

## Denying Diversity: A Review of *Mexican American Heritage*

Dr. Emile Lester<sup>i</sup>  
Department of Political Science and International Affairs  
University of Mary Washington

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s iconic 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech views the United States an exceptional nation. The Founders themselves and subsequent generations may have fallen short of living up to the ideals in our founding documents, but what makes our nation special is that we have a system of government allowing us to criticize our leaders and fellow citizens for their failures. Our government may not be perfect, but it is better than others because it allows us to be honest with ourselves and each other. Patriotism, for King, involves admitting that our actions have departed from our ideals, and working to correct this.

*Mexican American Heritage* is neither an honest nor a patriotic book by the standards of King's speech. The book properly claims that the United States has often been a force of good in the world when living up to our ideals, but virtually refuses to admit that we have ever departed from our ideals. The book gives us an America where the Founding Fathers have almost no flaws and looked out equally for all, where we are all united by and should celebrate the Biblical principles our nation was built on, where racial discrimination was never that much of a problem and anyway is a thing of the past, where the poor have almost always smiled contentedly while doing the most drudging work, and where the United States always acts altruistically in world affairs and its military and economic supremacy are welcomed equally by all nations. In *Mexican American Heritage*, the villains are those who shared King's views and dared to point out and protest against the occasional injustices our government and citizens have perpetrated against other Americans and those from other lands. Too often, the book blames not those who committed injustice, but the victims of injustice for their own persecution.

The approach to American history in *Mexican American Heritage* is especially shameful because the Mexican-American history courses it is to be implemented in offer an opportunity to celebrate diversity, and the struggles, sacrifices, and achievements of a group that has contributed much of value to our nation's heritage. *Mexican American Heritage* instead exploits this opportunity to re-write American and world history in accord with a deeply unbalanced and biased ideological agenda. Intended for a course created to honor Mexican-American history, the book dishonors crucial parts of this history and American history, and commits a disservice to the Texas public school students who will take it. Instead of celebrating diversity, the textbook too often denies it. The book's numerous factual errors, exaggerations and inconsistencies means that students required to read it will emerge from their courses less knowledgeable about American history than they were going in.

For a textbook to demonstrate a proper appreciation of diversity in American history, it must balance praise with criticism. The United States has much to be proud of regarding its history of inclusion of national, and ethnic minorities, and immigrant groups. The political rights, freedom from persecution, and economic prospects that our nation has historically offered to its citizens and residents were often greater than those other nations offered to their residents, minority groups, and immigrants, and attracted many immigrants to our shores. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for instance, the United States had a better economic and human rights record than the Soviet Union and Communist countries around the globe. *Mexican-American Heritage* does well to relate the stories of immigrants and individuals belonging to minority groups who took advantage of the opportunities the United States offered to forge a better life for themselves and their families.

Yet while our nation has on many occasions acted in accord with its worthy ideals, many Americans and those from other nations have held that over the course of our history we have at times abused our military and economic power. Various forms of

discrimination have prevented the blessings of political freedom and wealth from being equally available to all. When confronted with injustice and inequality by our government and its citizens, many courageous individuals and groups have struggled to confront and correct them. Some were successful and some were not.

Being honest with students about our flaws as well as our strengths is essential in a course intended to recognize diversity. Acknowledging the full extent of historical injustice and inequality in our history helps students recognize injustice and inequality in the United States today. Relating the full story of those who struggled against injustice fittingly memorializes their sacrifices, and can inspire students to engage in their own forms of constructive criticism of injustice.

*Mexican American Heritage* does not err by completely overlooking injustice or inequality in United States history. The book does ignore, though, crucial instances of injustice, and attempts to excuse and whitewash our nation's history in three crucial ways that are profoundly inconsistent with historical fact. First, the book provides a sanitized version of the Founding Fathers' views on slavery, and an account of the Civil War and Reconstruction once peddled by segregationists and apologists for the South's record on race. Second, the book provides a misleading history of role of religion in the American founding, and associates turning away from Biblical principles with the undermining of religion and private property during the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and Communism. By tying together many challenges of injustice with criticism of religion and unequal distribution of private property, the book insinuates that much political protest of injustice is un-Godly and connected to Communism. In claiming that all evil in the modern world is the result of deviating from traditional religion, the text manipulates American and world history to indoctrinate students with its misleading claims about the relationship of religion and politics. Third, the book's treatment of the Cold War embellishes the threat posed by the Soviet Union in Latin America among other places, and ignores occasional political and economic repression with which the United States

was involved. As a result, the book absolves the United States of virtually all responsibility for repression committed by our government and the regimes it sponsored during the Cold War. In the book's account, the United States could do no wrong in its Cold War battle with Communism. The book worships at the altar of Ronald Reagan's aggressive anti-Communism, and, perhaps worse, misrepresents Reagan's legacy by ignoring his peace initiatives.

Not only do all three of these elements contain the fingerprints of an extreme right wing agenda, but the book often provides no scholarly attribution or defense for its most controversial claims. Instead of giving students the complex three-dimensional history they deserve, the book provides a one-dimensional history reflecting the authors' biases.

This review will examine each of these three elements of the book's distortion of history. Though not a fully exhaustive treatment of all the book's problems, the many instances of factual errors, inclusion of irrelevant material, and inconsistent statements revealed are sufficient to demonstrate why the textbook is unfit for Texas classrooms.

### ***Topic Areas: The Enlightenment, Religion, and Church and State***

Summary: The book's discussion of the Enlightenment provides factually incorrect, confusing, and exaggerated claims about the views of Enlightenment thinkers on religion and private property. Most glaringly, the book misrepresents the views on religion, and the relationship of church and state of John Locke and Thomas Jefferson, perhaps the two most important figures in establishing the United States tradition of separating church and state. These passages reflect the book's ideological intent to convince students that the United States was founded on Biblical principles, and that any questioning of religion might bring down the United States by introducing destructive political change.

- The book misstates the relationship between the Enlightenment and religion. On page 101, the book describes the Enlightenment as "a European period of

heightened intellectual focus on reason and rationality over religion,” and on page 296, the book states: “Ever since the days of the French Enlightenment, philosophers had speculated about a new world order free from religion, central authority, and unequal wealth.” These statements are one-sided caricature of a complex historical movement. To support its claims, the book focuses on French Enlightenment thinkers. Even among French thinkers like Montesquieu, whom the book itself (p. 101) identifies as a major Enlightenment figure, a strong critique distancing from religion was not universally shared. The Enlightenment movement consisted of thinkers from different nations with varied views about the relationship of reason and religion. To give just one example, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, whose renowned article “What is Enlightenment?” helped to define the Enlightenment’s essence for his and later generations, devoted much effort to reconciling religion and reason in his philosophy. The book’s identification of the English philosopher John Locke as an Enlightenment thinker “working from the Puritan tradition” (p. 101) contradicts its own claims about religion and the Enlightenment.

- To advance its agenda of convincing students that a turning away from religion and unequal private property during the Enlightenment is connected to the development of Communism, the book makes a connection between the Enlightenment and the French Revolution riddled with errors. On page 101, the book states: “French revolutionaries believed that people needed to be free from state and religious authority always telling them what to do. One philosopher, Jean- Jacques Rousseau, espoused this sentiment when he said, ‘Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains.’” (See also quote from page 296 above.) Rousseau was not an Enlightenment thinker. His *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* was a severe critique of major Enlightenment thinkers and

their philosophies. Rousseau did not believe in freeing citizens from state and religious authority; his *Of the Social Contract* famously advocates a legally binding civil religion. Rousseau was a critic of excessive inequality of property, but in *Of The Social Contract* and other works he supports the right to private property. The book's assertion that Rousseau would have supported the French Revolution is problematic. Rousseau claims in *Of the Social Contract* that his ideas on political reform are only fit in practice for small, homogeneous countries like Corsica. When commissioned to provide recommendations on reforming Poland's government, Rousseau's recommended reforms were more moderate than those he proposed in *Of the Social Contract* and more moderate than those the French revolutionaries adopted.

- The book's description of John Locke as "working from the Puritan tradition" is misleading. Locke was born to Puritan parents, but Locke's thought had little in common with the thought of the Puritans who founded New England. Unlike the New England Puritans, Locke believed that the sole purpose of government should be to advance secular and civil rather than spiritual and religious interests, and argued that government ought to be based on principles of natural law available to those of all religions rather than on Biblical principles only shared by Christians and Jews. The book neglects to mention that Locke believed in a strict separation of church and state. For instance, Locke's belief that religious practices are not entitled to exemption from generally applicable laws suggests that he would almost certainly disapprove of the types of exemptions many religious conservatives in the United States today have supported in Supreme Court cases like *Burwell vs. Hobby Lobby Stores*. The book's attempt to convince students that Locke, a crucial figure in

the founding of our government, subscribed to Biblical principles on government is inconsistent with historical fact.

- On page 136, the text has a box entitled “The Laws of Nature and Nature’s God”: “A foundational premise prescribing that nature encompasses certain laws, obligations, and reasoning that align with Biblical laws and rules by which humans should maintain a certain respect and reverence, first referenced by Lord Bolingbrook and then his former student Thomas Jefferson.” The text misspells Lord Bolingbroke’s name. Jefferson never studied with Bolingbroke, who lived in England and died when Jefferson was eight. Jefferson did copy a substantial number of passages from Bolingbroke’s work into his commonplace book. The passages Jefferson copied from Bolingbroke’s work included criticisms of St. Paul’s theology and moral thought, the Book of Revelation, and the divine origin of the Ten Commandments. That is, while the book claims Bolingbroke was a defender of the Bible, Bolingbroke’s work in fact made him infamous among his contemporaries in England for his strong and provocative condemnation of fundamental elements of the Bible and central tenets of Christianity. The phrase “laws of nature and nature’s God” was commonly used by Deists at Jefferson’s time, who were critical of religion derived solely or primarily from Biblical rules and laws. Had Jefferson meant to refer to the Biblical rather than deistic conception of God, he could have used more conventional designations of the Biblical God such as “Supreme Judge,” which was also used in the Declaration. Jefferson’s private letters, most famously a letter to his nephew Peter Carr, argue that fundamental principles of political and personal morality are available to and can be practiced by all including those who believe in no organized religion. Jefferson’s project of creating a Bible that retained Jesus’s moral teachings but excised references to miracles and

the supernatural are inconsistent with the text's depiction of Jefferson as an orthodox or conservative Christian. The omission of this information indicates the book's purpose of deceiving students about the Biblical roots of our system of government.

- On p. 289, and in the glossary on page 498, the book provides the following definition of "the separation of church and state": "a post-Constitution phrase coined by Thomas Jefferson emphasizing the intent that the government should not be involved in the business of the church; often used interchangeably in casual context with the Establishment Clause, which is part of the First Amendment to the US Constitution." Jefferson used the term "high wall of separation between church and state" in his 1802 letter to the Danbury Baptist Association. The passage's implication ("post-Constitution") that Jefferson's phrase and thought had nothing to do with the Constitution is misleading. Jefferson's views on a strict separation of church and state were shared by James Madison, the most influential drafter of the First Amendment.<sup>ii</sup> Madison and Jefferson believed that the Constitution not only limited government involvement with religion as the passage suggests, but that it also placed strict restrictions on government sponsorship of religion. Madison, for instance, opposed government providing payment of military chaplains because it would violate the separation of church and state.

### ***Topic Areas: Slavery, the Civil War, Mistreatment of Minority Groups***

Summary: The text's inaccurate statements about the Founders' views of slavery and highly misleading account of the Civil War are consistent with the text's overall and frequently insensitive attempts to conceal historical injustice. The text seeks to revive myths once prominent among segregationists and apologists for the Confederacy about the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln, and the period of Reconstruction.

- On page 217, the text claims that the passage of the Northwest Ordinance “even prohibited slavery, showing the Founding Fathers’ commitment to abolition.” Claiming the Northwest Ordinance as evidence of the Founding Fathers’ views is problematic because the Ordinance was passed by the Confederation Congress prior to the Constitution’s ratification. The text neglects to mention reasons besides a belief in abolition that would have motivated southern states to support the Ordinance’s slavery ban. Since effective tobacco cultivation required slave labor, the ban served the economic interests of southern tobacco farmers by preventing a source of economic competition. Had abolition of slavery been the primary object of members of the Confederation Congress as the text claims, it is hard to understand why the legislators in the Congress who also participated in drafting the Constitution did not simply abolish slavery in the Constitution or why George Washington was the only Southern plantation-owning founder to free his slaves. Southern Founding Fathers made numerous statements in support of slavery. For instance, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney argued at the South Carolina ratifying convention that: “While there remained one acre of swamp-land uncleared of South Carolina, I would raise my voice against restricting the importation of negroes. I am . . . thoroughly convinced . . . that the nature of our climate, and the flat, swampy situation of our country, obliges us to cultivate our lands with negroes, and that without them South Carolina would soon be a desert waste.” If the Founders were united in their commitment to abolish slavery, as the text claims, the inclusion and debate over several of the Constitution’s provision including the 3/5 clause do not make sense.
- On page 218, the text claims: “As support for slavery waned in the U.S. in the 1840s and 1850s, various legislators attempted to abolish slavery peacefully and democratically through popular vote in each state. Ultimately, however,

the effort to forestall war and **secession** over slavery and **states' rights** failed.” The passage provides no evidence for the alleged waning of support for slavery in the U.S. of the 1840s and 1850s. Worse, the text fails to mention various developments during these decades that aimed at extending and reinforcing slavery. For instance, the text makes no mention of the Supreme Court’s notorious *Dred Scott* decision, and only passing reference to the Fugitive Slave Act. Southern support during these decades for conquering new territory and incorporating new states where slavery would be practiced is similarly omitted. Many Southern politicians supported the Mexican War because it would add new slave states to the Union, and attempts to purchase or conquer parts of Latin America including Cuba and Nicaragua for similar reasons. In 1860 Mississippi Congressman L.Q.C. Lamar expressed a desire to “plant American liberty with southern institutions upon every inch of American soil.” The text’s claim that holding popular votes in each state was intended to “abolish slavery peacefully” is the opposite of historical truth. The idea of popular sovereignty was introduced by Democratic Presidential candidate Lewis Cass in 1848, who secured his nomination primarily with support from southern defenders of slavery. The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which allowed for popular sovereignty in Kansas and Nebraska, did not restrict slavery, but extended slavery. The Act undermined the Missouri Compromise’s ban on slavery in states north of the 36°30’ latitude.

- On page 218, the text states: “The Southern **Confederacy** seceded under the leadership of Mississippi Congressman and Mexican-American War veteran, Jefferson Davis. He argued that the U.S. national government had grown too strong, as exemplified in its demands for abolition.” Opposing the South’s secession, President Abraham Lincoln headed the Northern **Union** and rallied

troops to force the South into reunification.” (See also previous quote from 218 above). The text creates an unbalanced impression that South and North were equally responsible for the war. The text does not tell students that Lincoln in 1860 did not run on a platform of abolishing slavery, and in his 1859 address at Cooper Union expressed support for the enforcement of fugitive slave laws. Many esteemed historians have argued that Southern secession was based on exaggerated fears about abolition, and a belief that Lincoln would not properly respect the power of slave states. Since the Constitution contains no provision allowing for states to secede from the Union, the claim that Lincoln sought to “force” the South to reunify is biased as it gives the impression that Lincoln rather than Southerners were acting unlawfully. The text also does not identify a fundamental contradiction in the Southern support for states’ rights. Perhaps no piece of antebellum legislation gave the federal government more power and interfered with states’ rights more than the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act supported primarily by Southern Congressmen. States’ rights apparently meant little to these Southern Congressmen when these rights came into conflict with instead of supporting their interests in protecting slavery.

- The text mistakenly states on page 85 and page 220 that the Emancipation Proclamation ended all slavery in the United States. The Proclamation freed only those slaves in territories that were at the time in rebellion. The text does correctly state that the Thirteenth Amendment ended slavery on page 355, but never reconciles this statement with its previous mistakes.
- The text’s account of the period of Reconstruction is deeply biased and misleadingly claims that Reconstruction was the cause rather than the effect of discriminatory laws in the South. Discussing the period of Reconstruction on page 219, the text claims: “Slavery had been abolished, but the root issue of

how strong the national government should be, compared to state governments, would remain unresolved for many years.” The passage gives students no indication that protecting the newly won freedom of slaves was a major challenge in the aftermath of the Civil War.

- The text proceeds to state on page 356 that: “Civil rights moved along a good trajectory after the Civil War, but stalled between 1880 and 1930 because racial inequality had deep roots. Additionally, revolutionary activity in this period encouraged more racial and ethnic hostility.” And on page 357, the text states: “Forcing civil rights on Southern states during Reconstruction failed because it bypassed representational avenues and trumped the beliefs of millions of citizens, including veterans and previous legislators from the South. While freed slaves were being mass registered for the Republican Party by Republican governors, southern white citizens had been disenfranchised.” The text perversely implies that Reconstruction was responsible for Southern racism in the aftermath of the Civil War rather than the other way around. The text does not mention the notorious Black Codes passed by Southern legislatures from 1865-1866 that substantially undermined the political and economic rights of newly freed slaves, or that this legislation led the United States Congress to approve military rule of these states through the Reconstruction Acts. Once white Southerners regained full representation at Reconstruction’s end, though, the rights and equality of African-Americans were eroded by discriminatory legislation. To the extent that civil rights of African-Americans received protection after the Civil War, it was due to the Reconstruction policies the book identifies as a failure. The claim that Reconstruction “failed” is unbalanced because it does not note that the protection of the safety and rights of African-Americans and the ability of African-Americans to vote and hold elected office in the South were greater in

many respects during this period than they were for almost a century or more after Reconstruction ended. Finally, the passage does not acknowledge the perspective of Unionists at the time and many subsequent historians that Southern whites had lost the franchise because they committed treason by seceding from and waging war against the Union.

- The text's allegation on page 356 that revolutionary activity in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was a major cause of "racial and ethnic hostility" receives no serious support or defense in the text. The text is unbalanced because it ignores the possibility that victims of oppression may have turned to radical forms of political protest and radical political organizations when they could not secure reform through mainstream electoral politics, and fails to mention that radical political organizations were at times in the forefront in protesting racial inequality. To give just one example, the Communist Party USA provided crucial legal support to the accused African-American teenagers in the Scottsboro Boys case.
- Elsewhere, the text goes further in blaming the victims of injustice for their own persecution. On page 362, the text reads: "**Negative Experiences.** Also fueling racial and ethnic hostility were everyday, negative experiences between people of different cultures. In Texas, California, and New York, this was especially common as different groups judged and misjudged others based on their lifestyle, standard of living, or religious practices. To some, foreigners seemed to bring poverty, crime, disease, and a tax burden. Others attributed alcoholism or other negative traits to groups they observed committing the offending behavior." The book claims on page 374: "Among the American public at large were scuffles between different racial and ethnic groups who misjudged and misunderstood each other." By identifying discrimination with misjudgment and misunderstanding, the text minimizes

the extent and severity of discrimination, and the profound suffering that it often caused. Perhaps even worse, the text does not attempt to examine the accuracy of the negative stereotypes it applies to foreigners, and minority racial and ethnic groups. The book thus gives readers the impression that those discriminating had a legitimate basis for the stereotypes they held, and that “foreigners” might have deserved the discrimination practiced against them. This is group character assassination by insinuation.

- On page 217, the text claims about the opening of the West in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: “All were in the quest for self-betterment together, and the U.S. government aided this quest by creating laws that encouraged individuals to mine land themselves, purchase it, and keep the profits. This was unique in the history of the world and undergirded many people’s decisions to come. . . . The Immigration Act of 1882 imposed a ‘head tax’ of 50 cents per immigrant in order to pay inspectors, doctors, and government officials who were now staffing the ports. Overall, it was generally easy to enter the country, and only about 2% of newcomers were denied entrance.” The text does not mention the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 which preceded the passage of the Immigration Act of 1882, and forbid the entry of Chinese immigrants into the United States. The 2% exclusion figure is thus at best highly misleading and, at worst, a gross manipulation of statistics since it does not account for the blanket denial of entry to all potential Chinese immigrants. Had these immigrants been included, the exclusion rate would be significantly higher. The mistreatment of Chinese is similarly whitewashed in the following passage from 223: “Many immigrant groups also had ‘bosses’ who translated English and maintained control of their groups, sometimes leading strikes if workers were taken advantage of or went unpaid. It was tremendously difficult work, but some diaries kept by laborers reveal they considered it

more exciting than simple fieldwork and more likely to lead to skilled jobs later on.” In addition to romanticizing dangerous and grueling labor, the passage ignores that Chinese railroad workers worked longer, and were paid less than their white counterparts.

- The text on page 223 similarly romanticizes the economic opportunities for and conceals economic exploitation of farmers in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: “One Irish immigrant recorded, ‘You can, as soon as you get into regular employment, save the price of an acre and a half of the finest land in the world every week! And in less than a year, you will have enough money to start to the West and take up an 80-acre farm which will be your own forever.’ Land ownership was a unique opportunity, arising from the U.S. acquisition of territory as well as its desire to sell it off.” From this account, the reader would never suspect that western farmers’ feelings of economic exploitation by railroad companies, large landholders, and financial institutions were sufficiently widespread to spark the rise of the Greenback and Populist Parties.

### ***Topic Areas: The Cold War and Communism***

Summary: The textbook’s treatment of the Cold War in Chapter 8, section 1 is accurate in noting the tremendous political and economic repression that Soviet Union and Communist regimes around the world committed. At the same time, the text uses this repression as an excuse to prevent an honest and balanced accounting of the record of U.S. behavior during the Cold War. The book omits discussion of several instances of political repression committed by the United States and regimes it sponsored during this era. It exaggerates Soviet influence and intervention around the world and in Latin American politics. This exaggeration absolves the United States of almost all responsibility for missteps and misdeeds, and ignores the role that these missteps and

misdeeds occasionally had in contributing to the rise of radical movements in Latin America. Claiming that Communist movements in Latin America and elsewhere were solely the product of the Soviet Union overlooks that support for Communism was at times indigenous, and dishonors many who fought injustice and poverty during the Cold War by suggesting that they were mere stooges of the Soviet Union. The book also provides a factually incorrect, ideologically biased and largely unsubstantiated account of Ronald Reagan's role during the Cold War. The book is correct that Communist regimes were responsible for widespread repression and injustice. Yet claiming Communism as the root of all evil in Latin America misleadingly implies that governments preceding or movements opposed to Communist regimes were almost always benevolent.

- On page 380, the book concludes, "Between 1945 and 1991, major wars all across the globe were ultimately the result of Communist countries trying to spread their system and the United States trying to prevent it." On page 385, the text reads: "The loss of Eastern Europe behind the Iron Curtain and the subsequent fall of Southeast Asia to Communism motivated the United States to take action between 1950 and 1990. Wherever the Soviet army went, capitals were overtaken, religion was outlawed, economic and environmental abuse occurred, schools and information were controlled, and food, medical care, and housing suffered. Afterward, missile bases and nuclear weapons were built to defend the regime. All over the world, the USSR was coercing allegiance to this new order, and the United States felt compelled to resist it." The Cold War does offer many examples of aggression by the Soviet Union and Communist countries, but the suggestion that all the major wars of aggression during the Cold War were attributable solely to Soviet and Communist aggression is a significant exaggeration. The following sentences include only a partial list of interventions most scholars would agree were initiated by the United States. During the Eisenhower administration, the

United States undermined popularly elected governments it perceived as radical in Iran and Guatemala. During the Kennedy Administration, the United States attempted to overthrow the Cuban government through the Bay of Pigs invasion, and undermine or destabilize popularly elected governments in British Guiana and Brazil. The Johnson administration sent United States military forces to intervene in the political affairs of the Dominican Republic, and provided assistance to the overthrow of the Sukarno government in Indonesia. During the Nixon administration, the United States sought to undermine or destabilize regimes in Cambodia and Laos.

- The text's claim that support for Communism was solely the result of Soviet aggression also ignores indigenous support for Communist regimes. To take only the case of Vietnam, religious persecution, unequal distribution of land, and the general incompetence of the governments of Ngo Dinh Diem, and his successors were significant contributors to the rise of Communism among South Vietnamese. The text, though, provides a simplistic account of the Vietnam War and Communism in Asia on page 384: "China then sponsored Communism's advance into Southeast Asia, especially Vietnam, an event Americans attempted to thwart from 1954 to 1975. After the U.S. lost this important ground, Communism spread into Laos, Burma, and Cambodia where millions more died under revolutionary takeover. This spread of Communism into bordering areas was called the **domino theory**, and motivated U.S. containment efforts." The text neglects to mention that prominent American politicians and scholars during the early 1960s and subsequently questioned if the domino theory was accurate. President Kennedy's and Johnson's Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara admitted in his 1995 memoir, for instance, that he believed the domino theory undergirding the Vietnam War was wrong. The text offers no explanation of

or support for its claim that Southeast Asia was “important ground” in the Cold War. The passage also neglects to mention that many foreign policy analysts at the time and subsequently claim that the 1969 bombing campaign of Cambodia authorized by the Nixon administration contributed to the undermining of the government of Prince Sihanouk and the eventual takeover of power by the brutal Khmer Rouge regime.

- The text similarly ignores and misrepresents indigenous support for Communist and other radical political movements in Latin America. The text states on page 385 that: “Although the Cold War officially began after World War II, Latin America had already experienced decades of anti-Western thought and revolution. From the Mexican-American War in 1848 and the Banana Wars of the early twentieth century, opposition to the U.S. was already a rallying point among many Latin Americans.” The attempt to attribute sympathy for radical political reform and movements solely to “anti-Western thought” is both vague and unbalanced claim. The passage does not encourage students to consider that intervention of the United States in Latin America may not always have been justified, and may have at times fueled legitimate resentment of the United States and its policies. The general severing of the discussion of radical movements in Latin America and political repression and economic injustice at times sponsored by the United States is evident in the text’s treatment of reformist and revolutionary movements in particular countries including:
  - *Cuba*. On page 388, the text states that: “In 1959, Cuba was a modern, literate nation with a growing middle class. Like most Latin nations, it still had a heavy export economy, but progressive health, education, and technology were being developed. This stopped suddenly when Cuba was radicalized by Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, who turned the nation into a base for

Communist revolution in the 1960s.” The text ignores scholarly claims that the decline of the sugar industry and the educational system, the rise in illiteracy, and the political repression that occurred during the regime of Fulgencio Batista led many Cubans and members of the military to withdraw their support from the Batista government in favor of Castro. Indeed, the text contradicts itself later on the same page calling the period before Castro’s rise “two decades of dictatorship and turmoil” and also mistakenly claims the Cuban revolution began in “1856” rather than 1959. On page 398, the text attributes the rise of the mafia in Latin America to Communism: “Many fled rural areas where guerilla movements took over villages and mountainsides. Not only did this cause major strain on urban cities that could not provide enough jobs or resources for the majority of the population, it also caused the growth of crime, as citizens found it difficult to get what they needed. Mafias, crime rings, black markets, gangs, and gun violence all proliferated in Latin cities in order to provide money, goods, and protection.” The text does not note the significant involvement of the United States mafia in the Cuban economy under the Batista regime, and the elimination of this involvement following the Cuban revolution. Finally, the book’s discussion at the conclusion of the Cuban Missile Crisis on page 389 states: “It became clear how much of a threat Communism was, and how far revolutionaries were willing to go to beat American influence in the world.” The text does not note that Castro may have supported installation of missiles in part to defend his regime against being overthrown by the United States. The passage fails to mention, for instance, the Bay of Pigs invasion and the continued efforts of the Kennedy administration to undermine the Castro regime during Operation Mongoose that preceded the installation of missiles.

- *Guatemala*. The text claims on page 387 that: “In 1950, the Guatemalan president Jacobo Árbenz believed it was time to nationalize the Guatemalan economy, starting with the banana industry, which was Guatemala’s key source of income. The United States owned the banana farms, factories, and railways, but Árbenz seized all the property and prepared to redistribute the land to peasants. The U.S. suspected that Communist control and communes were forthcoming, so President Eisenhower organized a small military force and ordered the overthrow of Árbenz in 1953. Eisenhower then helped install a new president, Carlos Castillo Armas, who was willing to work with the United States and allow them to use Guatemala as a base for training **contras**, or anti-Communist rebels.” The text commits a factual error by claiming that the United States as opposed to United States companies, and in particular the United Fruit Company owned banana farms and factories in Guatemala. The text does not note that Arbenz was popularly elected, the belief of many Guatemalans that the United Fruit Company wielded disproportionate political and economic influence, the extent of the inequality in wealth and land that Arbenz was attempting to address, and Arbenz’s stated willingness to compensate the Company for its losses. Without this context, the text gives students the unbalanced and misleading impression that Arbenz’s overthrow was a morally justified response to Arbenz’s redistributionist policies.
- *Chile*. The textbook’s passage on page 393 reads: “In 1973, the Chilean Supreme Court and Congress permitted the military, run by General Augusto Pinochet, to put the country under martial law to restore order. A very violent turnover ensued, but Chileans permitted it because they expected the army to call for elections as soon as they subdued the revolutionaries. Instead, a military dictatorship remained for 16 years who repressed unions and basic civil liberties. The nation had swung from one end of the political spectrum to

the other almost overnight.” The passage’s claim that the Chilean population “permitted” the military coup receives no substantiation in the text. More disturbingly, the text’s implication that the thousands of Chileans who were illegally detained, tortured, or murdered during the coup and its aftermath “permitted” these human rights violations is profoundly offensive to victims of this persecution. The text omits evidence suggesting possible CIA involvement in a plot to kidnap pro-democracy Chilean general Rene Schneider, and United States involvement in concealing the extent of human rights abuses under the Pinochet regime.

- *Nicaragua*. On page 391, the text states: “Concerned that Nicaragua would follow the path of Cuba, U.S. President Ronald Reagan stopped economic trade with Nicaragua and organized a guerilla army of *contras* to disrupt the Sandinista regime.” The text does not note that the administration of President Carter had severed aid to the Somoza regime that preceded the Sandinista regime because of its human rights abuses, or the passage of the Boland Amendments by Congress that forbid assistance to the *contras* for the purpose of overthrowing the Sandinista regime. On a related note, the text makes no mention of the Iran-*contra* affair, and that the funding to the *contras* at the heart of the affair broke the law by violating the Boland Amendment.
- The text continues its factually problematic account of the Reagan administration’s anti-Communism activities by making this statement about intervention in Grenada on page 395: “Although this kind of direct American involvement had not occurred in Central America since the 1920s, the changeover in control was positive for citizens . . . They avoided the kind of chaos that other Latin nations were experiencing. The event inaugurated the turning of the tide of Communism in Latin America.” The claim that Grenada was the first direct U.S. involvement since the 1920s is factually incorrect

because the U.S. committed over 22,000 troops in its 1965 intervention in the Dominican Republic, and the United States occupation of Nicaragua did not end until 1933. The text does not provide any serious support or defense for its dubious claim that the invasion of Grenada “inaugurated the turning of the tide of Communism in Latin America.” Communist revolutions in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Peru, for instance, lasted well beyond the invasion of Grenada. The text never explains why if direct intervention in Latin America was crucial to “turning the tide” against Latin American communism, Johnson’s much larger military intervention in the Dominican Republic did not contribute to or have the effect of preventing or rolling back communism in Latin America. For these reasons, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the book’s claim stems from a desire to venerate Ronald Reagan and exaggerate his accomplishments.

- The text’s unsubstantiated veneration of Ronald Reagan is also evident on page 397: “By the 1980s, Ronald Reagan took a more definitive stand against Communism by calling it an ‘evil empire’ and opposing its spread directly. Building up America’s military and boosting its economy allowed him to intimidate the Soviet government, which was running out of money.” This passage omits crucial information. Ronald Reagan himself never claimed that he or his policies had won the Cold War. The book does not identify other significant causes of Soviet economic decline besides the desire keep pace with the Americans such as the Soviet-Afghan war, or the role Mikhail Gorbachev played in ending the exclusive power of the Communist Party in Russia. It does not note that the Reagan Administration’s military buildup was based on an assessment by United States intelligence agencies in the early 1980s that the Soviet Union was becoming stronger, not weaker. The fact that levels of Soviet military spending remained constant during the 1980s belies

the book's claim that the military buildup under the Reagan administration bankrupted the Soviet economy. The text does not explain how including Reagan's speech at the Berlin Wall on page 399 is relevant to Mexican-American history.

- Moreover, the text dishonors Reagan's legacy by misrepresenting the true nature of his accomplishments. While Reagan's approach toward the Soviet Union in his first term was notable for increased military spending, his second term was notable for its open and positive response to Gorbachev's reforms and willingness to negotiate with Gorbachev. Hawkish foreign policy advisers inside and outside the administration were often harshly critical of Reagan's significant attempts at rapprochement with Gorbachev. Many foreign policy analysts have argued that Reagan's peace overtures and willingness to negotiate with Gorbachev enabled Gorbachev to carry out more widespread reforms in Soviet domestic and foreign policy. Emphasizing Reagan's role as an aggressive Cold Warrior, as the book does, ignores his legacy as a leader of efforts at negotiated peace.
- Finally, the text contains a factual error on page 396. The text states that: "In the 1970s, U.S. President Nixon signed the first nuclear weapons limitations with the USSR that slowed the arms race." The text does not mention, for instance, the atmospheric testing ban negotiated with the Soviet Union by the Kennedy administration in 1963.

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<sup>i</sup> The reviewer would like to express gratitude to Nicholas Jacobs for his review of this manuscript.

<sup>ii</sup> See Emile Lester, *A Triumph of Ideology Over Ideas*, (Austin: Texas Freedom Network Education Fund, 2014).