

A review of chapter 6, *Mexican American Heritage*

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Chapter 6 is titled “1910- 1940: Revolution and World War.”

The chapter contains virtually no information relevant to Mexican American history or heritage. Out of 51 pages, 3.5 pages focus on Marxist-Leninism and the Communist Revolution. One page concentrates on “Revolutionary Socialism in Latin America,” 4 pages discuss Nicaragua, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil. Two pages quote speeches by Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt while another page is dedicated to quoting Pope Pius XI. The connection of these to Mexican American heritage remains unclear in the text. One page focuses on World War I with only one sentence related to Mexican Americans. One page focuses on “Campaigns of WWI” without any relationship to Mexican Americans. Six pages discuss US policy from Wilson through Roosevelt. Fourteen pages discuss Mexican history without connecting it to Mexican American history in any way. Roughly 65% of the chapter does not discuss Mexican Americans *in any way*.

The section summaries reflect the lack of historical analysis and historical accuracy found throughout the chapter.

The summary for Section 1 states that when one million Mexican refugees and exiles crossed the border, “the United States rallied to incorporate them.” The chapter does not discuss this incorporation in any way and fails to discuss the experiences of Mexican immigrants during this time period, including segregated schools and exclusion from other opportunities, the immigration debates focused on whether Mexican immigrants could be assimilated, and other specific historical facts about U.S. attitudes towards Mexicans and Mexican Americans during this time period. The summary calls Francisco Madero “Franco.”

The summary for Section 2 has little to do with “Mexican American heritage,” reflecting the focus of the chapter on material that is irrelevant to the Mexican American story.

- For example, they label Flores Magón a socialist when he consciously did not label himself a socialist, but an anarchist.
- They focus on the birth of communism and how Soviet Communism aided Latin American revolutions.
- They state that Latin American “Revolutions continued...still aligned against America and the prosperous West, and hoping that the right peasant leader or military strongman could restore the honor and success their nations were due.” (319)
- What does this have to do with Mexican Americans? No connections are made.

Concerns:

First, the chapter spends many pages writing about the Mexican Revolution with little information on how this shaped Mexican American heritage.

Page 270: The authors compare the United States' emergence from civil war to Mexico's situation following their civil war, presenting the US as prosperous while ignoring

- That the U.S. remained (and in some way remains) torn over the Civil War
- The creation of Jim Crow and segregation, and
- The thousands of lynching that occurred following the war.

Mexico is consistently placed in a negative light in comparison to the United States. This does nothing to assist students in understanding Mexican American heritage.

While this page does correctly state that about 1 million Mexicans entered the country during this time period, it does not discuss the recruitment by U.S. agriculture, mining, and railroads who sought low paid labor. In fact, the chapter does not discuss this at all.

Page 272: The authors state that “Franco [sic] Madero had associated with a revolutionary group called *La Regeneración*, or ‘The Regeneration.’” This was a newspaper, not a “group.”

Page 275: To say that Mexico was in “the sphere of Germany and the Central Powers” is a great exaggeration.

Page 276: The page is devoted to WWI yet only has one sentence about Mexican Americans. The War resulted in the creation of the predecessor to the Bracero Program through the Temporary Admissions Program, a significant event in terms of US perceptions of Mexicans as laborers who could be brought to the US when needed and easily sent back to Mexico when they were no longer needed. There is no mention of this.

Page 278: I'm not aware of Pancho Villa working with Pershing to “subdue Huerta's forces in Veracruz.” What is the source?

Page 281: The authors characterize the period after 1848 was a time when many Mexican Americans were “officials in city government [in Texas]” while in New Mexico “much of the leadership” was Mexican, Indian, or of mixed ancestry. What are the authors referring to here? What historians have written about in-depth is the loss of political, economic, and social status of Mexicans incorporated into the United States following 1848.

On this page, they also mention that “the south [of what?] remained a bastion of Mexican culture where Spanish-speaking schools, churches, orphanages, and even universities flourished.” It is very unclear what area they are referring to, particularly since they conclude that “Mexican-Americans were sometimes the dominant ethnic group.” Where?

On the same page, they conflate Mexican immigrants with Mexican-Americans when they say that “large numbers of Mexican-Americans still felt loyal to their homeland and planned to return...”

On the same page they write that there were “tens of thousands of squatters and guest workers” within the Mexican-American community. I am unclear as to who they are referring.

Page 282: In their discussion of el Plan de San Diego, they ignore more recent historical works, such as Benjamin Johnson’s *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans*. Although, to their credit, they do mention that a “race war broke out and Texas Rangers began imprisoning and executing Mexicans and Mexican-Americans indiscriminately,” they do not discuss the effects of this violence on the Mexican American community.

Pages 282-283 The authors mention both el Plan de San Diego and the Columbus Raid as part of a *reconquista*. The Plan never mentions *Reconquista* but right wing, anti-immigrant websites do. See http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=3692 for the text of the Plan.

Page 288 has a cryptic phrase that says ‘pictures of Mexican workers strikes, oils, mines, 1890s-1930s.’

Page 291: The discussion of the PRI does not include any mention of how it relates to Mexican Americans.

Page 298: The chapter is supposed to cover 1910-1940 yet devotes only two paragraphs to the Great Depression. It lacks any nuanced discussion of the repatriations, has nothing on the deportation campaign under President Hoover, and no mention of how the Great Depression helped strengthen the *American* identity of the Mexican American community. There are numerous historical monographs that would be useful here, including Francisco Balderrama’s and Raymond Rodriguez’s *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* and Camille Guerin Gonzalez’s *Mexican Workers and the American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* as well as many scholarly articles.

Page 308: The newspaper *La Regeneración* is again referred to not as a newspaper but this time as a “movement.”

Pages 313-318 discuss US policies around diplomatic relations, including “Moral diplomacy” and the “Good Neighbor Policy.” There are two sentences on Mexican Americans in this six page section.

Pages 298-307 discuss Marx, Leninism, Nicaragua, Brazil, Chile and Argentina. They do not discuss Mexican Americans.

Discussion questions:

The proposed discussion questions do not follow pedagogical principals in history. One question asks the student to imagine “what would be better” (this “what if” approach doesn’t assist students in understanding what did happen) while another asks students to compare the American Revolution of the 18th century to the Mexican Revolution of the 20th century. Such a comparison is based solely on their being labeled “revolutions.” I don’t see a point in making a comparison—it is comparing apples to oranges. Another question refers to “La Regeneración,” as the chapter does previously, as an organization. It was a newspaper. Rather than writing about Francisco Madero, they refer to him as Franco.

Significant events for Mexican American history and heritage 1910-1940

The time period under discussion in this chapter is a significant one for Mexican American history and one which I have researched and written about since the 1990s. There is a glaring absence of most of the events, policies, and historic processes that shaped Mexican Americans during this period.

For example:

- The rise of US commercial agriculture/ mining/ railroads and the recruitment of Mexican laborers to the Southwest
- The Temporary Admissions Program, a guest worker program, that lasted from 1917-21
- The culture/ music brought by Mexican immigrants
- Spanish language newspapers that flourished in this time period
- Americanization schools/ segregated “Mexican schools” of the 1910s-1920s
- Mexican American efforts to gain equal education for their children
- The rise of civil rights organizations such as LULAC, founded in 1929
- On-going immigration debates about the desirability of Mexican immigrants and their children that occurred throughout the 1920s
- Immigration laws, such as the 1924 Immigration Act and how it reflects the place of Mexican immigrants in the United States
- The repatriations/ deportations of the 1930s and their influence on Mexican American identity
- The New Deal and its influence on Mexican American identity
- Labor organizing, including cannery workers and agricultural workers, in the 1930s

Finally, there is no mention of or quotation from a Mexican American in the entire chapter. The chapter is focused much more on Mexican and Latin American history and US diplomatic history.

There is also a total absence of women. The research on women in this time period includes the work of Vicki L. Ruiz, Cynthia E. Orozco, and many others.

In sum, the chapter does virtually nothing to inform the reader about Mexican American heritage, includes ahistorical and inaccurate information in numerous places, and lacks many significant historical events that pertain directly to Mexican Americans during this time period.

Using this textbook in Mexican American Studies classes would be a great disservice to the students of Texas.