



PROPOSED MEXICAN AMERICAN TEXTBOOK INAPPROPRIATE FOR TEXAS CLASSROOMS

The Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) will consider a proposed Mexican American Studies (MAS) textbook that promotes offensive cultural stereotypes, distorts history and is plagued by over 140 factual errors. The Responsible Ethnic Studies Textbook Coalition, a group of organizations from across Texas including members of the scholarly, education, business, labor and civil rights communities like MALDEF, calls on the SBOE to reject the text.

In 2014, the SBOE invited publishers to submit textbooks for high school social studies electives in Mexican-American, African-American and other ethnic studies. *Mexican American Heritage* was the only book submitted for consideration. The head of that book's publishing company, a former SBOE member, once condemned public education as "tyrannical" and a "tool of perversion."

Scholars in U.S. history and culture have detailed hundreds of problems with the textbook, including passages describing Native and Mexican Americans as opposing U.S. society and downplaying slavery as the root cause of the Civil War. It erases Mexican American women from the history and culture the book poorly attempts to narrate. To read scholarly reviews describing the errors and omissions, visit MASforTexas.org. One comprehensive review concludes that the book fails to meet the professional standards and guiding principles for a text worthy of Texas classrooms and is a "polemic attempting to masquerade as a textbook." The textbook cannot be fixed with a few edits; the SBOE must reject it entirely.

Recent research from the University of Arizona and Stanford University shows that well-designed and -taught Mexican American Studies courses lead to increases in overall academic performance and social outcomes such as graduation rates for students taking those classes.¹ While Latinos comprise the majority of Texas public school students and stand to benefit from a high-quality MAS curriculum, *all* students deserve to learn from texts that promote critical thinking, not a reinforcement of degrading stereotypes.

Sample Excerpts from the Textbook

- "Chicanos, on the other hand, adopted a revolutionary narrative that opposed Western civilization and wanted to destroy this society." (p. 415-416)
- "Stereotypically, Mexicans were viewed as lazy compared to European or American workers." (p. 248)
- "[M]exican laborers were not reared to put in a full day's work so vigorously. There was a cultural attitude of 'mañana,' or 'tomorrow,' when it came to high-gear production. It was also traditional to skip work on Mondays, and drinking on the job could be a problem. The result was that Mexican laborers were seen as inferior and kept in low-paying, unskilled jobs that did not provide a pathway upward." (p. 248)
- "Illegal immigration has since caused a number of economic and security problems in the United States over which people are divided on how to solve. Poverty, non-assimilation, drugs, crime, and exploitation are among some of these problems." (p. 428)
- "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." (p. 219)

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¹ Nolan L. Cabrera, et al., "Missing the (Student Achievement) Forest for All the (Political) Trees," *American Education Research Journal*, 2014: <http://aer.sagepub.com/content/51/6/1084>; Thomas Dee and Emily Penner, "The Causal Effects of Cultural Relevance," *National Bureau of Economic Research*, 2016: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w21865>.