

Second Ad Hoc Committee Report on  
Proposed Social Studies Special Topics Textbook:

*Mexican American Heritage*

*For Mr. Rubén Cortez*

November 15, 2016

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November 15, 2016

Mr. Rubén Cortez, Member  
Texas State Board of Education  
Austin, Texas

Dear Mr. Cortez,

We have reviewed *The Mexican American Heritage* a second time and conclude that the proposed textbook is fraught with errors, and continue to find it unacceptable for use in our public schools. Our first review had found a significant number of errors in the textbook that led us to conclude that the authors had not met the minimum professional standards to justify its use in our Texas schools (See attached document submitted to Mr. Rubén Cortez: Ad Hoc Committee Report on Proposed Social Studies Special Topic Textbook, *Mexican American Heritage*, September 6, 2016). Our second review is based on the responses that the authors submitted on September, 2016.

The authors prepared a “second edition” of the proposed textbook, but we were unable to review it because neither the authors, publisher, nor the Texas Education Agency notified us that someone had posted an electronic copy this month. We have conducted a cursory examination of the “second edition” and found that the authors have included revisions in response to our initial review as well as new additions to the text. Our preliminary early assessment is that the “second edition” also contains numerous new and continuing errors.

Our second review is based on two sets of responses by the authors to the initial findings of errors that we reported to the State Board of Education on September 6, 2016. The authors submitted their responses in two spread sheets. We have amended them with two new columns on the far right to allow for our error assessments and comments (these will be made available to the Board members in electronic form). The first spread sheet includes 716 rows of responses from the authors; we found 319 errors. The second spread sheet includes 215 responses from the authors; we found 96 errors. Their responses totaled 931 and our findings of errors reached 407 (a 48% error rate).

Twenty-six junior and senior scholars specializing or focusing on Mexican American Studies reviewed the responses (See names and institutional affiliation below). They represent various fields, including Anthropology, Civil Rights, Education, Law, Mexican American Studies, Music, Political Philosophy, Political Science, Politics, Religion, Research Methods, Rhetoric, Sociology, Texas History (Spanish Borderlands, Mexican, Independent and Modern periods), U.S. History (Education, Immigration, Mexican American, Mexico, Labor, Women), and Women and Gender Studies. Four of scholars were graduate students (1 in American Studies and four in History). They assisted me in planning, coordinating, assessing and reporting the review work.

Our assessment did not count errors if the authors accepted our findings and to one extent or another agreed to revise the text according to our suggestions. We also discounted errors if the authors made a convincing argument in favor of keeping the text as it appears in the book. Moreover, we instructed our reviewers not to assign an error when the authors refused to give added focus on the Mexican American experience and failed to provide relevance explanations when they introduced histories that in our estimation were distant from the focus of the book. Nor did we note an error the many times that the authors claimed that they were not obliged to expand or otherwise revise the portions of the text dealing with the Mexican American experience. Although it was difficult to overlook the many times that the authors responded to our findings of error with hard-headed, condescending and ridiculing responses, we overlooked unprofessional behavior as well.

We mostly instructed our reviewers to identify factual errors. We also asked them to report factual errors if they believed that omission of important historical experiences or incomplete or questionable interpretations also involved the exclusion of facts that were critical for a clear and fair understanding of the subject at hand. I reviewed the entire 931 rows and applied a strict and impartial review standard to give credibility to our assessment and integrity to the review process.

Aside from the errors noted above, the reviewers discovered other irregularities during the second review, including the following:

1. The authors did not respond to a substantial number of errors reported to the board by Independent Historian Martha Cotera (Austin, Texas), and University Professors James E. Crisp (North Carolina State University), Jesus Francisco de la Teja (Texas State University), John McKiernan Gonzalez (Texas State Universities), Emilio Zamora (University of Texas at Austin), and Andrés Tijerina (Austin Community College);
2. The authors also failed to respond to a section in the Cortez document that pointed to errors at the end-of-chapter activity questions and in the captions to images throughout the book;
3. They disregarded our original finding of an obvious failure to consult current scholarship in Mexican American, Mexican, Latin American and U.S. history, and used less reliable and dated sources like online records, encyclopedia entries and articles from popular venues;
4. They continued to devote a relatively small portion of the narrative to Mexican Americans (and the corresponding factual evidence) and an inordinate number of pages to world, U.S., and Latin American history that had little if any apparent relation to Mexican Americans;

5. We had also asked that the authors give more coherence and focus by intermittently providing relevance statements to justify the significant amount of attention that they gave world, U.S., and Latin American history, but they essentially declined our suggestion;
6. The lack of attention to Mexican American history can be demonstrated in two ways: the authors don't use the term "Mexican-Americans" until page 146 (Chapter 5); and many organizations, events and historical figures are absent and the Mexican or Mexican American who do appear in the rest of the book do not usually speak;
7. The authors continued to disregard much of the vast scholarship on Mexican Americans and its corresponding factual evidence that would have given them new information and perspective;
8. The authors often challenged our findings of errors by stating that they were not obligated to address the historical and contemporary experience of Mexican Americans on the grounds that they were required to prepare a social studies resource and that the Texas State Board of Education never mandated a textbook on Mexican Americans;
9. The authors also disputed the conventional standard of peer review by claiming that they are not "required" to provide any particular content beyond what is already in the text;
10. The authors consistently challenged our findings of errors, but would often add revisions that essentially admitted parts of the errors, leading us to speculate whether anyone could trust that they would ever heed the assessments by professional scholars specializing on Mexican American history and related fields;
11. They often failed to identify the source of the proposed change in both spread sheets;
12. The first spread sheet often attributed the "suggested" corrections to the publisher without explanations;
13. The first spread sheet at times attributed the "suggested" corrections to a "Public," but failed to explain who this public is, what concerns they raised and how their suggested correction responds to the public;
14. In several cases, we had to do extensive cross-checking to determine that their reference to an unidentified "public" that turned out to be the Cortez document of September 6;
15. The extensive cross-checking challenge also involved instances in the second spread sheet when the publisher and the authors did not offer vital information like their response to our findings of error, and referred us to the second spread sheet for their

responses, often without the necessary guidance to locate the corresponding information;

16. The authors also made it very difficult for us by noting page numbers in the spread sheets that did not correspond to the corresponding pages in the textbook;
17. The authors occasionally refer to an “early edition” of the textbook when noting that they had already responded to us in the first spread sheet, suggesting that they may have been responding to our findings with the use of a draft of the textbook that was not made available to us;
18. The publisher submitted a new draft of the textbook in electronic form to the Texas Education Agency in November 2016, too late for us to review for continuing errors;
19. There was no public notice that the Texas Education Agency or anyone else in an official capacity would allow the publisher to submit an “early edition” so late in the review process and in possible violation of established protocol and procedural understandings among members of the public;
20. The large number of errors in the text strongly suggests that the authors did not have the necessary skills to prepare the textbook, especially the narrative on the history of Mexican Americans; and
21. The continuing errors, especially in Mexican American history, strongly suggest that the authors—and whoever assisted them in formulating their responses—failed in their second chance to guarantee a high-quality textbook.

We thank you and the Board for the opportunity to review the proposed textbook. On previous occasions, we have noted that the textbook had to rise to the level of professional standards that guarantee its readers a scholarly based narrative of the highest quality. These standards also call for the kind of peer review process that the State Board of Education requires. Our public school youth deserve no less. They must be able to understand and explain the complex individual and group experiences of the past to prepare them for our modern and even more complex and intellectually challenging world of today. We must also provide them with a text that models the kind of behavior that we wish to see in our young adults, including a fair, respectful, and impartial examination and understanding of peoples and communities in our past and present. In our considered opinion as scholars specializing in multiple fields, we find that the textbook before you does not meet these basic responsibilities and expectations.

I also wish to thank the senior and junior scholars (listed below) who took the time in their busy schedules to assist in reviewing the responses by the Momentum publisher and authors. As we stated in our earlier report, we are not just scholars that abide by professional

standards in our fields. We are also parents and educators who thank you for your service and who take seriously our responsibility to provide youth the best instructional material possible.

Sincerely,

Emilio Zamora, Professor  
Department of History  
University of Texas at Austin

## Reviewers

Dr. Carlos Blanton, History, Texas A&M University, College Station  
Dr. Roberto Calderón, History, University of North Texas  
Dr. Yolanda Chavez-Leyva, History, University of Texas at El Paso  
Dr. Christopher Carmona, Social Studies, Donna High School  
Martha Cotera, Independent Scholar, Austin, Texas  
Dr. James E. Crisp, History, North Carolina State University  
Dr. Jesus Francisco de la Teja, History, Texas State University  
Dr. John McKiernan Gonzalez, History, Texas State University  
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Dr. Emile Lester, Political Science and International Affairs, University of Mary Washington  
Dr. José María Herrera, Education, University of Texas at El Paso  
Dr. Valerie Martínez, History, University of Texas at Austin  
Dr. Laura Muñoz, History, Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi  
Dr. Raul Ramos, History, University of Houston  
Dr. Virginia Marie Raymond, J.D.  
Dr. Guadalupe San Miguel, History, University of Houston  
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Dr. Angela Valenzuela, Higher Education, College of Education, University of Texas at Austin  
Dr. Emilio Zamora, History, University of Texas at Austin  
Dr. Jesus Jesse Zapata, History, Texas Southern University

## Graduate Students Assisting Dr. Emilio Zamora

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