesfson as members of the School Board of Education have guided our children through their education problems for many years. We are very thankful and happy to know that we have such fine men, that give so much of their time not only for our children but for us also. Knowing that we, have the courage to appeal to you help us solve this problem before it becomes a serious blemish to our town.

If we can be of any help please do not hesitate to call on us.

Sincerely and truly yours,

Louis Chacon, Chairman  
Club Triangulo Mexicano

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