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Claremont McKenna College

**We've Been Here: A History of Mexican and Latinx Communities in  
Anaheim Schools**

submitted to  
Professor Diana Selig

by  
Marycarmen Montanez

for  
Senior Thesis  
Spring 2022  
April 25, 2022

For the village that helped me get to where I am today.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This thesis is my attempt to give back to my school community that has done so much for me. They are the reason I am here, and they inspire me everyday. I especially wanted to thank Ms. Flores and Mrs. Solorzano for being the first to inspire me to love history.

To the people in Anaheim and Orange County doing the work to advocate for the community and resist against forms of oppression and discrimination no matter how big or small.

Last but not least, I want to express my deepest gratitude to my family -- my mother, father, and sister for always supporting me and being the rock that grounds

me.

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis aims to explore the history of Mexican and Latinx students in Anaheim so that the community has a better understanding of the history of their people before them. This thesis is divided into three chapters, each exploring a different time period within Anaheim's history and how the city and its schools navigated the Mexican communities who inhabited the city and its surrounding areas. The first chapter looks at the 1910's to the 1920s, when school segregation and Americanization programs dominated Mexican education in Anaheim. The second chapter looks at the 1960's and 1970's when Anaheim school districts tried to integrate, and faced the budget cuts brought by Prop 13. The third and final chapter will look at the growth in Anaheim schools in the 80's and 90's and how schools dealt with overcrowded schools and the now majority Latinx population.

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## INTRODUCTION

“I asked my students to raise their hands if they felt like they were ghetto,” shared a history teacher at Western High School in between tears, “and almost all of them raised their hands.” The gravity of what they had just said could be felt throughout the packed room. During a meeting in spring of 2019, a room full of teachers, students, parents, and alumni presented their grievances to an Anaheim Union High School District trustee and district representative about the conditions of their high school. Western’s school community had one main question in mind: why were their high school facilities so decrepit? The school community felt the impacts of Western’s physical deterioration. Students were going to class, eating lunch, and participating in sports in subpar facilities. Because of its visual appearance and predominantly Latinx and students of color demographics, Western had also gained a reputation that was hurting the self-image of students and decreasing enrollment at an alarming rate. The Western community members in that room felt frustrated and wanted both answers and solutions from the district.



**Figure 1.** An image of lockers, some with missing doors, in the boys locker room at Western as of 2019. By Author.



**Figure 2.** An image of a window of a classroom at Western in 2019. Paint is peeling on the wall, and the window frames are old. By Author.



**Figure 3.** Light fixtures in a room at Western in 2019. One of the light covers is partially loose. By Author.

During my senior year of high school, a friend and I were being nosy through a storage unit after a school event and hit gold -- a few yearbooks from the 60's were hidden in a filing cabinet at the very back of the unit. We were both shocked when we opened one of the yearbooks and discovered a truth that at the time seemed to shatter my



own sense of reality. All of the faces staring back at us were white. Their last names weren't the dozens of Garcia's, Martinez's, or Rodriguez's that lined our yearbooks. Their clothing, hairstyles, and race denoted a nostalgia and imagery of a romanticized, white 1950's with milkshakes, poodle skirts, and saddle shoes. During my lifetime, Western High School -- the second oldest high school in Anaheim, California -- has been almost synonymous with Latinx. About 70% of my peers were "Hispanic" and another 23% of my high school classmates were other students of color.<sup>1</sup> I had previously had no idea it could be anything else but that.

This discovery made me question my school and city's history for the first time. I had been critical of inequalities at Western and was present at the aforementioned meeting, but never realized that looking at the past may help me understand my present reality. The questions that guided this thesis originate from my experience as a student at both Orangeview Junior High School and Western High School in the Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD) from 2012 - 2018. As an 11-year-old, 6th grader at San Marino Elementary School -- a predominantly-Latinx elementary school in the neighboring city of Buena Park<sup>2</sup> -- I was first confronted with the concept that a school could be "ghetto". While most of my peers were going to other junior highs in the same school district with better reputations -- I was teased for being one of the few students that were going to attend Orangeview Junior High School, which is the feeder junior high for Western High School. Even some of my peers whose home addresses fell within the

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<sup>1</sup> "Western High in Anaheim, CA - US News Best High Schools" (U.S. News), accessed April 12, 2022, <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/california/districts/anaheim-union-high/western-high-1747>.

<sup>2</sup> In 2012, the last year I was at San Marino the student demographic breakdown was: 49.3% Hispanic, 21.3% Asian, 17.9% White, 6% Two or more races, 4.5% African American, 0.5% Pacific Islander, and 0.3% American Indian. "San Marino Elementary," SchoolDigger, accessed February 3, 2022, <https://www.schooldigger.com/go/CA/schools/0807000780/school.aspx>.

school boundaries of Orangeview and Western, but were transferring to other schools in the district with better reputations, partook in the taunting. This marked the beginning of a similar trend within the next six years of my schooling, where I heard people in and out of my school degrade Orangeview and Western. More often than not, these comments felt racially motivated, frequently featured the word “ghetto” in some capacity, and insulted either the facilities or the student body.

As an athlete, I had the opportunity to visit other schools for athletic events. I often marveled with envy at the facilities of these schools, some of which were in my school district. Their air-conditioned gyms, automatic bleachers, and beautiful locker rooms proved to be a stark contrast to the manual bleachers at Western’s gym that hadn’t closed all the way since at least my first year there. When athletes from other schools would visit us, they would insult the facilities as well. This upset me. I was angered by the inequality between our facilities and its subsequent reputation, and felt that I had been short-changed. Even though my time at Western was nothing short of a positive, transformative experience for myself, filled with great teachers and peers, I believed my school was equally as deserving of a campus that didn’t feel like it hadn’t been significantly renovated since the 1960s.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> A conversation with an alumni from the early 60’s confirms that significant aspects of Western’s building and infrastructure are largely the same since they were a student there. Conversation with Western High School alumni, phone call, March 2022,



**Figure 4.** On the left is a section of bleachers at Western’s smaller practice gym with a sign that says “DO NOT USE BROKEN!!!” and on the right are bleachers at Western’s larger gym in 2019. By Author.

I hope this thesis helps answer the questions that I previously thought were ahistorical. The broken bleachers were not always broken nor did they suddenly come into existence in that way, but have been witnesses to the decades of history that have left them abandoned, when they should have been completely replaced decades ago. Western’s reputation as “ghetto” is not a fixed entity, but the result of many decisions made by Anaheim city and school leaders throughout the past century. The students in that history teacher’s classroom are not inherently “ghetto”. They were not born ghetto. They simply found themselves in the conditions created by the Anaheim city leaders before them. The school leaders made decisions that were never enough to create the foundations for schools that could structurally empower its Mexican students, or more generally, its students of color.

Although it was difficult to find enough sources to focus this thesis only on Western, it was this first interest in my alma mater that motivated me to try to understand the history of Anaheim, specifically the relationship it has had with Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants within its schools as the city’s demographics have changed

throughout time. My hope is that by exploring the history of Anaheim schools and their relationship with its Mexican community, Western's own existence could be placed within a larger historical context, and that Anaheim residents could have a more nuanced understanding of the city's often tense relationship with its Mexican community.

This thesis will mainly look at the city from the 1920's to 1990's, but the city's origins are critical to understand, as it laid the foundation for what was to occur during the aforementioned time period. Officially founded in 1857 by 50 German farmers residing in San Francisco,<sup>4</sup> Anaheim's name is a combination of both the Spanish and German language, marking the beginning of the city's history of grappling with communities of different racial and ethnic origins. The first part of Anaheim -- "Ana" -- hails from the Spanish-named river that runs through the eastern side of the city, the Santa Ana River. The latter, "heim", means "home" in German.<sup>5</sup> Anaheim was the first city to be established in Orange County and today, the city can be divided into two main sections: Anaheim, and Anaheim Hills (see Figure 1). Although both regions of the city are represented in Anaheim's City Council, they are often considered as two distinct regions by residents. Today, Anaheim is a predominantly Latinx city, also filled with many other ethnic communities. Anaheim Hills, on the other hand, is much more white and affluent.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Donald R. Bahret, "A History of the Anaheim Union High School District." Thesis, (Chapman College, 1969), pp. 1-222, 8.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> "[...] Anaheim Hills, a tony, largely white section of the city dotted with planned neighborhoods". Daniel Miller, "How One Election Changed Disneyland's Relationship with Its Hometown," Los Angeles Times (Los Angeles Times), accessed April 11, 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/projects/la-fi-disney-anaheim-city-council/>.

There are several school districts throughout Anaheim. Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD) serves 7-12 grade students east of the Los Angeles County line and Los Alamitos city boundary, and west of the Santa Ana River<sup>7</sup> (see Figure 5). AUHSD's feeder elementary school districts are Centralia Elementary School District, Magnolia School District, Cypress Elementary School District, Savanna Elementary School District, and Anaheim City School District (now called Anaheim Elementary School District) (see Figure 6). These school districts serve the predominantly Latinx portion of Anaheim and sections of surrounding cities such as Stanton, Buena Park, La Palma and Cypress. Students in Anaheim Hills are primarily served by the following school districts: Orange Unified School District (in Orange, CA), and Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified School District (in Placentia, CA). This thesis primarily focuses on AUHSD and Anaheim City School District, as those are the school districts of which primary sources indicate have played their biggest role in Anaheim's history with Mexican students in schools.

This thesis is divided into three chapters, each exploring a different time period within Anaheim's history and how the city and its schools navigated the Mexican communities who inhabited the city and its surrounding areas. The first chapter looks at the 1910's to the 1920s, when school segregation and Americanization programs dominated Mexican education in Anaheim. The second chapter looks at the 1960's and 1970's when Anaheim school districts tried to integrate, and faced the budget cuts brought by Prop 13. The third and final chapter will look at the growth in Anaheim

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<sup>7</sup> *Elementary School (K-6) Boundaries (not in our district)*. Map. AUHSD. <https://www.auhsd.us/District/Department/14207-ANAHEIM-UHSD/80474-Schools-Boundaries.html>

schools in the 80's and 90's and how schools dealt with overcrowded schools and the now majority Latinx population.

Last but not least, I hope that this thesis helps complicate and challenge narratives that Anaheim continues to this day. Anaheim's website states the following message from current Mayor Harry Siddhu:

Welcome to the city of Anaheim, where we empower the American Dream. An entrepreneur and Anaheim's first immigrant mayor in modern times, Mayor Sidhu believes in empowering the American Dream. It is a leadership vision inspired by his own experience making Anaheim his home and our city's tradition of embracing bold thinking and a strong economy in support of residents and neighborhoods.<sup>8</sup>

Most current Anaheim rhetoric leaves out its not-so-pretty histories, and instead sticks to simple narratives that do give light into how the city and its schools have contributed, frequently hand-in-hand, to inequalities among its residents from marginalized communities.

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<sup>8</sup> "City of Anaheim," Anaheim, CA - Official Website | Official Website, accessed April 11, 2022, <https://www.anaheim.net/>.

## CHAPTER 1

### **Ideas of Progress, Schooling, and Mexicans in Anaheim (1910s - 1940s)**

*The school is one of the most important places where the Mexican-American children may gain a feeling of integration and belonging. For some it is the only place where they may be brought into the current American life.*

-- James Jensen, *The Mexican-American in an Orange County Community*, 1947

Anaheim, similar to the rest of Orange County, has historically tended to pride itself as being a hub for progress and the touchstone for the innovation of the future. To celebrate Anaheim's Centennial celebration in 1957, Mildred Yorba MacArthur described the first German colonists who founded Anaheim as "far-seeing and enterprising souls".<sup>9</sup> However, these narratives and visions of progress predominantly shaped by its white, European inhabitants were fraught with contradictions. These ideals also faced a major obstacle -- the "Mexican Problem"<sup>10</sup>. Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants<sup>11</sup>, in the eyes of Anaheim's city leaders, were both an absolute necessity to the success of the city through their labor, but a nuisance at the same time. Anaheim's primarily white and male city and school leaders had to negotiate with their presence and somehow fit them within their constructed narrative of progress and success. Schools, therefore, became the main vehicle through which the "Mexican Problem" could be navigated.

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<sup>9</sup> Mildred Yorba MacArthur, *Anaheim, "The Mother Colony."* (Los Angeles, CA: Ward Ritchie Press, 1959), 3.

<sup>10</sup> "Southland's Mexican Problem," *Anaheim Gazette*, December 31, 1925.

<sup>11</sup> Because it is difficult to distinguish between how Mexicans in Anaheim identified based on whether their origins in Anaheim came from under Spanish-rule, Mexican-rule, United States-rule, or as recent immigrants, this thesis will use the term "Mexican" to identify all people in Anaheim who are of Mexican-descent. This term, of course, does not fully encapsulate the different ways in which different Mexican identities inform the relationship these individuals had with Anaheim schools or how Anaheim school officials saw them. Hopefully, this term does at least illuminate a more general relationship between the city, the schools, and Mexican residents.

Each time there was an influx of Mexican immigrants, or just a general growth in the Mexican population, Anaheim schools became a vehicle through which city leaders could exert their influence on the Mexican community. Since schools primarily dealt with the children, and therefore the next generation of Mexican residents in Anaheim, schools also became a way through which Anaheim could exert its influence on the future of the Mexican community. During this time period, Anaheim city and school officials used schools as an avenue through which they could segregate Mexican children and then later erase their “deficiencies” through Americanization programs. Residential segregation enabled both of these approaches, which aimed to remove the Mexican community and their contributions from the predominantly white, visions of progress.

### **Anaheim, Oranges, and Progress**

Orange County’s development relied heavily on agriculture -- without it, Anaheim and the county might not have had the economic prowess to establish and maintain itself as they did.<sup>12</sup> Anaheim’s original claim to agricultural and commercial success were its vineyards, but after a disease destroyed all of the city’s vines in 1891<sup>13</sup>, the Valencia orange became the new star. Although it was the land whose fertile ground provided the foundation for oranges to flourish, it was the labor of Mexicans that allowed for this industry to thrive. The success that these oranges brought to Anaheim became key, and it enabled future economic and population growth.<sup>14</sup> Anaheim’s Chamber of Commerce used narratives of progress fueled by this economic prosperity to attract more

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<sup>12</sup> Robert A. Slayton, Leland L. Estes, and Stephen O’Neil, “The Role of Colonias in Orange County ,” in *Proceedings of the Conference of Orange County History 1988* (Orange, California: Chapman College, 1989), pp. 114-122, 114.

<sup>13</sup> Bahret. “A History of”, 27.

<sup>14</sup> O’Neil. “The Role of Colonias”, 114.



financial success, stating in a promotional flier in 1923 that Anaheim was “at the heart of a thickly populated, prosperous area -- the strategic center of Southern California”.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the key role that Mexican labor played in this success, historian Stephen O’Neil observes in 1988 that there “is a near universal absence in the literature of any mention of the people who performed the actual work - the farm laborer”.<sup>16</sup> This erasure makes research into Anaheim’s relationship with Mexicans in schools so much more pertinent.

This same pattern of erasing Mexicans from Anaheim’s progress-driven narrative shaped Anaheim schools as well. James Jemson, the author of *The Mexican American in an Orange County Community* noted in 1947 that “the study of the Mexican-American in the schools may throw new light on the social conflicts he experiences and upon the social adjustments he has to make”. While Jenson’s thesis aimed to “show the acceptance of the Mexican-Americans by the community in which they reside and also their efforts to be accepted”,<sup>17</sup> there is evidence that this history is much more complicated than simple acceptance. Understanding how schools attempted to erase the Mexican community provides a glimpse into the relationship between Anaheim city/schools and Mexican residents, and complicates simpler past and present narratives of the city. School leaders attempted to erase Mexican culture and language. That erasure has obscured the contributions of the Mexican community that were so central to Anaheim’s success.

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<sup>15</sup> Anaheim Chamber of Commerce. “Are You Looking For A Factory Site in Southern California?,” 1923.

<sup>16</sup> O’Neil. “The Role of Colonias”, 114.

<sup>17</sup> James Maurice Jensen. “The Mexican-American in an Orange County Community.” Thesis, (Claremont Graduate University, 1947), 26.

### **Mexican Segregation in Anaheim Schools (late 1910's and 1920's)**

The history of Anaheim is strongly intertwined with the history of its schools and school system. Most historical accounts of both Anaheim Union High School District and the Anaheim City School District (now called Anaheim Elementary School District) recount a history with similar underlying themes to the history of Anaheim. The accounts include little to no mention of the Mexican community in Anaheim, emphasizing instead on the growth of the school districts as the city grew and the pioneering efforts of the school administrators involved. Schools were a key aspect and pride of Anaheim<sup>18</sup>. In a history of the Anaheim Union High School District, published in 1969 -- Donald R. Bahret explained:

A lot was preserved for a schoolhouse in the town plot of forty acres in the center of the colony. This was done as one of the first items of business even before a church was built. This type of behavior was in sharp contrast to the early Spanish settlers who usually built their church first, and the building of the school was left for those who were to come later<sup>19</sup>

Bahret claims that the first German settlers saw schools as an essential part of their newfound home, as is evident by how quickly they established a school house when they arrived in 1859 in comparison to their Spanish counterparts.<sup>20</sup> This began the city's relationship with a structured school system. Therefore, how Anaheim school and city leaders negotiated this valuable resource with its Mexican population is indicative of the city's identity in relation to the Mexican community. Even though Bahret acknowledges that Mexicans resided in Anaheim before the 1870's and at the time the German colonists

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<sup>18</sup> "The erection of the new schoolhouse created great enthusiasm among the people of Anaheim because they were very proud of their school system" Bahret. "A History of", 26.

<sup>19</sup> Bahret. "A History of", 18.

<sup>20</sup> Bahret. "A History of", 26.

first built this school, as “reference is made to Mexican laborers who have worked for the early settlers”,<sup>21</sup> it does not make clear as to whether this initial school system welcomed Mexican children.

The Mexican community in Anaheim had already been segregated into colonias and barrios before Anaheim schools officially segregated them into schools. Farm owners established colonies throughout Orange County to meet the housing needs of Mexican immigrants who arrived in Orange County to work the fields and groves.<sup>22</sup> According to O’Neil, the colonias “were set aside strictly as permanent housing for agricultural workers, neighborhoods or hamlets [...] and were set in the midst of agricultural districts quite separate from the growing towns of Anglo settlers”.<sup>23</sup> Mexican communities also formed within barrios throughout Anaheim, which is “where the neighborhood forms naturally as like-people congregate together bit-by-bit. This usually occurred on the edge of the cities”.<sup>24</sup>

Many of the colonias lacked proper sewage infrastructure, clean water, or suitable housing.<sup>25</sup> In 1922, an article titled “Clamoring for admission to the city” documented the efforts of the residents of Sonora town -- a Mexican colonia in Anaheim -- as they asked to be annexed into Anaheim so that they could access the city’s water system because the “health of the settlement was endangered by impure water”.<sup>26</sup> The article stated that this is not the first time this Mexican community has asked to city for water, explaining that “they have suffered much during the past few years because of a lack of adequate water

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<sup>21</sup> Jensen. “The Mexican-American in.”, 22.

<sup>22</sup> O’Neil. “The Role of Colonias”, 114.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 117.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 116,

<sup>25</sup> O’Neil. “The Role of Colonias.”

<sup>26</sup> “Clamoring for Admission to the City,” *Anaheim Gazette*, 1922.

service, and the city government has turned a deaf ear to their frequent appeals for an extensions of the system outside the corporate limits”.<sup>27</sup> The petition illustrated the vision Anaheim aimed to execute, as well as the residents of Sonoratown’s petition attempts to use this rhetoric to appeal to city officials:

We were accepted because we are coming to contribute to the great progress of America -- contribute as a drop of water helps to make the wave that forms the great ocean. We believe that you will help us because you know all this and also know of our desire to help in the growth of the city of Anaheim and make it the most beautiful city of the southland.<sup>28</sup>

The Mexican residents of Sonoratown understood how to utilize the narratives city leaders both cherished and used to justify their segregation in order to insist on access to valuable resources. A few months after their petition, Anaheim city officials annexed Sonoratown into Anaheim and gave them access to the city’s water system.<sup>29</sup>

Following a surge in Mexican immigration in the 1910’s,<sup>30</sup> Anaheim city officials like Albert Graham reacted to this growth in the Mexican population by seeking to extend the residential segregation of Mexicans in school as well. An article published in the Anaheim Gazette in 1916 describing an Anaheim Chamber of Commerce meeting reported that, “The Mexican situation occupied the floor for considerable time. It was started by Albert Graham who wanted to know if something couldn’t be done to segregate the Mexican children in the smaller schools”.<sup>31</sup> Here, Anaheim’s Chamber of Commerce exerted significant influence in how the city approached the Mexican children following the immigration surge. Anaheim’s economic interest and the school systems

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<sup>27</sup> “Clamoring for Admission,”.

<sup>28</sup> “Clamoring for Admission,”.

<sup>29</sup> “Mexican Colony to Be Annexed to City ,” *Anaheim Gazette*, January 4, 1923.

<sup>30</sup> Jensen. “The Mexican-American”, 22.

<sup>31</sup> “Resent Building of Richfield Bridge,” *Anaheim Gazette*, April 13, 1916.

were intertwined. The Chamber of Commerce's goal of segregating Mexican students also paralleled another initiative introduced at this meeting: deportation of "all undesirable aliens not eligible to residence in the United States".<sup>32</sup> Segregating Mexican children in schools became one of the prongs in this two-pronged approach to the "Mexican problem". By both removing Mexican immigrants and pushing Mexican children into segregated -- and subpar -- schools, Anaheim leaders attempted to push the Mexican community further into the margins, and erase them from the city's narrative of progress.

Mexicans at this point in time had been categorized as "white" within the legal system, but they were not granted the same privileges as Anaheim's inhabitants of European descent.<sup>33</sup> In action, their ethnicity and otherness was a stain on the vision of progress that was rooted in a sense of purity and whiteness as hallmarks of progress. In this same 1916 meeting, chamber leaders raised concerns about two schools, appointing a committee "to investigate the sanitary conditions of Broadway and Central schools and report back to the schools".<sup>34</sup> Anaheim's Chamber of Commerce utilized the supposedly unsanitary conditions of the Mexican community in the city as a justification for why Mexican children needed to be segregated in the schools. The subpar living conditions of the Mexican communities in Anaheim did not, in the eyes of Anaheim city officials, align with the city's constructed narrative of progress and growth, but were rather seen as hindrances to that vision. Both the 1916 and 1922 articles illuminate a contradictory dynamic between Anaheim and the Mexican community: the city of Anaheim

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<sup>32</sup> "Resent Building of Richfield Bridge."

<sup>33</sup> Jensen. "The Mexican-American," 22.

<sup>34</sup> "Resent Building of Richfield Bridge."

systematically denied the Mexican community access to resources such as water, then used the impacts of such exclusion and segregation to justify the segregation of Mexican children within schools.

The segregation of Mexicans into colonias and barrios enabled segregation within Anaheim schools. Because Mexicans in Anaheim already lived in segregated communities, all Anaheim school leaders like schools district Superintendent Melbourne A. Gauer needed to do was fund a new school within the boundaries of the colonia like Gauer did with La Palma School.<sup>35</sup> From its opening in 1926 (or 1928), the La Palma School is the most documented segregated school in Anaheim. It served “forty Mexican children of Anaheim’s Sonora town [...] for the opening of the fall term”.<sup>36</sup> The segregated colonias also made it easier for city and school officials such as Graham to push for school segregation on the basis of sanitation. The systemic denial of sanitary resources ensured that insanitary conditions, which were antithetical to the vision of Anaheim city leaders -- were concentrated in the colonias. School leaders then implemented school segregation as a natural extension of the existing residential segregation.

There are a few discrepancies in documentation regarding what exactly happened after Anaheim city officials and schools suggested the policy of segregation after the 1916 Anaheim Chamber of Commerce meeting, and before Anaheim districts opened the most well-known Mexican segregated school, La Palma School. According to Jensen, “with the arrival of the present superintendent in 1925 the administrative policy was changed. The Mexican-American students residing in districts other than the all Mexican

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<sup>35</sup> “Begin Work Early in Summer,” *Anaheim Gazette*, n.d.

<sup>36</sup> “School Opens for Mexicans,” October 11, 1926.

La Palma area were permitted to enter the school in their respective district”.<sup>37</sup> A year later, an article stated that the new La Palma School opened in October 1926, “in the old Palm street building which was recently moved to the new school site and has been thoroughly renovated and painted”.<sup>38</sup> However, descriptions in the Online Archive of California (courtesy of the Anaheim Public Library) included with images of La Palma School indicate that La Palma School opened in 1928.<sup>39</sup> Where Mexican students were segregated before 1925 is not too clear, but what is clear is that Anaheim schools segregated Mexican students in some capacity as an official policy before 1925, and then continued to do so afterwards as an unofficial practice.

From its inception in 1926 (or 1928), Anaheim school districts used the La Palma School as its main site for the segregation of Mexican students. It served the Mexican community within Anaheim, but initially served “forty Mexican children of Anaheim’s Sonora town [...] for the opening of the fall term”.<sup>40</sup> The annexation of the Mexican colonia of Sonora town into Anaheim may have incentivized the city to create a more robust method of segregation through the La Palma School. Jensen’s thesis includes attendance data about the La Palma School up until the publication of the thesis in 1947,<sup>41</sup> which was also the year *Mendez v. Westminster (1947)* ended the legal segregation of Mexican students in California. Sources are not clear on whether Anaheim school districts decided to comply with the new legislation brought forth by *Mendez (1947)* and close La Palma School that year or if they resisted and kept the school open a

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<sup>37</sup> Jensen. “The Mexican-American”, 27.

<sup>38</sup> “School Opens for Mexicans.”

<sup>39</sup> “La Palma School, Anaheim [Graphic],” Online Archive of California, accessed April 24, 2022, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/kt9m3nc7dw/?brand=oac4>.

<sup>40</sup> “School Opens for Mexicans.”

<sup>41</sup> Jensen. “The Mexican-American”, 29.

few years more. Regardless of which specific year the La Palma School closed, before the school building was bought and demolished to build a new apartment complex in 1970, it served as the La Palma Recreation Center.<sup>42</sup>

Mexican residents did not remain passive as the Anaheim school districts segregated their children into the La Palma School. According to Jensen, they “object[ed] strongly to the existence of the La Palma School as an all-Mexican school”.<sup>43</sup> Jensen cites a conversation with Louis Sandoval, “the leader of the Mexican-American movement” as his source for this push back, but does not provide much documentation about either the pushback against the La Palma School or the broader Mexican-American movement that Sandoval led. Mexican parents in the neighboring cities of Garden Grove, Westminster, Santa Ana and El Modena,<sup>44</sup> fought against the school segregation of their children in the years leading up to the *Mendez (1947)* decision. Most likely, the Mexican community in Anaheim resisted as well, as Sandoval noted and as the self-advocacy by the colonia of Sonora town suggests.

### **Americanization Programs in Anaheim Schools (1920s)**

Another surge of Mexican immigration, even bigger than the one in the 1910s<sup>45</sup> shifted how Anaheim schools approached their Mexican students. Following a county wide initiative in the 1920s where “orange growers were arranging to bring in as much

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<sup>42</sup> “La Palma School, Anaheim [Graphic],” Online Archive of California, accessed April 24, 2022, <https://oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/kt9m3nc7dw/?brand=oac4>.

<sup>43</sup> Jensen. “The Mexican-American”, 32.

<sup>44</sup> David-James Gonzales, “Mendez v. Westminster, 1945-1947,” ed. Lilia Fernandez, *50 Events That Shaped Latino History: An Encyclopedia of the American Mosaic* 1 (March 2018), 419.

<sup>45</sup> Jensen. “The Mexican-American”, 32.



Mexican labor as possible,”<sup>46</sup> Anaheim schools began to implement Americanization programs in addition to segregating Mexican children. By this point, Mexican labor had become an accepted necessity for the city, especially after the Immigration Act of 1924 limited immigration and therefore, sources of labor from eastern and southern Europe<sup>47</sup>: “There is little likelihood that the immigration from Mexico is to be further restricted, for agriculture in all the southwest has become absolutely dependent upon Mexican labor,” commented the *Anaheim Gazette* in 1925.<sup>48</sup> This surge in immigration occurred in and outside Anaheim. In an article titled “Southland’s Mexican Problem” the newspaper rang the alarm on the increasing Mexican immigration, while recognizing the necessity of this immigration to the agricultural community of the region. The paper argued that the agricultural sector could not afford the deportation of Mexicans, regardless of immigration status. Who the Anaheim Chamber of Commerce, and other city leaders previously deemed “undesirable aliens”<sup>49</sup> almost a decade earlier, suddenly became a necessary asset to the city -- even as they continued to face suspicion/hostility from city leaders. Fueled by a combination of fear, prejudice, and self-preservation in the face of a growing Mexican population, Americanization efforts in the name of modernization helped Anaheim city and school leaders take control of the situation and keep the newly anti-American threat at bay while maintaining the city’s narrative.

With a new understanding that the city needed the rapidly growing Mexican population to stay, Anaheim leaders needed to reconcile the presence of Mexicans in the

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<sup>46</sup> Gustavo Arellano, *Orange County: A Personal History* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 52.

<sup>47</sup> “The Immigration Act of 1924.” US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives. Accessed April 4, 2022. <https://history.house.gov/Historical-Highlights/1901-1950/The-Immigration-Act-of-1924/>.

<sup>48</sup> “Southland’s Mexican Problem”, December 31, 1925.

<sup>49</sup> “Resent Building of Richfield Bridge.”

city with their narrative of progress. Anaheim schools reacted by implementing Americanization programs to serve Mexican children and adults. These Americanization programs were a response to the city leaders' fear that the Mexicans' "unsanitary nature" and backwardness -- the antithesis to the visions of progress -- would harm the city. In the eyes of city leaders, if the Mexican population could become "Americanized", their presence would not pose a threat to the progress centered image of the city.

Americanization programs aimed to integrate the Mexican community into the city as a cleaner, English-speaking, industrious, and appropriate version of themselves. They did not acknowledge the irony of this logic, in which the labor of the Mexican community was what allowed Anaheim to claim such a narrative of progress in the first place.

Under the leadership of "the forum committee of the Anaheim Chamber of Commerce,"<sup>50</sup> "school heads"<sup>51</sup> like Anaheim Union High School Principal J.A. Clay, Druzilla Mackey -- superintendent for Americanization work in Anaheim,<sup>52</sup> and Melbourne A. Gauer -- superintendent of Anaheim schools,<sup>53</sup> the Anaheim Union High School and Anaheim grammar school began to implement Americanization programs as noted in the "Report on Americanization work done by Anaheim Union High School". Anaheim Union High School District established its own Americanization Department,<sup>54</sup> providing evidence that schools implemented Americanization programs in an organized, institutional manner. Many accounts in the *Los Angeles Times* note that Anaheim school

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<sup>50</sup>Local Correspondence, "Plan to Build Modern Town for Mexicans," *Los Angeles Times*, October 8, 1925.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Exclusive Dispatch, "Plan Community Center: Anaheim Schools to Join Construction of Building for Americanization of Mexicans," *Los Angeles Times*, April 16, 1926.

<sup>54</sup> "Data on the New Mexican Settlement Called Independencia," 1926.

leaders intended for the La Palma School to be built for Americanization programs in addition to its purpose as a school. The La Palma School building included “large domestic science rooms where the Mexican women may be given instructions in better housekeeping methods”<sup>55</sup> such as a sewing room and a cooking room.<sup>56</sup> An article titled “For Americanization: New Building and Equipment to be Provided at Anaheim” reported that “one large classroom will be equipped with shower baths, an electric washing machine, several sewing machines, gas ranges and other home furnishings for use in instructing the women in improved home-keeping methods.”<sup>57</sup> The “Report on Americanization work done by Anaheim Union High School” noted that “Here in this splendid school-house the Mexican women receive lessons in English, sewing, cooking, art work, and lessons on how to care for their babies in the most sanitary manner”.<sup>58</sup> The Americanization programs at La Palma School, while planning to incorporate night classes for Mexican adults in addition to programs for Mexican mothers and children, did not begin with these classes right away: “No steps have been taken towards the initiation of night school classes for the adult Mexicans, however”.<sup>59</sup> When they were implemented (which is not entirely clear), these evening classes “consist[ed] of English, letter writing, citizenship and music”.<sup>60</sup>

Anaheim schools prioritized providing Americanization programs to Mexican mothers and children. These leaders did this with the hopes that the city could maximize

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<sup>55</sup> “More Vocational Work: Anaheim Schools Look Forward to Increased Efforts Along Practical Lines,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 5, 1926.

<sup>56</sup> “Begin Work Early in Summer,” *Anaheim Gazette*, n.d.

<sup>57</sup> “For Americanization: New Building and Equipment to Be Provided at Anaheim,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 18, 1926.

<sup>58</sup> “Report on Americanization Work Done By Anaheim Union High School,” n.d.

<sup>59</sup> “School Opens for Mexicans.”

<sup>60</sup> “Report on Americanization Work.”

the amount of Americanization possible, and ensure that a future generation of Mexican children would grow up Americanized and pass that on to their children: “The children can be educated that they cannot follow in the footsteps of their parents and they can be given instructions regarding features of health and education for their parents. Through the young Mexican lies the greatest hope of correcting conditions in the home”<sup>61</sup> asserted “Southland’s Mexican Problem.” Anaheim city and school leaders used schools as a vehicle for “progress” to educate the Mexican children “correctly” and rid them of what Anaheim city and school leaders understood as deficiencies associated with their Mexican heritage. Although these Americanization programs did provide the Mexican community access to beneficial technology, at its core Americanization programs functioned under the prejudice that Mexican culture was inferior to that of American culture. Because the Mexican community continued to grow and showed no signs of stopping or decreasing, the best way to eliminate the “inferior” aspects of Mexicans were for schools to replace them with the “superior” aspects of American culture. Americanization programs served as a means to assimilate the Mexican community, not necessarily into the predominantly-white Anaheim, but into what the city viewed as an acceptable lifestyle for coexistence between the white population of Anaheim and the Mexican population.

This dynamic of assimilation without complete integration is manifested in how Anaheim city leaders distributed the physical space of the city. In an attempt to “modernize” the Mexican community’s living situation, the article “Plan to Build Modern Town for Mexicans,” notes that Anaheim city and school leaders planned:

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<sup>61</sup> “Southland’s Mexican Problem,” December 31, 1925.

the establishment of a modern Mexican colony in another section of the city. It is planned to construct a colony on modern lines with a community house, located within the heart of the district for the use of Americanization workers in molding better citizens out of the new Americans.<sup>62</sup>

Instead of choosing to “modernize” the Mexican community by physically integrating them in the white sections of the city, Anaheim city and school leaders chose to “modernize” them at a distance, in different sections of the city. Similarly, when Anaheim annexed Sonora town under the guise that their annexation into the city and its water system would “fix” and “purify” the Mexican community:

[t]he board deemed it advisable to grant the request and bring them into the fold for sanitary reasons. Because of the lack of pure water, sewer and health regulations sickness was prevalent there and many contagious diseases originated in the colony [...] the atmosphere will undoubtedly be purified. The health of the community will be improved and a menace to the entire city removed.<sup>63</sup>

Anaheim city leaders viewed “pure water, sewer and health regulations” as valuable resources that the city could provide the Sonora town colonia to make their existence more inline with the vision of purity and progress of Anaheim, just as the city utilized schools as a method for this same goal.

However, Anaheim city and school leaders maintained the Sonora town colonia physically segregated and the Mexican children in the community remained primarily segregated in the La Palma School. Anaheim school leaders even continued to add Americanization programs to other colonias, continuing a pattern of providing the Americanization programs within the colonia, with no intentions of integrating the community into Anaheim. A report titled, “Data on the New Mexican Settlement Called

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<sup>62</sup>Local Correspondence, “Plan to Build Modern Town for Mexicans,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 8, 1925.

<sup>63</sup> “Mexican Colony to Be.”

Independencia” indicted that Anaheim Union High School District implemented an Americanization program in the Colonia Independencia in 1926,<sup>64</sup> 3 years after<sup>65</sup> the first Mexicans of the colonia bought this tract of land from the previous owner.<sup>66</sup> Anaheim school leaders, such as the “High School board of trustees, [and] the principal, Mr. J. A. Claye [...] are so convinced of the value of Americanization work that they are not only purchasing land and planning to erect a similar building as that in the other Mexican community in Anaheim, but are in a great rush to get the land and have [it] completed by March 1928 ”.<sup>67</sup> The Americanization Department found an added benefit to implementing the Americanization programs in the Colonia Independencia -- the average age of the Mexican community in this colonia was younger than in other colonias, “and therefore, they are taking to the new ideas more rapidly”.<sup>68</sup>

Anaheim school leaders prided themselves on developing one of the best Americanization programs in the region, continuing to replicate the narratives of progress within their reports on the Americanization programs. The La Palma School was “expected to develop into one of the most comprehensive Americanization centers in the Southland”<sup>69</sup> predicted the 1926 article “Schools Open for Mexicans.” Most articles and reports on the topic of Anaheim’s Americanization programs report similar sentiments about the success of the programs, illustrating a common narrative around these programs -- at least from the perspective of Anaheim’s white leaders and/or inhabitants. City leaders depicted these efforts to Americanize the Mexican community as a crucial aspect

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<sup>64</sup> “Data on the New Mexican,” 1926.

<sup>65</sup> O’Neil. “The Role of Colonias”, 116.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> “School Opens for Mexicans.”

to their narratives of progress. While the rest of the Southern California region faced challenges in navigating surges in Mexican immigration, Anaheim prided itself once again as one of the best at moving forward successfully.

The consequences of Americanization are riddled with nuances and complications. Americanization efforts did provide more opportunities and a better quality of life to the Mexican community with access to city resources and “aided some of them in securing better jobs and others giving steady work”.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, it’s origins both ignored the role the city played in creating these conditions and continued to stigmatize the Mexican community and their culture. Americanization programs imposed upon the Mexican community and its children an Anglo-centric framework as the “appropriate” standard of living that devalued their own Mexican culture, language, and customs. These programs did not provide resources to the Mexican community with dignity and respect, but with the intentions to fix the “Mexican problem.” A more dignifying program should either come from the Mexican community themselves, or be created alongside Mexicans so that any programming both recognizes and meets their genuine needs. Programs should not patronize the culture of the community, but instead celebrate it.

However, any sort of surface-level program would not consider the heart of the problem and is a step too late. Anaheim leaders *could* have treated the Mexican community differently. The city’s leaders could have not denied vital resources such as clean water and could have provided integrated and equal schooling to Mexican children. Instead, Anaheim city leaders made decisions that hurt the Mexican community and their

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<sup>70</sup> “Report on Americanization,” n.d.

children by pushing them out of the same educational experience white students had. White students and the white community also missed out on the relationships and knowledge they could have gained by engaging and living with Mexican children and the Mexican community. By creating and cementing segregation in and outside schools, Anaheim city and school leaders set the foundation for future generations of Mexican and Latinx people in the city to feel the repercussions of such social inequalities.



## CHAPTER 2

### **Integration Attempts and Funding in Anaheim Schools (late 1960s - 1970s)**

The years after World War II brought dramatic changes to Anaheim that continued into the 1960s. Anaheim, like the rest of Orange County, underwent a suburban boom, and the population grew significantly.<sup>71</sup> In 1950, the population of Anaheim was 14,556<sup>72</sup> and by 1964, it grew to 144,716.<sup>73</sup> Tract housing began to replace the ranches and orange groves that used to mark the terrain. Anaheim school districts opened many more schools to accommodate for the new children coming into the city. Anaheim Union High School District, for instance, grew from 6,000 students in 1957 to 25,000 in 1968.<sup>74</sup> During those 11 years, AUHSD opened 20 new schools -- seven high schools and thirteen junior high schools.<sup>75</sup>

In *Orange County: A Personal History*, journalist Gustavo Arellano described a fifty-seven page booklet titled *Living in Orange County* published by the Anaheim City School District in the 1960s that featured two children named Diane and Don from Fresno who were going to move to Anaheim.<sup>76</sup> The Anaheim district released this booklet to introduce Orange County to the many new children and parents of these children who were coming into the county and it highlighted the significant growth the county had seen in the past decade.<sup>77</sup> What this Anaheim City School District's booklet and its two

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<sup>71</sup> Gustavo Arellano, *Orange County*, 70.

<sup>72</sup> "Orange County Progress Report," vol. 2 (Orange County, CA: Orange County Board of Supervisors, 1962).

<sup>73</sup> "Orange County Progress Report," vol. 3 (Orange County, CA: Orange County Board of Supervisors, 1964), 5.

<sup>74</sup> Bahret. "A History of", 120-121.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Gustavo Arellano, *Orange County*, 43.

<sup>77</sup> Gustavo Arellano, *Orange County*, 43-44.

Anglo-named children protagonists didn't highlight was the conflict between Mexicans and Anaheim school leaders that had occurred in the previous decades, and the one that was currently underway. The 1960's and 1970's brought forth challenges of integration and funding for Anaheim schools that were similar to those occurring throughout the state of California. Concurrently, immigration into Anaheim and Orange County from the rest of the United States and other countries was fueling a dramatic population increase, and the Mexican and Latinx population made up the most dramatic increase. Anaheim school leaders, including Anaheim Union High School District's Superintendent Paul W. Cook (1957 - 1968), Anaheim Elementary School District Superintendent James D. Brier, Savanna School District Superintendent Dei Smeltzer, and Magnolia Elementary School District's Superintendent Spencer Covert grappled with this increase in Latinx immigration alongside a growing white population, while attempting to find solutions to integration and funding issues for their schools. Integration efforts lacked the scale necessary to successfully integrate completely, and schools that did integrate often did it at the expense of the Mexican students. Mexican students also bore a significant amount of the burden caused by a decrease in funding. By the end of the 1970's, Mexican students and their community lost two predominantly Mexican schools to these issues.

**“A Different Type of Segregation”<sup>78</sup> and Integration in Anaheim Schools: Anaheim District Closes Washington Elementary School**

By 1968, both *Mendez v. Westminster* (1947) and *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) had outlawed segregation, and conversations about language and

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<sup>78</sup> Helen Johnson, “Ethnic, Racial Housing Patterns Affect Schools ,” *Los Angeles Times* , October 20, 1968.

segregation shifted throughout Anaheim and the rest of Orange County. The city of Anaheim physically grew not just in population, but geographically. As the city grew outwards, the Mexican community remained largely segregated, and that segregation shaped the demographics of school attendance that was largely composed of neighborhood schools. An article in the “Los Angeles Times” titled “Ethnic, Racial Housing Pattern Affect Schools” noted that:

Now, school districts are trying to cope with a different type of segregation, a kind that develops because elementary schools, generally, are neighborhood schools. Since barrios and ghettos are part of Orange County’s housing patterns, several school districts have a concentration of minority students in certain areas.<sup>79</sup>

Although La Palma School had long been closed, some of the schools throughout Anaheim’s school districts still remained primarily segregated due to the neighborhood school structure.

The illegality of desegregation had not dramatically changed whether Mexican students systematically attended segregated schools, rather it transformed it from de jure segregation to de facto segregation. A report from the mid-1960’s (exact date is not clear) titled “Information Concerning Mexican Americans in Anaheim” researched “two census tracts located in the older and central part of the city”<sup>80</sup> and noted that “2,025 or 20% of all people inhabiting [these two census tracts] are Anaheim citizens with a Spanish surname. The Mexican-American community in Anaheim constitutes the largest single minority group found in the city and 38% of them find residence in this zone of transition.”<sup>81</sup> The report -- whose author or sponsoring organization is not made clear by

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<sup>79</sup> “Ethnic Racial Housing Patterns.”

<sup>80</sup> “Information Concerning Mexican-Americans in Anaheim” (Anaheim, n.d.).

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

documentation -- considers this is an improvement, as “prior to to and until 1948 this group was confined to this area because of social segregation, but today they are found in every quadrant of the city as a result of a special effort on the part of the school system.<sup>82</sup> The author(s) of this report fail to acknowledge a critical aspect of history shaping their present: the policies that Anaheim city leaders created hand-in-hand with Anaheim school leaders to segregate Mexican students officially before 1925, and unofficially after 1925. Instead, this report described it only as “social segregation”, limiting the scope of understanding of what had actually occurred. The segregation the Mexican community experienced in Anaheim was brought forth by policies created by Anaheim school and city leaders, not only through social norms. They also failed to acknowledge that although Mexicans were not segregated to the same degree as before 1948, they were still segregated enough so that specific neighborhood schools soon became classified as “minority schools” by the California State Department of Education.

In 1968, the California State Department of Education implemented a new policy that directed schools throughout California to correct any “racial imbalance” in schools.<sup>83</sup> The State Department of Education classified three Anaheim school districts (among the twelve it identified throughout Orange County)<sup>84</sup> as having at least one “minority school” due to residential segregation.<sup>85</sup> The “Ethnic, Racial Housing Pattern Affect Schools” article explained that the parameters required to be defined as a “minority school” was “that the percentage of a school’s minority enrollment exceeds the percentage for the

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> “Ethnic Racial Housing Patterns.”

<sup>84</sup> Scott Moore, “Schools Declare Intent to Correct Racial Imbalance: But Larger Districts Face Controversy Over Bussing of Students as a Solution,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 18, 1970.

<sup>85</sup> “Ethnic Racial Housing Patterns.”

total districts by more than 15%.”<sup>86</sup> In Anaheim, most of the “minority enrollment” came from the Mexican community. The Anaheim schools classified as “minority schools” were Savanna Elementary School at Savanna Elementary School District, Washington Elementary School and two other unnamed elementary schools at Anaheim Elementary School District, and Esther L. Walter Elementary School District at Magnolia Elementary School District. The numbers were striking. Savanna Elementary School “ha[d] a 20% minority enrollment in contrast to a 3% figure district wide.”<sup>87</sup> Anaheim Elementary School District, “with a minority figure of 12% for the total district, ha[d] one school [with a] 65% minority and two others a little above 30%.”<sup>88</sup> Walter Elementary School in Magnolia’s school district “ha[d] a minority figure of 25% in contrast to a district figure of 8.9%.”<sup>89</sup>

Under pressure from the California State Department of Education, the leaders of these Anaheim school districts sought ways to correct these ethnic and racial “imbalances”. Each district, with its district specific tools at its disposal, approached its problem of integration in distinct ways. Savanna Elementary School District’s plan was to disperse its 20% largely Mexican minority enrollment by redrawing attendance boundaries.<sup>90</sup> Superintendent Dei Smetlzer explained: ““We’ll split this 20% as soon as we add four more classrooms to the new Mary Perez School.””<sup>91</sup> Smetlzer’s plan did involve integrating its Mexican students into another school. However, he decided to do it at the expense of moving Mexican children, *not* the Anglo children. More Mexican

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

students bore the brunt of that difficult transition of changing schools and integrating the Mary Perez School. Superintendent Smeltzer minimized the challenges of this transition, as he considered “spreading the children out [as] one of the minor factors when [they] redraw attendance boundaries.”<sup>92</sup>

Magnolia Elementary School District’s Superintendent Spencer Covert didn’t plan on implementing significant plans of integration, but rather took the route of improving Walter School: “As one major way of meeting educational needs in the Walter School, the district has reduced its student-teacher ratio to 26-to-1 in contrast to a district average of 29-to-1.”<sup>93</sup> Magnolia’s Assistant Superintendent for Instruction Arch J. Haskins assured in an article titled “Schools Declare Intent to Correct Racial Imbalance” that “bussing is down at the bottom of the totem pole [...] Enough children are walking distance that there’s no big problem.”<sup>94</sup> Leadership’s hesitancy to integrate Magnolia’s Walter School even though Haskins expressed that integration was possible even without bussing may have stemmed from the nature of Walter School and its Mexican community’s concerns: “Walter School is in a predominantly Mexican-American neighborhood. Several residents went before the board of education recently to argue in favor of the neighborhood school concept. ‘They expressed concern their children would be either bussed or moved out of the area,’ Haskin sa[id], ‘and they want to keep their community intact.’”<sup>95</sup>

Mexican parents may not have necessarily wanted to keep their schools segregated as much as they wanted to ensure their students were not separated from their

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> “Ethnic Racial Housing Patterns.”

<sup>94</sup> “Schools Declare Intent.”

<sup>95</sup> “Schools Declare Intent.”

neighborhood school. Esther L. Walter Elementary School's history was deeply connected to Colonia Independencia, the Mexican colonia that the school served. Gloria Lopez, Colonia Independencia's beloved activist who fought hard to advocate for the colonia, worked to name this school after a teacher at Magnolia School No. 2, Colonia Independencia's formerly segregated, Mexican school.<sup>96</sup> Walter Elementary was also .6 miles from the center of Colonia Independencia.<sup>97</sup> This school, even though it was segregated, had a close historical, communal, and physical connection to Colonia Independencia. It might have been too big of a loss for the tight-knit community if their students were separated across different schools. Besides, Colonia Independencia's Mexican parents may have had faith that Lopez's activism may improve the situations within Walter School without dividing the community across different schools. Covert may have also wanted to limit robust integration efforts after Lopez's activism integrated Magnolia School No. 1 and Magnolia School No. 2 in 1955, angering many white parents in the process.<sup>98</sup>

Magnolia School District leadership centered the concerns of the Mexican community to maintain Walter School as a neighborhood school while they tried to figure out how to balance out their student demographics and provide a more equal quality of education -- regardless of whether that care for the concerns of the Mexican community

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<sup>96</sup> Gabriel San Román, "Gloria Lopez's Legendary Activism Began with the Integration of an Anaheim Mexican School," OC Weekly, September 4, 2019, <https://www.ocweekly.com/gloria-lopezs-legendary-activism-began-with-the-integration-of-an-anaheim-mexican-school/>.

<sup>97</sup>"La Colonia Independencia to Esther L. Walter Elementary School," Google maps (Google), accessed April 25, 2022, <https://www.google.com/maps/dir/La+Colonia+Independencia,+Anaheim,+CA+92804/Esther+L.+Walter+Elementary+School,+10802+Rustic+Ln,+Anaheim,+CA+92804/@33.8046907,-117.972343,18z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m14!4m13!1m5!1m1!1s0x80dd28550ee12091:0xfe9697409b8b571d!2m2!1d-117.9695643!2d33.8052679!1m5!1m1!1s0x80dd28ffdf1d7dbd:0xa0e7ff06b1390ebf!2m2!1d-117.9734898!2d33.8060801!3e2>.

<sup>98</sup> "Gloria Lopez's Legendary Activism."

were genuine or not. Savanna School District leadership, on the other hand, decided to move Mexican students without acknowledging that they were the ones who were going to bear the burden of that transition.

Much larger than the Magnolia and Savanna districts, Anaheim Elementary School District faced different challenges with integration. Anaheim Elementary School District's Superintendent James D. Brier had to contend with bussing as a means for balancing out school demographics and integrating Mexican students into predominantly Anglo schools when the method was so unpopular among school administrators and parents. In the article, "Schools Declare Racial Imbalance," Brier shares his thoughts on the matter:

'Bussing?' asks Supt. James D. Brier. 'Nobody likes to use the word. We call it 'transferring' children. But how do you transfer them? By bussing, and that's the only solution available to us as we see it.' The only way to eliminate racial imbalances is to bus certain youngsters who now walk to central area schools, to other schools, Briar contends. That's the only way you can do it; there's no other way,' he maintains flatly. 'You have a central area here where there is a high ethnic population. These kids are not in an area where there are schools without ethnic imbalance, so the only way to get them there is to bus them [...] Little community opinion has been expressed so far, Briar says'<sup>99</sup>

Brier's comment speaks to the degree to which segregated neighborhoods and their schools were concentrated close to each other, creating larger portions of Anaheim that were completely segregated. Despite the necessity of bussing within the context of the district's geography and entrenched residential segregation, Brier spoke out against it<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> "Schools Declare Intent."

<sup>100</sup> Steve Emmons, "Reaction Mixed on School Integration Policy Suspension: Reaction Is Mixed on School Policy Repeal," March 14, 1970.



and instead aimed to close the predominantly Mexican Washington School. In “Ethnic, Racial Housing Pattern Affect Schools”, the author wrote:

Supt. Brier of the Anaheim district describes steps his district has taken as ‘partial solutions’. As one step fifth and sixth graders from Washington School, where Spanish surnames make up 65% of the enrollment have been transferred to three adjacent schools, Thomas Jefferson, Horace Mann and Abraham Lincoln, where their ethnic group represents only 25% to 32% of the enrollment. ‘We are attempting to phase out Washington School’ Brier said, ‘Reaching that goal will depend on the approval of bonds for construction at Horace Mann and Lincoln Schools’ [...] With new buildings at those two schools and expansion of Jefferson School, Washington students would be more widely dispersed. The superintendent said the next step then would be to consider a change in the boundaries to bring in more Anglo students to the schools. ‘That definitely will be one of the factors to be considered in drawing new boundaries’ he said.’

By choosing to close Washington School, Superintendent Brier followed a pattern Chicano/Latino studies emeritus professor Gilbert G. Gonzalez described in *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation*: “[q]uite often they achieved integration by closing down the old Mexican school, a practice seldom applied to the old Anglo school.”<sup>101</sup> It’s not clear as to why Superintendent Brier decided to close Washington School specifically to achieve a more balanced school district. In 1977, Superintendent Brier claimed that ““eventually Washington School should be closed, because it is not economical to operate,”<sup>102</sup> but does not state why it had to be Washington School in particular, or why closing any other school in the district would not have brought the same benefits to the district’s operational costs. Regardless of the reasons as to why the Anaheim Elementary School District and Superintendent Brier chose to close Washington School, this decision did reflect the resulting dynamics that efforts of integration had within Mexican

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<sup>101</sup> Gilbert G. Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation* (Denton, TX: UNT Press, 2013).

<sup>102</sup> Leslie Berkman, “Integration in County: Nobody’s Complaining: Even Minorities Cling to Concept of Local Schools,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 20, 1977.

communities and their children -- administrative decisions made by non-Mexican school leaders impacted them the most.

In March 1970, the California State Board of Education suspended its policy for “racial integration.”<sup>103</sup> As a result of this policy suspension, an article titled “Reaction Mixed on School Integration Policy Suspension”<sup>104</sup> explained districts were no longer required to correct racial “imbalances”: “Magnolia Elementary School District plans to leave its one imbalanced school as is because it exceeds the previous state limit by only about 5%. ‘And nobody’s complaining,’ said Supt. Spencer Covert.”<sup>105</sup> He did eventually move some white students into Walter School as well after a “trainable mentally retarded program”<sup>106</sup> displaced these students from Salk School<sup>107</sup> which “cut the minority percentage to 25%” one year after the State Board of Education rescind its racial integration policy.”<sup>108</sup>

In contrast, Anaheim Elementary’s Superintendent Brier affirmed that “The district policy [...] will remain unchanged.”<sup>109</sup> The Anaheim board, according to Superintendent Brier, “already had decided its course of action before the state board rescinded its policy”<sup>110</sup> and “gone on record against busing to achieve racial balance and said, in effect, it will correct instances of racial imbalance when opportunities arrive, such as placement of new schools or setting attendance boundaries.”<sup>111</sup> Just as Superintendent

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<sup>103</sup> “Reaction Mixed on School.”

<sup>104</sup> This article does not include Savanna’s Superintendent Smeltzer’s opinion, reaction, or policy decision after the department’s policy change.

<sup>105</sup> “Reaction Mixed on School”

<sup>106</sup> Thomas Fortune, “9 School Districts Still Ethnically Imbalanced: 4 of Systems Cited Year Ago by State Satisfy Guidelines, Removed From List,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 21, 1971.

<sup>107</sup> “9 School Districts.”

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> “Reaction Mixed on School.”

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

Brier claimed, the Anaheim board kept its policy, and in January 1971, an article titled “9 School Districts Still Ethnically Imbalanced” explained that: “Anaheim City District got some mileage out of converting Washington School to primary grades only and having fourth, fifth and sixth graders walk to surrounding schools. Washington remains 64.5% minority students, however.”<sup>112</sup> It’s important to note the language that is used in this update -- in particular the phrase “got some mileage”. This word feels so cold in contrast with the following sentence. Washington School upper graders now had to transition to another school to which they had to walk to, and this article instead focuses on this change as a benefit to the district. The Anaheim School district “got some mileage” out of it as if the school and the community it served were simply an inanimate object and not a locus for the Mexican community. The goal of integration appeared to be an abstract marker for the district to reach. District leaders seemed unmotivated to fix the effects of “de facto segregation [that] is considered almost as harmful to a minority child as deliberate or de jure segregation”<sup>113</sup> in the words of the 1968 “Ethnic, Racial Housing Patterns Affect Schools” article that first documented these integration efforts in Anaheim.

More than a year after the State Department of Education suspended the racial balance policy, Superintendent Brier and the Anaheim School District board implemented their plan to Washington School, but decided to abandon all other efforts for integration . As noted in September 1971 in an article titled “Racial Imbalance Weighed by 7 School Board in County”:

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<sup>112</sup> “9 School Districts.”

<sup>113</sup> “Ethnic Racial Housing Patterns.”

the Anaheim Elementary [board] plan to do nothing immediately to end the imbalances [...] Many spokesmen for Mexican-American residents of these school districts say there is not much sentiment for bussing youngsters away from their neighborhood schools. But they say Mexican-American parents do definitely want improved educational opportunity for their children<sup>114</sup>

The Anaheim Elementary School board continued phasing out Washington School throughout the following years until 1977,<sup>115</sup> when they finally closed the school. To do so, Superintendent Brier went back on his initial stance against bussing once he finally closed Washington School, even despite claiming “Mexican-American residents of these school districts say there is not much sentiment for bussing youngsters away from their neighborhood schools.”<sup>116</sup> However, in an article published in 1985 in the *Los Angeles Times* titled, “Schools Reflect County’s Steadily Growing Minority Population”, Superintendent Brier recounts that “Minority students were bused not to the closest schools, he said, but ‘a little further’ to campuses where they did not result in a disproportionate minority enrollment, he said. Parents did not protest the move.”<sup>117</sup> There is evidence that Mexican parents and the community of Washington School did protest and voice their thoughts against the closing of Washington School. In an 1979 article titled, “Chicano Youths: Closing of School Brings a Murmur” that discusses the closure of Fremont Junior High School, the author writes: “More anguish resulted from the closing [of] not-too-distant Washing Elementary. Residents unsuccessfully fought that closure two years ago.”<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> “Racial Imbalance Weighed by 7 School Boards in County,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 6, 1971.

<sup>115</sup> “Chicano Youths: Closing,” 1979.

<sup>116</sup> “Racial Imbalanced Weighed.”

<sup>117</sup> Mark Landsbaum, “Schools Reflect County's Steadily Growing Minority Population,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 26, 1985.

<sup>118</sup> “Chicano Youths: Closing.”

Brier was not a reliable narrator to represent the voices of the Mexican parents and students. These conflicting accounts on bussing indicate that Brier did not mind bussing Mexican students, only white students. In the Anaheim City School District, school leaders never systematically tried to integrate the schools by moving white students, only the Mexican students. Brier only decided to voice the opinions of the Mexican parents when it aligned with the motives of the district. When the school leaders acknowledged bussing as an option to fix school segregation, but ultimately “plan[ned] to do nothing immediately to end the imbalances,”<sup>119</sup> Brier claimed “[m]any spokesmen for Mexican-American residents of these school districts say there is not much sentiment for bussing youngsters away from their neighborhood schools.”<sup>120</sup> When Washington School closed and the district bussed Mexican students to other schools, “parents did not protest the move” even though there is evidence they did from other sources.

The California State Department of Education did not include high school districts in its list of “minority schools”, like Anaheim Union High School District, because “by the time the minority students reach junior and senior high where school boundaries are enlarged, their ratio to Anglo students drops considerably.”<sup>121</sup> However, within almost a decade, the closing of one junior high school in Anaheim Union High School District would bring light to a different reality.

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<sup>119</sup> “Racial Imbalanced Weighed.”

<sup>120</sup> “Racial Imbalanced Weighed.”

<sup>121</sup> “Ethnic Racial Housing Patterns.”

## **Anaheim Schools Face Funding Problems: Anaheim District Closes Fremont Junior High School**

Money matters in education, and in the 70's, Anaheim school leaders had to grapple with the many changes Proposition 13 generated. Although this legislation impacted all students in Anaheim schools, decisions Anaheim school leaders made in the face of large financial changes impacted Mexican students. These losses included losing a fantastic and beloved teacher to layoffs along with the majority of bilingual education staff, and last but not least, Fremont Junior High School, one of the schools the Anaheim Union High School Board closed, was a predominantly Mexican school.

Before 1971, when *Serrano v. Priest (1971)* began attempting to remedy the school financing system; schools in California received funds in accordance with the property values within their school district. The plaintiff of *Serrano v. Priest (1971)* -- John Serrano, the parent of a Los Angeles public school student -- claimed that this system of public school finance created inequalities across different school districts. In "property-rich districts had enormous advantages when it came to raising funds for local schools. A rich district could tax its property at a low rate and still have much more money to spend on local schools than a poor district with very high property taxes"<sup>122</sup>. The court ruled in favor of Serrano and after the implementation of two bills and another court decision, attempts to significantly remedy the inequalities within the existing school financing system ultimately failed.<sup>123</sup> It's not clear how Anaheim schools were

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<sup>122</sup> Paul A. Sracic, *San Antonio v. Rodriguez and the Pursuit of Equal Education: The Debate over Discrimination and School Funding* (University Press of Kansas, 2006), 17.

<sup>123</sup> Wendy Torres-Badajoz, "Ignorance Is Bliss: An Analysis of the Historical Coverage of California's Proposition 13 and Its Impacts on Public Education," 2021, [https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc\\_theses/2552](https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/2552).

specifically impacted by these changes in the financing system, except for a brief mention in the February 1978 article “Anaheim School Peace: Real or Tenuous?”. The previous September, the California legislature passed Assembly Bill 65.<sup>124</sup> According to the article, many issues among Anaheim Union High School board members and teachers, in addition to “a budget crisis because of the effects of new state school finance laws”<sup>125</sup> created tension throughout the district.

Assembly Bill 65 soon became the least of the district’s funding problems. Proposition 13 sent tremors through the entire education system in California. After a record breaking voter turnout<sup>28</sup> in 1978, Proposition 13 passed with 65% of the state’s approval.<sup>126</sup> In short, Proposition 13

reduced property taxes to the specific property’s value as shown in the 1975-1976 tax bill. [...] The Proposition also limited the maximum tax on any property to 1% of its value, and the year-to-year inflation rate reflection to 2%. The Proposition included the caveat that neither the state nor the local government could raise taxes without a 2/3 majority vote.<sup>127</sup>

Proposition 13 immediately impacted public school funding since it limited how much properties could be taxed and therefore, how much money could go to schools. These budget cuts did not spare the Anaheim Union High School District, and particularly hurt Mexican students.

Within months that California state voters passed Proposition 13, Anaheim Union High School District leaders announced that they would be laying off 102 staff including

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<sup>124</sup> John B. Mockler and Gerald Hayward, “School Finance in California: Pre-Serrano to the Present,” *Journal of Education Finance* 3, no. 4 (1978): pp. 386-401, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40703153>, 392.

<sup>125</sup> Scott Moore, “Anaheim School Peace: Real or Tenuous?,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 26, 1978.

<sup>126</sup> Peter Schrag, *Paradise Lost: California's Experience, America's Future: Updated with a New Preface* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 151.

<sup>127</sup> “Ignorance Is Bliss,” 11

Barbara Clark, a teacher at Fremont Junior High School, the predominantly Mexican junior high school in the district. Barbara Clark had just won 'teacher of the year' at Fremont Junior High. The article "Declining Rolls, Prop 13 Spur Layoff" describes Barbara Clark -- an English and home economics teacher -- as a teacher that invested a lot of her own time for her students outside of the classroom and was beloved by all: "Her principal [...] says he values her ability. Fellow teachers speak highly of her. Students like her -- even adore her. Parents support her. But it was all for naught."<sup>128</sup> 48% of Fremont's students population was Mexican,<sup>129</sup> so they lost a high quality teacher, which is a crucial part of receiving a high quality education. The losses, however, had only started.

"Eight of the nine bilingual teachers and counselors at Fremont and at nearby Anaheim High School were caught in the school district's mass layoff,"<sup>130</sup> described the article "Reinstate Bilingual Teachers, Parents Urge." Mexican parents demanded these teachers be reinstated, arguing that "the bilingual educators fill a special need and should be exempted from seniority-based layoffs."<sup>131</sup> Robert Ross, the director of instructional services for the Anaheim district responded to these demands with "If there was a legal way we could do it, we certainly would have wanted to keep some of those teachers."<sup>132</sup>

With the budget cuts brought forth by Proposition 13, many of the Mexican students have now also lost the bilingual education their parents found so critical. There

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<sup>128</sup> Thomas Fortune, "Declining Rolls, Prop. 13 Spur Layoff School Door Shut on 'Teacher of the Year'," *Los Angeles Times*, May 31, 1979.

<sup>129</sup> Thomas Fortune, "Falling Enrollment Forces School Closings: Anaheim District Cuts 3 Junior Highs but No High Schools," *Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 1979.

<sup>130</sup> Reinstate Bilingual Teachers, Parents Urge."

<sup>131</sup> Reinstate Bilingual Teachers, Parents Urge."

<sup>132</sup> Thomas Fortune, "Reinstate Bilingual Teachers, Parents Urge: Spanish-Speaking Staff Cut in Anaheim District Layoffs," *Los Angeles Times*, August 11, 1979.



is a discrepancy between these demands and the effort the district was willing to put into keeping this staff. Parents accused the district of not highlighting the bilingual education training bilingual educators needed to receive to a state hearing officer, while the music teachers received the seniority-based exemption on the same grounds of the special credentials the music teachers require.<sup>133</sup> The Mexican parents noticed this contradiction and the apathy Ross had towards the removal of bilingual education staff. Parent Rudy Miranda said, “I don’t think they realize how serious we are about this situation. We will seek every legal recourse we have if we feel they are not complying with our demands.”<sup>134</sup> There are no reports on whether parents took legal action or whether they reinstated the teachers, but with Prop 13 slashing through the budgets of school districts it’s difficult to imagine Ross and other district leaders reinstated these teachers. Although there are no reports on how much Anaheim Union High School District lost, Proposition 13 caused an estimated \$752 million revenue loss for Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD)<sup>135</sup> -- the largest school district in California, and by June 1991, LAUSD had to slash \$88 million dollars from its budget.<sup>136</sup>

A year after Prop 13, the Anaheim Union High School District “unanimously voted to deal with declining attendance by closing Fremont and Apollo junior highs in Anaheim and Crescent Junior High in Buena Park”<sup>137</sup> which was expected to “save the Anaheim district almost \$700,000 in annual operating costs.”<sup>138</sup> The district claimed that

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ronald L. Soble, “Court Tests Looming for Proposition 13,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 8, 1978, pp. A10.

<sup>136</sup> David Wharton, “As Funds Dry Up, Schools Made to Steer Rocky Course,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 19, 1991, pp. VYB3-VYB5.

<sup>137</sup> Thomas Fortune, “Falling Enrollment Forces School Closings: Anaheim District Cuts 3 Junior Highs but No High Schools,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 1979.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

“financial considerations were the main factor in selection of which schools to close”<sup>139</sup> and “because its older buildings are costly to maintain and its nearness to adjacent junior highs would minimize the cost of busing students elsewhere.”<sup>140</sup> In the process, the district also gained another benefit from the closure of Fremont Junior High School: “One side effect will be the redistribution of Mexican-American students from Fremont, where they comprise 48% of the student body, to schools with 10% to 20% minority enrollment.”<sup>141</sup>

Although the Mexican students and community Fremont served were not the only school community or even Mexican students impacted by the closure of juniors brought forth by Prop 13 budget cuts, Fremont students lamented the loss of the school they had a strong connection to. This is largely in part because the school did feel like a large community centered around the Mexican students and their identity. The article “Closing of School Brings Murmur” explains that:

In the eyes of a certain group of Mexican-American youths, Fremont Junior High School in Anaheim belonged to them. Just under half of the student body were Chicano youths, and they were about to become the majority. In the fall, the student body officers and song girls would have been Mexican-American.<sup>142</sup>

Because a good portion of Fremont’s population was Mexican, and they were on the verge of becoming the majority, there is a sense of loss of a community akin to losing Washington School. Fremont Junior High must have felt like an extension of their

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Thomas Fortune, “Chicano Youths: Closing of School Brings Murmur,” *Los Angeles Times* , July 1, 1979.

<sup>141</sup> “Falling Enrollment Forces,” 1979.

<sup>142</sup> “Chicano Youths: Closing,” 1979.

Mexican community, and closing the school and sending the students to surrounding schools<sup>143</sup> must have felt like a fragmentation of the Mexican community.

The Mexican Fremont community didn't protest this closing, not because they didn't like it but because they felt a sense of hopelessness. "Closing of School Brings a Murmur" explains that: "The Mexican-American community, by and large, does not like the idea of the closing, but seems resigned to it."<sup>144</sup> Susan Hernandez, a clerical aid at Fremont said, " There seems to be a pattern in Orange County of closing barrio elementary schools. It seemed bound to happen in junior high. That's the attitude (of inevitability) I've picked up from people."<sup>145</sup> Frances Martinez, a community aid at the school said that the parents felt "they [didn't] have a chance (of swaying the board), maybe because we are Spanish-speakers, Mexicans."<sup>146</sup> Amin David, a community leader shared that "These people are predominantly not vocal. [...] They're not accustomed to acting from a power base."<sup>147</sup> This reaction from Mexican parents must not be confused with apathy, its Mexican stereotype, but the reactions from a community that has historically been ignored by the district and other school leaders. The district has failed to empower the Mexican community -- especially the parents -- by providing them language appropriate resources to voice their opinion. These feelings must have been intensified after the district laid off the bilingual education teachers, especially because 7 of the 8 teachers were at Fremont. It was another hit to the Mexican community when AUHSD closed Fremont in the wake of Prop 13.

None of these examples necessarily mean that the district went out of its way to harm Mexican students after Prop 13, but that they rather chose to not help them or

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

mitigate the harms of Prop 13 when it closed down the school or laid off its bilingual educators. Residential segregation amplified the harms of Prop 13. Because the Mexican community is residentially segregated, their schools are segregated. Whenever the district makes decisions that impact a predominantly-Mexican school like Fremont, it ends up hurting a significant Mexican population. The consequences of these decisions are magnified when it hurts a community that is so concentrated in different sections of the city's schools.

## CHAPTER 3

### Anaheim Union High School District Leadership's Reaction to Latinx Growth in 1980's - 1990's

*'We have a real crisis on our hands [...] Our schools are like microcosms of our society. We know what we need to do to help them succeed but we're facing major obstacles. If these kids don't succeed, neither will our communities'*

-- Anaheim City Elementary School District Superintendent Roberta Thompson in "Scheduling Squeeze: Year-Round Schools Aren't Enough to Handle Severe Overcrowding"

While the previous decades marked a period of immigration into Anaheim from both the rest of the United States and Mexico and Latin American countries, the 1980's and 1990's were marked by increased Latinx immigration into Anaheim, and a white flight out of Anaheim. Anaheim's white population began leaving, either outside of the county or to "South County," the rapidly growing southern portion of Orange County. In *Orange County: A Personal History*, Gustavo Arellano recounts:

Unlike that of my parents and aunts and older generations of Mexican-Americans, my school experience through those early years was *muy* Mexican. Thomas Jefferson Elementary [...] was in the mindset of a demographic change by the time I entered Kindergarten in 1985. The kids in my classes were almost all Mexican -- only the upper grades had white students, and more kept leaving every year.<sup>148</sup>

Orange County schools felt the impact of these population changes. The population of Anaheim schools became much bigger, and much more Latinx. Anaheim schools, in particular, suddenly had to accommodate a population of Latinx students who began entering at a rapid rate. Schools became overcrowded, or as an article in 1996 described, "bursting at the seams."<sup>149</sup> The Anaheim Union High School District Board of Trustees

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<sup>148</sup> Gustavo Arellano, *Orange County*, 112.

<sup>149</sup> Tina Nguyen, "Scheduling Squeeze: Year-Round Schools Aren't Enough to Handle Severe Overcrowding," *Los Angeles Times*, August 16, 1996.

attacked bilingual education, and a member of the same board pushed to sue and bill Mexico for the education of undocumented Mexican students. At the turn of the millenia, Anaheim school leaders didn't react to increased Latinx immigration by segregating Mexican students in different schools, or by closing the predominantly Mexican schools in the name of integration. Instead, Anaheim school districts became segregated in and of themselves. Anaheim school district leaders, along with leaders in the Orange County Department of Education made decisions that amplified the segregation between Anaheim (along with the majority of North and Central Orange County), and Anaheim Hills, and South Orange County as white flight saw many white people move from Anaheim to these locations. Latinx immigration fueled the events and trends that occurred in these years, but they were embedded within the context of growing residential segregation throughout the county.

### **“Minority Students are Now the Majority”<sup>150</sup> in Anaheim Schools**

Fueled by an increase in immigration from Mexico, the rest of Latin America, and Los Angeles County,<sup>151</sup> Anaheim's Latinx population grew significantly in the 1980's and 1990's. An article published in 1985 by the *Los Angeles Times* titled, “Schools Reflect County's Steadily Growing Minority Population” explained this growth. This trend occurred throughout Orange County as well, but specifically “in the north, west, and central sectors of the county.”<sup>152</sup> Anaheim schools also reflected this increase. For instance, the “Anaheim City School District, [...] minority enrollment has reached 50.6%

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<sup>150</sup> Mark Landsmaum, “Schools Reflect County's Steadily Growing Minority Population,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 26, 1985.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

[in 1984-1985] compared to 16.9% in 1973-1974.”<sup>153</sup> This growth continued into the 90’s. A 1992 article in the *Los Angeles Times* titled “Schools’ Enrollment Hits Record” described that “in North County, 1,452 new students spelled Anaheim Union’s first enrollment jump in 17 years.”<sup>154</sup> Like in 1985, Latinx students composed most of this growth. From 1990 to 1991, the Latinx student population increased by 3% in the Anaheim City Elementary School District, 2% in the Magnolia Elementary School District, 3% in the Savanna Elementary School District, and 3% in the Anaheim Union High School District.<sup>155</sup> In these same years, the white student population decreased by 3% in the Anaheim City district, 2% in the Magnolia district, 3% in the Savanna district, and 4% in the Anaheim Union district.<sup>156</sup> The only exception to this was Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified School Districts, which was the only school district in Orange County to see an increase in white students with a “20% jump in percentage of whites [...] largely attributed to new housing developments.”<sup>157</sup> Although this school district is not directly in Anaheim, it serves students in Anaheim Hills, a location where many white families moved during white flight. This chapter will primarily focus on the growth within Anaheim Union High School and Anaheim City Elementary School districts, as they faced the biggest growth and were front and center in the news for the issues Anaheim schools faced during this time period.

South County school districts also saw increased enrollment in their schools, but the racial and ethnic breakdown of their predominantly white students remained largely

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> “Schools’ Enrollment Hits Record.”

the same in some of their districts but not in others. Capistrano Unified grew the most in South Orange County with 5.6% overall increase from Fall 1991 to Fall 1992,<sup>158</sup> and the district's 81% white student population only decreased 1% and its Latinx population stayed the same at 13%.<sup>159</sup>

The difference between Anaheim and the rest of South County is that although there is a general decrease in the white population throughout these school districts, Anaheim's districts -- specifically its two biggest (Anaheim City Elementary and Anaheim Union High School) -- are now predominantly Latinx while South County's are predominantly white. No longer are Mexican students segregated primarily within districts, but now between districts in the county.

School leaders approached this surge in immigration in different ways. Some school leaders did approach this significant demographic shift through an optimistic lens. Anaheim Union High School District's Superintendent Cynthia F. Grennan shared with the Los Angeles Times in 1991 that "it's been frantic keeping up with the changes, but it's good for the district [...] You can walk into one class and see up to 14 cultures in one room."<sup>160</sup> Not all school leaders maintained this attitude. This shift in demographics was different from the previous ones. White people and students no longer were the majority, they were the minority. The Latinx population didn't grow within the margins, they became the majority. The Latinx population became a force to reckon with due to their size, and this threatened the status quo the city and county's primarily white leaders had

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<sup>158</sup> Catherine Gewertz, "Anglos Now a Minority in O.C. Public Schools: Demographics: Statewide Shift Seen Locally Later than Elsewhere. Whites Are Only Race Whose Enrollment Fell," *Los Angeles Times*, December 13, 1992.

<sup>159</sup> "Schools' Enrollment Hits Record."

<sup>160</sup> Lily Eng, "Minority Students Increase Markedly," *Los Angeles Times*, April 8, 1991.



maintained for most of its history since its official incorporation. Anaheim schools became one of the arenas where school leaders had to both confront this shift in the status quo and logistical challenges of educating many more immigrant students.

### **Anaheim Schools “Bursting at the Seams”**<sup>161</sup>

Anaheim schools, particularly Anaheim City Elementary School District, did not have the physical capacity to accommodate the exponential growth of students, and by 1995 district leaders were ringing the alarm bell. An article in the *Los Angeles Times* titled “O.C. School Districts Face Crisis of Crowded Campuses” explained that “In the Anaheim City School District, enrollment grew 53% from 11,454 to 17,577 students from 1983 to 1994. This school year, the district is expecting about 1,000 more students.”<sup>162</sup> To accommodate these new students, Maria Elena Romero, Anaheim City District’s director of fiscal services department said, “the district needs to build at least five elementary schools. But there is only money for one school: its old administrative offices will be converted into an elementary school campus.”<sup>163</sup> Anaheim City Elementary School District needed to get creative to make space:

Anaheim City districts have installed hundreds of portable classrooms, shifted campus boundaries and adopted space-saving, year-round calendars at more than half of their elementary and middle school campuses. Still, there is not enough classroom space to educate all the students expected to enroll in the districts within the next few years.<sup>164</sup>

Portable classrooms often covered the playgrounds, limiting the play space students had.

At Lincoln Elementary School, “children spen[t] their recess playing at a neighboring

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<sup>161</sup> “Scheduling Squeeze: Year-Round.”

<sup>162</sup> Diane Seo, “O.C. School Districts Face Crisis of Crowded Campuses,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 24, 1995.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

park because their own school playground is packed with temporary classrooms.”<sup>165</sup> Jack Sarnicky, superintendent of the Anaheim City School District, lamented:

I think we’re just about at the end of our solutions, [...] We’ve already turned to year-round schooling as a solution, and [to] temporary buildings. But unless we come up with other unique ways to solve our housing problems, we’re simply going to run out of space.<sup>166</sup>

Because of increasing Latinx immigration and white flight, Anaheim schools became increasingly segregated, and Latinx students largely felt the impact of this schooling crisis. Anaheim City leader Al Mijares said:

Overtime, it will take a toll [...] The more you tax these facilities, eventually they’ll give out, We’re already at the max.”<sup>167</sup> Mijares believed that “the situation will only increase discrepancies between poor, urban school districts and more affluent ones, because the majority of students from his and other urban districts will attend class in overcrowded, overtaxed facilities. It’s going to perpetuate the have and have-nots.<sup>168</sup>

The Anaheim schools Latinx students attended were being pushed to its maximum use, which school officials said “that children will ultimately suffer if they are forced to attend classes in deteriorating facilities.”<sup>169</sup> The impact of this overcrowding extended beyond the facilities. With more students, classes were more likely to be overcrowded, directly impacting the quality of instruction these Latinx students received.

The affluent white students in Anaheim Hills and South County attended schools that, despite growth, were not going to strain under the pressure of overcrowding. In fact, these growing districts were able to grow more gracefully with its increased student

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

population. The “O.C. School Districts Face Crisis of Crowded Campuses” article explains that:

Unlike other fast-growing but more affluent districts such as the Capistrano and Saddleback Valley unified school districts, the [...] Anaheim districts don’t have the financial means to build-new facilities. These more affluent districts have used special, Mello-Roos tax districts in which an assessment is levied on new houses to fund the schools. But few new homes have been built in [...] Anaheim.<sup>170</sup>

These inequalities were only amplified by the state’s policies that ironically attempted to help schools without the funds to build new schools but preferred districts who could already put down more money:

And even if the state eventually is able to start funding new projects, districts like Santa Ana and Anaheim are at a disadvantage because the state gives priority to districts that are able to come up with half of their construction funds. More districts accumulate such revenue by striking deals with new housing developers.<sup>171</sup>

Anaheim City Elementary District school leaders did not only face overcrowding. They also faced overcrowding within the context of growing residential segregation. In Santa Ana, school districts were facing the same increasing Latinx student population and overcrowded schools. Enriqueta Ramos, a Santa Ana community activist and a trustee of Rancho Santiago College said, “White folks have left the inner cities, so how can we integrate Santa Ana when we don’t have anyone to integrate it with? The truth is, they left because they didn’t want their kids going to school with a bunch of Mexicans -- it sounds horrible, but it's true.”<sup>172</sup> Larger systems like the economic system reinforced the inequalities of this segregation via things like the Mello-Roos Tax. Latinx students felt

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Richard Lee Colvin, “School Segregation Is Growing, Report Finds,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 1999.

the impacts of such structural inequalities. Anaheim school leaders knew this, and tried their best to fix these problems. In the end, their power is limited to the decisions they can make within their districts -- even when the problem is much bigger and structural.

### **AUHSD Threatens Bilingual Education**

As Latinx students began to increasingly populate Anaheim schools, Anaheim schools needed to have more resources to provide for the language differences these students had as well. Bilingual education is one of these resources, and schools struggled to keep up with the increasing demand. Superintendent James Brier of Anaheim City School District said that “complying with the bilingual education laws is the greatest challenge [...] of 410 classes in the district, there are 173 bilingual classes and only 23 teachers with bilingual credentials [...] the need keep growing [...] You’re kind of a sand hill, climbing up. But we keep making the effort.”<sup>173</sup>

The writing was on the wall for Anaheim Union High School District. If its biggest feeder district, Anaheim City Elementary was crushed under the weight of the new surge of students, they might have that same problem on their hands when those students promoted 6th grade and entered their district. However, unlike Anaheim City Elementary School, Anaheim Union High School District had more warning time to prepare in the same way they did decades earlier when the growth in Anaheim’s population was mainly white.<sup>174</sup> Instead of engaging with this growth in constructive ways by welcoming the new community into the schools or preparing for these new students by expanding their facilities and infrastructure, Anaheim Union High School District leaders took a much more hostile approach. Led by AUHSD Board of Trustee

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<sup>173</sup> “Schools reflect counties.”

<sup>174</sup> Bahret. “A History of.”

Harald G. Martin -- a former, unpopular policeman accused of his racism during this time in the force<sup>175</sup> -- AUHSD's board attempted to implement two reactionary policies into their district in response to the growth in the Latinx student population in Anaheim.

At AUHSD's Board of Trustees meeting on March 9th, 1995, Anaheim Union High School District's Board of Trustees considered a resolution "that condemn[s] a state-mandated language program designed to mainstream non-English speaking students."<sup>176</sup> The resolution claimed that:

Bilingual education has been defined by the California Department of Education as native-language instruction which has become an ideologically based program more concerned with the intrinsic virtues of bilingualism -- and with keeping children indefinitely in those programs -- than with its supposed mission; getting them into the English-speaking mainstream as quickly and efficiently as possible.<sup>177</sup>

Trustee Martin feared that by forcing schools to maintain bilingual education programs that incentivized keeping students in this track and not in the English-only classrooms, the California Department of Education restricted the local power of school districts at the expense of its students. This resolution didn't seek to only eliminate bilingual education in the district, but to push towards making it optional throughout the state. The resolutions stated:

Be It Hereby Resolved, that the Board of Trustees of the Anaheim Union High School District calls upon the Governor, all members of the State Assembly, all members of the State Senate, the California School Boards Association, the California State School Board and the Department of Education to return control to local school districts to determine which method of instruction is more

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<sup>175</sup> Gabriel San Román, "Harald Martin Former Anaheim Trustee Who Wanted to Sue Mexico Is Running Again," OC Weekly, October 2, 2018, <https://www.ocweekly.com/harald-martin-former-anaheim-trustee-who-wanted-to-sue-mexico-is-running-again-2/>.

<sup>176</sup> Martin Miller, "Schools Fight Against Bilingual Education," *Los Angeles Times*, March 9, 1995.

<sup>177</sup> "Minutes Board of Trustees Anaheim Union High School District March 9 1995," *Minutes Board of Trustees Anaheim Union High School District March 9 1995* (1995).

appropriate for their limited English proficient students and that these school districts be held accountable for results rather than methodology.<sup>178</sup>

Both Anaheim Board of Trustee Joanne L. Stanton and Anaheim Secondary Teacher Association (ASTA) President Lisa Eck spoke against this resolution<sup>179</sup>. Trustee Stanton said she would reject the resolution because she believed that “in our district, we’ve fashioned a program that really meets the needs of our young people.”<sup>180</sup> This viewpoint undermines Martin’s local control argument. The district may not have had local control over the program, but according to Stanton it did work for their students, hinting that this push back against bilingual education may have been much more about prejudice towards Spanish than local control.

Martin believed that learning Spanish alongside English hurt students. According to Trustee Martin, “If you want to train these kids to be busboys, just keep on what you’re doing in this program [...] But if you want these kids to become doctors and lawyers, you are going to have to change the way you’re doing business.”<sup>181</sup> Martin argues that Spanish is the reason as to why the Latinx students are not succeeding in school and afterwards. This assumed that an education that includes Spanish is inferior and can only harm students. Spanish became a stand in for the larger prejudices held about Latinx people and their heritage. Martin believed that their Latinx identity was stopping them from success, and that only by stripping the students of their language and therefore Latinx identity, they could become more American and as a result, successful.

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> “Schools Fight Against.”

Not only is this racist, but it completely ignored the larger context Latinx students lived in. Speaking Spanish was not inhibiting them from becoming successful. These students were navigating both school and residential segregation, a school district that had actively been prejudiced against them, overcrowded schools, a long history of discrimination towards them and their community, and more. Instead of placing the blame on Spanish, Martin should have looked inward at how the district was contributing to the larger inequalities Latinx students in their district faced, and instead think about how the district could play a role in ending or mitigating those inequalities.

At the March 9th board meeting, AUHSD Board of Trustee President Robert Stewart moved the motion and trustee Martin seconded.<sup>182</sup> However, after “some members of the board expressed concern with the language in the resolution as presented,”<sup>183</sup> both trustees withdrew the motion<sup>184</sup> so that the board members could “further review this item at a board workshop.”<sup>185</sup> It’s not clear what exactly happened with this resolution, but in 1998, a large majority of California voters passed Proposition 227, which eliminated bilingual education in California.

### **Bill Mexico \$50 Million Dollars**

“Mexico should be responsible for the education of its own citizens,” Martin affirmed.<sup>186</sup> Many other people attending the Board of District meeting that May 1999 agreed.<sup>187</sup> Four years after initially bringing up this proposition to no avail,<sup>188</sup> Martin --

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<sup>182</sup> “Minutes Board of Trustees Anaheim Union High School District March 9 1995.”

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Lisa Richardson, “High School District Mulls Suing Mexico,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 28, 1999.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Danielle A Fouquette, “Trustee Wants Mexico Billed for Students ,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 21, 1995.

now the president of the board -- decided to bring it back to the board. In this resolution, AUHSD wanted to bill Mexico \$50 million for the costs it has taken to educate Mexican students who have come into the country illegally, and \$10 million yearly for the same reason.<sup>189</sup> Claiming that he was not racist but simply fed up, Martin argued that:

the expense borne [for educating undocumented students] by the district keeps it from achieving other educational goals [...] For example, Anaheim could easily achieve class sizes of 20 students to one teacher if all students who are not in the United States legally were either required to leave the schools or had their expenses paid by Mexico.”<sup>190</sup>

Trustee Katherine Smith also asserted that “no animosity toward Mexican children is intended. But [...] school overcrowding is the single most important issue in the district. I believe this issue is purely an economic reason and nothing else [...] I believe the spirit of this is right but we need to get our facts straight.”<sup>191</sup> Others agreed. Chad Morgan, the Orange County chair of conservaiv Young Americans for Freedom, shared “This resolution singles out one country, and we do not want to appear racist, so we should send a bill to every country that that has illegal aliens in the schools.”<sup>192</sup>

Many people for the resolution claimed that their sentiments weren’t racist, but that they came from a neutral, logical perspective -- the school needed space and money, this would solve the problems. However, its foundations are racist. Although many who supported this resolution said every single country should be billed, the original called only for Mexico. Martin singled out Mexicans, even when there were many other students -- from all over Latin America and the world -- who were undocumented and

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<sup>189</sup> Lisa Richardson, “School Board Moves Closer to Mexico Suit,” May 29, 1995.

<sup>190</sup> “High School District Mulls.”

<sup>191</sup> “School board moves.”

<sup>192</sup> “High School District Mulls.”



attending the school district. It's racist to group and label all Spanish-speaking Latin Americans as Mexicans. It assumes their personhood is limited to their native language and follows the stereotype that all Spanish-speakers are Mexican.

Many other people also pushed back against this resolution. Benny Hernandez, president of Anaheim City School District explained that "while he used to laugh off Martin's proposals targeting illegal immigrants, now he cannot. 'This time I'm angry and even sad for your discriminating message.'" <sup>193</sup> The article "School Board Moves Closer to Mexico Suit" reports that:

With sighs of exasperation, two Latino community activists reached Friday declined to comment or to have their names be connected with the proposal. It is an old story, they said: A population of middle-aged, middle-class white people fear the growing number of Latinos in Orange County. <sup>194</sup>

This resolution is a response to the increased immigration. Martin and supporters needed to point fingers at one group -- Mexicans -- as the cause of the problems when in fact, it's not the people but larger society and its structures. In the end, this resolution did not move forward, but it essentially told Mexican and Latinx undocumented students that they were a burden.

Anaheim City Elementary District and Anaheim Union High School leaders did find themselves in very difficult situations with limited resources. While Anaheim City School District leaders frantically attempted to find resources for their students, Anaheim Union High School leaders' reaction was indicative of the fear that the shift in demographic breakdown in the city and the increase in Latinx immigration may have caused to the city's white leaders.

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<sup>193</sup> "School board moves."

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.



## EPILOGUE

In a 1968 Los Angeles Times article titled “Latin Teacher Shortage Due to Bias of Supply?”, accusation by “Dr. Eugene Gonzales, associate superintendent of public instruction in California, who received his early education in Anaheim, believes Orange County is historically ‘more disposed’ to prejudice than elsewhere. This is disputed by county school officials who cite Soria’s case as an example”.<sup>195</sup> Ben Soria was a Mexican-born teacher who taught at Santa Ana High School, who “was ‘very surprised and shocked’ when the district was accused of discriminating against Mexican-American teachers during a probationary teacher’s hearing earlier this year”.<sup>196</sup> This thesis proves Dr. Eugene Gonzales’s point -- Anaheim, similar to Orange County, has been historically prejudiced. An understanding of local history would weaken county school officials’ claims, and citing the experience of only one individual no longer becomes sufficient grounds to continue justifying injustices. The experience of one individual wouldn’t be as powerful as a means to erase the experiences of a larger community.

This thesis was a personal venture as much as it was an academic venture. By exploring and digging deep into the newspaper articles, reports, and images from my community’s past, I found a greater sense of place and community. History no longer became a mission to understand other people and places, but one to understand *my* people and *my* place. Common complaints about history curriculums in K-12 schools frequently include phrases such as “Who cares? These people are dead now”, and “It’s just boring facts we need to memorize”. Students are currently being robbed from opportunities to

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<sup>195</sup> Helen Johnson, “Latin Teacher Shortage Due to Bias or Supply?: Minority Group Constitutes Only 2% of Instructors Latin Teacher Shortage in Schools Cited,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 11, 1968.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

understand those who came before them at a local level, to ground themselves in a community with historical origins, and to further comprehend the impact that larger historical events had or didn't have on people who feel more real -- their people. By presenting students in schools with a curriculum that allows them to learn and engage with histories that occur at a local level, in addition to a state, national, and global level, historical events no longer become abstract or simply "facts to memorize".

By understanding their local past, students -- and therefore the future leaders of the community -- are better equipped to deal with the present and their future. Their present no longer becomes isolated from what and who has come before them, and students become empowered to think critically about the world around them. Joseph Anthony Amato explains in *Rethinking Home: A Case for Writing Local History*: "People of every place and time deserve a history. [...] Every community has stories worthy of telling".<sup>197</sup> It's critical that local histories reflect the diversity of the community.

By understanding the history of the Mexican and Latinx community in Anaheim schools, the students in Western's history class would understand -- they are not ghetto. People before them created the conditions so that they felt that way. With or without the intentions to harm, the actions of those before them are still reverberating in their hallways and they are simply walking through them. History is made up of contingencies, and they have the power to use this to their advantage. They can work to create a world so that those who follow them are not riddled with the same hurt they now carry. As this history tells us, it's not always easy but it's possible. Too much is at stake to not do so.

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<sup>197</sup> Joseph Anthony Amato, *Rethinking Home: A Case for Writing Local History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 3.

As of 2022, there is a direct and immediate line connecting the past and the present. In 2007, Trustee Martin “was appointed July 19 by a 3-1 vote to the board seat left open by the death of Denise Mansfield-Reinking.”<sup>198</sup> Trustee Katherine H. Smith nominated him to fill this vacancy, and Trustee Brian O’Neal was one of the three trustees who voted in favor. Trustee Smith and O’Neal still sit on the board.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>198</sup>Jennifer Delson and Seema Mehta, “Anaheim Schools Trustee Is a Target of Left and Right,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 3, 2007.

<sup>199</sup> “AUHSD Board of Trustees,” Board of Trustees • Page - Anaheim UHSD, accessed April 20, 2022, <https://auhsd.us/District/Department/14174-Board/80153-Board-of-Trustees.html>.

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